

# The Winter Migration

December 1, 1989—February 28, 1990

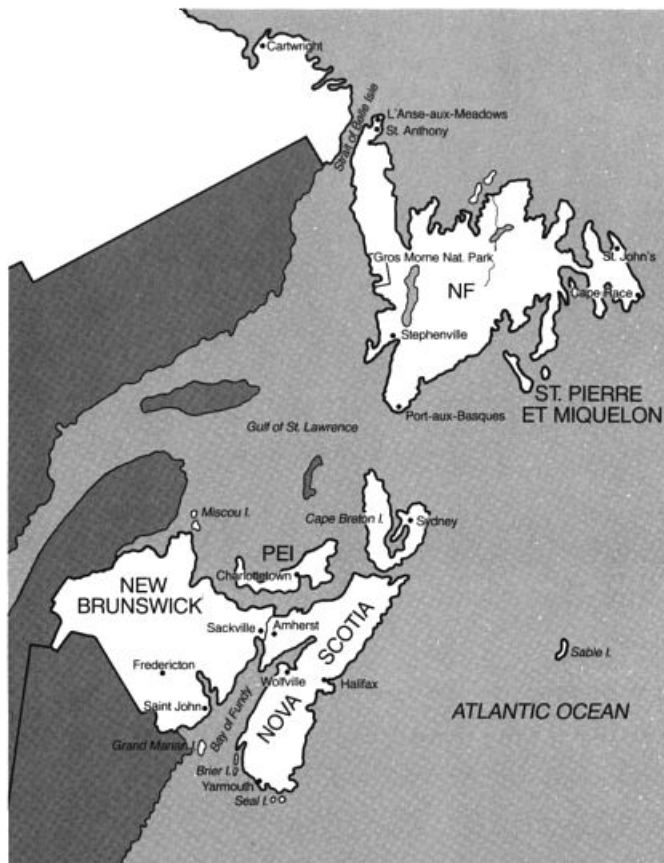
## ATLANTIC PROVINCES REGION

Ian A. McLaren

In common with nearby Regions, ours was bitterly cold in December, averaged milder in January, and was cold again through February, with some severe swings of weather throughout. Accumulated snowfall was exceptional in inland New Brunswick and Newfoundland. Thus, less hardy birds emigrated or died in early winter, and landbirds were generally rated as hard to come by. The sea offered its usual solace to birders. What follows includes records from “unofficial” Christmas Bird Counts that will be published in regional bird journals, but not in *American Birds*.

**ABBREVIATION** — S.P.M. = Saint-Pierre et Miquelon.

**LOONS TO WATERFOWL** — In addition to the usual scattering of Red-throated Loons in Nova Scotia, one was on Trinity Bay, NF, Dec. 22 (RB). Two Pied-billed Grebes lingered in Nova Scotia until late December (*fide* LPMP), but evidently none wintered. “It was a good winter for Horned Grebes” in Nova Scotia (LPMP), but three around St John’s in early January were noteworthy, as they are “strangely rare in Newfoundland” (BMct). Red-necked Grebes, by contrast, were widespread and in good numbers. A black-and-white shearwater off Sable I., NS, Feb. 9 (AF) was thought to be a Manx Shearwater. A Great Blue Heron present until at least Dec. 18 was a first for that month at S.P.M. (RE). It was a harsh winter for the usual stragglers of this species in Nova Scotia, where only two were noted in February. A Cattle Egret was on Cape Sable,



MAP ILLUSTRATION/DENISE O'BRIEN

NS, in early December (Viola Sperka).

Last winter's unusual Snow Goose records were almost matched by a flock of 13 over Miramichi Bay, NB, Jan. 7 (*fide* DSC), and a bird on Sable I., NS, until mid-January (AM). Two Brant at Little Hbr., NS, Jan. 18 (DY) were unusual; others there Feb. 11 and at Grand Manan, NB, Feb. 24 (*fide* DSC) may have been early migrants. Canada Geese seemed undeterred by cold in their usual winter concentrations in Nova Scotia. A “black-duck sized” individual was on Sable I., NS, until Dec. 20 (AM). As usual, there were a few wintering Wood Ducks in Nova Scotia, but a bird at Sackville, NB, furnished one of very few CBC records for that province. Feeding of waterfowl at Sullivan's Pond in Dartmouth, NS, was curtailed through a by-law, resulting in concentrations elsewhere in the Halifax-Dartmouth area and some late-winter starvation.

Among a few wintering Green-winged Teal in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia were males of the Eurasian race at St. John's, NF, from December through February (m.ob.) and at Greenwich, NS, from early December to mid-January (*fide* JWW). Two ♀ N. Pintails remained in St. John's, NF, along with two ♂ and two ♀ Mallard x Pintail



Male Eurasian Green-winged Teal (with two American Green-wingeds) at St. John's, Newfoundland, February 3, 1990. Photograph/Bruce Mactavish.

hybrids (v.ob.). In Nova Scotia a ♂ Gadwall was around Canning until mid-January (*vide* JWW), and two males and a female were seen at Trenton Feb. 16 (MO). A ♀ Eurasian Wigeon was sporadic through January at St. John's, NF. None was detected among the 20+ American Wigeons wintering in Nova Scotia.

A Redhead at Sydney, NS, through February, was the first to winter in some years (*vide* LPMP). Six Ring-necked Ducks appeared unexpectedly Feb. 11 at Waverley, NS, to stay on an open stretch of lake water (LPMP). Up to 600 Greater Scaup at Pictou, NS, were the largest reported winter concentration (MO). A Lesser Scaup was late at Saint John, NB, Dec. 17 (JE), and five January birds were identified in Nova Scotia (v.ob.). A reassuring 36 Harlequin Ducks were at Cape St. Mary's, NF, in early January (*vide* RB), but elsewhere only 10 scattered birds were reported from Nova Scotia, three from S.P.M., and two from Grand Manan, NB. Other sea ducks seemed to be in usual numbers, although a CBC estimate of 4600 Oldsquaw at Annapolis Royal, NS, deserves mention. Barrow's Goldeneye were more modestly prominent with reports of 36 near Shediac, NB, Jan. 14 (plus a few elsewhere on CBCs in NB), four in Newfoundland (RB), 15+ in Nova Scotia (v.ob.), and nine males at Roxbury, PEI, Jan. 24 (Mary Majka). Good counts of Common Mergansers were of 262 on the CBC at Shediac, NB, and 160 at Pictou, NS, Jan. 31 (MO).

**DIURNAL RAPTORS** — Two Turkey Vultures were on the CBC on Brier I., NS, and another there Feb. 18. More unusual were at least two around Wolfville and Windsor in January and another in late February near Halifax (v.ob.). Convincing reports were received (*vide* DSC) of an Osprey near Fredericton, NB, in late February, inspecting a nest site on a power pylon a few days later, and (same bird?) flying below Mactaquac Mar. 5.

#### S.A.

Bald Eagles seem far from troubled in the Region. They were widely and well reported — from S.P.M. (up to three), the w. coast of Newfoundland (up to eight), and New Brunswick (21 on the CBC at Pennfield and a record seven in Fundy N.P., Feb. 2). In Nova Scotia, they occurred on 20 of 24 CBCs (*vide* DAC). There were the usual good numbers on Cape Breton I. (up to 20 on the Big Pond CBC) and in various other Nova Scotia localities. However, the n.e. Annapolis Valley, where farmers and slaughter houses supply offal to attract them, has become an eagle spectacular. A reliable count of 63 immatures and 60 adults was made by 10 synchronous parties in Kings and w. Annapolis Feb. 3. Other estimates were as high as 180 for the entire Annapolis Valley. Beginning in late February, about 400 wildlife tourists, *en route* to seal watching on the Madeleine Is., Quebec, were treated to this gathering of eagles as part of their itinerary; which is all to the good.

The routine harrier, accipiters, and buteos were in the usual places in normal numbers. An imm. N. Harrier through January at St. John's was unusual for Newfoundland (v.ob.). A well-described ad. Cooper's Hawk in Dartmouth, NS, Feb. 26 (Janos Kovacs) furnished one of few acceptable winter records from the Region. A near-ad. Red-shouldered Hawk found at Kentville Jan. 3 (RBS, ph.) was seen through the month by many others. It favored one backyard, "hanging upside down by its talons . . . and pecking at the suet" (JWW). There are no post-CBC



This Red-shouldered Hawk at Kentville, Nova Scotia, in January 1990, provided a first winter record for the province. Photograph Richard B. Stern.

records for Nova Scotia, except for a corpse found Mar. 1, 1975. A Broad-winged Hawk on the CBC at Yarmouth, NS, fitted the now almost routine pattern of early-winter occurrences in Nova Scotia. A count of 58 Red-tailed Hawks during the aforementioned eagle census was not exceptional. An imm. Golden Eagle wintered at Cadden Bay, NS (Peter MacDonald *et al.*) and an adult was near Albert, NB, for at least the 3rd consecutive winter (m.ob.).

American Kestrels and Merlins were almost unreported after December, and were thought to be unusually scarce in Nova Scotia (IAM). Individual Peregrine Falcons were at Cape St. Mary's, NF, Dec. 28 (RB *et al.*), in Kings, NS, Dec. 30 and Jan. 24, and on Sable I., NS, through January (AM). Gyrfalcons wintered as usual around l'Anse-aux-Meadows and St. Anthony, NF — at least two dark and one white morph (DA). Others were a white bird near St. John's, NF, Dec. 3 (RB), possibly three different dark birds in Kings, NS, sporadically through winter (v.ob.), a dark bird on Sable I., NS, into February (AM), an almost pure white bird at Glace Bay, NS, Feb. 2 (Steven Bray), and three distinguishable dark birds around Moncton, NB, through winter (RW *et al.*). This elusive species may be becoming a reliable sighting in the last locality.

**GALLIFORMES TO WOODPECKERS** — A sighting Mar. 5 of three Rock Ptarmigan 25 mi n.e. of Port-aux-Basques, NF, reminds us that "the Arctic is not that far away" (BMct). In Nova Scotia, Ruffed Grouse were rated as "clearly up" in numbers (IAM). Other reports on native and introduced Galliformes revealed little. Two Am. Coots were in St. John's, NF, in early December, and one got through the winter, as usual, on Sullivan's Pond, Dartmouth, NS (v.ob.). The only other reported rallid was a stressed Virginia Rail at Cole Hbr., NS, Dec. 2 (IAM).

There were fewer than usual post-CBC reports of half-hardy shorebirds. Ruddy Turnstones remained in unusual numbers in Newfoundland, with nine at Carbonear Jan. 11 and four next day at Ferryland (BMct *et al.*). Another was at Louisbourg, NS, Feb. 27 (Clive MacDonald), while a bird at St. Andrews Feb. 22 furnished about the 3rd winter record for New Brunswick (DSC). A Red Knot at Ferryland, NF, Jan. 12 provided a first winter record for Newfoundland (BMct *et al.*). The only reported late Sanderling was, surprisingly, on Miquelon, S.P.M., Jan. 21 (AD). Purple Sandpipers were widely and well reported. A closely observed and well heard Short-billed Dowitcher occurred Dec. 17 on the Port Hebert, NS, CBC (Bill Curry). Two Common Snipe in January in Nova Scotia (*vide* FS) were not unusual, but individuals Jan. 13 & 22 on S.P.M. (*vide* RE) were pushing their luck. In Nova Scotia, an Am.

*This Common Black-headed Gull—one of the many around St. John's, Newfoundland, this winter—had been banded, presumably not in North America, but its band number could not be read. Photograph/Bruce Mactavish.*



Woodcock survived until early January near Wolfville (B. Forsythe *et al.*) and another remained in Dartmouth until at least Feb. 22 (v.ob.).

About 175 Common Black-headed Gulls coming out of nighttime roost on western Conception Bay, NF, Dec. 31 probably made a record day count in North America (BMct). They were in good numbers, as usual, around St. John's, NF, and Sydney and Halifax, NS, but not elsewhere. Up to five on S.P.M. in January were considered unusual (RE). A Bonaparte's Gull at Saint-Pierre Jan. 4 (Christian Moullec) made only the 3rd known occurrence for S.P.M. Two ad. and one first-winter Mew (Common) Gulls wintered around St. John's, NF, and a first-winter bird was sporadic through March at Dartmouth, NS. At least two Ring-billed Gulls wintered in St. John's, NF (v.o.). There were no surprises among the white-winged gulls, although more than usual Glaucous Gulls were reported from Nova Scotia (RGG). A bird with field marks of an ad. Thayer's Gull was at Dartmouth, NS, Feb. 25 (v.o.); we do, however, see dark-eyed, darker backed birds here that are structurally *kumlieni*. One adult and perhaps three imm. Lesser Black-backed Gulls overwintered at St. John's (RB, BMct), and three adults around Halifax (v.o.). An immature was at Rocky Hbr., NF, Dec. 16 (RB), and an adult through February at Lockeport, NS (Donna Crosby). Ivory Gulls were almost daily at L'Anse-aux-Meadows, NF, from mid-December to mid-January, up to several dozen on some days (DA).

An ad. tern off Sable I., NS, Feb. 25 was thought to be an Arctic Tern, and definitely not Forster's (AF); there would be no precedent. A flurry of media reports on many oiled alcids and other birds in s.e. Newfoundland this winter simply recognized a chronic situation. Around Halifax, all six alcid species were seen on some days (v.o.), reflecting effort rather than increase. A count of ca. 250 Dovekies off s.e. Saint-Pierre, S.P.M., Jan. 6 (*fide* RE) was impressive.

**DOVES TO WOODPECKERS**—Last winter's toe-hold by Mourning Doves in Newfoundland became a foot-hold, with at least 21 surviving into February at Ferryland and two at Curling on the w. coast (RB, BMct *et al.*). A dead **Barn Owl** Dec. 6 at Mushaboom, NS, furnished a 7th provincial record (\* N.S. Museum). A hand-reared, wild-mated Great Horned Owl began incubating Feb. 18 on a tree platform in Cyril Coldwell's yard at Gaspereau, NS — its earliest in 3 years. It was a poor year for Snowy Owls; apart from several around L'Anse-aux-Meadows, NF (DA), only about six were reported from S.P.M. and all provinces. The owl of the season was the Short-eared Owl, with reports (v.o.) of up to six in s.e. Newfoundland,

four on S.P.M., four in New Brunswick, and 11 in Nova Scotia. Bruce Mactavish suggested that they had been displaced eastward. A Boreal Owl did not survive a mid-December arrival on Sable I., NS (AM). Another in *Prince*, PEI, was a rarity for that province (*fide* GH). At least two Belted Kingfishers around St. John's, NF, and four in Nova Scotia survived into January or beyond (v.o.). Two Red-headed Woodpeckers in late December and mid-January in Halifax–Dartmouth, NS (*fide* FL), were the only vagrant woodpeckers reported. Post-CBC Northern Flickers were recorded only in Nova Scotia, where five in January were a good show for a severe winter. Thirteen Pileated Woodpeckers in w. *Hants* exceeded all past CBC records for Nova Scotia.

**LARKS TO WARBLERS** — Horned Larks stayed in good numbers in the Annapolis Valley of Nova Scotia (RBS), and up to 15 were on Miquelon, S.P.M., in January (RE). A Gray Jay was carrying nesting material Feb. 8 at Big Pond, Cape Breton, NS (J. MacNeill). Last winter's **Eurasian Jackdaw**, with missing lower mandible, was found again Nov. 13 in Halifax, and remained into March (m.ob.).

New Brunswick's combined CBC estimates of Black-capped Chickadees per party-hour were the highest ever (DSC), and they were exceptionally common at feeders in Nova Scotia (RBS). By contrast, none was reported on S.P.M. this winter (RE). A **Tufted Titmouse** was reported twice, independently, in Fredericton in mid-December, but could not be relocated later (Andy Didyuk, *fide* PP); there is only a handful of Regional records, all from New Brunswick. A half-dozen Red-breasted Nuthatches at feeders in St. John's, NF, were unusual (v.o.). A Ruby-crowned Kinglet in Saint-Pierre Dec. 3 was the latest on record for S.P.M. (Gilles Barthe, *fide* RE). Post-CBC stragglers were in Halifax Jan. 16 (Sylvia Fullerton) and Barrington, NS, Feb. 11 (Joan Czapaly). The **Redwing** that appeared Nov. 25 on Sable I., NS, was last seen Dec. 23; alas, it was savored, and beautifully photographed, by only one birder (AM). American Robins were much scarcer this winter, without sustaining crops of mountain ash berries. A **Varied Thrush** on Saint-Pierre Dec. 4 was a first for S.P.M. (Daniel Abraham, *fide* RE). Other individuals were at Newcastle, NB, Jan. 25 (Tom Greathouse, *fide* DSC), and at Seabright, NS, in late January to early February (*fide* Bernice Moores).

Beyond Nova Scotia, at least one N. Mockingbird wintered in St. John's, NF (BMct), and one appeared Feb. 13 at Saint-Pierre, S.P.M. (RE). At least two Brown Thrashers wintered in Nova Scotia (RBS), and one was at a feeder in

Glovertown, NF, until at least Jan. 13 (v.o.). A half-dozen American Pipits Dec. 28 at St. Brides, NF, were late (RB). One was at Cape Sable I., NS, Feb. 12 (FL). The invasion of Bohemian Waxwings heralded in last season's report was the biggest since 1985–1986. High counts included 353 on the CBC at Fredericton, NB, 500+ Feb. 6 at Wolfville, NS (RBS), and about 750 on the CBC at St. John's, NF. Good numbers also visited Prince Edward Island (GH), but curiously none was reported on S.P.M. (RE). Some reports of Cedar Waxwings were discounted by subregional editors, but a few did winter in Nova Scotia (RBS) and at least one flock of 35+ was seen by RB in St. John's, NF, in December. It was a poor (Newfoundland) to average (New Brunswick, Nova Scotia) year for Northern Shrikes (v.ob.).

The severe weather killed off most errant warblers during December. Individual Orange-crowned Warblers were seen Dec. 1 in Halifax, and until Dec. 10 in St. John's, NF (v.ob.). Only one Yellow-rumped Warbler remained in late December in St. John's, NF (RB), and they were less common than usual in coastal Nova Scotia (KK). A Yellow-throated Warbler was at a feeder at Glovertown, NF (ph., *vide* RB) until Dec. 10. One Pine Warbler in Halifax and one or two in St. John's, NF, survived to mid-January; one in Saint John, NB, got through March (*vide* DSC). A Palm Warbler (eastern race) was at White's L., NS, Dec. 16 (BMA). A Black-and-white Warbler was in St. John's Dec. 2 (JW). Two Yellow-breasted Chats in Halifax were not seen after early December (v.ob.).

**CARDINAL TO FINCHES** — An impressive 17 N. Cardinals were seen on CBCs in New Brunswick, but only three or four later feeder birds were reported (DSC *et al.*). At the fringes, three wintered in Nova Scotia (RBS) and six in Prince Edward Island (GH). A Rose-breasted Grosbeak was at a feeder in Fredericton, NB, until Dec. 2 (PP). Two Dickcissels survived at St. John's, NF, feeders until mid or late January, but the latest elsewhere were a few on CBCs in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. The only wintering Rufous-sided Towhee was at a feeder in Fredericton (PP).

It was thought to be a good year for Am. Tree Sparrows in Nova Scotia (DAC), perhaps only by contrast with other scarcities. In addition to the usual sprinkling of Chipping Sparrows wintering in Nova Scotia, two or three in New Brunswick were unusual (DSC). Also surviving the winter at feeders were a Field Sparrow at Harvey, NB (RW), and a Vesper Sparrow in Dartmouth, NS (JWT). A Lark Sparrow survived until at least late December in Sackville, for a first New Brunswick winter record (DSC). Savannah Sparrows are routine in winter on coastal dunes in Nova Scotia, but two at Renews, NF, were unexpected Feb. 2 (BMct, JW). A few "Ipswich" Sparrows winter in Nova Scotia (mostly on Sable I.), but a wrong-headed one Dec. 16 at Cape Race, NF, was minutely described by an observer thoroughly familiar with the subspecies (BMct). Although this island-homing race would seem to have to be navigationally fine-tuned, one did "overshoot" to England in April 1982.

Fox Sparrows, and even the hardy Song Sparrow, were substantially lower in numbers this winter in Nova Scotia (DAC). Single Lincoln's Sparrows wintered on Sable I. (AM) and at Little Hbr., NS (DY). Although common breeders in w. Newfoundland, they are unusual around St. John's, where one was well studied on the CBC (JW *et al.*). The only reported post-December Swamp Sparrow was in Nova Scotia (DAC), and fewer than usual White-throated Sparrows remained in Newfoundland and Nova Scotia. One White-crowned Sparrow was at a feeder near St.

John's, NF, in early February (v.o.). In contrast to this general paucity of sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos were rated abundant on the Avalon Peninsula (v.o.) and common on S.P.M. (RE), although scarce elsewhere in Newfoundland (BMct), and below average in Nova Scotia (DAC). An "Oregon" Junco was at a feeder near Tantallon, NS, through February (*vide* Bev Sarty). Lapland Longspurs stayed in good numbers in Nova Scotia (DAC) and ca. 20 were on Miquelon, S.P.M., Jan. 12, where there was only one previous January record (RE). A single bird near Cape St. Mary's Dec. 28 was the only one reported from Newfoundland (*vide* RE). Spectacular flocks of 1000+ Snow Buntings were seen in Nova Scotia's Annapolis Valley through January, but the species was not mentioned in reports from other provinces.

Like the sparrows, icterids were generally scarce this winter. A few flocks of Red-winged Blackbirds, including 30 on Brier I., stayed in Nova Scotia (DAC), but only a few remained at feeders in New Brunswick and Newfoundland (v.o.). There were no post-CBC reports of Eastern Meadowlarks. A male Yellow-headed Blackbird was sporadic in Halifax until Dec. 25 (v.o.). A few Rusty Blackbirds stayed after December in both New Brunswick (RW) and Nova Scotia (DAC). Small flocks of Common Grackles wintered in Nova Scotia, and there were a few at feeders around St. John's, NF (RB), and a single bird at Saint-Pierre, S.P.M. (RE). Brown-headed Cowbirds, regrettably, held their own at scattered feeders in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia (v.ob.). No N. Orioles were reported after the CBC period.

The harsh weather probably had little effect on winter finches, but they responded variously to food supplies. In general, conifer crops were poor, but weed seeds plentiful in windswept places. Most species were scarcer than usual in recent years at feeders and in the countryside. Pine Grosbeaks were an exception — "average" in New Brunswick (DSC), "regular" in Nova Scotia (DAC), "common" in P.E.I. (GH), "a few" at S.P.M., and "in good numbers" in Newfoundland. Several observers in Nova Scotia commented on a preponderance of ad. males (*vide* DAC). Purple Finches were not reported from S.P.M. and P.E.I., and were decidedly scarce in the other provinces (DAC, DSC, BMct). House Finches pushed on, with 31 on 5 CBCs in New Brunswick, where they first appeared on CBCs only 3 years ago. In New Brunswick, several remained through winter in Moncton (RW) and up to mid-January in Fredericton (PP), and two were reported into February in Nova Scotia (DAC).

Only four Red Crossbills were tallied on CBCs in New Brunswick (DSC), and they were very scarce in Nova Scotia and Newfoundland (DAC, BMct). White-winged Crossbills were only slightly more evident, and became scarcer through winter in s.e. Newfoundland (BMct). It was an "average year" for Common Redpolls in New Brunswick (DSC), but an impression of scarcity was given by reports from elsewhere. Up to six well-studied Hoary Redpolls were around St. John's, NF, between Dec. 31 and Jan. 28 (v.ob.). Their very pale plumage and large size seemed to indicate *C. h. hornemanni* (BMct). A few small flocks of Pine Siskins were around St. John's, NF (BMct), and few visited feeders in New Brunswick (RW) and Nova Scotia (DAC). Only New Brunswick experienced "a good year" (DSC) for Am. Goldfinches, whereas "it wasn't a spectacular winter" in Nova Scotia (DAC). They were scarce in P.E.I. (GH) and St. John's, NF, where they are "barely annual" (BMct), and a mere two were on S.P.M. (RE). There were "many complaints about absence of Evening Grosbeaks from feeders" in New Brunswick, but it "would

have been considered a good year in the '70s and exceptional in the '60s" (DSC). "Almost all" reporters thought them "well below normal" in Nova Scotia (DAC), but they were deemed "slightly below normal" around St. John's, NF (BMct). In light of all the abandonment of feeders, Keith Keddy writes from Nova Scotia that "This is the first winter for several years that I have had a stable House Sparrow flock at my feeders. They are not unwelcome — they are survivors in a hostile world."

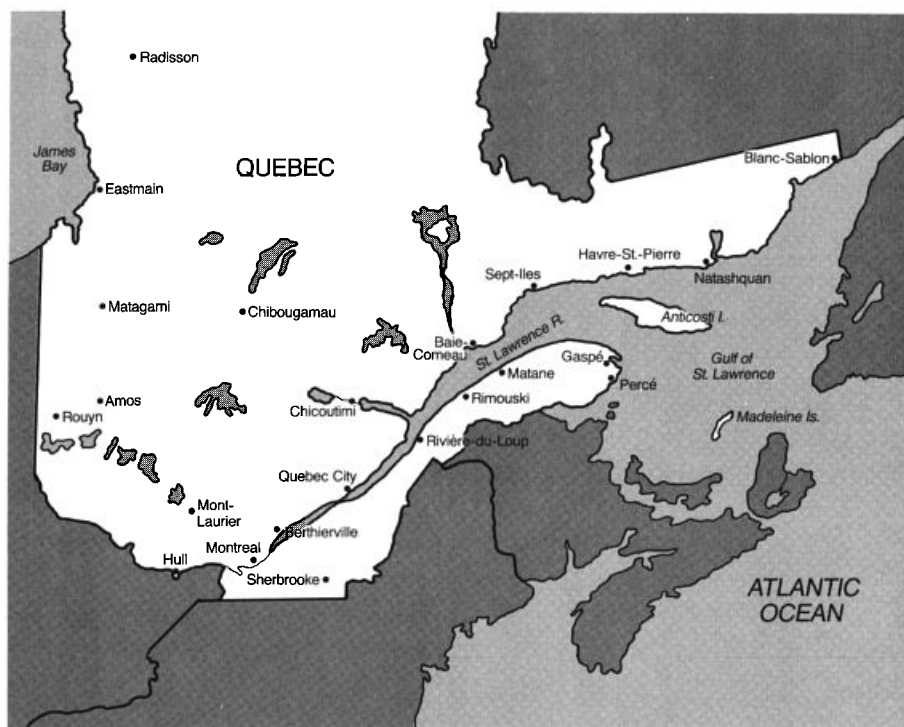
**ADDENDA**—A Masked Booby was closely studied from a Polish vessel about 78 mi s.w. of Nova Scotia on Mar. 15,

1989, by S. Strawinski. Details will be published in *Nova Scotia Birds*.

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## QUEBEC REGION

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**S**outhwestern Quebec had a winter of extremes. The coldest December on record, with below average snowfall, was followed by a very mild January with above average precipitation that fell as much in the form of rain as snow. This mild spell produced several unusual mid-winter sightings. Temperatures dropped sharply again in mid-February. Conditions were not as variable in the rest of the province. Northern and eastern Quebec registered temperatures consistently below normal, accompanied by generally dry conditions.

**CORMORANTS THROUGH WATERFOWL** — An ad. Double-crested Cormorant lingered on the Saint-François R., near Sherbrooke, until at least Jan. 15 (CD *et al.*) and possibly until mid-February. This represented only the 2nd mid-winter record for the Region. A dead imm. Great Blue Heron was picked up in a Beaconsfield yard during a period of mild weather Jan. 27 (RY), while a live bird was reported at Cowansville Feb. 11 (*vide* BH) to provide the Region's first February record.

First noted in a field at Saint-Mathias Feb. 19 (RD), a **Mute Swan** could still be found nearby, on the Richelieu R., at the end of the season. Approximately 100 wild

Canada Geese wintered at the Hemmingford zoo (PB), while a group of four spent the season on the Magog R., at Sherbrooke (CD *et al.*). A ♀ Wood Duck at North-Hatley Jan. 21 (FS *et al.*) added to the few mid-winter records for this species. The presence of single Hooded Mergansers at Pointe-au-Père (AB) and Dégelis (RB *et al.*) on Jan. 28, and of five at Grande-Entrée Feb. 4 (AP), was less surprising; nevertheless, the latter did represent the first winter sighting from the Magdalen Islands.

**DIURNAL RAPTORS THROUGH OWLS** — A N. Harrier seen at Saint-Anicet Jan. 9 (PB) was responding quickly to a period of exceptionally mild weather that bared area fields. Seldom found along the N. Shore in winter, a Rough-legged Hawk was noted at Tadoussac Feb. 16 (YD). Sharp-shinned Hawks preyed at feeders throughout the province this winter, and no fewer than seven Cooper's Hawks — a species until recently considered a rare winter resident — were reported from as far n. as Quebec City. Rarely encountered on the Magdalen Is. in winter, a Merlin was observed at Basin Jan. 3-28 (AGr, RG). Gyrfalcons made a slightly better showing than last year with a total of 8 sightings in s. Quebec.

The southern limit of the winter range of the Willow Ptarmigan corresponds to the 50th parallel, reaching Matagami, Chibougamau, and L. Péribonka. It is well known that ptarmigan numbers within this range fluctuate from year to year. Periodically, a gradual increase in population brings more and more birds to these "border" locations and, as numbers peak, some push even farther south. A crash typically follows, with the species almost totally absent the following year. The length of this "cycle" is somewhat variable, lasting from 8 to 12 years, and may also differ from region to region. Comeau (1909) documented population peaks in 1864, 1873, 1885, 1895, and 1904. Various sources also provide evidence that invasions occurred in 1914, 1924, 1934, 1942, 1950, 1961, 1971, and 1980. Available data seem to suggest that these invasions have comprised a diminishing number of birds. It is unlikely that we will ever again experience invasions such as one that saw 1200 birds shot at Quebec City during the winter of 1648, or another that produced 60,000 ptarmigan between Godbout and Mingan in 1904.

This winter, small flocks of Willow Ptarmigan were regular from mid-December through February near the 50th parallel at Matagami (ND, DJ), Chibougamau (*vide* YA) and Mingan (*vide* SP). The most southerly sighting came from 80 km n. of L. Saint-Jean where 13 birds were seen Jan. 28 (GSD, CCo, JJ). Numbers should peak within the next year or two, and the 600 km road joining Matagami to Radisson provides an excellent opportunity to see these birds.

Sharp-tailed Grouse were encountered up to 410 km n. of Matagami (ND, DJ) and one was reportedly shot by a hunter near Chapais (*vide* GSD). These reports increase our limited knowledge of the current distribution of this species in w. Quebec. Wintering Com. Snipe involved two at Tracy (JLL), as well as lone birds at Aylmer (JPA), La Pocatière (CA), and La Vernière (ML, BL, JB). An ad. Ring-billed Gull was unusual inland at Maniwaki Feb. 9 (GB). Among wintering Mourning Doves, a flock of 18 still at Saint-Anaclet Feb. 2 (JLM) was worthy of mention.

A rare Barn Owl was found dead at Val-d'Espoir on the Gaspé Pen. in early December (*vide* PP, \*C.M.N.). Snowy Owls were scarce throughout the Region, while the only N. Hawk Owl to reach s. Quebec this winter was observed at Aylmer Feb. 11 (BMD). Contributors highlighted the presence of Short-eared Owls in many areas. In addition to at least 13 individuals in the Montreal area, lone birds were seen at Saint-Félicien Jan. 13 (GSu) and Havre-aux-Maisons in February (CL) — sites where the species had not previously been recorded in winter. In contrast to last winter, Boreal Owls were absent from southern regions; in the Magdalen Is., where they are resident, at least five dead birds were reported (*vide* PF). Mid-winter reports of N. Saw-whet Owls involved one at Longueuil Jan. 24 (DD) and three at Sainte-Foy Feb. 16–21 (AGn).

**KINGFISHERS THROUGH SHRIKES** — A Belted Kingfisher frequented a fish hatchery at La Baie Jan. 8–Feb. 5 (MT), furnishing our only report for this half-hardy species. The Saguenay region also hosted its 2nd Red-headed Woodpecker, an immature that visited a Chicoutimi feeder Nov. 26–Jan. 7 (MSH, RP *et al.*). The boreal "3-toed" woodpeckers were unreported in extreme s. Quebec. On Dec. 27, a roost near Granby contained an impressive 12,000 Am. Crows (*vide* VL). Annual since

1986, lone Tufted Titmice appeared at feeders in Philipsburg (CCh) and Sherbrooke (LB) beginning in December. Three Carolina Wrens noted on Montreal I. in December apparently did not winter (*vide* PB), but one or two individuals were seen throughout the period at Hudson feeders (*vide* BM) and another survived the season at Aylmer (HK). On Jan. 27, two Winter Wrens were singing on I. des Soeurs, where at least one bird overwintered (FG). Small flocks of fewer than 100 Bohemian Waxwings were regularly observed throughout s. Quebec, but the highlight was a concentration of 1000 birds feeding in a weed-covered field, bunting-like, near Rigaud Jan. 27 (MM, BB). Following the pattern of recent winters, observers reported N. Shrikes in generally low numbers across s. Quebec.

**CARDINALS THROUGH FINCHES** — The N. Cardinal continues to do well at the n. edge of its range: single males were present at Sainte-Blandine Dec. 2–Jan. 3 (JPB) and nearby Rimouski Dec. 3–Feb. 24 (GL), and no fewer than eight different birds could be found at Quebec City this winter (*vide* LM). A banded ♂ Blue Grosbeak that brightened a Quebec City feeder from September onward was found to have escaped from the local zoo (DG, JGi); the bird was left to its life in the wild, surviving at least through January. Out of range Rufous-sided Towhees included eastern-type males at Sept-Iles Dec. 1–7 (NV) and Gaspé Jan. 20–Feb. 24 (JMD), as well as a female of one of the southern white-eyed races studied on the Sorel Is., Jan. 29–Feb. 21 (LL). A Fox Sparrow remained at Baie-Comeau over the winter (AF), only the 4th such occurrence in the province. Also rare in winter, a White-crowned Sparrow lingered at Cap-aux-Meules until Jan. 17 (CH). An imm. Harris' Sparrow first noted at a Châteauguay feeder Dec. 16 could still be located Mar. 7 (PB, m.ob.) and, also from the west, an Oregon-type ♂ Dark-eyed Junco was identified at East-Farnham Dec. 4–Jan. 15 (DL). Lapland Longspurs were widespread in small numbers, while Snow Buntings received little attention from contributors—an exception being the flock of 5000 birds that blanketed a field at Saint-Rédempteur Jan. 27 (MM, BB).

A window-killed meadowlark sp. may have been an extremely early migrant lured by mild temperatures to Sainte-Cécile-de-Milton Feb. 3 (FP, *vide* VL). No longer surprising was the presence of one to three Yellow-headed Blackbirds at Châteauguay and nearby Beauharnois this season (*vide* PB). Pine Grosbeaks were common this winter, and Purple Finches were almost totally absent; however, up to five Purple Finches at Fatima Dec. 21–Feb. 22 (UD *et al.*) did provide an unprecedented winter record for the Magdalen Islands. White-winged Crossbills were relatively common in s.w. Quebec but drew little comment elsewhere. While redpolls were again rare along the St. Lawrence Lowlands, they appeared in fairly good numbers farther north. Closer scrutiny of Hoary Redpolls resulted in reports of individuals of the large *hornemanni* race in e. Quebec at Alma (NT), Saint-Fulgence (JI), Pointe-au-Père (AB), Saint-Emile (SSO), and Sainte-Foy (AGn). Few Pine Siskins were present, and while Am. Goldfinches were fairly common in s.w. Quebec, contributors agreed on the scarcity of Evening Grosbeaks.

**CORRIGENDUM** — A Monk Parakeet reported at Sainte-Foy July 30, 1989 was actually a Budgerigar.

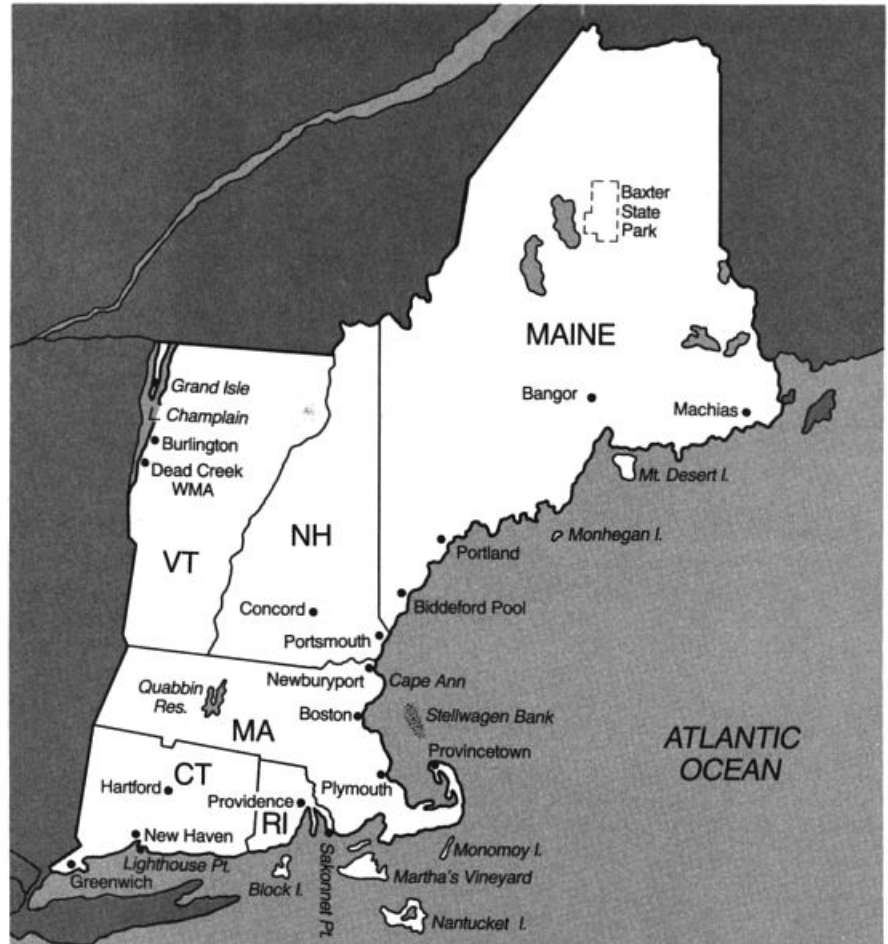
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## NEW ENGLAND REGION

Blair Nikula



The winter of 1989–1990 is likely to be remembered more for its weather than for its birds. December was ushered in with bitter, unrelenting cold and by month's end, century-old records lay shattered. Boston temperatures for the month averaged 12°F below normal, making it the coldest December in the 119 years of record-keeping there! Precipitation was also far below normal: it was the third-driest December in Boston history. But, as suddenly as the cold arrived, it departed, and January finished a balmy 7°F above average, while February was nearly 4°F above normal. Precipitation returned to more normal levels from early January through mid-February, falling primarily as rain in the southern half of the Region but as snow in the north, where substantial accumulations accrued. Winter returned during the second half of February, when even extreme south coastal sections had some significant snowfall. Despite the abrupt oscillations, the season as a whole ended up just a half degree below normal in Boston, but with a 4 inch precipitation deficit.

The topsy-turvy weather pattern had some predictable effects on the Region's avifauna. Winter's abrupt, premature arrival (in late November, actually) apparently dis-

suaed most of the less hardy species from lingering, as flycatchers, most warblers, swallows, and the like had almost completely vanished by the beginning of the period. By late December, severe icing undoubtedly had an impact on waterbirds, although there was little evidence of any significant mortality, and those individuals that survived until the first of the year presumably had a fairly easy time of it thereafter. Most notable among the winter incursive species were Bohemian Waxwing and Rough-legged Hawk, while Short-eared Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and most of the "winter" finches made good showings as well.

January's temperature surplus led to an extremely early onset of northward migration in a number of species, and by the second week of February there were obvious movements and/or arrivals among some ducks, Turkey Vultures, Red-shouldered Hawks, Killdeer, woodcock, and blackbirds.

Once again, birders in general (myself included) complained about the lackluster season; yet just a decade ago, a winter that produced such rarities as Barnacle Goose, Black Vulture, Ross' Gull, Townsend's Solitaire, Yellow-

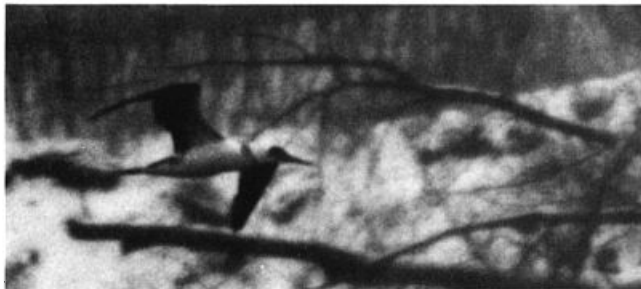
throated Warbler, Painted Bunting, Green-tailed Towhee, and Golden-crowned Sparrow would have been considered quite exciting. Additionally, a number of species seen this season, such as Eared Grebe, Western Grebe, Tundra Swan, Greater White-fronted Goose, Mew Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Varied Thrush, and Clay-colored Sparrow, are all taken more or less for granted in the winter now, whereas they would have merited boldface treatment not long ago. Are we getting a bit blasé?

Thorough, timely reports were received from all six states—kudos to all involved. As in the past, to avoid redundancy, CBC results have not been included in this summary.

**ABBREVIATIONS** — M.V. = Martha's Vineyard, MA.

**LOONS TO HERONS** — Peak counts of Red-throated Loons included a maximum of 34 off M.V., in January (VL); 25 in Provincetown, MA, Jan. 20 (BN); and 25 at Sachuest Pt., RI, Feb. 3 (C. Avengo *et al.*). Most peculiar was a juv. Red-throated on a narrow, heavily-vegetated stretch of the Sudbury River in Framingham, MA, Jan. 1 (RAF); although occasionally found on large inland lakes during fall migration, both the date and location of this sighting were novel. Common Loons were remarkably scarce, one prominent exception being 225 off M.V. Jan. 17 (VL).

Pied-billed Grebe totals were again low. The Cape Cod Lake & Pond Waterfowl Survey conducted Dec. 2–3 censused 285 ponds but recorded only 42 grebes, 46% below average and the lowest total in the survey's 6-year history (C.C.B.C.). Two Pied-billeds were noted inland at Hadley, MA, on the most unusual date of Feb. 4 (*vide SK*). Horned Grebes were also poorly represented this season: coastal peaks were of only 59 at Cape Ann, MA, Jan. 16 (RSH), 34 on M.V. Jan. 27 (ML), and a paltry maximum of 16 off Rhode Island during January (*vide DE*). The highest Horned Grebe counts of the season came, surprisingly, from Lake Champlain, where a maximum of 75 was found at Charlotte Beach, VT, Jan. 27 (BR). The usual late winter influx of Red-necked Grebes was evident in February. Highest counts were of 32 in Rye, NH, Feb. 5 (G. & A. Robbins); 208 along the Hull-Marblehead coast of Massachusetts Feb. 28 (RAF); and 130 at Sachuest Pt., RI, Feb. 16 (GS, *vide DE*), the latter an exceptional total for that southerly locale. The origin(s) of these birds remain an unmitigated mystery, as the species is decidedly scarce anywhere south of the Region. For the 13th consecutive year a W. Grebe wintered in the Georgetown area of Maine, last reported Jan. 16 (JD *et al.*). Possibly the same bird was reported somewhat to the south at Cape Elizabeth, ME, Feb. 12 (SP, *vide JD*), while a 2nd individual was present in Rye, NH, Dec. 10–Feb. 12 (D. Durso *et al.*).



Subadult Northern Gannet 100 miles inland on the Connecticut River at Hadley, Massachusetts, January 24, 1990. Photograph/Peter Yeskie.

Unusually high numbers of N. Gannets overwintered again this year, as indicated by 200 in Provincetown Jan. 20 (BN) and 100 at Sachuest Pt., RI, Jan. 18 (DLK *et al.*). Undoubtedly the most bizarre occurrence of the season was provided by a subadult gannet flying up the Connecticut R. in Hadley, MA, Jan. 24 (ph. P. Yeskie)! Once unheard of, inland Great Cormorants are now almost routine (concurrent with the species' dramatic increase along the coast), and this season one was found in Southwick, MA, Dec. 4 (*vide SK*) and two were in Lakeville, MA, Dec. 12 (KH). Double-crested Cormorants again overwintered in scattered locations in s. New England: up to 58 were in Boston Harbor in late December (*vide RHS*), and the largest late-winter concentration was found at the now-traditional site in Jerusalem, RI, where 25 were noted Feb. 11 (DLK).

Winter's dramatic arrival apparently swept the Region nearly clean of lingering herons. The only exceptions (aside from the usual Great Blue Herons and Black-crowned Night-Herons) were an Am. Bittern on Nantucket Feb. 1 (E. Andrews *et al.*) and a Great Egret in Weekapaug, RI, Dec. 11 (*vide DE*).

**WATERFOWL** — A Tundra Swan spent about 2 weeks during January feeding in a field in Stonington, CT (*vide FM*), and two were present at Tiogue Lake, RI, Feb. 15–28 (AF *et al.*). Additionally, two birds were seen sporadically during the period at the usual site on M.V. (VL). A Greater White-fronted Goose was in Marshfield and Plymouth, MA, Dec. 1 & 22 (D. Ludlow *et al.*), and another was in Woodbury, CT, Dec. 11 & 16 (M. Szantyr *et al.*). The latter bird was in a flock of geese containing three young birds described as White-fronted X Canada hybrids (*vide BK*). Snow Geese continue to linger in s. New England in ever-increasing numbers, as evidenced by a remarkable 425 in Hadley, MA, Dec. 10 (*vide SK*) and 37+ in Rhode Island during December (*vide DE*). Scattered reports in January included as many as seven birds total in Vermont (vo.), but February reports were limited to three birds (including two "Blues") in Connecticut, and one each in Massachusetts and Rhode Island. Ten Brant in Hadley, MA, Feb. 2 (*vide SK*), were most unusual inland at that season. A Barnacle Goose in Newport, RI, Feb. 17 (W. Harrington, ph.) may have been the same individual present in New Bedford, MA, last year.

Several species of waterfowl were much more widely reported in February than earlier in the season, suggesting a very early movement induced by the unusual warmth of January. For example, 36 Green-winged Teal in Milford, CT, Feb. 11 (SKo), and a total of 17 N. Pintail in Vermont



Barnacle Goose at Newport, Rhode Island, February 18, 1990. Photograph/Warren Harrington.



in early February (v.o.) seem more likely to have been early migrants than winterers. Gadwall continue to thrive in the Region, and escalating winter numbers this year included 171 in Napatree, RI, Jan. 3 (CR); 50 in White Brook, RI, Jan. 4 (DLK); and a record high 95 on the Cape Cod waterfowl survey Dec. 2–3, 130% above the 6-year average (C.C.B.C.). Single Eur. Wigeon were found at sites in s. New England: four in Massachusetts and one each in Connecticut and Rhode Island. American Wigeon were considered to have been scarce in Connecticut (FM) and a peak of 415 at Watchemoket Cove, RI, Jan. 29 (DE) was the lowest there in at least 4 years; however, 159 on Cape Cod, Dec. 2–3, made a record high, 138% above the 6-year average (C.C.B.C.).

Canvasbacks were scarce in Connecticut (FM) and 486 on Cape Cod Dec. 2–3 made a 6-year low (C.C.B.C.). However, 1000 Canvasbacks in Barrington, RI, Jan. 18 (DE) were somewhat encouraging though not exceptional, and a single bird in Falmouth, ME, Jan. 27 (G. Therrien *et al.*) was a rare find in that state. Common Eiders amassed off Monomoy I. in the largest concentration noted there in many years, with 100,000 birds estimated Dec. 10 (D. Houghton, BN *et al.*). For a discussion of the huge historical counts of eiders off Monomoy see Erskine (1990, *Auk* 107:208–209). A total of 10 King Eiders in the Cape Ann area of Massachusetts throughout the period (JB *et al.*) was the most seen there in years, but elsewhere the species was almost nonexistent.

The wintering population of Harlequin Ducks at Sachuest Pt., RI, peaked at another record high of 83 birds Feb. 14 (GS, *vide* DE) and an additional (?) five birds were at Beavertail, RI, Feb. 5 (CP). In Massachusetts, a maximum of 23 on M.V. (*vide* VL) was below last year's high, as were 10 birds on Nantucket Dec. 23–25 (FM *et al.*). However, at least nine Harlequins wintered in the Cape Ann area (*vide* RHS), the highest number in that area in several years, and a single bird at Norwalk, CT, Dec. 17 & 21 (D. & N. Pokras) was a rare find in that state.

Nantucket Sound generally hosts by far the Region's largest concentrations of scoters, although only rarely is there an opportunity for anyone to obtain a reasonable estimate of the numbers present. This year, considerable icing in the sound during late December concentrated the birds to a greater degree than usual, and 15,000 White-winged, 7000 Surf, and 800+ Black scoters were estimated from the Nantucket ferry Dec. 31 (RSH). Lake Champlain hosted good numbers of Com. Mergansers this season, and a maximum of 2000 at Colchester, VT, Dec. 6 (F. Pratt) was one of the largest concentrations in the Region in recent years. Farther south, 675 Com. Mergansers were in Southbury, CT, Dec. 7 (D. Rosgen). The only gathering of Red-breasted Mergansers was found in Provincetown, where 1500 were estimated Jan. 20 (BN), well below recent totals in that area. Ruddy Ducks were virtually absent from the Region, the peak a meagre 10 birds at 2 sites in Rhode Island, Dec. 2–3 (*vide* DE).

**RAPTORS** — The New Milford, CT, landfill attracted the Region's largest winter gathering of vultures, among which were two **Black Vultures** Dec. 16–Feb. 19 (E. Hagen, m.ob.), with three Blacks reported there Dec. 30 (T. Burke). Another Black Vulture was reported from Richmond, RI, Jan. 16 (J. & R. Gee, *vide* DE). No fewer than 70 Turkey Vultures were at the New Milford dump Dec. 22 (FM *et al.*), and the species was seen in a number of locations in s. New England throughout the season. January vulture sightings included at least 12 birds in Rhode Island, at least five in Massachusetts, and a single bird in

Bellows Falls, VT, Jan. 4 (H. Putnam); by mid-February migrants were showing up in many places. Lingering Ospreys were found in Seymour, CT, Dec. 1 (B. Devine) and Harwich, MA, Dec. 6 (J. Welch).

The U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service has proposed changing the status of the Bald Eagle from Endangered to Threatened, and winter population trends in New England certainly lend support to the proposal. The annual eagle census in January tallied 19 birds in New Hampshire, nine in Vermont, and record highs of 61 (33 imm.) in Massachusetts and 76 (53 imm.) in Connecticut. Notable eagle concentrations included up to 28/day at the Shepaug Dam in Southbury, CT; 14–18 birds in Newburyport, MA (*vide* RHS); and up to 14 birds in Eastport, ME (*vide* WCT). In the category "amazing if true" is the account of an imm. eagle taking a Burmese cat off a back porch in Tenants Harbor, ME (*vide* WCT)—a *bold* eagle!

Both Sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks were again widely reported, with over 2 dozen sightings Regionwide of the latter species. Northern Goshawks, on the other hand, were very scarce, although a bird on Block I., RI, Feb. 2 (R. Tate) was unusual. Numerous reports of winter Red-shouldered Hawks included six birds in Connecticut, two in Rhode Island, a dozen or more in Massachusetts, and at least four in Maine; by mid-February a number of birds were back in their breeding areas. Although numbers of Rough-legged Hawks in Maine were said to have been "about average" (JD), elsewhere in the Region the species staged its best incursion in several years: up to seven per day were seen in Vermont; up to 10/day in the Newburyport/Plum I., MA area (RSH); up to 14/day in Marshfield, MA (*vide* WRP); and up to five per day in Connecticut (*vide* FM). Highest counts in most areas were in December, with a gradual diminution through the remainder of the season. As usual, a Golden Eagle was seen sporadically around the Quabbin Res., MA, throughout the period (ML, v.o.), but no others were reported.

Wintering Merlins have increased to the point that they are not only routine along the coast, but are now encountered fairly regularly both inland and in n. New England as well, as indicated this season by three birds in w. Massachusetts (*vide* SK), four in Vermont (v.o.), and two in Maine. Peregrines are also wintering regularly in the Region now, although the distinction between wintering birds and permanent residents is becoming increasingly blurred as some of the breeders, particularly in urban areas such as Boston and Springfield, MA, are present year-round; in New Hampshire at least 2 pairs were back at their breeding sites by late February (*vide* DdL). The only Gyrfalcons were a gray bird in Scarborough, ME, Dec. 10 (*vide* WCT) and one in Shelburne, VT, Jan. 28 (BR).

**TURKEYS TO ALCIDS** — In New Hampshire, counts of 46 Wild Turkeys in Walpole Dec. 24 and 30 in Dunbarton Jan. 4 were considered exceptional for that state (*vide* DdL), indicative of the species' general increase throughout much of the Region. A Clapper Rail in Brewster, MA, Jan. 25 (P. Trull) was unique this season, and a Sora survived until at least Jan. 14 in Ipswich, MA (JB). Virtually all of the Am. Coots in the Region apparently congregated once again in Plymouth, MA, where a maximum of 250 was recorded Feb. 11 (*vide* RHS).

Wintering Killdeer on M.V. reached a peak of 14 birds Jan. 17 (VL), whereas 12 birds in Kingston, RI, Feb. 12 (DLK) may have been either winterers or extremely early migrants. An Am. Oystercatcher at Charleston Breachway, RI, Feb. 27 (M. Murray, *vide* DE) was most likely an exceptionally early arrival, but a Greater Yellowlegs in Eastham,

MA, Feb. 11 (F. Bygate *et al.*) perhaps had wintered somewhere nearby. At their traditional wintering sites, highest counts of Ruddy Turnstones were of 27 in Biddeford, ME (SP); 15 on Nantucket; and 41 in N. Scituate, MA (RAF); while at the latter site up to 24 Red Knots were present throughout the period (*fide* RHS). Purple Sandpipers are generally found scattered irregularly along the coast in suitable habitat from Maine to Rhode Island but rarely in large numbers. Thus, a maximum of 400+ Purples in N. Scituate, MA (*fide* RHS), was noteworthy.

Common Black-headed Gulls were scattered along the coast: in Maine up to four birds were present throughout the period in Rockland (D. Reimer) and up to three were in Portland through Jan. 13 (R. Eakin); in Massachusetts, a total of 10 or so birds was noted at various sites, mostly around Boston Harbor; in Rhode Island five were at Watchemoket Cove Jan. 16 (D. Finizia); and one was in Old Saybrook, CT, Feb. 6 (N. Currie). The only aggregation of Bonaparte's Gulls was in E. Gloucester, MA, where up to 350+ were found sporadically in January and February (JB *et al.*). For the 5th consecutive year a Mew Gull wintered in Quincy, MA (v.o.). A thorough description accompanied a report of an ad. Thayer's Gull in Burlington, VT, Dec. 19 (C. Provost), but a couple of other reports of the species(?) lacked adequate details. Lesser Black-backed Gulls were found in Massachusetts (six or more), Rhode Island (one), and Connecticut (one or two). Glaucous Gulls can appear virtually anywhere in the Region, but seldom are more than single individuals seen; thus, counts of four at Gloucester, MA, Feb. 1 (RAF), and up to four in Portsmouth, NH (*fide* DdL), were exceptional. Although a few were recorded on CBCs, Black-legged Kittiwakes were all but absent from the Region after the first of the year, an abrupt turn-about from just 3–4 years ago. The highlight of the season for a fortunate few was an ad. **Ross' Gull** in E. Gloucester, MA, Feb. 1–2 & 13 (RAF *et al.*), for the state's 3rd or 4th record. The bird appeared only briefly and sporadically with Bonaparte's Gulls, and most of the hundreds of birders who tried for it left disappointed. The only lingering term this season was a first-winter Common in Provincetown, MA, Dec. 2 (BN *et al.*).

Alcids, with the modest exception of Razorbills, made a poor showing this season. The only Dovekies were in Maine, where 2 reports totaled five birds (*fide* WCT). Only two Com. Murres were reported, while Thick-billed Murres numbered just four in Maine and several in Massachusetts. Razorbills again assembled off Provincetown in January: 1600 large alcids there Jan. 20 were most, if not all, of this species (BN). Elsewhere, 95 Razorbills were counted at Rockport, MA, Jan. 2 (RSH), and 18 at Pt. Judith, RI, Jan. 8 (AF) made a good total for that area.

**OWLS TO WRENS** — Barn Owls are thriving now on M.V. (with the assistance of an active nest-box program) and are fairly regular on Nantucket, but elsewhere in the Region the species remains a distinct rarity; the only report this season was of one in Boston Dec. 6 (H. Wiggin *et al.*). A "white" Great Horned Owl in Freeport, ME, in December was thought to have been of the Arctic race (*fide* JD). Snowy Owls made little more than token appearances, with but three or four total in Maine, one in New Hampshire, 11+ in Massachusetts (six individuals at Logan Airport—N. Smith), one in Rhode Island, and none reported in Vermont or Connecticut. Long-eared Owls, among the most elusive and least-known birds in the Region, were relatively numerous this winter. In Maine, single Long-eareds were found in Augusta and Falmouth, while in Massachusetts a total of 12–13 birds included up

to four on Nantucket (FM) and up to three in Lexington (*fide* GWG); additionally, up to three were at Hammonasset S.P., CT, during the period (*fide* FM).

The population of wintering Short-eared Owls in the Region was the highest in many years. Every state except New Hampshire reported well-above-average totals, with the center of abundance apparently in s.e. Massachusetts. An impromptu census conducted by Massachusetts Audubon Jan. 20–21 turned up 46 Short-eareds in the eastern part of the state, despite poor weather and limited coverage (SAP). Included in this total were an exceptional 14 birds at the Daniel Webster W.S., in Marshfield; eight in Middleboro; and eight on Nantucket. Elsewhere, there were a dozen or more in Maine, several in Vermont, at least five in Rhode Island, and six or more in Connecticut. Northern Saw-whet Owls were numerous as well although, typically, a number of the records involved dead or injured birds. Only two Saw-whets were noted in Maine, but New Hampshire had eight, Vermont at least six, Massachusetts 25+, Rhode Island one, and Connecticut at least seven.

Red-headed Woodpeckers maintained a tenuous presence in the Region with one in Hillsborough, NH, Dec. 2 (K. Echberg) and another in Lincoln, RI, Jan. 12 and Feb. 11 (W. Bosse *et al.*). In sharp contrast, Red-bellied Woodpeckers continue to do very well. They were "widespread and numerous" in Connecticut (BK) and may now outnumber Hairy Woodpeckers on M.V.(VL). Rhode Island hosted at least seven Red-bellieds, Massachusetts (outside of M.V.) a dozen or more, Vermont three, and New Hampshire one, although none was reported from Maine this year. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker is also becoming a regular feature of the winter avifauna in the southern one-third of the Region, and this year numbered 10 or more from Connecticut eastward to Cape Cod.

Flycatchers apparently got wind of the impending weather and departed the Region early, as only an E. Phoebe at Sachuest Pt., RI, Dec. 1 (*fide* DLE) tarried late enough (barely) to make this summary. Tree Swallows likewise vacated early, and three in Wellfleet, MA, Dec. 3 (D. Reynolds *et al.*) were the last representatives of their family. Horned Lark is one of those everyday species that rarely elicits comment from local observers, but a maximum of 400 in Newbury, MA (*fide* GWG), was certainly of interest.

Reporters in Maine, Rhode Island, and Connecticut commented on high numbers of Blue Jays in their states. The massive crow roost in Framingham, MA, contained up to an estimated 10,000 Am. Crows during the period (E. Taylor), but utterly unprecedented was an estimate of 1500 Fish Crows at the same roost Feb. 6 (K. Hamilton, E. Morrier). Presumably, given the identification problem involved, a considerable margin of error may exist in the total; but even allowing for some "slop," the count is astounding. The distribution and movements of Fish Crows in southern New England are puzzling, to say the least. A Boreal Chickadee in W. Boylston, MA, throughout the period (m.ob.) was apparently the only one of its species to even budge from its summer haunts; not since 1981 have Boreals staged an appreciable southward movement. Red-breasted Nuthatches were common and widespread throughout the Region, although generally in modest numbers.

Carolina Wrens continued to consolidate their holdings in the Region; at the species' northern outposts, single birds were in Rockport and Cherryfield, ME (*fide* WCT), at 5 sites in New Hampshire (*fide* DdL), and 10 or so locations in Vermont (V.I.N.S.). Tardy House Wrens were in S.

son), and 2000 in Hadley, MA (*vide* SK), both in February.

The exceptionally mild weather in January and early February induced a very early movement of blackbirds. As early as late January, apparently migrant Red-winged Blackbirds were noted in Rhode Island and on Cape Cod, and by the 2nd week of February a general arrival of both Red-winged and Com. Grackles had occurred as far north as s. Vermont and New Hampshire. A total of five E. Meadowlarks in Maine was above average (*vide* JD) and counts of 25 at Sachuest Pt., RI, Dec. 3 and 50 at Trustom Pd., RI, Dec. 9 (*vide* DE) far exceeded any others in the Region. Rusty Blackbirds were more widely reported than usual and of the 84+ birds Regionwide, peak counts were of 37 in South Windsor, CT, Jan. 7 (SKo) and 14 in Phippsburg, ME, Jan. 16 (*vide* JD). A description of a bird identified as a Brewer's Blackbird in Sheepscot, ME, Dec. 26, did not completely eliminate Rusty as a possibility. The only N. Orioles noted after the first of the year were three birds in Massachusetts in January (*vide* RHS).

**WINTER FINCHES** — Overall, it was the best winter for boreal finches in years, although only in northern and western sections were they found in any numbers. Small groups of Pine Grosbeaks were scattered across the northern states and a few trickled down into inland Massachusetts and the hills of Connecticut. Although it hardly seems possible, Purple Finches were even scarcer this winter than last—what in the world is happening to this bird in New England?

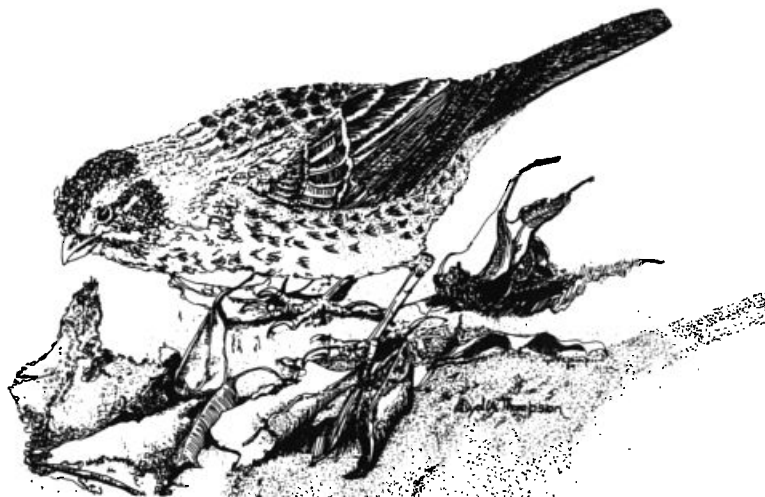
Certainly the most controversial, if not the most noteworthy bird of the season appeared at the feeder of Jan & Bill Fregeau in Athol, MA, Jan. 29. The Fregeaus noticed a ♀-plumaged *Carpodacus* finch that did not look right for either House Finch or Purple Finch and called in other local birders, some of whom began to suspect that the bird might be a Cassin's Finch (D. Spector *et al.*), a species unrecorded anywhere east of Minnesota. Thanks to the Fregeau's hospitality, the bird was extensively studied by scores of people until its last appearance Feb. 7. Numerous photographs were taken but, unfortunately, no vocalizations were heard. Although exhibiting a number of characteristics consistent with Cassin's, and inconsistent with either House or Purple finch, the consensus at this writing is that the bird was probably an aberrant House Finch, perhaps in a retarded, worn juvenal plumage. Although the bird possessed many of the right "parts," those parts did not quite add up to a convincing whole. A

few Cassin's proponents remain unwavering however, and a final verdict (we hope) awaits examination of the photos and descriptions by experts in the western U.S. At the very least, the incident was a useful learning experience for many of us.

Red Crossbills, perhaps the most erratic of this most erratic group, made token appearances in all 6 states, but were very few and far between. White-winged Crossbills were widespread, except in Rhode Island and e. Massachusetts, and far outnumbered Reds, but overall seemed less in evidence than they had been in many areas during the previous fall. There seemed to be little pattern to the occurrence of Com. Redpolls this season; they were distributed randomly but very sparsely across the Region, except in Vermont, where flocks of up to 75 birds were seen and one count of 229 (*sic*) was reported from Granby, Jan. 9 (D. Cargill *et al.*). In Maine, a few redpolls were noted during the first half of the season, followed by a slight influx in late January and February (*vide* WCT). Lacking any details, and hard to believe in what was generally a poor redpoll year, was a report of a Hoary Redpoll in Torrington, CT, Feb. 4–27 (J. Kirk *et al.*, *vide* FM).

Pine Siskins were THE finches this winter. After a sizable fall flight, numbers seemed somewhat diminished during December and early January, but in late January another major incursion inundated portions of northern and central New England, and for a few weeks siskins were the most conspicuous, if not the most common, birds in some areas. Despite their abundance inland, however, siskins remained very scarce in Rhode Island and coastal Massachusetts, and were essentially absent from Cape Cod and the islands. It was another mediocre year for Evening Grosbeaks, although in most areas numbers were decidedly up over last year's anemic showing.

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LYDIA THOMPSON

Peabody, MA, Dec. 12 (RSH), and Trumbull, CT, Dec. 27 (J. Young). Winter Wrens lived up to their name, with 20 or more noted in New England after the first of the year. The only Marsh Wren reported in the new year was a bird present through at least January in S. Dartmouth, MA (J. Hill).

**KINGLETS TO WARBLERS** — Golden-crowned Kinglets were widespread, but in only modest numbers. One macho Ruby-crowned Kinglet survived until at least Feb. 24 in Jamestown, RI (CP), the 3rd consecutive year the species has been reported from this location in late winter. Eastern Bluebirds appear to be well on their way to a full recovery and once again are wintering regularly in s. New England. The largest flocks were on M.V., where up to 30 were found (VL), and in Hardwick, MA, where the peak was 25 birds (*fide* GWG). Northernmost bluebirds included 4+ groups totaling 13+ birds in Vermont (V.I.N.S.). A **Townsend's Solitaire** in Woodbury Dec. 16–23 (M. Szantyr, m.ob.; ph.) was the first to be documented in Connecticut. Good numbers of Hermit Thrushes survived the season in s. coastal sections. Robins presented a mixed picture: they were considered scarce in most of Massachusetts, but numerous in Connecticut. The Varied Thrush found in Gloucester, MA, in November remained until at least Jan. 10 (*fide* GWG); others were in Rangeley, ME, throughout the period (J. Copeland *et al.*); in Warren, ME, Dec. 4–8 (E. Weaver *et al.*); in Brooks, ME, Jan. 22 (*fide* WCT); and in Bedford, NH, Jan. 9–Mar. 1 (J. Newbury *et al.*). A total of 15+ Am. Pipits was found during the season in 9 coastal locations scattered from s. Maine to Connecticut; at least six of these birds were present as late as early February.

Waxwings were very much in the headlines this season. Bohemians staged one of the largest incursions into northern New England in several years; flocks of 30–200 were widely reported in New Hampshire and Maine, and a maximum of 350 was noted in Vermont. A few trickled down into w. Massachusetts (9 sightings totalling 17+ birds), but apparently none made it to Connecticut, Rhode Island, or s.e. Massachusetts. Curiously, in Bangor, ME, where Bohemians often number into the hundreds, no more than 45 were reported this year. Cedar Waxwings were also present in abundance, except in s. coastal sections where only a few were noted. From southern Maine through central New Hampshire and Vermont, southward into inland Massachusetts, flocks of 10–100 Cedars were routinely encountered and some impressive larger flocks were noted: up to 500 birds in New Hampshire, 350 in Massachusetts, and 200+ in Vermont. In e. Massachusetts alone, January reports of Cedars totaled over 1500 birds. Northern Shrikes made only a faint appearance, except in Maine where a “good flight” was evident (JD); however, none made it to Connecticut or Rhode Island, and the species was rather sparsely distributed in Massachusetts.

It was a very poor year for lingering warblers. The only Orange-crowned Warblers were singles in Brewster, MA, Dec. 15 (S. Highley), and at Sachuest Pt., RI, Dec. 25 (AF). Two **Yellow-throated Warblers** appeared at feeders: the bird first noted in November in Marblehead, MA, remained until Dec. 14 (ph. RSH), and another was in Duxbury, MA, Jan. 3–23 (W. Richmond *et al.*, ph.). Peripheral Pine Warblers were in Freeport, ME, Dec. 12 (*fide* WCT), and in both Agawam and Ware, MA, in January (*fide* SK). A Palm Warbler in Woodbury, CT, Jan. 14 (R. Naylor) was apparently the only one of its kind seen after the first of the year, but an Ovenbird in West Simsbury, CT, first seen Dec. 9, possessed unusual vigor, as it persevered until at least Feb. 27 (G. Knight *et al.*).



This male Painted Bunting, photographed February 12, 1990, had been visiting this feeder in Old Lyme, Connecticut, since October 1989. Photograph/Frank W. Mantlik.

**BUNTINGS TO ORIOLES** — A ♂ Painted Bunting visited a feeder in Old Lyme, CT, throughout the period (*fide* FM, ph.), but its presence did not become known to birders until Feb. 8; the bird arrived in late October, when two others showed up on Cape Cod (see AB Fall summary). After a good fall showing, lingering/overwintering Dickcissels included two in New Hampshire, at least nine in Massachusetts, and one or two in Connecticut. A **Green-tailed Towhee** in Brattleboro Dec. 16–Feb. 25 (W. Nichols, m.ob.) furnished the first state record for Vermont, and in the same state a “Spotted” Rufous-sided Towhee visited a feeder in Manchester Center through Feb. 11 (J. Geriak *et al.*, ph.).

A Clay-colored Sparrow was found in Randolph, MA, Dec. 2 (RA *et al.*) and another visited a feeder in Yarmouth Port, MA, Dec. 27–28 (M. Tuttle *et al.*). Vesper Sparrows were found in Middletown, RI, Dec. 17 (R. Enser *et al.*), in Stamford, CT, through Feb. 9 (FP *et al.*), and through Feb. 7 in S. Peabody, MA (RSH), and two were in Middleboro, MA, Feb. 24 (WRP). The Fairfield, CT, landfill hosted an exceptional aggregation of sparrows Dec. 9–10, including 100 Savannah, 300 Song, and 100 Swamp sparrows (FP *et al.*). Also among these birds was a late Grasshopper Sparrow (FP *et al.*), while another Grasshopper was in Randolph, MA, Dec. 2–3 (RA *et al.*). Fifteen Sharp-tailed Sparrows at Ft. Hill, Eastham, MA, Jan. 9 (T. Aversa) made an impressive winter count, although not unprecedented at that site.

Fox Sparrows wintered in the best numbers in years and must have totaled at least several dozen Regionwide. A late Lincoln's Sparrow was reported (without details) from Orr's I., ME, Dec. 3 (*fide* WCT). Rarest among the sparrow clan this season was an imm. **Golden-crowned Sparrow** in S. Dartmouth, MA, Jan. 14–26 (GWG *et al.*). Not surprisingly after a good fall flight, more White-crowned Sparrows lingered than is usual, and at least five birds remained into January or later. Dark-eyed Juncos were in good numbers also, and “Oregon” types were reported from Woodbury, CT, through Jan. 6 (R. Naylor); Cornwell, CT, Dec. 17–22 (C. Barker *et al.*); Gilsum, NH, Jan. 11 (M. Wright); and Saco, ME, where two individuals were apparently present throughout January and February (SP).

Well above average numbers of both Lapland Longspurs and Snow Buntings were reported from across the northern 3 states and w. Massachusetts. Highest counts of the latter species were of 2000 in Middlebury, VT (J. Peter-

# HUDSON-DELAWARE REGION

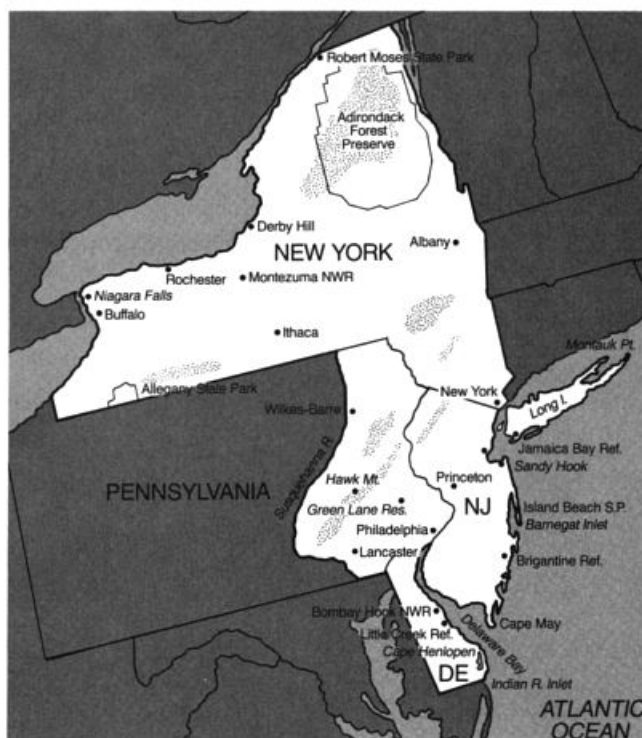
William J. Boyle, Jr., Robert O. Paxton,  
and David A. Cutler

Winter was a season of exceptional extremes in this Region, as it was over much of the east. December was the coldest since record keeping began in the 19th century, averaging about 15 degrees below normal. Most of the near-normal amount of precipitation fell as snow, especially in Syracuse, which accumulated a record 64 inches for the month. Ice jams disrupted traffic on the Delaware River at Philadelphia late in the month, and the temperature of Lake Erie reached 32 degrees on December 19, seven weeks earlier than last year. The weather changed abruptly on New Year's Day, producing an exceptionally mild January that was the fourth warmest on record for New York State. This trend continued through most of February, with temperatures reaching the mid-eighties on several days in the southern part of the Region. Only during the last week of the month did we return to normal winter weather, ushering in a cooler than normal spring.

The extreme cold of December had a pronounced negative effect on the abundance of waterfowl and other water-associated birds, reducing some of the Christmas Bird Count totals that depend on these species. Most wintering species seemed to be unaffected, however, and even many half-hardy species survived the cold spell, as evidenced by their appearance on CBCs, January censuses, and at many feeders. In the Hudson-Mohawk Valleys region of upstate New York, compiler Able noted the presence of Marsh Wrens, Hermit Thrushes, Gray Catbirds, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Rufous-sided Towhees, and Fox Sparrows in better than average numbers, even at higher elevations. He observed that "the important factor was apparently that food (especially berries) was abundant in these areas, providing an illustration that given sufficient available food, these species are little affected by cold temperatures, per se." The six-year-old Southwest Morris (NJ) Winter Bird Count, conducted in mid-January according to CBC rules, recorded a record 82 species, ten higher than the previous best. In western New York, however, wintering birds were scarce, the poorest variety in at least 15 years (RS).

Except for a few notable rarities, it was an unexceptional birding season. Waterfowl returned early with the warming trends of January and February, but gulls remained poorly represented. A couple of Gyrfalcons provided excitement early in the season and Bald Eagles were found in impressive numbers throughout the Region, but raptors were generally inconspicuous, except for an impressive roost of Northern Harriers in Warren, New Jersey. Winter finches staged a major invasion only in the Adirondacks of New York, although White-winged Crossbill and Pine Siskin were found in good numbers in some other areas. Most of the Region was left finchless.

**ABBREVIATIONS** — Bombay Hook = Bombay Hook Nat'l Wildlife Ref., near Smyrna, DE; Brig = Brigantine Unit,



Forsythe Nat'l Wildlife Ref., *Atlantic*, NJ; Dunkirk = Dunkirk Harbor, *Chautauqua*, NY; Indian River = Indian River Inlet, *Sussex*, DE; L.I. = Long Island, NY; Montauk = Montauk Point and vicinity, Long Island, NY; Sandy Hook = Sandy Hook Unit, Gateway Nat'l Recreation Area, *Monmouth*, NJ; CBC = Christmas Bird Count. Place names in italics are counties. With the reactivation of the New Jersey Bird Records Committee, there are now rarities committees in each of the four states that make up the Region. Consequently, reports of rarities for which documentation is required by the respective states will not be published unless documentation is submitted to the committee or to us.

**LOONS THROUGH HERONS** — Most loons were frozen out of the Great Lakes early in the period, but a Red-throated Loon was at Watkins Glen, Seneca Lake, Jan. 3, and Common Loons were found on the Finger Lakes throughout the season. A bird believed to be a Pacific Loon was studied closely at Sandy Hook, Dec. 2 (B & NM, SB); the details will be considered by the newly revived New Jersey Bird Records Committee.

Horned Grebes were found in better than average numbers on Long Island and the New Jersey shore, especially later in the season. Despite some impressive numbers in the region to our east, Red-necked Grebes were hard to come by. One was at Indian River Dec. 18 (WWF), two in New Jersey in early December, about six on Long Island during the CBC period, and returning migrants were in western New York at Dunkirk Jan. 23 and Allegheny Reservoir, *Cattaraugus*, Feb. 4. An Eared Grebe was located on the Cape May CBC Dec. 17 (A. Driscoll, B. Stocku), and another was most unusual at Malaga Lake, *Gloucester*, NJ, Feb. 24 (G. & R. Regensburg, R. Kegel).

Birders on opposite sides of Delaware Bay were impressed by the flocks of migrating Northern Gannets on Feb. 24, estimated at 1500 at Cape May (VE) and 2500+ at Cape Henlopen, DE (WWF *et al.*). A wayward Brown Pelican at Cape May Point Jan. 22 (PK *et al.*) may have been

fooled by the warm weather, but neither it nor any others were seen again. Great Cormorants were again found up the Hudson River, with six at Peekskill, *Dutchess*, Jan. 27 (S.C.A.S.) and two at Nyack Beach S.P., Feb. 1 (PDE). The now regular wintering group on the Delaware River at Riverton, *Burlington*, NJ, peaked at 27, Jan. 16 (WD), while a stray immature was new for the county at Round Valley, *Hunterdon*, NJ, Jan. 6 (E. LeGrand). Sandy Hook's big flock totalled 190 on the CBC, but numbers along the coast seemed down again this winter.

The cold December chased most of the herons and egrets from the Region, although the coastal CBCs produced the usual scattering of records, including Glossy Ibis at Long Branch, NJ, and Yellow-crowned Night-Heron at Queens, NY. A Least Bittern at Cape May Dec. 1 (M. Fritz, J. Bouton) was exceptionally late, but did not linger for the CBC. Most unexpected was a Black-crowned Night-Heron at Branchville, *Sussex*, NJ, Jan. 25 (G. Johnson).

**WATERFOWL** — Although waterfowl were not particularly abundant after the early cold spell (numbers did improve later in the season), the variety was exceptional, with 38 species of swans, geese, and ducks being recorded. Tundra Swans peaked at 400+ at Brig, Dec. 7 (JDo), but headed south during the cold spell; the Southern Lancaster County, PA, CBC, which includes a major stopping-off area on the Susquehanna River for this species, missed it for the first time. There were somewhat fewer reports of Greater White-fronted Goose this winter, mostly from New York, and those for which details were provided appeared to be of the Greenland race. One returned to Peace Valley Nature Center, *Bucks*, PA, Dec. 28, and stayed into January (AM). Two different adults were on eastern Long Island in January (TWP, m.ob.) and another was found Feb. 13 at Dover Plains in *Dutchess*, NY, where there have been numerous reports in recent years. More unusual was a pair at Tomhannock Reservoir, *Rensselaer*, NY, Dec. 13 (*vide* W. Shuster).

Snow Geese, too, departed during the big freeze, but returned early to traditional staging areas on the New Jersey side of Delaware Bay, where 14,000 were noted at Heislerville, *Cumberland* (CS) and 10,000+ at Jakes Landing, *Cape May* (VE), on Jan. 27. An adult Ross' Goose at Bombay Hook in January and February was thought by at least one observer to be a hybrid. Much rarer was another **Ross' Goose** discovered on eastern L.I. at Calverton, *Suffolk*, Jan. 1 (J. Clinton). It was seen again Jan. 15, then relocated in late February at Watermill, 20 mi to the east, where it remained into March. That this was the same bird was surmised from its presence in a flock of Canada Geese with numbered neck-bands, some of which were noted at both sites.

The Cape May CBC recorded an impressive 29,000 Brant, but numbers farther north in the state and on Long Island were reduced by the unusual cold of December. Canada Geese continue to be ridiculously common throughout (e.g., 32,000 at Montezuma N.W.R., *Seneca-Cayuga*, NY, in February), but suffered the consequences of wintering farther north at Westport, *Essex*, NY, where 51 Canadas, Mallards, and American Black Ducks were found frozen in the ice on New Year's Eve, and at Hamilton, *Madison*, NY, where 500 of these same three species were found dead in mid-December after being driven by snow cover to eat farmer's silage that was spoiled by mold. A small Canada Goose, thought to be of the race *minima* (=Cackling), was at Sodus Bay, *Wayne*, NY, Jan. 14 (D. Sherony, M. Sunderlin). The recent spate of Barnacle Goose sightings continued with one in *Dutchess*, NY, Feb.

11 (*vide* HM), and another near Honey Brook, Chester, PA, Feb. 15–19 (m.ob.). Twenty-six Wood Ducks wintered again at a Pennfield, *Monroe*, NY, pond.

A Green-winged Teal of the Eurasian subspecies returned to Peace Valley Nature Center for the 3rd year in a row, Dec. 27–Jan. 13 (AM); another was found at Bombay Hook Feb. 16 (NH). One of the spectacular highlights of the season was the gathering of huge numbers of Northern Pintails in several tidal marshes from Bridgeport to Pedricktown, *Gloucester-Salem*, NJ, during February, peaking at a conservatively estimated 50,000 on the 24th (WD, SF). Eurasian Wigeon were present in normal numbers, with about eight or nine on Long Island, six in New Jersey, one at Bombay Hook Feb. 28, and a more unusual male in *Lancaster*, PA, Dec. 23–Feb. 7 (R. Koury, D. Hoffman), where it provided a first record for the S. Lancaster Co. CBC.

A flock of 400 Canvasbacks at Sodus Bay Jan. 17 was a good count for recent years, but a far cry from the thousands formerly seen here or wintering on the New Jersey coast. The annual gathering of Redheads on Canandaigua Lake, *Yates*, NY, reached 2500+ as early as February 6 (F. Dobson); in the southern part of the Region, where the species is decidedly uncommon, a flock of 20 at Lake Manahawkin, *Ocean*, NJ, Jan. 12 (SB) was noteworthy. The annual drake Tufted Duck was seen only a few times at Central Park Reservoir, New York City, and at Weehawkin, *Hudson*, NJ, in February, and scaup were much less in evidence than last year after being frozen out of some of their favorite bays in December.

Eiders were noted in good numbers early in the season, but were hard to come by during the warmth of January and February. The Montauk CBC turned up 34 Common Eider Dec. 16, and a scattering of others were reported along the south shore of Long Island. In New Jersey, there were reports of about 16 birds, mainly in late December, while Cape Henlopen had three females Dec. 20 and two females and a male Jan. 20 (WWF). King Eiders included about four in Delaware for the season, three in New Jersey, and a maximum of 12 at Montauk, plus a few others along the Long Island shore; more unusual was an individual at Oswego Harbor, *Oswego*, NY, Jan. 15 and Feb. 12. Harlequin Ducks continue to winter south in increasing numbers, although this year the invasion stopped in New York. Only about a dozen were found in New Jersey, but Long Island had concentrations at Jones Beach (25, Feb. 9), Pt. Lookout, Fire Island (13, January), and Shinnecock (10, Dec. 26), plus scattered individuals, including a few in Long Island Sound.

A drake Barrow's Goldeneye at Ausable Point, *Clinton*, NY, on Lake Champlain, Feb. 6–24, was the only report of the season (RH). Common Mergansers were indeed common this winter, concentrations including 1500+ on the Hudson River in mid-January and 475 at Bombay Hook, Jan. 22 (NH). A Red-breasted Merganser, apparently flightless, deposited in Bethlehem, *Northampton*, PA, by hurricane Hugo in September, remained throughout the season.

**RAPTORS** — Black Vultures were again widespread in the southern states of the Region, but numbers seemed down a bit from recent years. An individual seen over the Northern State Parkway at the *Nassau-Suffolk* line Jan. 6 furnished one of the few recent records for Long Island (D. Monteith), although the majority of the state's records prior to the past decade were from there. With Turkey Vultures wintering regularly now to northern New Jersey and even southern New York, it is not surprising that they are

being found even farther north. One grounded in the Adirondacks during the bitter cold of December was pushing his luck, but a group of about 10 wintered at Letchworth St. Park, *Wyoming-Livingston*, NY, where small numbers have been present in recent winters. One was in *Rensselaer* Jan. 24 (T. Judge) and another near Lake Ontario in *Oswego* Jan. 27–28.

For the first time in 4 years there were no reports of Osprey, but the continued surge in Bald Eagle records was almost staggering. In addition to the concentration points mentioned last winter, there were more than 60 reports from the Hudson-Mohawk River Valleys and Lake Champlain, NY. The mid-winter eagle survey found 87 birds at the *Ulster-Sullivan* reservoirs in New York, and 70 in New Jersey; about two dozen wintered along the lower Susquehanna River in Pennsylvania. With increased winter sightings have come dramatic increases in nests or nesting attempts in the Region, to be reported later. For some years, Northern Harriers have formed a winter roost at Alpha, *Warren*, NJ; this year the biggest concentration yet was noted, with 50 birds in a tight-knit flock coursing over the farmlands and settling into one field at dusk Jan. 28 (WJB).

Accipiters continue to enjoy the abundance of feeders, encouraging them to stay for the winter. Perhaps inspired by the warm weather after December, Red-shouldered Hawks were courting in *Cattaraugus*, NY, Feb. 18, the earliest date in 40 years (SE). Rough-legged Hawks were common, especially in the northern part of the Region, and an average total of Golden Eagles included one in Delaware, five in New Jersey (all but one in the south), and four in southern New York. The mid-winter eagle survey found fewer American Kestrels (38) than Bald Eagles in southern New Jersey, not a good sign for this declining species.

Wintering Merlins were noted at numerous places along the coast, 4 inland sites in New Jersey (including one seen regularly at the harrier roost in Alpha), 2 in Pennsylvania, and one along the Lake Erie shore of *Chautauqua*, NY. Two Peregrine Falcons were also on the Lake Erie shore at Dunkirk in January, and a pair returned to its nest site in mid-town Manhattan by mid-February. The Gyrfalcon reported from Sandy Hook in the fall was seen sporadically into early January, and it and a 2nd Gyr were seen together there Dec. 12 (GH, JZ). Likewise, the Jones Beach, L.I., Gyrfalcon discovered in early November was present into January, although it became hard to find. A Gyr seen occasionally to early February at units of Gateway National Recreation Area in New York City was probably the same as the Sandy Hook bird; another seen at Pelham Bay Park in the Bronx, Dec. 26–Jan. 2, could have been a different one from the other two.

**GROUSE THROUGH SHOREBIRDS** — A Spruce Grouse, observed at leisure near Benson in extreme southern *Hamilton*, NY, near the *Fulton* line was far south of any of the sites documented by the breeding bird atlas, while the appearance of four Wild Turkeys at Primehook N.W.R., *Sussex*, DE, Dec. 17 (G. O'Shea) represented a range expansion for this rapidly increasing species. Very few rails were noted anywhere in the Region, perhaps having been frozen out in December, although a couple of Common Moorhens stuck it out in Cape May until about Dec. 10 (VE). A Sandhill Crane at Beltzville S.P., *Carbon*, PA, Dec. 18–19 provided the only record for the season (RW).

Semipalmated Plovers were found on 3 New York City area CBCs, and another was at Mill River, Rockville Center, L.I., Jan. 14 (BK). American Oystercatchers continue to

winter farther north in substantial numbers; they were recorded on 2 New York and 3 New Jersey CBCs, including 165 at Cape May. Four were at Pt. Lookout, Fire Island, Jan. 14, 30 were still at Hereford Inlet, *Cape May*, NJ, Jan. 30 (B. Heinrichs), and four were at Indian River all winter (WWF).

The only unusual shorebirds noted this season were a pair of Marbled Godwits at Absecon, *Atlantic*, NJ, Dec 16, on the Oceanville CBC. American Woodcock were hard hit by the December freeze—64 were seen at Cape May Pt., Dec. 22, but Kerlinger found 47 dead in the same area two days later (PK). Nevertheless, with the advent of the warm weather, the woodcocks returned early and were found performing their courtship flight in many places in February.

**GULLS THROUGH ALCIDS** — Little Gulls were scarce, with only about five in the Niagara River area in December and a few around Rochester: a single on the S. Nassau (L.I.) CBC was the only other report. Common Black-headed Gulls were again present in sub-par numbers, with just two on Long Island, one in New York City, a couple in New Jersey, and two in Delaware, including a repeat visitor to the Wilmington sewage treatment plant (PV). Bonaparte's Gulls peaked at 10,800 on the Niagara River, Dec. 2, then disappeared; observers farther south noted the same phenomenon, including Frech, who noted 1000+ at Indian River Dec. 15–18, then none for the rest of the winter (WWF).

A Thayer's Gull on the Troy, NY, CBC Dec. 30 was the only one for the season (S. Terrill, KPA, R. Holberton), while numbers of white-winged gulls were well below normal. Only the Hudson-Mohawk Region in New York did well with Iceland Gull, about 15 reports, including nine on the Troy CBC. There were a few in western and northern New York, about nine on Long Island, but New Jersey and Delaware reported only four and one, respectively. Glaucous Gulls were similarly distributed in about the same numbers. Lesser Black-backed Gulls were again widely noted, with more than two dozen reports, including one in Allentown, *Lehigh*, PA, Jan. 12 for a first county record (DD).

One Long Island and one Delaware CBC recorded Forster's Terns, but the 14 at Indian River were a tiny fraction of the number there last winter; a few remained at that location until Feb. 15, while an early migrant was at Brig, Feb. 5 (J. Connor). No fewer than five species of alcids were found along the coast this winter, lacking only the Common Puffin, with Long Island being the hot-spot, as expected. An exception was a *Dovekie* picked up alive on the beach near Indian River Jan. 23, for only the 2nd record for Delaware; the bird subsequently succumbed and is a specimen in the Delaware Museum of Natural History (G. Hess). A Common Murre was discovered at Shinnecock Inlet Dec. 6 (PG), and it or another was there Jan. 6–7 (ABa *et al.*); several others were picked up oiled elsewhere on eastern Long Island. The more frequently encountered Thick-billed Murre was seen near Montauk Point Feb. 11 (*vide* B. Spencer), while two Razorbills were at Montauk Feb. 16 (A. Farnsworth, TWB). Another Razorbill was seen along the shore of *Ocean*, NJ, Jan. 13 (AG), and 37 were counted a few miles offshore there Jan. 31 (ABr). Rounding out the list, a Black Guillemot joined the Common Murre at Shinnecock Jan. 7 (M. Cooper *et al.*).

**OWLS THROUGH SHRIKES** — Snowy Owls were scarce, with only two reaching New Jersey, one at Sandy Hook Dec. 8 & 9 joined by a second on the 10th, but

neither seen thereafter Long Island had about six through the season, but only four other reports came from upstate New York. Short-eared Owls were well represented throughout the Region, but especially in New York, where most of the subregions reported above average numbers; a small group in *Rensselaer* was gradually wiped out by a Great Horned Owl.

A Red-bellied Woodpecker was found near Chazy, *Clinton*, NY, Feb. 6, less than ten miles from the international border with Quebec, as this species continues to spread in the Hudson-Champlain basin (RH). An out-of-range Black-backed Woodpecker was at Fultonville, *Montgomery*, NY, Jan. 4 (W. Greene). Eastern Phoebe were found on 3 New Jersey, one New York, and 2 Delaware CBCs, despite the cold, and an early migrant was on the Maurice River, *Cumberland*, NJ, Feb. 28 (JDo). Western Kingbird was found on a Long Island CBC for the 2nd year in a row, this time at Captree.

The mild weather of January apparently encouraged an unprecedentedly early, but ill-fated, nesting of Horned Larks at Jones Beach, L.I., where dozens of dead fledglings with partially grown feathers were found Feb. 11 (MO); Bull, *Birds of New York State*, gives Feb. 28 as the earliest egg date for the state and Mar. 11 as the earliest for nestlings, but these larks must have nested in January. A Tree Swallow was investigating a bluebird box at Rhinebeck, *Dutchess*, NY, Feb. 9, and numerous migrants were reported from New Jersey at mid-month. A Barn Swallow was a surprise at Brig Jan. 20 (JDa).

American Crows gathered at impressive roosts in Nanuet, *Rockland*, NY, where 37,000 were counted Dec. 17 (PF *et al.*) and Trenton, *Mercer*, NJ, the latter group joined by 4000 Fish Crows (RJB). Common Raven continue to increase in the southern Catskills and environs, while a single at Waterloo, *Sussex*, NJ, during February was much sought after, but seldom seen (T. Laura, v.ob.). Winter Wrens were again well represented on CBCs, while single Marsh Wrens in *Greene* and *Columbia*, NY, in mid-December were winter rarities for the Hudson Valley.

Eastern Bluebirds are now so common throughout the Region, even in mid-winter, that it is hard to believe how scarce they were during the 1970s. One of the season's highlights was a **Townsend's Solitaire** discovered at Pawling, *Dutchess*, NY, Jan. 7, where it was seen by many observers into March (D. Fleury, M. Yegella, M. Van Wagner, J. Beck, m.ob.); although it was only the 3rd for New York State, it was the 2nd for *Dutchess*. The solitaire was part of an apparent "flight" beginning with one in Pennsylvania in October, New Jersey in November, and neighboring Connecticut in December. A Hermit Thrush was out of season at a Saranac Lake, *Franklin*, NY, feeder Dec. 4–29, but struck a window and died on the latter date, missing the local CBC by one day. Rounding out the thrush family, a **Varied Thrush** arrived at a Fredonia, *Chautauqua*, NY, feeder Feb. 15; although its presence did not become known to area birders for 2 weeks, it was seen by many during March (S. Paschke, m.ob.).

Following the big fall flight of Bohemian Waxwings in the Adirondacks, many continued to be seen there through the winter and modest numbers were encountered farther south. The biggest group of these was a flock of 201 near Rome, *Oneida*, Dec. 29, but 4 reports totalling ten birds came from the Hudson-Mohawk Region. Southernmost in the state was a single at Middletown, *Orange*, Feb. 1 (JPT), while in Pennsylvania, one was found in a flock of Cedar Waxwings at Eckville, *Berks*, near Hawk Mt., Jan. 5 (M. Bailey, *vide* LG). Northern Shrikes were not

especially plentiful in upstate New York, with only about 30 reports, but an above average total of six was found in New Jersey, mainly in late December–early January.

**WARBLERS THROUGH BLACKBIRDS** — An Orange-crowned Warbler returned to an Eatontown, *Monmouth*, NJ, arboretum for a 3rd winter, and was joined by a second on Jan. 30 (N. Kazanjian, m.ob.). Another was in Princeton during January and February (LL), and four were on Long Island in December. A late Cape May Warbler was in Millbrook, *Dutchess*, NY, Dec. 13, but another chose to winter in Princeton, Jan. 15 through the end of the period (LL *et al.*). For the 2nd year in a row a Yellow-throated Warbler was found during the winter season in western New York; this year's bird visited a feeder in Dunkirk, Dec. 1–8 (D. & J. Golder, m.ob.). The usual scattering of Pine Warblers was found on CBCs in the southern part of the Region, but more unusual were individuals at a Millerton, *Dutchess*, NY, feeder during January and February and at Orchard Park, *Erie*, NY, Feb. 4. An Ovenbird at a Williamsville, *Erie*, NY, feeder in early December was not seen after the 7th.

A ♀ Summer Tanager was seen at the Caleb Street Park just prior to the Smithtown, L.I., CBC, but could not be relocated (S. Duffy). More cooperative was a female or first-winter ♂ **Western Tanager** discovered in Whippany Township, *Montgomery*, PA, on a local CBC Dec. 30, this individual, an extreme rarity in Pennsylvania, stayed well into January and was seen by many (E. Fingerhood, C. Walters, m.ob.). Two well-described Rose-breasted Grosbeaks in female plumage were at Tallman Mountain S.P., *Rockland*, NY, Jan. 4 (C. Weiss), while an imm. ♂ Blue Grosbeak visited a Linwood, *Atlantic*, NJ, feeder Feb. 4, then reappeared in March (JDa). Also out of season was an Indigo Bunting at Sandy Hook throughout December, including the day of the CBC (m.ob.).

The highlight of the season in Delaware was a ♂ **Painted Bunting** at a feeder in Ocean View, *Sussex*, Dec. 13–Jan 5 (m.ob.); only the 2nd record for the state, it followed by only a few months the first, found at Bombay Hook in August. Dickcissels were more widely reported than usual, especially in New York, with 8 records, mostly at feeders, from 5 of the 10 reporting regions. Three in New Jersey included one at the same Linwood feeder visited by the Blue Grosbeak.

Chipping Sparrows defied the cold weather in attempting to winter at feeders well north of their usual range. In upstate New York, individuals were at 4 different feeders in *Chautauqua* in December, another was at a Webster, *Monroe*, feeder, Dec. 7–8, and yet another spent the entire winter at an *Onondaga* feeder. In New Jersey, Chippies wintered at Pittstown, *Hunterdon*, and Mendham, *Morris*, feeders, in addition to some more expected groups in the southern counties. Vesper Sparrows were reported on 3 Long Island and 2 New Jersey CBCs, but none was found later in the season. More unusual was the appearance of single Grasshopper Sparrows on the Montauk and Oceanville, NJ, CBCs, plus an individual at Sandy Hook Jan. 14 (J. Peachey, R. Berry). Five Lincoln's Sparrows were found on New York area CBCs, and the one on the Boonton, *Morris*, NJ, count was still present a week later (D. Freeland, A. Keith).

A **Harris' Sparrow** wintered at a feeder in Mendham, NJ, and was recorded on the Southwest Morris Winter Bird Count (J. Graham, m.ob.); interestingly, it was not the first for this young count, as there was one in 1986. A small scattering of Lapland Longspurs was reported from the 3 southern states in the Region, but upstate New York



observers found some sizeable flocks, especially later in the season. Snow Buntings were not especially numerous, but they too formed some large flocks, such as 150 on the Bombay Hook CBC, and 1500 at Red Hook, *Dutchess*, NY, and a similar number on the Lake Ontario shore west of Rochester Feb. 4.

An above average total of 10 Yellow-headed Blackbirds was reported, but the only one not in New Jersey was in Fulton Township, *Lancaster*, PA, in early December (E. Blom). Topping the list of seasonal sightings in New Jersey was the appearance of **Brewer's Blackbird**. An individual visited a rural *Salem* feeder Dec. 29 (*vide* WD), but the prize was the group of eight discovered in Cape May Jan. 23 and seen by many observers through the end of the period (DS, m.ob.). Northern Orioles were too numerous to list, but a "Bullocks" on the Sandy Hook CBC was exceptional.

**FINCHES** — As has happened too often in recent years, the hoped-for winter finch flight failed to materialize over much of the Region, although the Adirondacks had an excellent showing. Two species, Pine Siskin and White-winged Crossbill, were found in good to excellent numbers throughout most of New York, but only the siskin roamed farther south in limited numbers, mainly in the interior. Except for the many records from New York, the only Pine Grosbeaks were three at Pequannock, *Morris*, NJ, Feb. 28 (J. Broschart). Only about a dozen reports of Red Crossbill were received, mainly in small flocks and all in upstate New York, but White-winged Crossbills were found in large numbers throughout most of that state, except in the extreme southeast; ten near Wild Creek, *Carbon*, PA, Jan. 4 were the only southern vagrants (RW).

Common Redpolls were in modest numbers and mostly limited to the north, but a few made it to Long Island, New Jersey, and even a *Sussex*, DE, feeder, Dec. 19 (WWF). Despite the lack of a heavy influx of redpolls, one Hoary Redpoll was reported at a Cazenovia, *Madison*, NY, feeder, Jan. 29–31 (N. Lange). Pine Siskins roamed as far south as some southern Delaware feeders (W. Fintel, WWF), but were especially common in New York. Both "green-morph" and "gray-morph" individuals were at Peterson's feeder in Elizabethtown, *Essex*, NY; most unusual, however, was a leucistic bird at a nearby Mineville, *Essex*, feeder that clearly was a siskin, but looked as though "it was trying to impersonate a Hoary Redpoll." Evening Grosbeaks were abundant in some parts of New York, but only stragglers reached the southern portion of the Region.

**EXOTICS** — Among the non-native species of dubious origin were a Red-crested Pochard in Bethlehem, PA; seven Monk Parakeets at Rehobeth Beach, DE; Rose-ringed Parakeet on Long Island; and European Goldfinch at an Arcade, *Wyoming*, NY, feeder.

**UNCONFIRMED REPORTS** — An Eared Grebe was reported from Dunkirk Jan. 15 (JG, Jr.), but no details were

received. A tantalizing report of a Northern Hawk Owl at Potters Hollow, *Albany*, NY, Dec. 10 was submitted; although there are several dozen acceptable records for New York, few of them have been so far south (J.S. Ruscica).

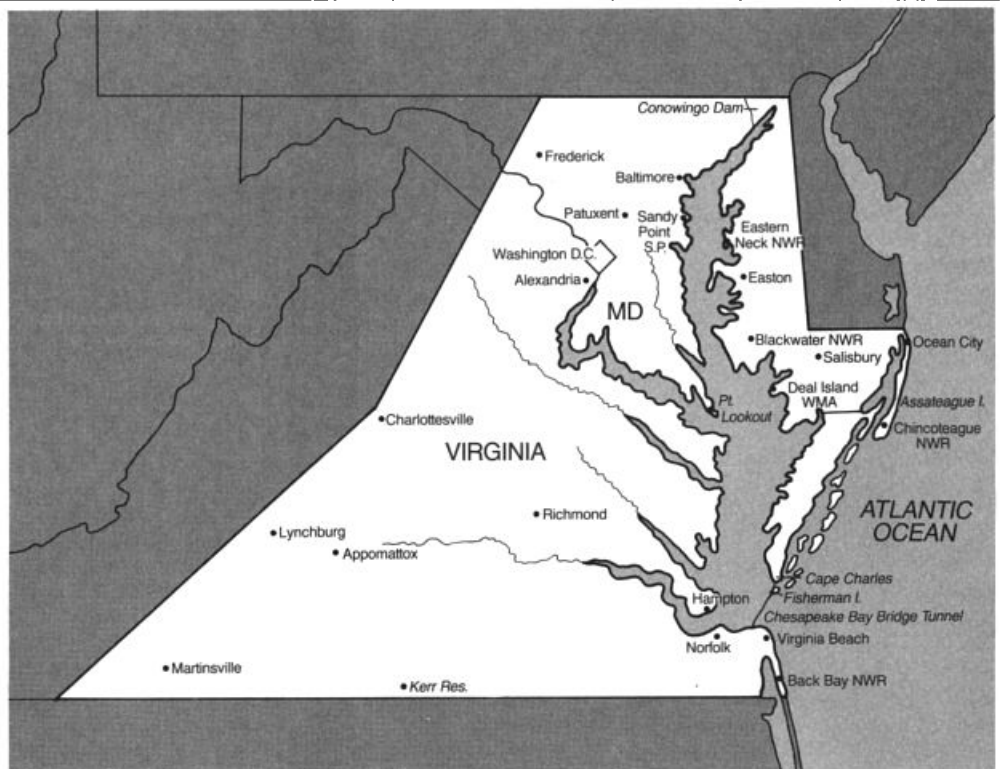
**CORRIGENDA** — Contrary to what was published in the preceding issue (AB 44:67), there exists a valid specimen record for Bachman's Sparrow in New Jersey, as well as a sight record of a singing bird.

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# MIDDLE ATLANTIC COAST REGION

Henry T. Armistead



**B**rutal cold December with record low temperatures, ice and wind drove out most lingering species but also made for very high counts of many waterfowl, some woodpeckers, Hermit Thrushes, robins, thrashers, towhees, American Tree Sparrows, juncos, and woodcock. Most of these became scarce after the Christmas counts when these birds dispersed and were no longer concentrated by ice or snow. Winter struck during and was over by the end of December. January and February were exceptionally mild. The entire season was quite dry. Many plants were four to six weeks ahead of schedule in February, when quince, Bradford pears and cherries were in full bloom during the third week in Virginia Beach. It was a good winter for most grebes, "Hutchins" Geese, Bald Eagles, gulls, bluebirds, and winter raptors; a poor one for herons, shorebirds, stray warm weather birds, and northern finches. The very mild new year did not entice many early returns.

Deviation from normal of temperature (Look closely. When did you last see extremes like these?): Dec.  $-9.6^{\circ}\text{F}$ ., Jan.  $+8.5^{\circ}$ , Feb.  $+8.3^{\circ}$ ; of precipitation: Dec.  $-0.7$  in., Jan.  $0.0$  in. (normal), Feb.  $-0.1$  in. Most of the winter's small snowfall was during December.

**ABBREVIATIONS** — A.R.L.F.=Alpha Ridge landfill, Howard, MD; Back Bay=Back Bay Nat'l Wildlife Ref., VA; the Bay=Chesapeake Bay; Blackwater=Blackwater Nat'l Wildlife Ref., MD; C.B.B.T.=Chesapeake Bay Bridge & Tunnel, VA; Chinc.=Chincoteague Nat'l Wildlife Ref., VA; Fish. I.=Fisherman Island Nat'l Wildlife Ref., VA; M.W.C.=Mid Winter Counts in Maryland; Susq.=lower Susquehanna R. below Conowingo Dam, MD.

**LOONS THROUGH IBISES** — Red-throated Loons were scarce in December owing to the cold but by Jan. 14 120 were at Back Bay [SR] and on Jan. 27 110 were in Worcester, MD, on the M.W.C. (RFR). Common Loons

were also in lower numbers except for 456 at Back Bay CBC Dec. 29 (PWS). Organic warmth kept water open at Occoquan sewage treatment plant, Fairfax, VA, where Bass saw 15 Pied-billed Grebes Jan. 6, this winter's modest high count. Iced out from other areas, 669 Horned Grebes at Back Bay CBC were a good count (PWS), and 250 had already returned up the Bay by Feb. 15 at Swan Pt., Kent, MD (J & PG), presumably early due to the very mild winter. Red-necked Grebes were at 12 localities, an exceptional turnout, with records throughout the period, such as two at Kerr Res., VA, with 42 Horned Grebes Jan. 28 (MRB), two off Virginia Beach Dec. 2 (BP *et al.*), and two at C.B.B.T. Dec. 27 (DFA) and Feb. 17 (T & JH). Eared Grebe singles were at Sandy Point S.P., MD, August to Dec. 13 (AH, RAA, m.ob.), Rudee Inlet in Virginia Beach Dec. 27 (DFA), Little Creek, VA, CBC Dec. 31 (PM) and at Chinc. Jan. 14 (DC), also a better than average showing.

Patteson *et al.* observed two Manx Shearwaters off Virginia Beach Dec. 2. The December chill drove the N. Gannets south with anemic counts such as four at Back Bay and 12 at Little Creek CBCs, where sometimes there are thousands. However, when the warmth incredibly



Winter 1989-1990 was a good season for Red-necked Grebes along the Middle Atlantic Coast. This individual was at Rudee Inlet, Virginia Beach, Virginia, February 17, 1990. Photograph/George L. Armistead.

returned starting in January so did many birds, such as 3100 gannets at Ft. Story, Virginia Beach, Feb. 11 (SR), and 86, most headed north, off *Worcester* Jan. 27 (MO). The mouth of the Bay was as usual the best place for large piscivorous birds, and both pelican species overwintered in this general area, with an Am. White and 28 Brown pelicans on the Little Creek CBC Dec. 31 (PWS, RJT), and an Am. White and six Browns at Back Bay CBC Dec. 29 (*vide* PRS). The almost resident Am. White Pelican was also present at Chinc. through February (GG, DC, GLA). Single Brown Pelicans were also at Fish. I. Dec. 30 (MAB *et al.*) and Bethel Beach Dec. 31 (JBB) while 15 were in the C.B.B.T.-Virginia Beach area Feb. 17 (HTA, GLA). The sole Maryland pelican was a Brown in the Ocean City area in late December (*vide* CSR).

At C.B.B.T., 38 Great Cormorants were seen Dec. 27 (DFA), 35 on Dec. 31 (MO), and 34 on Feb. 17 (HTA, GLA), typical optimal counts for there, and 11 were on the Potomac R. at Lower Machodoc Creek, *Westmoreland*, VA, Jan. 29 (JEJ). They are less numerous but increasing in Maryland where five were at Ocean City CBC Dec. 28, three at Hooper's I. Dec. 27 (MO), one at Cambridge Jan. 15 (DC), one at Susq. during December (v.o.), two at Sandy Point S.P. Dec. 2 (RAA), and an immature at Hooper's I. Jan. 28 (JWS, HTA). Double-crested Cormorants were more widely reported in the upper Bay than perhaps ever before with 22 at Mathias Pt., *Charles*, Feb. 8 (CG), one at Tolchester Beach Feb. 7 (J & PG), two at Crisfield (RFR) and four near Deal Island W.M.A. (EB) Jan. 28, and 12 at Pt. Lookout Feb. 17 (GJ), these all in Maryland. A bit early in the season for such numbers, 2200 were at C.B.B.T. Feb. 17 (HTA, GLA). However, the big chill in December made them scarce then, with 215 at Newport News CBC Dec. 16 the lowest since 1983 (TK).

Ice concentrated (and killed) some heron types, but in the case of most species, simply drove them south. For the first time in 25 years Tricolored Heron was missed at Cape Charles CBC Dec. 30, but there were 10 Am. Bitterns there, one of which died during the count on Fish. I. An interesting winter record was of another found at inland Dorsey Hall in *Howard*, MD, Feb. 18-19 (BO *et al.*). Excellent counts of Great Blue Herons, even for CBCs, were of 123 at Rock Run, MD, Dec. 30 (DLK), 162 in the D.C. area Dec. 16 (JAB), and a record 384 at Hopewell, VA, Dec. 17 (LR). Reese noted five early ones migrating north Feb. 9 at St. Michaels, MD, and as usual they could be found starting to nest-build in selected areas by period's end, such as in *Westmoreland*, VA, Feb. 25 (JEJ). Unique was a Tricolored Heron at Deal I. Jan. 27 and Feb. 3 (HLW, LMD) along with 63 Black-crowned Night-Herons on the latter date. Four Yellow-crowned Night-Herons were at Little Creek CBC Dec. 31 (*vide* PWS), and seven latish Glossy Ibis were at Chinc. Dec. 2 (JSG). Nineteen Great Egrets made the best count at Back Bay CBC Dec. 29 (PWS). Otherwise it was a bleaker than usual winter for the heron tribe.

**WATERFOWL** — December ice created either record lows or record highs for waterfowl. Some CBC circles had essentially all water frozen, with a prime spot such as Crisfield missing for the first time such common species as Oldsquaw, Bufflehead, and Red-breasted Merganser (CRV), with only four Com. Goldeneyes and no Great Black-backed Gulls! However, what open water there was saw nice concentrations of waterfowl, such as at Rock Run where nine of the 16 species seen enjoyed new highs along the lower Susq. Dec. 30 (DLK). Since most of the Bay was frozen many birds headed south or east to the coast. At Cape Charles CBC Dec. 29, of the 30 waterfowl

species, 11 were in the highest numbers in the count's 25 years, such as Snow Goose 3156, Canada Goose 13,000, Am. Black Duck 4900, Greater Scaup 142, Lesser Scaup 1024, White-winged Scoter 1077, and Ruddy Duck 540, these all double or more previous highs, with record counts also of 2300 Mallards, 15,678 Surf Scoters, and 426 Com. Goldeneyes. Hooded Mergansers were in excellent numbers in some areas such as 126 in the D.C. area Dec. 16 (JAB), 360 at Hopewell Dec. 17 (LR), and 545 at Little Creek Dec. 31 (PWS), these all CBCs, while 221 were at Williamsburg CBC Dec. 17 (BT). White-winged Scoters were in record numbers in some places with 1939 at Pt. Lookout Dec. 30 (PC) and 448 at Back Bay Dec. 29 (PWS).

As usual the high Mute Swan count was at Hooper's I., MD, where 260 were seen Jan. 28 (HTA, JWS). Greater White-fronted Goose reports came from 7 localities, an excellent showing, with six at Blackwater Jan. 9 (BL) and five nearby at Chancellor's Pt., *Talbot*, MD, the next day (JC). Snow and ice drove Snow Geese farther s. than usual in the Region so that huge numbers were s. of Chinc. in December and early January (v.o.). On the other hand, there were still 33,918 in the Ocean City area Dec. 28 (CSR) and 19,998 just s. of Chinc. Dec. 29 (FRS), yet only one was seen on the *Worcester*, MD, M.W.C. Jan. 27, an area which includes all the Ocean City CBC. Best counts of Blue Geese were of 750 at Blackwater Feb. 25 (GLA, HTA) and 1050 at Hopewell CBC Dec. 17 (LR) while the Ross' Goose at Blackwater was present at least from Nov. 25-Mar. 10 (PO, E & CS, MI, DC *et al.*). Somewhat out of place were five Brant at Pt. Lookout Dec. 26 (JB), three at Sandy Point S.P. Dec. 2 (RAA), four at Hooper's I. Jan. 28 (HTA, JWS) and another at Blackwater the same day (HTA, JWS), and 506 made a record high for Back Bay CBC Dec. 29 (PWS). Brant were formerly rather common on the central Bay up until the 1950s when there were still abundant grasses for them to eat there, and they normally bypass or stay north of Back Bay, which is bereft of shallow tidal areas. An unbanded ad. Barnacle Goose was at Lands End W.M.A., VA, Dec. 11 (HFD), a "strong flyer." More of the small *hutchinsii* Canada Geese were noted than ever before with Day detecting ten at Leedstown Dec. 7, five at Lands End W.M.A. Dec. 11, 13 at Curles Neck Feb. 4 with 17 there Mar. 1, and four at the Taylor farm on the Rappahannock R. Mar. 3, these all in Virginia not far from Richmond. Elsewhere singles were at Occoquan S.T.P. Jan. 13 (KHB), Cape Charles Dec. 30 (PWS; new to this CBC), and in *Kent*, MD, Jan. 26 and Feb. 10 (J & PG), with six on the CBC there Dec. 17 (J & PG).

As usual, Hopewell was the Wood Duck regional capitol, with 737 on its Dec. 17 CBC (LR). A Eur. Green-winged Teal was at Curles Neck Mar. 1 (HFD), and Eur. Wigeon were at Hampton Jan. 6 (BP) & 11 (SR), while one was at

#### S.A.

A somewhat problematical record, although it should not be ignored, is that of a **Mottled Duck** included here on the basis of a band return. The bird was shot Oct. 11, 1989, on the Mattaponi R. near Walkerton, VA, and had been banded at Loxahatchee N.W.R., FL, Sept. 14, 1987 (*vide* DB). Presumably the bird was eaten and left no trace. The Bird Banding Laboratory contacted the bander, who indicated there was practically no chance the bird had been a misidentified Mallard when it was banded. Mallards are quite scarce at Loxahatchee.

Fish. I. Dec. 30 (MRB). Superior counts of divers included 10,600 Canvasbacks and 14,829 Lesser Scaups on the *Kent*, MD, M.W.C. Feb. 10 (J & PG). Single King Eiders



Harlequin Ducks at Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel, Virginia, January 1990. Photograph/Kenneth H. Bass.

were seen at C.B.B.T. in late December (m.ob.) and at Chinc. Jan. 13 (DC), and up to six were at Ocean City Dec. 27–Feb. 18 (JGR, RFR, DC). Single Com. Eiders were at Rudee Inlet Dec. 27–Jan. 5 (DFA, BP), C.B.B.T. Feb. 1 (HCI), Ocean City Dec. 27–Feb. 25 (GG, EB, RFR, MO; two on Dec. 28 CBC) and one along with three King Eiders was at Wallops I., VA, Jan. 13 (CRV), where four Harlequin Ducks were seen Jan. 4 (BJ). On C.B.B.T., five to nine Harlequin Ducks were present through the period (m.ob., ph.), and up to six were at Ocean City Feb. 18 (PO). These jetty duck observations were all rather routine. However, the presence of Harlequin Ducks on the upper Bay was not. Most unusual were Maryland birds at Susq. in fresh water Dec. 29–Jan. 3 (DLK), one at N. Beach, Calvert, Dec. 10–17 (JLS, MI) and one at Patuxent R. N.A.S. Dec. 25–Feb. 14 (KR, DR, ph.). In D.C., 19 Oldsquaws were seen far up the Potomac R. Jan. 6 (DC). Numbers of waterfowl in the celebrated *Hydrilla* beds of the Potomac s. of D.C. nosedived this winter even after December's ice disappeared (JSG).

**RAPTORS THROUGH CRANES** — Fine single-observer counts of vultures included 110 Blacks at A.R.L.F. Feb. 16 (SA) and 170 Turkeys at Tanyard, Caroline, MD, Dec. 10 (EE). In this frigid CBC period, an Osprey at Little Creek Dec. 31 was surprising (GMW, GBH), and reports of singles at Pt. Lookout Feb. 7 (PC), on the Wicomico R. Feb. 16 (C & DB), and at Denton Feb. 24 (LTS) probably represented very early migrants. Bald Eagles were in respectable if not record numbers on the CBCs, such as 31 at Hopewell Dec. 17, 17 at D.C. Dec. 16, 48 at Ft. Belvoir, VA, Dec. 23, 20 at Lower Kent, MD, Dec. 17, and 37 at Crisfield Dec. 27. You can't have record numbers every count, but many of these are close. However, the midwinter survey by the MD Dept. of Natural Resources and others did find record numbers, the highest since the surveys began in 1979, with 263 Bald Eagles this year, 178 at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Harford, Jan. 14 (111 imm.), four at Susq., and 81 at Blackwater Jan. 12 (GDT *et al.*). A new roost at Blackwater discovered just a few years ago had 89 Bald Eagles Jan. 12 (*fide* TV). The previous high for the midwinter survey was 180 in 1984, and 44 were seen in startup year 1979! Up to 25 Bald Eagles were seen along the Susq. in early December (LE, EB) where up to two Golden Eagles were also present. As many as four different Golden Eagles were also at Blackwater through the winter (v.o.).

The CBCs found high numbers of Sharp-shinned Hawks, especially coastally with 40 at Cape Charles Dec. 30, 25 at Ocean City Dec. 28 (including two immatures

attacking a Pileated Woodpecker, MO), and 18 up the Bay at St. Michaels Dec. 17 (CM), while Chinc. detected 23 Dec. 29. A N. Goshawk was banded near Springfield, VA, Dec. 15 (JP), and one was at Double Rock Park near Baltimore through the season (BD). Howard, MD, observers counted 74 Red-shouldered Hawks on their M.W.C. Jan. 27. Rough-legged Hawks were more widely seen than in the average winter. Blom found an unprecedented 18 at a roost at dusk in Deal Island W.M.A. Jan. 28, and 56 N. Harriers were tallied the same day in the greater Deal area as part of the *Somerset* M.W.C. (RFR *et al.*). Unusual localities for Golden Eagle singles were Bellevue, Talbot, MD, Feb. 24 (HTA, MEA), Pt. Lookout Feb. 17 (GJ), Taylor's I., Dorchester, MD, Dec. 27 (MO) and Cape Charles Dec. 30 (HTA, CCW, GLA). Otherwise this species is reported every year of late at Blackwater, Susq., and in Kent, MD.

Day contributed a count of 46 Wild Turkeys along the James R. at Upper Brandon, VA, Feb. 6. December ice concentrated holdout rails along the few open leads of water on south-facing marsh areas, permitting a count of 30 Kings, 14 Virginias, and four Soras at Back Bay CBC Dec. 29 (PWS). Four hundred Am. Coots were at Loch Raven Res. n. of Baltimore Dec. 2, and 285 had returned there after the iceout Feb. 24 (SWS). The longterm resident Sandhill Crane at Poolesville, MD, was seen through the period (RAA, MO, GG), and another was at Jug Bay and nearby Merkle W.M.A., MD, Jan. 20–Feb. 15 (DB, CB).

**SHOREBIRDS** — Not surprisingly, many shorebirds were in very low numbers for the CBCs and during the mild weather after the counts were even scarcer. Yet there were anomalous situations. Cape Charles had lowest ever counts of Black-bellied Plover (91) and Dunlin (904) plus an anemic 13 W. Sandpipers, yet perfectly respectable totals of 265 Am. Oystercatchers, 63 Willets, and 37 Marbled Godwits, and four widely separated parties saw a total of 15 Whimbrel, a record count. Of course Am. Woodcock have a different agenda. Sudden cold weather often concentrates them in some areas of the Region and 124 were at Cape Charles CBC with 100 banded here at



The December cold snap concentrated many American Woodcock at Cape Charles, Virginia, where this one was photographed December 30, 1989. Photograph/George L. Armistead.

Eastern Shore of Virginia N.W.R. during *one night* Dec. 17–18 (PT). Record CBC counts included six at Salisbury, MD, Dec. 17 (CRV), eight at St. Michaels Dec. 17 (CM), and nine at Newport News Dec. 16 (TK), plus 36 at Ocean City Dec. 28 (CSR). Most of the big shorebirds at Cape Charles winter at Thoms Creek but a visit here Feb. 18 revealed only 15 Willets, 11 Black-bellied Plovers, two Am. Oystercatchers, a W. Sandpiper, and 220 Dunlin, the smallest number of birds seen in the over 50 trips made to this spot by the observers in all seasons (HTA, GLA). Yet some birds did return during the warmup. At Bethel Beach, VA, where the Mathews CBC found no Black-bellied Plovers, Bazuin saw 121 Feb. 11 where he had seen zero Dec. 30–Jan. 2, plus 700 Dunlin, whereas the CBC of Dec. 31 had only 131 (MP). At Blackwater 38 Greater Yellowlegs

were present Feb. 25 (HTA, GLA), while the local CBC had found just one yellowlegs (sp.) Dec. 26 (CSR).

Killdeer were especially scarce this winter, the nine Maryland M.W.C.s. finding only from one to three on 7 of these counts (*vide* RFR). At the peak of the cold December snap there was a major exodus of them with flights at Cedar I., VA, Dec. 16 (GLA, CCW, HTA) and up to 147 at Newport News CBC the same day (TK). Unusual in winter in their respective areas were single Am. Oystercatchers at Tanner Creek, *St. Mary's*, MD, Dec. 28 (PC, ph.) and Hooper's I. Jan. 28 (JWS, HTA), and a total of 55 at Ocean City Jan. 27 was excellent (RFR). However, the Chinc. CBC total of 255 Dec. 29 (as well as the Cape Charles total of 265 noted above) were below optimal counts. Unique was a Spotted Sandpiper at Hopewell CBC Dec. 17 (*vide* LR). At Oyster, VA, 12 Marbled Godwits were reported Feb. 19 (SR), probably part of the Thoms Creek flock. From one to three Red Knots overwintered in the greater Ocean City area (GG, MO, MI, HT, PO) and nine were at Chinc. CBC Dec. 29 (FRS). Schwab's beach surveys at Back Bay/False Cape S.P., VA, yielded from 363 (Jan. 5) to 1001 Sanderlings (Feb. 27) (DS, TMP) and eight up the Bay at Cambridge were unusual Feb. 19 (DC). Twelve Least Sandpipers braved the cold at Hopewell CBC Dec. 17 (LR). In the central Bay, three Purple Sandpipers, with 22 Sanderlings, were notable Dec. 30 at Point Lookout (PC, JB). The total of just 128 Dunlin, instead of thousands, at Chinc. CBC Dec. 29 (FRS) was indicative of the paucity of shorebirds. Dowitchers were almost nonexistent on the coastal CBCs where they might be expected as well as during the remainder of the winter. This season's fancy shorebirds were six Red Phalaropes at sea off Virginia Beach Dec. 2 (BP *et al.*).

**JAEGERS THROUGH ALCIDS** — Patten's pelagic minions saw a Pomarine, two Parasitic and an unidentified jaeger off Virginia Beach Dec. 2, and a Parasitic was reported from Ft. Story Feb. 11 (SR). Laughing Gulls and Forster's Terns were almost nonexistent during and after the big December freeze. Over the course of the winter single Com. Black-headed, Iceland, Glaucous, and Lesser

Black-backed gulls plus Black-legged Kittiwake were all seen at productive but small Rudee Inlet (DFA, SR, MRB *et al.*). The lone Little Gull was at Little Creek CBC Dec. 31



*Iceland Gull in first-winter plumage at Rudee Inlet, Virginia, February 5, 1990. Photograph/Michael R. Boatwright.*

(DLH, JHG). A Com. Black-headed Gull was reported from D.C. Dec. 16 (PGD). Bonaparte's Gulls were in low numbers, another victim of the cold presumably, with but 10 at Ocean City CBC Dec. 28 yet a record 225 at Newport News CBC Dec. 16.

A new North American species from Georgetown Res. in D.C.? Well, possibly yes. Czaplak discovered an apparent **Yellow-legged (Herring) Gull**, *Larus (argentatus) cachinnans*, there Feb. 1, a form which in all likelihood will be officially split into a discrete species soon. There is one previous North American sighting from Newfoundland, Jan. 16–Feb. 28, 1985 (*American Birds*, vol. 39, p. 147). The bird remained Feb. 1–6 and was seen by many. Three excellent descriptions are on hand (DC, CPW, RH) and details have been submitted to the A.B.A. and A.O.U. checklist committees. Most *cachinnans* group birds occur in the greater Mediterranean area.

A Thayer's Gull was at A.R.L.F. Feb. 24 along with two Lesser Black-backed and a Glaucous Gull (EB). This was a good white-winged gull winter with sightings of Iceland Gulls from at least 10 sites, including three different birds in D.C. Dec. 30–Feb. 11 (DC), and Glaucous Gulls from 11 places, such as two at Rudee Inlet Feb. 18 (RH). Lesser Black-backed Gulls continue to turn up just about anywhere and were seen in at least 25 localities, with seven at



*Yellow-legged (Herring?) Gull (front center bird) at Georgetown Reservoir, Washington, D.C., February 1990. This form, often considered a distinct species (*Larus cachinnans*), was unknown in the New World aside from one sight record in Newfoundland. Photograph/David Czaplak.*

C.B.B.T. Dec. 3 (DFA), four in D.C. Jan. 20 (DC), and three seen on the *Baltimore* M.W.C. Jan. 20 (*vide* RFR). The wacky weather made Great Black-backed Gulls either incredibly scarce, such as three on icebound Salisbury CBC and none on Crisfield CBC (CRV) and S. *Dorchester*, MD, CBC (CRS), or else they were seen in some areas in record numbers, such as 105 at Hopewell CBC Dec. 17, 657 at D.C. CBC Dec. 16, and 196 at Newport News CBC Dec. 16. Ten Black-legged Kittiwakes were seen out from Virginia Beach Dec. 2 (BP *et al.*) and another Jan. 27 (HFD, BP, SR). A Dovekie was reported from Rudee Inlet Dec. 28 (DFA).

**DOVES THROUGH SHRIKES** — Large numbers of Mourning Doves were seen on many CBCs including a record 1487 at Cape Charles Dec. 30 plus 1800 at Little Creek Dec. 31. Bass noted his earliest ever Barn Owl eggs, a clutch of four at Nokesville Feb. 3 in Piedmont Virginia, presumably due to the very mild weather after December. One of the highlights of the season was a Snowy Owl, always rare anywhere here, at Wallops I. (the mainland NASA base) Jan. 30–Feb. 25 (CRV, JHB *et al.*, ph.), often very difficult to find in spite of its rather long stay. A Long-eared Owl was on n. Assateague I., MD, in late December (*vide* CSR) and one was captured at Cape Charles the night of Dec. 17–18 as it mantled its prey, an Am. Woodcock (PT). Northern Saw-whet Owls were seen at 4 places (KHB, WR, PO, BMR), a so-so showing. There were more records of Short-eared Owls from more places than usual, such as four at Curles Neck, VA, Dec. 14 (HFD), five at Greensboro, *Caroline*, MD, Dec. 17 (AJF), four at Manassas airport, VA, Jan. 16 (VBK), and five at Hopewell CBC Dec. 17 (LR).

The cold was rough on Belted Kingfishers causing them to leave or sometimes die. Ocean City CBC Dec. 28 had its lowest count since 1963, 13 birds. Red-headed Woodpeckers were in record supply on some CBCs, including Nokesville with 38, a state Piedmont high count Dec. 17 (KHB), and 45 at Ft. Belvoir Dec. 23 (DFA), with an impressive 16 at Brooke Dec. 18 (DBS) and 17 at Hopewell Dec. 17 (LR), these all in Virginia. Among the highlights of the winter were big tallies of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, which seemed to vanish after the CBCs. Notable were 131 at Seneca, MD, Dec. 17 (JAB), 70 at Ft. Belvoir Dec. 23 (DFA), 46 at Williamsburg Dec. 17 (BT), and 42 in D.C. Dec. 16 (JAB), all CBC numbers. Pileated Woodpeckers continue to be abundant in the greater D.C. area as evidenced by totals of 94 at Seneca Dec. 17 (JAB) and 55 at Ft. Belvoir Dec. 23 (DFA) CBCs.

A prime rarity was an **Ash-throated Flycatcher** at Cheatham Annex near Williamsburg Dec. 17–19 (BW, BP, HFD *et al.*, ph.), for about the 9th state record, most of which have been on CBCs in the past 15 years. As this species seems to here, this bird spent most of its time within a few feet of the ground. Snow made it easier to locate many landbirds, such as Horned Lark, with counts such as 542 at Nokesville CBC Dec. 17 (KHB) and 200 at Danville, VA, Dec. 16 (PW). At Deal I. some 22,000+ Fish Crows on their way to a roost represented a new Maryland maximum count Jan. 28 (EB). Red-breasted Nuthatches were in low-medium quantity throughout the winter (v.o.). The *Somerset* M.W.C. Jan. 28 detected four House Wrens—one of several species, including the “marsh” wrens, which are extremely underreported after the conclusion of the CBCs (RFR *et al.*)—and two Sedge Wrens were also found here at Irish Grove Sanctuary the same date (JLS). In spite of the cold, single Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were found in Virginia on 4 CBCs at Hopewell, Cape

Charles, Little Creek, and Alexandria (on D.C. CBC) (FE, PGD, DWh, BOa).

Eastern Bluebirds continue to be in burgeoning quantity, with bluebird headquarters as usual at Mathews, where the CBC Dec. 31 counted 570 (MP); 461 were at Seneca Dec. 17, 249 at St. Michaels the same day, and 242 at Brooke, VA, Dec. 18 (DBS). Both Hermit Thrushes and Am. Robins were in exceptionally high numbers, mostly during December, as shown by these CBC counts for these two species respectively: 186 & 1489 at Ft. Belvoir Dec. 23, 49 & 2275 at Nokesville on the Piedmont Dec. 17, 109 & 891 at Salisbury Dec. 17, 93 & 630 at Brooke Dec. 18, 44 & 905 at Hopewell Dec. 17, 17 & 145 at Rock Run Dec. 30 (DLK), and 135 & 2383 at Port Tobacco, MD, Dec. 17 (GBW). Many of these, especially the Hermit Thrushes, represent new high counts. Brown Thrasher was another species in unprecedentedly high supply on the CBCs with record totals such as 51 (more than four times the previous high) at Salisbury Dec. 17, 25 at Hopewell the same day, and 17 at Mathews, VA, Dec. 31. In keeping with its irregular, unpredictable nature, Cedar Waxwing was in record numbers in some areas (*e.g.*, 1516 at Cape Charles, 2822 at Seneca) and yet unaccountably scarce elsewhere (*e.g.*, zero at Salisbury) as shown by these CBC numbers. Loggerhead Shrikes were seen at Lucketts, *Loudoun*, VA (two on Feb. 3, VBK), at Lilypons, MD, in January and February (GG) and one was at Hopewell CBC Dec. 17.

**WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES** — Given the brutal weather of December it was not surprising that few unusual warblers and vireos were seen. Two Solitary Vireos were at Little Creek Dec. 31 (DLH) and a Prairie Warbler was at Cape Charles Dec. 30 (FRS), the only species even remotely worth mentioning.

The famous Painted Bunting at Pungo, VA, w. of Back Bay was present for its 2nd straight winter and was seen from the last week of December to March 3 (VBK, DM, BP *et al.*). Most of the observations were from the dining tables of a local restaurant which also feeds birds. Single Dickcissels were at Newport News Feb. 18–Mar. 3 (DM *et al.*) and in Gaithersburg, MD, through most of the period (PO, MO *et al.*). Rufous-sided Towhees were yet



*This Lark Sparrow, photographed February 5, 1990, spent the entire winter west of Black Bay, Virginia, far from its normal winter range. Photograph/Michael R. Boatwright.*

another bird in exceptional numbers on many CBCs, such as a record 96 at Ft. Belvoir Dec. 23, while Salisbury had 165 Dec. 17 and Port Tobacco 152 Dec. 17 (GBW). This was the best winter in many years for the declining Am. Tree Sparrow, one species that was not only found in small numbers on many CBCs where they have always been scarce but also continued to be in good numbers through the winter (v.o.). A Lark Sparrow was present again through the winter at Colechester Rd. w. of Back Bay, seen by many (MRB, HFD, RH, SR, BP, ph.). Ipswich Sparrows were scarce this winter on the barrier islands. Lincoln's Sparrows were reported from 3 CBCs, about on par. White-throated Sparrows and Slate-colored Juncos were in excellent numbers on many CBCs but seemed somewhat scarce afterwards. This was a slightly better than usual winter for Lapland Longspurs and Snow Buntings, top counts being of seven longspurs at Craney I., Portsmouth, VA, Dec. 2 (BT) and 300 buntings at Ruthsburg, *Queen Annes*, MD, Jan. 9 (J & PG).

The only Yellow-headed Blackbird was a female at Rising Sun in extreme n.e. Maryland Dec. 23 (HF). There



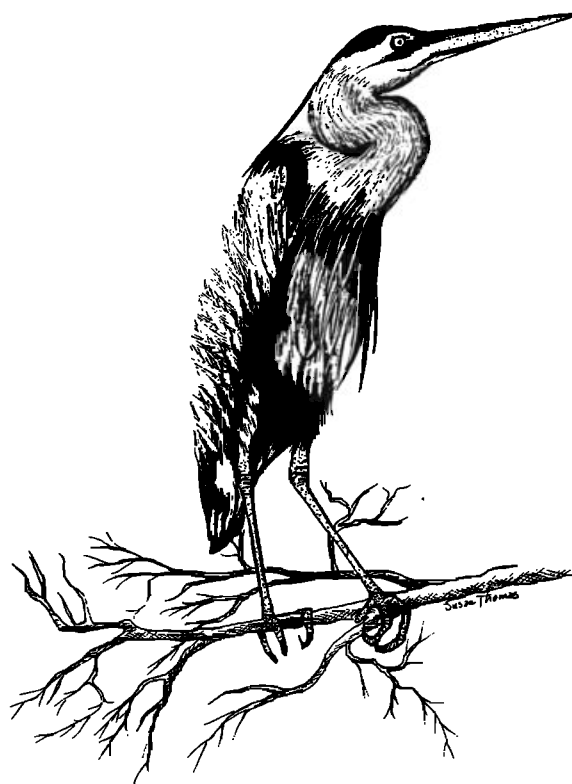
*Snow Bunting at the Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel, Virginia, February 5, 1990. Photograph/Michael R. Boatwright.*

was a nice flurry of Brewer's Blackbird activity with up to five near Pungo Dec. 29–Feb. 18 (NB, SR, HFD, BP, RH *et al.*), one on the Brooke CBC Dec. 18 (*vide* DBS), and an astounding 22 at Nokesville Dec. 15 (KHB), a record state count, these all in Virginia. Northern (Baltimore) Oriole reports were received from just 4 localities, and single N. (Bullock's) Orioles were at Williamsburg Dec. 8 (BT) and Mathews Dec. 31 (DSO *et al.*).

The only Red Crossbill sightings were of seven at Cape Charles Dec. 30 (GP) and two at Amherst, VA, Feb. 21 (MRB). Pine Siskins and Evening Grosbeaks were present in poor–mediocre numbers in most places—it was another very disappointing season for northern finches. Exceptions, however, were 247 siskins at Cape Charles CBC Dec. 30 and a rather heavy flight the next day heading S along the C.B.B.T. (HTA *et al.*). House Finches continue to be in very high numbers although counts of them on the CBCs were actually lower than in some years because many were driven south by the extreme cold. Almost omitted was mention of a Dark-eyed (Oregon) Junco banded at Salisbury by Vaughn and present Dec. 8–24. Helpful friends carefully photographed it with an empty camera. Another was reported from Kent, MD, Dec. 17 (J & PG).

**OBSERVERS** — D.F. Abbott, Margaret Abbott, R.A. Anderson, G.L. Armistead, M.E. Armistead, Tom Armour, Scott Atkinson, K.H. Bass, Polly Batchelder, J.B. Bazuin, Carol Beyne, J.A. Bjerke, Eirik Blom, M.R. Boatwright, Jim Boxwell, Ned Brinkley, Carol & Don Broderick, Mike Bryant, J.H. Buckalew, M.A. Byrd, Danny Bystrak, David Carr (DCr), Martha Chestem, Jeff Chynoweth, Patty Craig, **David Czaplak** (D.C. area), Liz Darnell, L.M. Davidson, H.F. Day, Barbara Diller, Robert Dixon, Sam Droege, P.G.

DuMont, Les Eastman, S.D. Eccles, Gerald Elgert, Frank Enders, Ethel Engle, J.H. Fales, Jane Farrell, **A.F. Fletcher** (*Caroline*, MD), Harold Fogleman, Donald Ford, J.H. Getgood, Carol Gheblian, J.S. Gottschalk, Greg Gough, Jim & Patricia Gruber, Melva & Charles Hansrote, G.B. Harris, Al Haury, M.W. Hewitt, Robert Hilton, Ty & Julie Hotchkiss, D.L. Hughes, Marshall Iliff, Gregory Inskip, H.C. Irving, Bill Jenion, Simone Jenion, George Jett, J.E. Johnson, **Teta Kain** (C.B.B.T.), Kerrie Kirkpatrick, D.L. Kirkwood, V.B. Kitchens, M.K. Klimkiewicz, Bev Leeuwenberg, H.E. LeGrand, Nancy Magnusson, Paul McQuarry, Carolyn Mills, Dorothy Mitchell, Dottie Mumford (DMd), Marianna Nuttle, Holly Obrecht, Michael O'Brien, Paul O'Brien, Tuna Onder, Brian O'Shea (BOa), Bonnie Ott, T.M. Padgett, F.L. Parks, Brian Pateson, Elizabeth Peacock, Grayson Pearce, Carl Perry, **E.L. Pitney** (lower MD Eastern Shore), Jim Poemenoy, Mary Pulley, Kyle Rambo, **J.G. Reese** (*Talbot*, MD), David Reinhold, Sue Ricciardi (SRI), **R.F. Ringler** (entire state of MD), Wilbur Rittenhouse, C.S. Robbins, Larry Robinson, B.M. Ross, Stephen Rottenborn, Don Schwab, F.R. Scott, L.T. Short, S.W. Simon, Eddie & Chris Slaughter, Dave Sobal (DSO), **Jo Solem** (*Howard*, MD), J.W. Sparks, Eleanor Standaert, J.L. Stasz, D.B. Stewart, C.E. Swift, P.W. Sykes, Brian Taber, Hank Taliaferro, Peter Tango, Brent Tarter (BTt), G.D. Therres, R.J. Tripician, Curt Vacek, **C.R. Vaughn** (lower MD Eastern Shore), Terry Villanueva, Dave Walbeck, Steve Westre, Debbie White (DWh), H.L. Wierenga, C.P. Wilds, Bill Williams, G.M. Williamson, G.B. Wilmot, Penultima Wiseman, C.C. Witt, Jean Woods.—**HENRY T. ARMISTEAD**, 523 E. Durham St., Philadelphia, PA 19119.



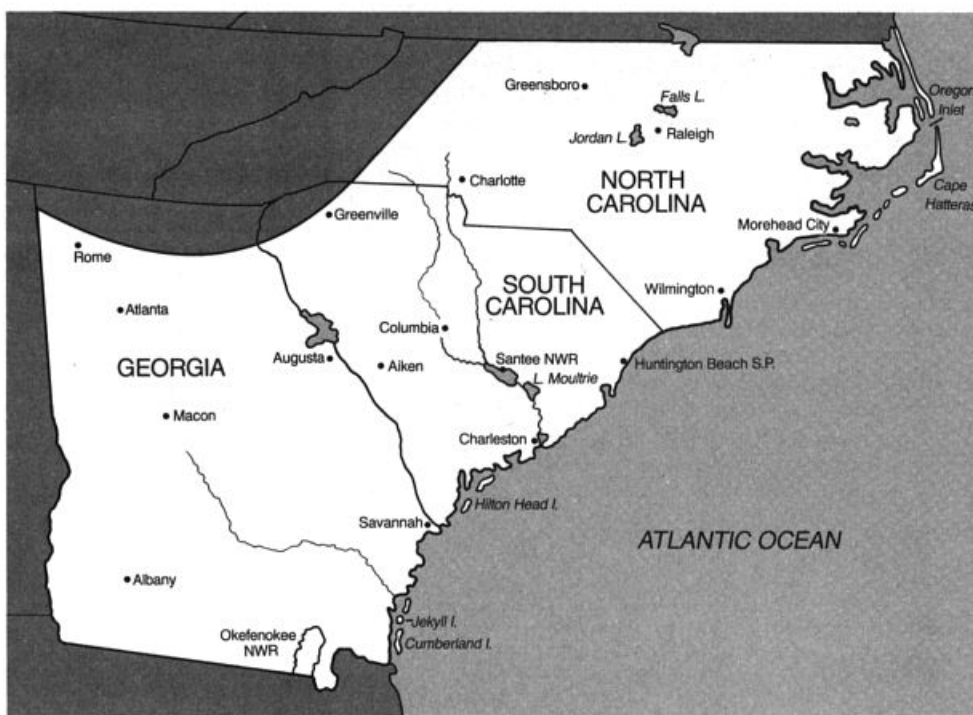
*Great Blue Heron*

SUSAN THOMAS

# SOUTHERN ATLANTIC COAST REGION

(Fall 1989 Report)

Harry E. LeGrand, Jr.



The weather for the fall season was wetter than usual, and the migration was poorer than usual. But most observers likely don't remember much of anything except the ultimate storm—Hurricane *Hugo*. Many of us eagerly await a hurricane, because it often brings extralimital records. *Hugo* did just that, but the damage wrought to the environment, arguably the most destructive natural disaster to hit the United States in our lifetime, far outweighed the benefits of extralimital records.

**HURRICANE HUGO**—This storm contained winds of 135 mph when it hit the coast just northeast of Charleston, South Carolina, at midnight on September 21–22. The northwesterly track carried it near Sumter and then to the west of Charlotte, North Carolina, at 6 a.m. on September 22, where winds were approximately 90 mph. The eye then continued in a north-northwesterly direction toward the northwestern corner of the state.

The following account of the hurricane is taken from Forsythe, printed in the Carolina Bird Club newsletter. "The path of the storm was such that there was increasing damage as you traveled north along the coast. So prime birding areas south of Charleston like the Savannah National Wildlife Refuge, and Bear Island Wildlife Management Area survived virtually unscathed; while the same was not true for areas north of Charleston. Especially hard hit were the Francis Marion National Forest, Cape Romain National Wildlife Refuge, the Santee Coast Reserve, and Huntington Beach State Park. In the 250,000 acre Francis Marion about 75% of the saw timber was destroyed. Timber volume losses are estimated at about 700–1000 million board feet. While pines were the main species affected, a large number of swamp hardwoods including mast-producing oaks were also destroyed. The brunt of the storm and its 15+ foot storm surge was felt by Bulls Island and the Cape Romain NWR where dikes were broken, letting saltwater into freshwater ponds, killing the vegetation. Trees were toppled, and the refuge visitors' center was washed away. Similar damage occurred at the

Santee Coastal Reserve, the Yawkey Center on South Island, the Baruch Property, and Huntington Beach State Park.

"In my view, the principal bird species affected by this storm include: the Red-cockaded Woodpecker, wintering waterfowl, and Bald Eagle. Perhaps the most adversely affected is the Red-cockaded Woodpecker population in the Francis Marion. Prior to the storm, the forest held one of the largest populations of this species in the world, and it was the only population which was increasing. The storm damaged almost all of the 470+ colonies with over 90% of the colonies having significant damage to den trees and feeding areas. Preliminary surveys showed over 60% of the birds may have died already, and additional mortality may occur from exposure and predation because of lack of den trees and from destruction of feeding areas by forest fires and Pine Beetle infestations.

"Another major effect of this storm will be on wintering waterfowl, especially puddle ducks. In areas such as the Santee Coastal Reserve, where some 40% of the Atlantic flyway's duck population overwinter, their main food, freshwater vegetation, was destroyed by saltwater intrusion into almost all freshwater ponds through broken dikes. This lack of food may have a tragic effect on waterfowl overwinter survival just at a time when duck numbers are at an historic low because of habitat destruction and drought on their breeding grounds.

"The hurricane also caused the loss of many super-canopy trees used by Bald Eagles for nesting. Perhaps 50% of eagle nest trees were destroyed. Time will tell if enough trees remain for eagles to use, or if the loss of these trees will become a major limiting factor on eagle population growth."

There were no reports of hurricane strays from the coast of the Region, in part because of the great destruction there; local birders often had to deal with home damage and inaccessibility (downed trees and powerlines). Actually, reports from the coast on later dates were negative; large numbers of waterbirds died, espe-



cially Brown Pelicans and waders. Birders inland, however, made numerous discoveries on the larger lakes near the hurricane's path. Even some parking lots and lawns contained birds practically never seen inland; all birds reported below were alive, and nearly all were healthy, although many were undoubtedly in rather weakened condition.

Jordan L., Chatham, NC, Sept. 22 (HL, RD, MT *et al.*): Sooty Tern three, Laughing Gull one, Royal Tern one.

Falls L., Wake, NC, Sept. 22 (RD): Sooty Tern one.

Lake Wheeler, Wake, NC, Sept. 22 (JM): Laughing Gull one.

Shelby, NC, area, parking lots and Moss L., Sept. 22 (AB): **White-tailed Tropicbird** one immature (third state inland record), Willet *nine*, Marbled Godwit *four*, Laughing Gull *285*, Herring Gull *45*, Forster's Tern *200*, Common Tern *135*, **Arctic Tern** one in parking lot (first state inland record and second inland for the Region), Sooty Tern one, **Bridled Tern** one (apparently only one previous state inland record), Royal Tern seven, Caspian Tern *16*, Black Tern *nine*, **Black Skimmer** *27*. Least Tern *six* in parking lot on Sept. 22 (RR). Moss L. on Sept. 23: Pomarine Jaeger one (AB, RD, DC, HL).

Lake Norman, NC, Sept. 23: **Leach's Storm-Petrel** one resting on lake within 50 yards (DC, RD, HL) (first state inland record), Laughing Gull one (TP), Royal Tern one (TP), Caspian Tern two, Common Tern *25+* (TP, DW), **Bridled Tern** two (TP), **Brown Noddy** three (DW) (first state inland record and 2nd inland record for the Region).

Goldsboro, NC, Sept. 22 (ED): **Audubon's Shearwater** one (apparently first Regional record away from tidewater), Pomarine Jaeger two, Laughing Gull *55+*, Caspian Tern *12*, Common Tern *35+*, Sooty Tern one, Black Tern three.

Fayetteville, NC, Sept. 22 (PJC): Caspian Tern one, Common Tern *36*.

Lake Murray dam, SC, Sept. 23 [not Sept. 22? This list of birds would be extremely unlikely a day after hurricane passage. — Reg. Ed.] (GS): **Cory's Shearwater** *50* (first state inland record and apparently 2nd inland for the Region), Sooty Shearwater *20* [extremely unlikely in fall — Reg. Ed.], **South Polar Skua** one (state hypothetical, and first state inland report and 2nd inland for the Region), Parasitic Jaeger *15* [all jaegers of this species? — Reg. Ed.], Royal Tern *150*, Caspian Tern *five*, **Sandwich Tern** three (apparently no previous inland state records), Sooty Tern two.

Lake Murray at Billy Dreher I., Sept. 23 [or Sept. 22?] (GS): Royal Tern *30*.

Riverbanks Zoo, Columbia, SC, Sept. 22 (KC): Least Tern *four*.

Lakes east of Columbia, SC, Sept. 22 (RC, DF *et al.*): Black-bellied Plover three, Willet one, **Marbled Godwit** one (first state inland record), Laughing Gull *60*, Royal Tern one, Caspian Tern three, **Sandwich Tern** one (first inland state record?), Common Tern one, Forster's Tern *35*.

Lugoff, SC, parking lot, Sept. 22 (LG): Forster's Tern *24*, with twice that number flying in area.

Lake Wateree dam, SC, Sept. 23 (LG): Laughing Gull *75*, Royal Tern two, Caspian Tern eight, **Sandwich Tern** three, Forster's Tern *20*, **Black Skimmer** *12*.

Augusta, GA, Sept. 23 (GR): **Sandwich Tern** *2* (first state inland record?).

In the above totals, Ring-billed Gulls are not included; this species was present on most lakes. Also, it appears likely that Forster's and Common terns were often misidentified; determining the identity of these species on large lakes (many of which are one to several miles wide),

and during windy conditions, is very difficult

**LOONS TO STORKS** — Sykes observed a **Pacific/Arctic Loon** Nov. 19 at Tybee I., GA, with "small white patches on the flanks. As viewed from the rear, the patches stood out like 'tail lights'." The details suggest Arctic Loon, which is virtually unknown on this continent outside of western Alaska. Pacific Loon has been photographed from North Carolina but is hypothetical in Georgia. The first nesting of Pied-billed Grebe for the Atlanta, GA, area was documented when one young was seen in Clayton in August and September (PB *et al.*) Single Red-necked Grebes were all in tidewater North Carolina: Nov. 4 at both Bodie I. (RD) and Pamlico Pt. (PJC, MEW) and Nov. 24 near the Cedar I. ferry terminal (PSa). Dean had as many as three Eared Grebes in a day at Goldsboro, NC, with a grand total of four for the period Sept. 21–Nov. 30. One to two Eareds were at Ash Pond at Rum Cr. W.M.A., GA, Sept. 30–Nov. 22 (TJ *et al.*), another was at Cape Hatteras point, NC, Oct. 27–Nov. 5 (DC, RD, MaL), and still another was photographed at a golf course pond at Mt. Pleasant, SC, Oct. 28 (PN).

As usual, a handful of pelagic trips were made, essentially all those reported being out of Oregon Inlet, NC, in August and September. The better tubenose results included 63 Black-capped Petrels Aug. 18 (HL, RD party), 952 Cory's Shearwaters Aug. 26 (HL *et al.*), two Band-rumped Storm-Petrels — the only convincing report for the season — Aug. 18 (HL, RD, ST, ph. NB), and a Leach's Storm-Petrel Sept. 2 (PD party). An excellent total of Am. White Pelicans for North Carolina was of eight at Pea I Nov. 4–30 (RD, m.ob.), with nine there in late November (HH). Seven at Andrews I., GA, Oct. 15 (HO) were notable for that state. Apparently a record state count was of *60+* Anhingas soaring in a thermal at Goldsboro, NC, Sept. 24 (ED), likely displaced from farther south by *Hugo*.

Belatedly reported was a "Great White" Heron near Raleigh, NC, Apr. 21 (WI, JM), remarkably the 3rd *pedmont* record for the state in the past several years. The post-breeding dispersal of waders inland this season was lackluster, partly because of high water levels at the reservoirs. One to two Reddish Egrets (an adult and an immature) were present at Ft. Fisher, NC, from summer to Sept. 3 (DC, ED, m.ob.), one of perhaps fewer than a dozen state records. The species is somewhat more regular farther south, as expected, with two immatures at North Inlet, SC, Sept. 16 (LG, CM) and one immature at Jekyll I., GA, Sept. 24 (BD, PBo). Locally notable post-breeding counts for Cattle Egrets were of *100+* at Goldsboro (ED, GH) and *900+* near Fayetteville (PJC), both in late August. Another surprising count for North Carolina was of *60-70* White Ibises near Goldsboro in early August (ED); in addition, one *Nov 21* at Winston-Salem, NC (RS *et al.*) was about two months later than the usual piedmont departure. Two inland Glossy Ibises each were reported at Goldsboro Sept. 24 (ED) and near Zebulon, NC, Sept. 8 (RD). Georgia, as usual, had all the Roseate Spoonbills — an excellent *15* at Andrews I., Aug. 18–20 (BD), with one still present there Oct. 15 (HO), and another at the Altamaha Waterfowl M.A. Sept. 7–11 (GSt, FT). Far inland Wood Storks were single birds at Lenoir, NC, July 16 (TR, ABo), in Greene, GA, Aug. 12 (PY), and at Edgefield, SC, Oct. 1 (RC).

**WATERFOWL** — For some strange reason, no Fulvous Whistling-Ducks were reported from Georgia or South Carolina, but a banner flight, unprecedented in recent years, reached e. North Carolina. A count of *61*, in 3 flocks, was made at private impoundments near L. Matta-

muskeet Nov. 25 (JFa, RH, *vide* KD), seven were at Goldsboro Nov. 4 (ED, GH, SG, RRa), six were at Bodie I. Nov. 18 (HWi), and two each were in *Lenoir* Nov. 23 (*vide* VP) and near Otway in November (JF, BH). Tundra Swans, one of the few waterfowl species obviously increasing in the Region, were in double figures at 3 South Carolina sites, including 60 at Huntington Beach S.P. Nov. 25 (RC, CE). A wary Mute Swan arrived, from parts unknown, with other waterfowl in the fall near Otway, NC, where seen Nov. 27 (JF, BH). Nugent found two imm. Greater White-fronted Geese near Charleston Nov. 2. Almost to be expected in fall or winter, an ad. Ross' Goose was encountered at Pea I. Nov. 11–30 (HWi, DD, SD, MT).

A N. Pintail from early summer into fall at Peachtree City L., GA (PB), was most surprising. Four Eur. Wigeons were at North Pond at Pea I. Nov. 4 (RD); the species was seen at that site Oct. 7 (AB, BL) to late November (HH, DD). Another Eurasian was at L. Mattamuskeet during the last half of November (KD, JW). A Ring-necked Duck present in *Greene*, GA, in summer was seen again Sept. 9 (PY), and two were in *Monroe*, GA, Sept. 2 (MC, TJ). Perhaps a record Regional count for this species was of 14,700 tallied on an aerial census at Mattamuskeet N.W.R., NC, Nov. 22 (*vide* KD). Seldom reported in fall, a Common Eider Nov. 4 at Bodie I. (RD) was very early, as was a Harlequin Duck at nearby Oregon Inlet Nov. 27 (DD *et al.*). Scoters inland are always notable; a ♀ Black was at L. Norman, NC, Nov. 4 (DW, RB) and a ♀ Surf was at Goldsboro Oct. 25–31 (ED). A Hooded Merganser Aug. 19 at Ocracoke I., NC (TP, DW) was quite early, as was a Common Merganser Oct. 21 at Jordan L., NC (RD).

**KITES TO CRANES** — Extralimital Am. Swallow-tailed Kites were seen Sept. 24 near Wilson, NC (PWr), Aug. 12 at Landrum, SC (ST), and Aug. 27 at nearby Columbus, NC (ST); the latter 2 sightings might have referred to the same individual. Mississippi Kites away from their breeding range were at Ft. Fisher, NC, Oct. 7 (RC, SC), Sesquicentennial S.P., SC, Sept. 30 (RC, CE), L. Oconee, GA, Aug. 12 (BP, PY), and two birds at Conyers, GA, Aug. 19 (FM). Thompson again did much hawk-watching in the Tryon, NC, area, and his one-day count of 2335 Broad-winged Hawks at nearby Landrum, SC, Sept. 27 was far greater than other totals. A dark-morph Rough-legged Hawk was well described Nov. 21 at Savannah N.W.R., SC (FP, RRi), for a remarkable record. A Golden Eagle chasing a Bald Eagle Oct. 21 in n.e. *Pamlico*, NC (PJC, MEW, TMcL), was quite a sight; the only other Golden was Nov. 24–30 at L. Mattamuskeet (KD *et al.*), where reported every few winters. The fall flight of falcons was again rather mediocre, and Am. Kestrels, once common to abundant in fall along the coast, are now sometimes outnumbered by the relatively uncommon Merlin. Of the many inland reports of Merlins and Peregrine Falcons, the more notable reports were of "skyscraper" Peregrines noted in Atlanta Aug. 29 (PB) and in Charlotte most of the fall (m.ob.).

A Clapper Rail found injured in downtown Fayetteville Sept. 22 (GD) was obviously displaced by Hurricane *Hugo*. The first nesting of **American Coot** for the Atlanta area, and perhaps the first in the piedmont of the Region, was documented when an adult raised three young at the *Clayton* Water Treatment Plant in August and September (PB), plus two adults and one young were at nearby Griffin Res. Aug. 27 (PR). Five Sandhill Cranes, presumably seen in flight, were near Columbus, NC, Oct. 23 (*vide* ST), and nine were locally rare Nov. 22 at the Savannah spoil area, SC (FP, RRi). The peak total of 400+ Nov. 19 in *Mon-*

*roe*, GA (TJ), was a good tally

**SHOREBIRDS** — Inland shorebirding was the poorest in years, thanks to above-normal to record levels of rainfall all year keeping lakes and ponds filled; mudflats were red-letter finds! The better inland counts of Black-bellied Plovers were of nine near Goldsboro Nov. 11 (ED) and four near Mayesville, SC, Nov. 3 (LG, EDa). There were 10 reports of Lesser Golden-Plover, about average for recent autumns; disappointingly, all were singles except for two at Pea I. Sept. 4 (PD). Inland Am. Avocets are always of interest; one appeared at Goldsboro Sept. 7 (ED), and Cooper had the species at impoundments near Aurora, NC, from mid-October to Nov. 16, with a peak of eight Oct. 31.

Late inland shorebirds included a Lesser Yellowlegs at *Clayton*, GA, Nov. 26 (BD *et al.*), a Spotted Sandpiper Nov. 4–24 at *Pactolus*, *Pitt*, NC (JW, VP), and an excellent nine Upland Sandpipers at Goldsboro Sept. 29 (ED). Long-billed Curlew reports were of singles at 3 North Carolina coastal sites: Portsmouth I. Aug. 10 (JW), Long Beach Aug. 10 (BB), and the Ft. Fisher area Oct. 7 (C.B.C.) & 23 (JF). A few Hudsonian Godwits are always seen in fall on the North Carolina coast, but there were several unusual reports. Quite late were one just north of Beaufort, NC, Nov. 12 (JF) and another at Pea I. Nov. 24–25 (PW, HL, RD); and extremely rare in South Carolina were birds Sept. 24–Oct. 22 at the Savannah spoil area, with 10 on Oct. 21 (SCa).

There's no doubt when the inland flight of Sanderlings passes through the Region; the 7 inland reports were all Sept. 8–26, with the highest count being of five in *Monroe*, GA, Sept. 8 (TJ). White-rumped Sandpipers are essentially coastal in the East in fall, with the only inland sightings being of two at Winston-Salem Sept. 24 (DD) and at *Pactolus*, NC, Oct. 22 (JW, VP), and singles at *Clayton*, GA, Oct. 8 (A.A.S.) and Rocky Mount, NC, Oct. 15 (RD). Three Baird's Sandpipers in *Laurens*, GA, Aug. 12 (HP) made an excellent inland total. Other Georgia Baird's were at Jekyll I. Aug. 19 (BD), *Clayton* Sept. 3–4 (PB, A.A.S.), and Andrews I. Oct. 14 (JG, PM, TM); and North Carolina Baird's were one at Cape Hatteras Sept. 3 (JK) and two the next day at Pea I. (PD), a most disappointing showing for that state. The only Curlew Sandpiper report was a holdover from the July influx at Pea I., with one found Aug. 6 (DC, ML). Cooper had an excellent count of 184 Stilt Sandpipers away from the coast at Aurora, NC, Sept. 14; other notable Stilt Sandpiper reports included nine at Goldsboro Sept. 26 (ED) and one Nov. 26 at Beaufort, NC (JF).

There were 8 reports of Buff-breasted Sandpipers, but the peak count of only two birds might be attributed both to high water levels inland and the still depressed global populations, apparently, of the species over the past decade. Ruffs went undetected for the season, and the only Long-billed Dowitcher away from the tidewater zone was one Sept. 24 near Greenville, NC (JW). A good total of 14 Wilson's Phalaropes was at Pea I. Aug. 19 (HL, KK *et al.*). In addition to a handful of other coastal reports, two were at Goldsboro Aug. 24 (ED), two were near Aurora Sept. 14 (SC), and one was near Dublin, GA, Aug. 12 (HP). In addition to pelagic reports, single Red-necked Phalaropes were found at 5 coastal sites, plus two were seen at Goldsboro Sept. 30 (RT).

**SKUAS TO TERNS** — DuMont's very successful Sept. 2 pelagic trip off Oregon Inlet encountered both a S. Polar Skua and an imm. Long-tailed Jaeger, birds that would

make an Atlantic Coast trip a success, even if no other birds were seen at all! Six Pomarine and three Parasitic jaegers were also reported on this trip. Other notable jaegers on pelagic trips off that inlet were six Pominas Aug 18 (HL, RD *et al.*) and an ad. Long-tailed Aug. 27 (BO, HL, m.ob.).

Fifteen Laughing Gulls near Ayden, NC, Nov. 4–10 (JW) were somewhat inland from tidewater, and four more Laughings were at Jordan L. Oct. 21 (RD). An ad. **Franklin's Gull** at Jekyll I. Oct. 8 (PS, TM, DH, BBl) furnished approximately the 6th Georgia record; it was mostly in breeding plumage. The sole record of Common Black-headed Gull came from Hatteras, NC, where one was seen in late November (CF). Seldom reported before the Christmas count period, an Iceland Gull was noted at Avon, NC, Nov. 15 (DC). On the other hand, Lesser Black-backed Gulls are now regularly being reported as early as September, when one was at Cape Hatteras point Sept. 17 (JW, ED) and several adults were at Jekyll I. from late September to Oct. 21 (*vide* TM). Other notable gull reports were of a Great Black-backed at St. Simons I., GA, Aug. 18–20 (BD), a Black-legged Kittiwake at Cape Hatteras point Nov. 4 (RD), and a **Sabine's Gull** at Cape Hatteras Sept. 9 (HH, BBa), for apparently the 9th record for North Carolina.

Most of the significant terns were inland, associated with *Hugo*. At least the third report for North Carolina of a "Cayenne" Tern (or yellow-billed Sandwich Tern), all from Cape Hatteras, was made by Lewis and Bryan Oct. 7. Of course, unless such a bird is banded, it would be almost impossible to know if such birds are just aberrant Sandwiches or are truly birds of the Cayenne taxon from northern South America. The non-breeding Roseate Tern that lingered at that cape in July was last noted Aug. 19 (DW, TP). An Arctic Tern was reported, without details, from this cape Sept. 3 (PD). The only significant inland reports of Common and Forster's terns were related to *Hugo*, but a Least Tern at Greenville, NC, Aug. 14 and two the following day (VP) provided a good non-storm tern record. Late summer and early fall pelagic trips off North Carolina usually find Bridled Terns fairly common and Sooty Terns uncommon. For some unknown reason, Sooties were as common as, or more numerous than, Bridleds, with counts of Sooties off Oregon Inlet including 28 on Aug. 26, 21 the following day, and 39 Sept. 16 (HL *et al.*) The declining Black Tern was found in good numbers at a few spots, such as 350 at Ft. Fisher Aug. 20 (RD), 46 at Goldsboro Aug. 24 (ED), and 40 in *Monroe*, GA, Aug. 21 (TJ, DaF, KaD).

**CUCKOOS TO FLYCATCHERS** — The elusive Black-billed Cuckoo was reported only 5 times, including a remarkable bird *Dec. 3* at Santee N.W.R., SC (HS, ZB). A Short-eared Owl was a good find Nov. 7 as seen in flight in the afternoon near Hillsborough, NC (HC). A N. Saw-whet Owl seen in a yard at Buxton, NC, Nov. 29 (B & FTe) was undoubtedly the same bird that overwintered there a year ago. At least three Common Nighthawks were still present in Atlanta on the night of Nov. 1–2 (PB). Fussell has found that Whip-poor-wills linger regularly in *Carteret*, NC, into early winter and may occasionally overwinter, but a tape recording at night is necessary to get the birds to respond (with a "wurk" call or by flying toward the tape). He had four birds respond with call notes at Cedar I. Nov. 11. Rufous Hummingbirds (including *Selasphorus* assumed to be of this species) are reported in multiple numbers now in the Region each fall and winter. An imm. male was seen at Smarr, *Monroe*, GA, Nov. 4–22 (TJ, PS, KaD, RE),

two birds of unreported age and sex were banded at feeders in Atlanta in the fall (*vide* TM), and an imm. bird was at Tryon, NC, Nov. 16–Dec. 1 (ST).

The rare Olive-sided Flycatcher was noted twice, in North Carolina Sept. 4 near Duck (PD) and Oct. 13 near Raleigh (JM). A wood-pewee (sp.) was very late Nov. 18 at L. Norman (AB); Western Wood-Pewee has never been reported from the Region. There were at least 10 reports of Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, an impressive number, although banding efforts in previous years have indicated that this species and the other *Empidonax* flycatchers are not really rare in the fall season. Observers of more than a single Yellow-bellied were F. Michael at Conyers, GA, with singles Aug. 19 and Sept. 14 and two on Sept. 20, and D. Wright in *Mecklenburg*, NC, with singles Sept. 17 & 29. A calling Alder Flycatcher Oct. 10 in *Mecklenburg*, NC (DW), was unusually late.

This is getting redundant, but again this fall all Western Kingbird records (five) were of single birds along the North Carolina coast. A 4th inland record of Gray Kingbird for South Carolina was provided by one just east of Greeleyville Oct. 27–28 (LG, KC, RC, SD). The species undoubtedly nested this summer at Jekyll I., as two adults and two young were there Aug. 19 (BD), and another Gray was at Ft. Fisher Sept. 22 (SC) for an always noteworthy North Carolina sighting. Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were reported only in the Cape Hatteras area, where one was seen by numerous birders at Buxton Oct. 4–14 (MaL *et al.*); others were reports Aug. 10 at Cape Hatteras point (RP) and Nov. 18 near Frisco (CA).

**SWALLOWS TO WARBLERS** — Excellent counts of swallows for North Carolina were of 100+ Rough-wingeds, presumably displaced by *Hugo* to Greenville, NC, Sept. 24 (JW), and 1400+ Banks on powerlines near Aurora Aug. 17 (SC). Red-breasted Nuthatches, after essentially non-flights in Fall 1987 and 1988, arrived in the Region in just moderate numbers, still a far cry from an invasion year. Seven Blue-gray Gnatcatchers made a notable count Nov. 25 at New Bern, NC (BH, JF, RBo, KW). *Catharus* thrushes, as expected, were in low numbers, perhaps never to recover. The only significant report of the group was of a Swainson's Thrush on the early date of Aug. 18 near Jordan L. (PSa).

One of the rarest of the eastern migrants in fall in the Southeast is the Warbling Vireo. One noted at Columbus, NC, Sept. 16 (ST) was seen by a veteran observer who is afield almost daily in fall. The considerably more numerous, yet scarce, Philadelphia Vireo was encountered 10 times, in the period Sept. 9–Oct. 25; the only coastal reports were of one at Buxton, NC, Sept. 24 (JN) and one banded at Jekyll I. Oct. 11 (TM).

The best flight of Golden-winged Warbler was noted by the Atlanta Audubon Society, which conducted bird walks daily at Fernbank Science Center near that city; the peak count was of five on Sept. 9 (*vide* GSc). Two "Brewster's" Warblers were noted at the above locale on Sept. 23 (GSc), and other "Brewster's" were seen near Stone Mt., GA, Oct. 8 (PB) and north of Charlotte Sept. 14 (DW, HW). The extremely rare "Lawrence's Warbler" hybrid was noted near Atlanta Sept. 16 (GSc). Of the handful of Nashville Warblers, the most unusual was a very late bird at New Bern, NC, Nov. 19 (BH); another at Ft. Fisher Nov. 4 (SC) was not quite as surprising. Despite another lack-luster fall flight of warblers, there were a few notable counts along the coast, such as 53 Cape May Warblers banded at Jekyll I. Sept. 25 (*vide* TM) and 200 Blackpoll Warblers in the Corolla and Duck areas, NC, Oct. 14–15

(JN, GM).

As usual, the only Cerulean Warbler reports were in the w. portion of the Region, particularly n. Georgia, with the best being four at Athens Aug. 14 (PY). Late Prothonotary Warblers were singles seen Oct. 9 near Williamston, NC (ML, RY), and banded at Jekyll I. Sept. 28 (TM). Although Connecticut Warblers do migrate through the inland portions of the Region, most are found along the coast, which is where the season's reports were made — singles banded at Jekyll I. on Sept. 28, 29, & 30, and Oct. 12 (TM), and observed Oct. 8 at Buxton, NC (BL). DuMont had the only Mourning Warbler, at Duck, NC, Sept. 4. Just 5 reports of Wilson's Warbler, none from n. Georgia, was a disappointment, although late birds were found Nov. 11 near Thomasville, GA (RLC), and Nov. 22 at the Savannah spoil area, SC (FP, RRI).

**TANAGERS TO FINCHES** — R. Davis noted a strong migration correction flight at Pea I. on the morning of Oct. 22. Such morning flights, usually directed to the northwest following a night of heavy migration (mainly to the southeast), are directed northward on the Outer Banks north of Cape Hatteras because Pamlico Sound lies to the west. Birds often pile up at the northern end of Pea I., where 80 Indigo Buntings and seven Dickcissels, along with many cardueline finches, were found in 2 hours. Other Dickcissels were four in a flock in Greene, GA, Sept. 16 (PY) and singles near Raleigh Oct. 15 (JM), in n. Mecklenburg, NC, Oct. 29–31 (DW, HW), and at Ft. Fisher Nov. 4 (SC).

Clay-colored and Lark sparrows were limited to coastal sites, as is frequently the case in fall; all were single birds except for two Clay-colored at Pea I., Oct. 22 (RD) and three Larks at Duck, NC, Sept. 4 (PD). Notable Grasshopper Sparrows involved probable breeding birds in the North Carolina coastal plain; the species was again present all summer at the *New Hanover* airport, and two were singing Aug. 5 (SC, DW), three to six were near Grantham, Wayne, Aug. 6–8 (WC), and three were near Fayetteville Aug. 26 (PJC). The elusive Le Conte's Sparrow was encountered twice, in the piedmont of North Carolina: at Raven Rock S.P. (PH — no date given) and Nov. 1 in Mecklenburg (DW). Lincoln's Sparrows, elusive but not really rare, were found 6 times, including one singing near Zebulon, NC, Oct. 29 and Nov. 5 (EP)! There were 4 reports of Lapland Longspurs, but surprisingly they represented all 3 states; one at the Savannah spoil area Nov. 18 (SCa, PYo) and another at Augusta Nov. 23 (AW, VW, GR) were very rare in the Coastal Plain of South Carolina and Georgia, respectively. Laplands were also at Goldsboro Nov. 23 (ED) and at Cape Hatteras Oct. 19 (JF). Single Snow Buntings appeared at Ft. Macon S.P., NC, Oct. 27 (NL) and Cape Hatteras Nov. 4 (RD).

A very good count of 3500 Bobolinks was seen leaving a stand of *Phragmites* at dawn Sept. 14 near Aurora (SC). Isn't it nice to know that common reed is good for something! The meager, but regular, early fall coastal migration of Yellow-headed Blackbird was validated by just one sighting, an imm. male at Pea I. Sept. 4 (PD). Another, a male (what age?) visited an Atlanta feeder Sept. 26–30 (JD). Good details were received for three Brewer's Blackbirds at cattle pens near Charlotte Nov. 17 (DW) and for two birds at a Charleston feeder Nov. 15 (PN). Despite the abundance of this species in the West, and its being locally common in winter in a few places in Georgia, it is definitely rare in the Carolinas, with details being strongly encouraged for all reports. North Carolina's new state bird for the season was a ♂ **Shiny Cowbird** found by Cooper

Nov 16 near Aurora, feeding on a lawn with Brown-headed Cowbirds near an industrial area. Photos are now being reviewed by the state's Bird Records Committee, although the details are very convincing. Following on the heels of this summer's South Carolina first **Shiny Cowbirds**, Post had an ad. male at his Sullivans Island feeder Aug. 23–24 and a female there Aug. 25. These two were in different plumage from the two seen in July at another Sullivans Island site (*vide* WP).

Again this fall, the only Red Crossbill report was from the mountains, just outside the Region. Pine Siskins hinted of a moderate to good winter for them, as many birders found at least a few, but Evening Grosbeaks were found only twice. It's been nearly a decade since our Region truly had large numbers of these species, particularly the grosbeak, during the fall and winter.

**OBSERVERS** — Charlie Alston, Atlanta Audubon Society, Benton Basham (BBa), Roy Beddard, Bill Blakeslee, Phyllis Bowen (PBo), Rich Boyd (RBo), Allen Boynton (ABO), Ned Brinkley, Patrick Brisse, Bill Brokaw, Allen Bryan, Zack Bynum, Kevin Calhoun, Steve Calver (SCa), Carolina Bird Club, Derb Carter, Robin Carter, Hartsell Cash, Mike Chapman, Sam Cooper, R.L. Crawford, P.J. Crutchfield, Wesley Cureton, Evelyn Dabbs (EDA), Kathy Darley (KaD), Kelly Davis, Ricky Davis, Eric Dean, Greg Deering, Steve Dennis, Jackie Dilworth, David Disher, Susan Disher, Bruce Dralle, Paul DuMont, Caroline Eastman, Rosemary Evans, John Farley (JFa), Dan Forster (DaF), Dennis Forsythe, Chris Foster, John Fussell, Lex Glover, Joe Greenberg, Sue Greenberg, Dale Hardee, Paul Hart, Herb Hendrickson, Robert Hester, Bob Holmes, Gene Howe, Wayne Irvin, Terry Johnson, John Kelly, Kris Kristofferson, Neill Lee, Harry LeGrand, Bob Lewis, Merrill Lynch, Marcia Lyons (MaL), Chris Marsh, Greg Massey, Tim McLaurin (TMcL), Francis Michael, Peggy Moore, Terry Moore, Jim Mulholland, Jeremy Nance, Perry Nugent, Bob Odear, Helen Ogren, Veronica Pantelidis, Hunter Patterson, Taylor Piephoff, Will Post, Eloise Potter, R. Poulin, Frederick Pratt, Bill Pulliam, Robert Raffel, Paul Raney, George Reeves, Richard Rickard (RRI), Tony Robinson, Robert Ruiz, Paul Saraceni (PSa), Georgann Schmalz (GSc), Glenn Smith, Harry Snavely, Ramona Snavely, George Steele (GSt), Paul Sykes, Bonnie & Frank Terrerri (B & FTe), Simon Thompson, Fred Todd, Mike Tove, Russ Tyndall, Heathy Walker, Anne Waters, Vernon Waters, M.E. Whitfield, Haven Wiley (HWi), Ken Wilkens, Peter Worthington, David Wright, John Wright, Paula Wright (PW), Peter Yaukey, Randy Yelverton, Pat Young (PYo). — **HARRY E. LeGRAND, JR., N.C. Natural Heritage Program, P.O. Box 27687, Raleigh, NC 27611.**



# FLORIDA REGION

John C. Ogden

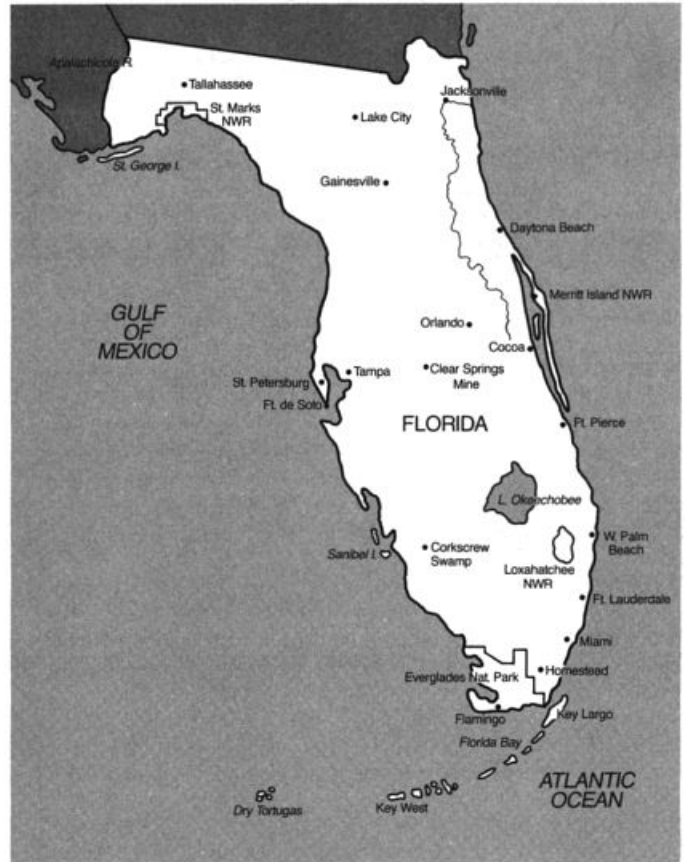
This 1989–1990 winter season report, like most other Florida Region reports for many years, contains important contributions from Johnnie Johnson of Cocoa, Florida. Johnnie died in April 1990; he was a good friend for many birders in Florida, and he will be long remembered.

Also long remembered will be the massive freeze that swept the entire peninsula during late December. Various labels as “the Big Chill” or “the Christmas Freeze,” this front started with measurable amounts of snow between Tallahassee and Jacksonville December 23, and ended with 14 consecutive hours of below-freezing temperatures in sub-tropical south Dade County through Christmas morning. Damage to citrus and other exotic vegetation in central Florida, to a surprisingly broad array of native and exotic plants in south Florida, and to coastal mangroves everywhere, was severe. Those who preach the perils of global warming will find few early converts in Florida, which has suffered through three of the worst freezes of the century, all since 1983 (December 1983, January 1985, and December 1989)!

Otherwise, the winter was generally mild to hot, with temperatures averaging almost 5 degrees above normal, state-wide, for all of January. Rainfall was well below average at most locations, thus continuing the serious Everglades drought into the second year. I hasten to add, when water managers in south Florida agree to reestablish more natural water deliveries to Everglades National Park, these low rainfall years will be far less detrimental to that ecosystem. The number of wading birds nesting on the mainland portion of the Park during the past five years has been less than 5 percent of the number that nested in the same region during the 1930s–1940s!

Suspected avian responses to the Christmas freeze were not widely reported. Between late December and mid-January, what appeared to be a high percentage of the eastern populations of Tree Swallows, Gray Catbirds, and Yellow-rumped Warblers arrived in south Florida. The catbirds remained through the period, while numbers of the other two tailed off noticeably after mid-January; did they start back north? Record high counts of Tree Swallows and Yellow-rumped were also counted on one Polk County Christmas Bird Count December 30.

Other possible consequences of the freeze were less certain. Cedar Waxwings arrived in central Florida by late December, and appeared rather abruptly in south Florida between January 5 & 9; waxwing numbers increased steadily thereafter, until they were abundant by the end of the period at many peninsular locations. Some north Florida observers suggested that the first appearance of Dark-eyed Juncos and Fox Sparrows coincided with the storm. While this may be true, much of Florida experienced a heavy sparrow flight that began well before the freeze (see Sparrows). Other cyclic species—American Robin, Pine Siskin, American Goldfinch, Purple Finch—were reported either only locally or in low numbers, suggesting again that food supplies farther north, rather than low temperatures, probably are the primary factors governing such flights.



**ABBREVIATIONS** — E.N.P. = Everglades National Park; F.O.S. = Florida Ornithological Society.

**LOONS TO SPOONBILLS**—The only Com. Loon flight was Dec. 13–14 at Lake Worth Pier, *Palm Beach*, where 33 were counted southbound (HPL, BV, KG). Single Red-throated Loons were at the Lake Worth Pier Dec. 12 for the 2nd *Palm Beach* record (HPL, KG), and at Port Canaveral, *Brevard*, Dec. 27 (JJ, MHI). A remarkably high count of 13 Eared Grebes represented the maximum total from 4 different locations in *Polk*, where they wintered (CLG, m.ob.). Even more remarkable, the high estimate of Am. White Pelicans this winter in the *Polk* phosphate impoundments was of 7000, Jan. 6 (PIF). This amazing number, taken with the large numbers of wintering waterfowl in the same impoundments during recent winters, suggests that substantial adjustments by waterbirds are being made to take advantage of these man-made habitats. Or, since surface phosphate mines have existed in cent. Florida for many decades, is it only that we're seeing better coverage by birders now than in the past? Elsewhere, 350 Am. White Pelicans, a local high count, were circling over Lake Crews, *Highlands*, Dec. 16 (BK, MK). Ignoring the Christmas freeze, Brown Pelicans initiated nesting at Marco Island in late December, the earliest ever during 18 years of record keeping for the area (THB).

There was little to report for wading birds, perhaps because of the s. Florida drought. A large roost of Yellow-crowned Night-Herons for the Region was 75–100 birds in s.w. *Broward*, Feb. 3 (CP, JLB). Rare in winter so far north, one Least Bittern was at Wakulla River State Park. *Wakulla*, Jan. 5 (SAC), while at the other end of the

Region, and on the same day, a dark-morph "Cory's" Least Bittern was well studied at Eco Pond at Flamingo, E.N.P. (SAS, PWS). Locally high winter counts included 12 Glossy Ibises at St. Marks N.W.R. through the period (CSG), 11 Roseate Spoonbills at Port Canaveral Dec. 30 (JJ), and 67 spoonbills at Alafia Bank, *Hillsborough*, Jan. 24 (RTP).

**WATERFOWL** — For the 2nd consecutive winter, the Florida peninsula paraded a remarkably diverse assemblage of waterfowl, a phenomenon with paradoxical overtones in the face of such low waterfowl numbers, continent-wide. Following are the highlights for what may be a record high 15 species of waterfowl of noteworthy occurrence for a single Florida report. Tundra Swans penetrated as far south as s.w. *Alachua*, with one Dec. 17 & 18 (KSW, SAN); others were one at Lake Seminole, *Jackson*, Dec. 14 (DB), and two at Hickory Mound Impoundment, *Taylor*, Feb. 13 (JTK). Two species of geese made impressive showings in the Region. At least 10 reports of Snow Geese included one as far south as the Boynton Beach area, *Palm Beach*, Dec. 4–10 (AW), and high counts of 15 at St. Petersburg, *Pinellas*, Dec. 15 (LAH), and 28 at Paynes Prairie, *Alachua*, Dec. 17 (WHA, JHH). Greater White-fronted Geese, rare anywhere in the Region, occurred on Paynes Prairie, with six on both Dec. 18 and Feb. 18 (RMH), Long Pond near Chiefland, *Levy*, one Jan. 9 (SRM), and unusually far south in Water Conservation Area 3A, n.w. *Dade*, one on Feb. 26 (WRH).

About one-half of the birds in a flock of 21 Mottled Ducks at Bradenton, *Manatee*, Jan. 18, were obvious Mallard hybrids (LSA). My favorite flat-faced fowl, the Am. Black Duck, is, unfortunately, rarely reported in the peninsula. The only well-documented (not Mottled) Blacks for this winter were four on Crews Lake, *Pasco*, Feb. 25 (DR, PY, BP). Although I heard rumors of several Cinnamon Teal, the only one mentioned in the area editor reports was in the Orlando Wilderness Area, *Orange*, Feb. 22 (DWF, RLP). Unusually far north in the peninsula, 13 Fulvous Whistling-Ducks were on Alligator Lake, near Lake City, *Columbia*, Dec. 14 & 15 (RL, PDS).

Last winter, I reported a **Harlequin Duck** from *Duval* and suggested that this must be one of the rarest ducks to appear in the Region. So one year later, Harlequins appeared at 2 new locations, one female at St. Marks N.W.R. Dec. 9 (CSG), and one at Sebastian Inlet, *Indian River*, Feb. 9–21 (MP, m.ob.). I heard strong rumors of four Harlequins at Flagler Beach, *Flagler*, in January; bird-watchers will do a service to Florida ornithology if they will take time in their quest for rarities to document this record! Common Goldeneyes made it as far south as Hicoria, *Highlands*, one on Dec. 29 (JWF), and Ft. Desoto Park, *Pinellas*, one Jan. 3 (DJD, KDN). Also of note, both for their rarity and southern penetration, were two White-winged Scoters off Cedar Key, *Levy*, Dec. 30 (BC, LC, DCH, BW), and three of the same at Honeymoon Island, *Pinellas*, Jan. 14 (PGT). Unquestionably, the most intriguing report (could they have been escapes?) was of three **Masked Ducks** in estuarine marsh near the junction of Barnett and Daumay Creeks near the mouth of the Suwannee R., *Levy*, Jan. 17 (SRM, DWM). Convincing details were submitted, including dark stripes on the faces, ruddy on the backs of the heads, and white wing patches; they jumped straight up out of the water when taking flight!

The remainder of the waterfowl observations included here are for unusually high counts, indicating among other things that this was a great Hooded Merganser winter in c. Florida. Up to 800 Green-winged Teal were in the

Orlando Wilderness Park, *Orange*, Feb. 22 (BS, DWF), and 1500 Ring-necked Ducks were on nearby Lake Cherokee throughout the period (DWF). For Bufflehead, 17 in s.w. *Hernando*, made a high count (DG, BP). High counts of Hooded Mergansers were reported widely in the N. Peninsula, including 112 in e. *Orange*, Dec. 1 (RLP, JB), 5700 in the *Polk* phosphate mines, Dec. 2 (PJF), and 46 near Ruskin, *Hillsborough*, Jan. 10 (RTP).

**RAPTORS** — One or two Black-shouldered Kites were seen on each monthly aerial survey of Water Conservation Area 3A, *Dade* and *Broward*, between December and February (WRH). As expected, Snail Kites scattered throughout s. and c. Florida in response to the Everglades drought. Many seemed to end up hunting along canals scattered throughout s. Florida, or they headed for the more permanently flooded c. Florida lakes. Up to 80 Snail Kites were on L. Kissimmee, *Osceola*, throughout the period (CLG, JAR), while the northernmost reported was one near Bartow, *Polk*, Feb. 11 (LSA, BHA), and one in the Orlando Wilderness Park, *Orange*, through Jan. 25 (JB, DWF). One Snail Kite over the Archbold Biological Station, *Highlands*, Jan. 3, was reported as only the 2nd county record (FEL, JWF, GEW). A large concentration of N. Harriers was of 75 in agricultural fields along the Miami Canal, *Palm Beach*, Dec. 22 (PWS & SAS).

Most observers thought that overall numbers of the larger soaring hawks were low this winter, especially by comparison with last year's invasion of western buteos (FSS, DWF). Among the smaller buteos, Broad-winged Hawks appeared farther north than usual, with two near Boynton Beach, *Palm Beach*, during January (HPL, BHH), and one adult in S. Venice, *Sarasota*, Dec. 21 (FF). A Short-tailed Hawk perched in a cabbage palm along the Waccasassa R., *Levy*, Jan. 20, was well north of its usual winter range (JTK), while another Short-tailed made political history by soaring low over President Bush during his E.N.P. visit, Jan. 29 (PWS). Two Peregrine Falcons wintered in downtown Jacksonville, entertaining large numbers of people with their pigeon hunting tactics (PCP).

**RAILS, SHOREBIRDS** — A Black Rail, unexpected when seen almost anywhere in Florida, was flushed by a control burn at Paynes Prairie, *Alachua*, Dec. 1 (JEW). Two Lesser Golden-Plovers were at Port Canaveral, *Brevard*, Jan. 1 (BLR, DLR *et al.*). The highest counts of Piping Plovers were of 23 at Ohio Key, *Monroe*, Jan. 26 (HD, MB), and 30 on Marco I., *Collier*, in mid-January (THB). Killdeer were affected by the Christmas freeze at both ends of the peninsula. In Tallahassee, they were "unusually common" following the snow, Dec. 23–24 (DKJ), while in Key West, 115 very vocal Killdeer were counted on the coldest morning, Dec. 24 (JO). Black-necked Stilts again wintered as far n. as c. Florida: nine at Sawgrass Park, *Pinellas* (RWS), three in the *Polk* phosphate mines (CLG), and three at Port Canaveral (MHI, JJ); all remained through the period. Unusually high counts of Am. Avocets were of 800 at Tampa Bay Jan. 1 (PJF), and 153 at Port Canaveral Feb. 9 (MHI).

Very rare in winter, one White-rumped Sandpiper was at the *Polk* phosphate mines Dec. 19 (BC), and almost as rare in winter, one Pectoral Sandpiper was well studied near Zephyrhills, *Pasco*, Dec. 27 (WB, DG). It seems only a few years ago that we also considered the Stilt Sandpiper to be rare anywhere in the Region in winter. In the right places, however, they now are regular throughout the period as far north as c. Florida. The highest counts of Stilt Sandpipers in the c. peninsula were of 12 at Port Canaveral

Dec. 27 (JJ, MHL, DC), and at the 125 *Polk* phosphate mines Dec. 2 (PJF). The common inland dowitcher in winter (anytime?) is the Long-billed. High counts included 617 at the *Polk* mines Jan. 6 (PJF), 150 at Orlando Wilderness Park Feb. 22 (DWF, RLP), and seven unusually far north in mid-winter at L. Lafayette, *Leon*, Jan. 1 (HMS). For the 3rd consecutive winter, one Am. Woodcock performed nightly courtship flights in E.N.P., *Dade*, Jan. 24 through the end of the period (PWS, SAS). Also rare in winter, eight Wilson's Phalaropes were at the *Polk* phosphate mines Dec. 26 (MHw).

**GULLS TO HUMMINGBIRDS**—Two different Glaucous Gulls were at Titusville, *Brevard*, Feb. 2 (BLR, DLR, JJ), and nearby Coccoa Feb. 25 (DC, KB, JJ). An imm. Great Black-backed Gull reached the southern limit of the Region, the Dry Tortugas, Jan. 6 (KD); two Great Black-backeds were in the area of St. John's Pass—L. Seminole, *Pinellas*, Dec. 16—Feb. 28, where the species has yet to become regular (KDN, BRP). A high count for Caspian Terns was of 108 at the *Polk* phosphate mines Dec. 2 (PJF). The same location produced a rare winter sighting of a Black Tern Feb. 10, and an unusually high inland count of 400 Black Skimmers throughout the period (both PJF). Signs that White-winged Doves are expanding their range in Florida came from sightings of up to four during the period at Cedar Key, *Levy* (DCH, JHH), and three at Archbold Biological Station, *Highlands*, Feb. 26 (GEW). A preliminary list of non-native birds seen in the wild in s. Florida, prepared by Bruce Neville, includes among its 50 species of parrots, 14 that have been confirmed as nesting!

Smooth-billed Ani, considerably reduced in numbers in s. Florida during recent years, became even less common following the Christmas freeze. For most observers, two or three at Eco Pond, E.N.P., were the only ones seen during January—February. Elsewhere, one in *Broward* Feb. 9 (BDN), and small groups of two Jan. 23 and six Feb. 26 near Homestead (PWS, SAS) were the only ani reported! The early breeding schedule of the Barn Owl was demonstrated by a pair that fledged two young between Dec. 4 & 10 near Homestead (PWS, SAS). Although Com. Nighthawks appear to winter in towns in extreme s. Florida, one at St. Marks, *Wakulla*, Dec. 17, was very late for the Tallahassee Div. (CC). Details of a Vaux's Swift at Terwilliger Pond, Gainesville, Dec. 17 (JWH, AMK) were submitted as a Rare Bird Report to the F.O.S. records committee, but not seen by me.

People who systematically watch for rarities at hummingbird feeders in Florida are being positively reinforced for their efforts often enough to suggest that more hummingbird feeding stations should be established. The potential rewards may encourage more people to become hummingbird identification experts, resulting ultimately in an improved understanding of the status of several species that currently are regarded as being very rare here. The biggy this winter, first for the Florida peninsula, was a **Buff-bellied Hummingbird** that was at a Ft. Lauderdale feeder Jan. 11 and remained through the end of the period (TC, BC, m.ob.). It was singing during February; details were submitted to the F.O.S. records committee. A Black-chinned Hummingbird, very rare in the peninsula, was at a St. Petersburg feeder, Dec. 28—Jan. 7, and was photographed and video-taped (LAH, m.ob.; details to F.O.S. records committee). And the only *Selasphorus* hummingbird, almost certainly a Rufous, was at a Gainesville feeder, Dec. 14—Feb. 28 (DTF).

**FLYCATCHERS TO VIREOS**—The only Vermilion



*Ash-throated Flycatcher west of Delray Beach, Florida, January 21, 1990. Photograph/ Brooks Atherton.*

Flycatcher reported was one on several dates during February at Englewood, *Sarasota* (BR). An **Ash-throated Flycatcher**, reported as the first for the Florida pen. south of Jacksonville, was w. of Delray Beach, *Palm Beach*, Jan. 19—Feb. 28 (HPL, m.ob.). It was filmed and taped, with a complete record submitted to the F.O.S. records committee. One Western Kingbird in Tallahassee Jan. 1 was either extremely late, or wintering well north of where expected (JC). At the other end of the Region, 32 W. Kingbirds wintered at 5 locations in the agricultural fields around Homestead (PWS, SAS). Very rare anywhere in the Region in winter, one Gray Kingbird was at L. Istokpoga, *Highlands*, Feb. 21 (FEL, FF), and another was at the Homestead airport Jan. 13 through the period (SAS, PWS). A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was unusually far north for mid-winter at Medart, *Wakulla*, Jan. 14 (RWL).

Extremely rare in the S. Pen., two **Horned Larks** were on the Flamingo campground, E.N.P., Dec. 31—Jan. 5 (AL, PWS, m.ob.). Good photographs were produced (WHH, WCH, MG). I am tempted to suggest that these birds were driven south by the extensive snowfall throughout the lower South during the preceding week. Purple Martins arrived early at the northern end of the Region, St. Marks N.W.R, Jan. 15 (DKJ), and about one week earlier than any were seen in extreme southern Florida. Although Tree Swallows are abundant here in winter, the other swallows are rare anywhere in the peninsula during this period. This year, about 50 N. Rough-winged Swallows were somehow located in a massive aggregation estimated at one million Tree Swallows in w. *Palm Beach* Dec. 22 (PWS, SAS), three Bank Swallows were in s. E.N.P. Dec. 24 (WRH; photo to E.N.P.), and 23 Barn Swallows were on an *Orange* Christmas Count Dec. 30 (BS *et al.*). The Cave Swallow nesting colony site located in s. *Dade* contained 16 roosting Caves, Feb. 18; the site had not been checked earlier this winter to determine if they wintered there (PWS, SAS). A high count for extreme s. Florida of 80 American Pipits was made in a farm field w. of Homestead, Jan. 7 (PWS & SAS). In the same area, one Bell's Vireo, rarely reported but perhaps regular in *Dade* in winter, was well studied, Jan. 14 (PWS, SAS). Also in a s. *Dade* hammock, a bird identified as the gray, Rocky Mountain form of the Solitary Vireo was repeatedly located Jan. 3—17 (PWS, SAS).

**WARBLERS, TANAGERS**—While my overall impression was that it was a relatively slow winter for warblers, that fact didn't seem to reduce the number of sightings of local rarities. Included were single Blue-winged Warblers at 2 widely separate locations, Chiefland, *Levy*, Dec. 31 (SRM), and Snake Bight Trail, E.N.P., Jan 3 (WHH, WCH,

MG); what probably were very late, transient Tennessee Warblers, one on the St. Marks Christmas Count (CC), and one on Levy Prairie, *Alachua* (DL), both Dec. 17; a Black-throated Blue Warbler at Corkscrew Swamp, *Collier*, all winter (PH); and one Black-throated Green Warbler at Sawgrass Park, *Pinellas*, Feb. 15 (RWS).

In the same category of local rarities were one Ovenbird Jan. 28 (TM) and one Wilson's Warbler Dec. 25 (SJ, DKJ)



Male Hooded Warbler at Mahogany Hammock, Everglades National Park, Florida, January 20, 1990. Photograph/ Joe Harris.

both near Tallahassee, a Canada Warbler in Miami Dec. 24 (TB), a ♂ Hooded Warbler at Mahogany Hammock, E.N.P., Dec. 27–Jan. 20 (JG, JH, good photos), and very rare in c. Florida in winter, one Yellow-breasted Chat in n. *Pinellas* Dec. 17 (LAH) and another chat at the *Polk* phosphate mines Dec. 20 (BC).

Two warblers that rarely winter outside the coastal mangrove forests in s. Florida are the local breeding race of the Yellow Warbler and the Am. Redstart. One of the well-marked local Yellow-bellies was in agricultural country near Homestead throughout the period (PWS, SAS), and one Am. Redstart wintered in my yard near Homestead (JCO). Another Am. Redstart, perhaps a late transient, was on the L. Placid Christmas Count, *Highlands*, Dec. 16 (JWF). Certainly the most unexpected of the lot was one **Connecticut Warbler**, very rare anywhere in Florida except for a small flight each year in May. This Connecticut was in a hammock thicket on Club Key, an island in Florida Bay, *Monroe*, Dec. 28 (WRH). The report was submitted with several pages of good verifying details!

Observers in Florida, and especially in the S. Pen., have often noticed what appears to be movement by warblers and other "neotropical" species during February. While most have assumed, perhaps rightly so, that the sudden appearance of relatively large warbler flocks in mid-late February represents no more than local shifting or flocking by birds that wintered here, some past observations have suggested the possibility that some earlier than expected flights from south of the Region are part of the story. These suspicions were reinforced this winter by the appearance of red-plumaged Summer Tanagers at 3 widely separate sites around Homestead during a two-day period, Feb. 12–13 (JCO, OB, RH). All 3 sites were fairly well covered by birders throughout the period, thus it seems unlikely that all three of these showy birds were previously overlooked. Although Summer Tanagers are rare but perhaps regular in s. Florida in winter, most that do winter are not red-plumaged (one other red Summer Tanager this winter, however, was e. of L. Placid, *Highlands*, Dec. 16—JWF, DSt). Also suggestive of February migration were sharply increased numbers of N. Parulas around Homestead by mid-month, and eight Black-and-white Warblers on the Snake Bight Trail, E.N.P., Feb. 19 (PWS, SAS).

**BUNTINGS TO FINCHES** — Evidence for a flight out of the tropics as early as February was also provided by one Indigo Bunting found freshly dead at St. Marks N.W.R., *Wakulla*, on the same date as Summer Tanagers "arrived" in *Dade*, Feb. 12 (JC). It was a good year for win-



Green-tailed Towhee near Lake Alfred, Florida, January 27, 1990. First state record. Photograph/Brooks Atherton.

tering Dickcissels, with reports of 10 different birds at 6 locations, all in s. Florida, except for one at Eagle Lake, *Polk*, Feb. 25 (PJF). A remarkable discovery was of one **Green-tailed Towhee**, the first ever for Florida, found in a weedy orchard near L. Alfred, *Polk*, Jan. 7 (PT). It remained for weeks, was seen by hundreds, and was well photographed.

This was a winter for sparrows, perhaps unparalleled in the Region in recent years in terms of both numbers and species. High counts were made in n. Florida well before the Christmas freeze. Some examples from around the peninsula: about 175 sparrows of nine species were in a weedy field near L. Alfred, *Polk*, Dec. 9 (PT); an estimated 3000 sparrows, mostly Chipping, were in fields s.e. of Brooksville, *Hernando*, Dec. 18 (LSA, DHG); and "hundreds, if not thousands" of Savannah Sparrows, and "close to 100 a day" Grasshopper Sparrows, were in fields around Homestead throughout January–February (PWS, SAS). At least three species, Fox Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, and Dark-eyed Junco, were reported in more locations and in higher numbers than is normal. Notable high counts of Fox Sparrows were of seven at Orange Park, *Clay*, Dec. 23 (LNM), and six in *Wakulla* Dec. 26 (JHE). White-crowns made it to the southern end of the mainland, with high counts of 22 at Gainesville Dec. 17 (m.ob.), 16 near Brooksville, *Hernando*, Dec. 18 (LSA, DHG), and seven near Homestead Jan. 2 (PWS, SAS). Juncos made it as far south as Venice, *Sarasota*, one on Dec. 27 (GM, RM), and L. Alfred, *Polk*, three on Jan. 7 (PT, CLG). A couple of other sparrow records of note: One Le Conte's Sparrow, rarely detected, was near its southern range limit, Paynes Prairie, *Alachua*, Dec. 17 (EAV, BPM), and a high count of Lincoln's Sparrows was of eight at 4 *Palm Beach* locations in mid-January (HPL). By no means detected annually in Florida, two Lapland Longspurs were near St. Marks Light, *Wakulla*, Dec. 2 (DSa, CSG). Even rarer in mid-winter, the distinctive "wink" call was heard from a flying Bobolink, near Flamingo, E.N.P., Jan. 3 (WHH, WCH, MG).

Although up to seven Yellow-headed Blackbirds were





*Bronzed Cowbird at Lakeland, Florida, January 27, 1990. One of ten present at the site this winter. Photograph/Brooks Atherton.*

found near L. Harbor, *Palm Beach*, Jan. 17–Feb. 11 (HPL, BHH, MG), the real blackbird story this winter involved cowbirds. Florida appears to be on the way to becoming a three-cowbird state, a dubious honor at best. At least one of them, the Bronzed Cowbird, is not known to breed here. It's something of a puzzler how the Bronzed end up in Florida; this winter, amazingly, they were detected in 5 widely separate localities. North to south, they were one at Tierra Verde, *Pinellas*, Dec. 2 (LSA, BHA), up to 10 on a Lakeland golf course Dec. 16–Feb. 2 (LC, CLG, m.ob.), two at L. Harbor Jan. 21 (BHH), one at a West Palm Beach landfill Jan. 9 (HPL), and one at w. Broward City, *Broward*, Jan. 19 (JLB, ER). Shiny Cowbirds are rapidly becoming regular in s.e. Florida, and are spreading. This winter they were found in *Monroe*, *Dade*, *Broward*, and *Palm Beach*, with the most northern at L. Harbor, one on Feb. 11 (BDN).

Although numbers were not unusually large, Purple Finches made it as far south as *Alachua*, and Pine Siskins penetrated, primarily along the Gulf coast, as far as Flamingo, E.N.P., Jan. 3 (WHH, WCH, MG). The high counts for siskins were of 50 in n. *Pasco* through much of the period (DG, PY), and 20 at Venice, *Sarasota*, Feb. 24–28 (GM, RM). American Goldfinches did arrive in s. Florida in large numbers, described as a "major incursion" in Miami (BDN), and including a record high count of 685 on the Ft. Pierce Christmas Count Jan. 1 (m.ob.). Finally,

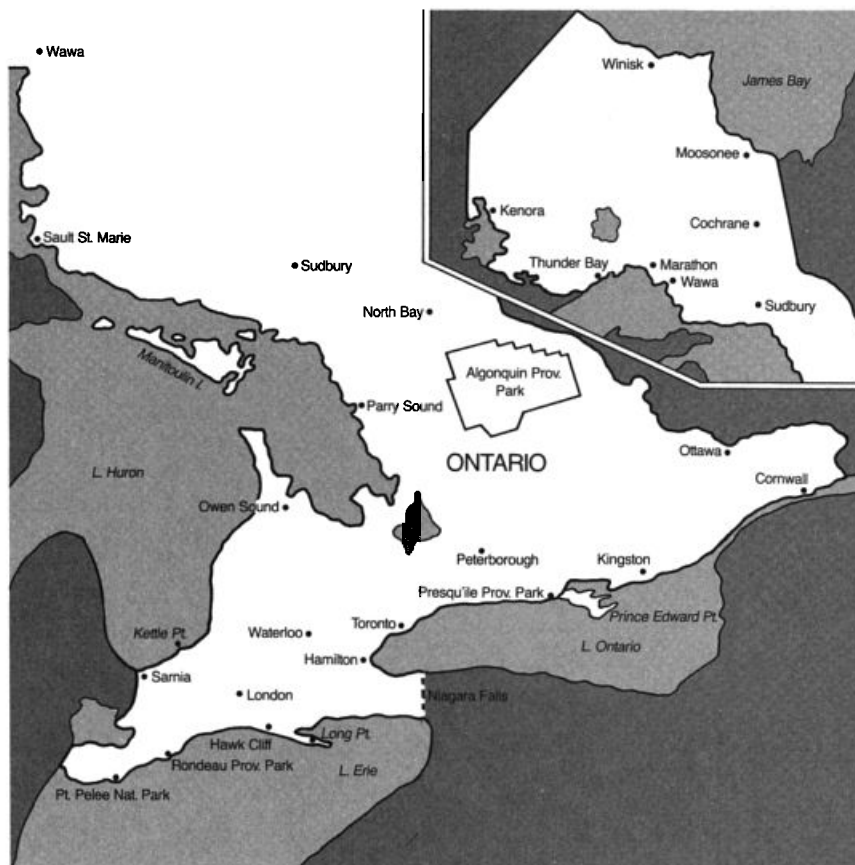
the only Evening Grosbeaks were two in w. Jacksonville for a week in mid-December (SJ).

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# ONTARIO REGION

Ron D. Weir



**W**hether for this last winter of the decade was everted from the normal pattern over virtually all of settled Ontario. Bitterly cold conditions descended during December, only to give way to record-breaking warmth during January and much of February, but the cold returned as the season ended.

The winter of 1989–1990 was the fourth in a row to be relatively mild with below-normal snowfalls, as a warming trend emerges — at least in the short term. Not surprisingly, the avifauna responded accordingly. Robins, Eastern Bluebirds, Hermit Thrushes, and Yellow-rumped Warblers overwintered successfully in large numbers, supported by an abundant supply of berries. The gap between autumn departure and spring arrival continued to narrow for the Turkey Vulture, a pioneer that is adapting to wintry conditions thought impossible 20 years ago. Sedentary species whose northern limits barely reach Ontario continued to expand in numbers or range, aided by feeding stations; these include Mourning Dove, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, and Northern Cardinal.

Most contributors reported an especially strong showing during December by tardy migrants and some finches, which led to many high species totals on Christmas Bird Counts. Records from these CBCs are omitted in this account, except in instances of overriding significance. The Bohemian Waxwing flight remained very strong through to February, but northern owls and woodpeckers again failed to erupt. The relative heat wave during early February brought record-early arrivals for 13 species in the Pelee area, and the early influx was seen as far north as Kingston and Owen Sound.

**ABBREVIATIONS** — Pelee = Point Pelee Nat'l Park and vicinity; P.E.Pt. = Prince Edward Point. Algonquin and Presqu'ile are Provincial Parks. Place names in *italics* denote counties.

**LOONS TO HERONS** — Spillover from last autumn's strong flight of Red-throated Loons were singles at Niagara-on-the-Lake to Dec. 14 (GBe), Hamilton Beach Dec. 22 (KAM), Toronto Jan. 7 (GC), and Niagara Jan. 7 (*vide* MWD). Late Com. Loons were singles in Kingston to Jan. 14 (SJS) and Whitby Jan. 20 (BAr, EP), and two at Owen Sound to Jan. 26 (PM). Another overwintered successfully on L. Ontario at Burlington (*vide* KAM). Early "spring" grebes in the warm February were single Pied-billed at Pelee Feb. 11 (AW) and Kingston Feb. 17 (JHE *et al.*), and Horned Grebes Feb. 17 at Bronte (KAM, GN) and Dundas (GCh). The six Red-necked Grebes represented a poor showing, especially after last fall's tremendous flight, and the last sightings were of singles in Ottawa Jan. 3 (BMD) and Hamilton Bay Feb. 7 (RC, RZD, JO). Toronto's lakeshore hosted a lone Eared Grebe Feb. 23 (SL).

A **Great Cormorant** identified as it flew over Ajax Dec. 13 (JF, *vide* MJB) furnished the 4th winter record since the early 1980s. Most Double-crested Cormorants withdrew by early December, but late lingerers were three in the Welland Canal at St. Catharines Jan. 7 (KJR) with one remaining to Feb. 4 (LH), and a single at Sombra, Lambton, Jan. 7 (DAM, LW, DFR). Only five Great Blue Herons overwintered, far fewer than usual. In spite of the December cold snap, single Black-crowned Night-Herons tarried in Hamilton to Jan. 6 (AGC *et al.*), Pickering to Jan.

9 (BH *et al.*), and Wheatley to Feb. 28 (where two had been present until Jan. 17 — AW *et al.*).

**WATERFOWL** — Wintering Mute Swans were three at Wildwood L. for Oxford's 3rd ever in winter (JMH), one at W. Guilford, Haliburton, for the 9th consecutive winter (RJP), and two at Presqu'île to Feb. 11 (SML). Late Brant included 12 at Conway Dec. 16 (AEB *et al.*), 10 off Wolfe I. Dec. 17 (RDW), and an immature at Aldershot Dec. 21 (RZD). Wood Ducks overwintered at London, Dundas, Burlington, Whitby, and Ottawa, and two drakes at Leamington Jan. 13 provided only the 2nd winter record for the Pelee area (AW). A record-late Green-winged Teal remained in Kingston to Jan. 20 (RW) and another was in Kitchener to Feb. 15 (CC). Wintering N. Pintails in the Beachville quarries were Oxford's 3rd ever (JMH *et al.*), and a female wintered at Port Hope (ERM). A bird believed to be a hybrid Am. Wigeon X Am. Black Duck appeared at Wildwood L. Feb. 10 (JMH).

The largest groups of wintering Canvasbacks were of 4377 tallied on the waterfowl count in Kent, Essex, and Lambton Jan. 2–4 (PAW), 350 at Presqu'île Jan. 7 (P.B.F.N.), and 325 along the Niagara R. Jan. 7 (*vide* RFA). Redheads numbered 2046 in Kent, Essex, and Lambton Jan. 2–4 (PAW) and 625 at Presqu'île Jan. 7 (P.B.F.N.). Long Point's first Ring-necked Duck ever for January was found Jan. 14 (L.P.B.O.). Ontario's first Tufted Duck since 1985 fed along the St. Clair R. Jan. 2–5 (PAW *et al.*). The ♂ Lesser Scaup in Ottawa all season was one of few ever to winter there (BMD *et al.*). Only one King Eider was reported during the period, consistent with the species' poor fall flight, at Pelee Jan. 2–4 (GTH).

Four Harlequin Ducks were reported (the 11-year winter average is five). A male and female were along the St. Clair R. Dec. 24–Feb. 28 (AHR, DFR). The others were a single male off Burlington Dec. 10–Feb. 28 (KAM, GN *et al.*), presumably the same male at New Toronto Dec. 18 (HGC), and a female at Pelee Dec. 18–19 (DFR *et al.*). Oldsquaw concentrations included 14,500 at P.E.Pt. Dec. 16 (JHE, RDW), 6529 along Toronto's waterfront Jan. 7 (*vide* WJE), and 4000 at Niagara-on-the-Lake Jan. 26 (GBe). Ottawa remained the center for Barrow's Goldeneye as a male and two females overwintered (BMD). Single males were at Colpoys Bay Dec. 14 (*vide* TRM) and Burleigh Falls Dec. 24, the latter thought to have moved to Peterborough where still present Feb. 28 (PB *et al.*). The ♀ Bufflehead at Wildwood L. New Year's Day furnished Oxford's first January record, and a ♂ Hooded Merganser was there Jan. 7 (JMH). Other overwintering Hoodeds were a male at Aylmer L. near Algonquin to Feb. 21 (GF) and a female at Manotick Dec. 10–Feb. 28 (BMD *et al.*). The bird identified as a hybrid ♂ Hooded Merganser X Com. Goldeneye at Sarnia Jan. 13 was the first of this type there since the 1970s (DFR, DP). Noteworthy numbers of Com. Mergansers at Pelee were the 39,640 Dec. 18 (GTH) and 10,000 Jan. 15 (DGC).

Waterfowl movement during February led to record-early arrival dates at several sites along the lower Great Lakes. Tundra Swans arrived at Pelee and Blenheim Feb. 9 (WW *et al.*, KJB), and the lone ad. blue Snow Goose at Pelee Feb. 19 was record-early by 15 days (DGC, AW). Northern Pintails reached Westport in the east and Pelee in the southwest both on Feb. 7 (NLB, AW), and Owen Sound farther north Feb. 10 (PM). Two ♂ N. Shovelers arrived at Pelee Feb. 14, record early (DGC). Both Gadwall and Am. Wigeon appeared simultaneously at Pelee Feb. 6 (AW) and at Kingston Feb. 10 (K.F.N.). Canvasbacks and Greater Scaup were also at Pelee Feb. 8 and Kingston Feb.

10 (DGC, RDW, JHE). Other record-early arrivals at Pelee were of Ring-necked Duck Feb. 20, Lesser Scaup Feb. 12, and Hooded Merganser Feb. 7 (AW).

**VULTURES TO PHALAROPES** — For Turkey Vulture, the gap between departure and arrival dates continued to narrow. Late birds were in Toronto to Dec. 14 (ph. DMcC *et al.*), Wolfe I. Dec. 17 (RDW), Wheatley harbour (where the vulture attempted to eat an old shoe on the



Several Turkey Vultures lingered quite late in the season in Ontario. This one was photographed December 31, 1989, near Toronto. Photograph/Beth Jefferson.

beach) Dec. 27 (AW), and Beachville, Oxford, Dec. 28 (RSk, JSk, JMH). Early arrivals appeared near Guelph Feb. 4 (GN), Thorndale, Middlesex, Feb. 10 (JE), Bellwood L., Wellington, Feb. 14 (JM), and P.E.Pt. Feb. 17 (RTS *et al.*). A delayed report was of Ontario's 11th Mississippi Kite since 1951, at Pelee May 18, 1989 (JAS), for the park's 6th record. The 73+ Bald Eagles in the south represented a further rise in that species' steady increase since the early 1980s. Numbers of Sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks in the south, at 72 and 91 respectively, were over double their usual winter tallies; many patrolled feeding stations.

The northernmost wintering Red-shouldered Hawk (of 21 reported, about double their normal numbers) was at Nephton, Peterborough (DCS *et al.*). Noteworthy concentrations of Red-tailed Hawks were of 67 at Port Hope-Cobourg Dec. 17 (ERM) and 231 at Fisherville, Haldimand, Dec. 23 (JBM *et al.*). A "Harlan's" Red-tailed at the Toronto railyards Dec. 28 was east of its normal range (JC). Golden Eagle numbers also continued to climb with 11 birds from Elgin, Middlesex, Norfolk, Manitoulin I., Toronto, Northumberland, Peterborough, Prince Edward, and Renfrew, Dec. 3–Feb. 28. Noteworthy among the 10 Merlins were singles well north to Kenora and Vermilion Bay Dec. 1–31 (SRM), and in Algonquin Jan. 20 for the park's 2nd ever in winter (RGT, DT). The only reports of Peregrine Falcon were of an immature on Wolfe I. Dec. 17 (RDW) and an imm. female in Sarnia all winter (DFR, AHR). A light morph Gyrfalcon appeared near Ottawa Feb. 11 (PRM).

Single Virginia Rails were at Long Pt. Dec. 16–Feb. 28 and Feb. 20 (L.P.B.O.), having wintered successfully, as did the three Am. Coots in Orillia Dec. 1–Feb. 28 (RLB). Early migrant coots were at Long Pt. Feb. 15 (L.P.B.O.) and Pelee Feb. 20 (AW, DGC). The lone Sandhill Crane at Long Pt. Feb. 11 was probably an early arrival (DAS, BC). Early Killdeer were widespread in the southwest (Thorndale,

London, Pelee, and Hamilton) Feb. 10–12, and reached Wooler in the east Feb. 21 (HS). Pelee's late autumn Least Sandpiper lingered until Dec. 2 (AW *et al.*), and the only Purple Sandpipers were the four at Niagara Falls until Jan. 7 (*vide* RFA). Late Dunlins were at Pickering to Dec. 26 (JMS *et al.*) and Niagara Falls to Jan. 6 (JBM, SJM). For the 2nd consecutive winter, the only Red Phalarope was in Sarnia, Dec. 3 (DFR, SAC).

**GULLS TO OWLS** — Franklin's Gull is almost always absent from Ontario during January through March, so the adult at Goderich Feb. 11 was extremely rare (WT, TL).

#### S.A.

Up to five ad. Little Gulls remained at Niagara-on-the-Lake to Jan. 6 (AGC *et al.*) when the species suddenly vanished, a pattern noted in previous winters. Some 17 reappeared at Queenston Jan. 27 (*vide* RFA) to linger along the Niagara R. until mid-February (GBe). Only two were left by month's end. This pattern of reappearance during the first half of February has recurred in several successive winters; it suggests that this is the most reliable time to locate Little Gulls in Ontario, and possibly in North America. While their origins are unknown, it seems probable that they are moving from elsewhere on the Great Lakes, passing through Niagara on their way to destinations unknown.

The province's 19th Com. Black-headed Gull during the past 26 winters appeared at Niagara-on-the-Lake Feb. 28 (GBe). A record-early ad. Bonaparte's Gull arrived at Wheatley harbour Feb. 16 (AW), and 50 reappeared at Niagara-on-the-Lake Feb. 28 (GBe). The ad. Mew Gull in Bronte Harbour Feb. 15 (MWJ *et al.*), arriving with a surge of northbound migrants, was Ontario's 11th ever. Northbound Herring Gulls numbered 21,000 passing Turkey Pt. Jan. 27 (JMH, DSG *et al.*), but they were pushed back south by temporary cold only two days later. Some 131 reached Ottawa Jan. 30 (BMD) and Minden Feb. 12 (RJP), both early arrival dates. The 52 Icelands, 16 Thayer's, and one Kumlien's gulls were all usual numbers for the period. However, the 15 Lesser Black-backed were a higher number once again, more than the 7-year winter average of nine. The birds were at Sarnia, Wheatley, Wildwood L. (Oxford), Turkey Pt., Niagara Falls, Burlington, and Kingston Dec. 2–Feb. 13. Typical for winter were the 148 Glaucous Gulls, noteworthy among which were the single hybrids thought to have been Glaucous X Herring at the Lindsay dump Dec. 9 (RJP, RGT) and at Turkey Pt. Jan. 27 (JMH, DSG). The only report of a Black-legged Kittiwake was from Niagara Falls Dec. 3 (WCD *et al.*). The juv. Razorbill found on L. Dore, Renfrew, Dec. 1–5 (CM, BMD, MR *et al.*) was the 6th for the province since 1970.

Mourning Dove numbers rose again throughout much of s. Ontario where feeding stations and a relatively warm winter reduced mortality. The leading edge of these concentrations has advanced north to the latitude of Ottawa, west to Huntsville, Burk's Falls, and to the Bruce. The winter abundance of this species is one of the reasons *Accipiter* numbers are up. Only 35 Snowy Owls were reported in the entire province, indicative of a poor flight. The greatest concentrations were of three each overwintering on Wolfe I. and Amherst I., where numbers rose to five by Feb. 17 as returning migrants arrived from farther s. (K.F.N.). More than the usual numbers of Long-eared Owls were noted in roosts, led by 25 at Bronte Jan. 30 (RC), up to 20 at Port Maitland all winter (*vide* JBM), and eight at Long Pt. (RC *et al.*). Short-eareds were also more abundant, or at least more evident. The largest flocks were of 43 at Fish-

erville Dec. 23 (*vide* JBM), 20 on Amherst I. Feb. 17 (JHE *et al.*), and 14 at Long Pt. Feb. 28 (AL *et al.*). The species was widespread through *Haldimand, Niagara, Middlesex*, with a few reports from *Lambton, Manitoulin I., Essex, Kent, and Durham*. One at Thunder Bay to Jan. 7 was a latest ever (NGE). The one Boreal Owl reported was in Guelph Dec. 28 for *Wellington's* 4th ever (WSS).

**KINGFISHERS TO WRENS** — Belted Kingfishers wintered successfully n. to Barrie, Orillia, and Severn Bridge (RLB), and the Red-headed Woodpecker in Manotick Dec. 14–Feb. 28 (*vide* BMD) was well n. of range. Red-bellied Woodpeckers remained in good numbers in the extreme s.w. where 45 were reported. Two beyond this traditional range were singles in the Port Hope–Cobourg area Dec. 1–Feb. 28 (ERM) and Ajax–Pickering Dec. 1–Feb. 28 (*vide* MJB, BH). Late Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were the the imm. male at Brighton to Dec. 27 (S & DH) and another in Toronto's Mount Pleasant Cemetery Dec. 1–Feb. 28 for the 2nd successive year (HK, DPe). Three-toed Woodpeckers remained scarce within the breeding range and none was reported s. of it. However, observers fared better with Black-backed Woodpeckers as birds wandered s. to Kingston Dec. 16 (RKE), Sydenham Dec. 17 (JHE, RDW), Peterborough Dec. 27 (AGC), and Gravenhurst Dec. 28 (PT).

Northbound Horned Larks were early at many sites along the lower Great Lakes, appearing by late January, and the two arrivals at Wheatley Jan. 8 from over L. Erie were record early for the Pelee area (AW). Much farther n. at Thunder Bay, an individual appearing to be of the race *E. a. hoyti* showed up Jan. 27–Feb. 28 (NGE). Single Gray Jays frequented feeders near Port Hope Jan. 4–5 and along Cypress L., Bruce, Dec. 20–Feb. 28 (TRM). One of the three Black-billed Magpies which escaped at Woodstock last autumn was present to Feb. 9 (JMH), but the origins of another travelling with crows between Bronte, Halton, and the Rattray Marsh Jan. 7–Feb. 11 was unknown (*vide* MWD). The 33+ Tufted Titmice made the highest number for any season during the 1980s and should be viewed as consolidation within the established range of the south-west. The only extralimital report was from an Ottawa feeder Dec. 1–Feb. 28 for that area's 4th ever (BMD). The abundance of Red-breasted Nuthatches noted last autumn continued during winter throughout most of s. Ontario. Numbers of Carolina Wrens remained very high at 70+ birds, thereby maintaining the trend begun in the mid-1980s coincident with successive mild winters. Some 64+ were in the traditional s.w. and the six extralimitals were singles n. to Orillia from late December to Feb. 28 (RLB), and e. to Toronto at 4 different sites all winter (MWD) and at a Port Hope feeder Dec. 20–Jan. 30 (ERM).

**KINGLETS TO WARBLERS** — The only reports of Ruby-crowned Kinglet were of singles at Peterborough Dec. 4, latest ever there by 9 days (FH), and Thunder Bay Dec. 21 (GG). Overwintering E. Bluebirds were more numerous and widespread than usual through the south. The 60+ in the Kingston area were unprecedented in winter for e. Ontario (K.F.N., N.L.B.). Ontario's 6th Townsend's Solitaire in the past 8 winters was in Ottawa Dec. 27–Feb. 28 (PMa, BMD *et al.*). The tardy Swainson's Thrush at Wige Creek, Essex, Dec. 16–17 (ph. DGC, AW) furnished the 2nd credible winter record for the province since 1976. Late Hermit Thrushes were in Peterborough to Dec. 27 (WM), on Amherst I. to Jan. 20 (VPM), and in Thornhill to Feb. 2 (WJE). The 100+ Am. Robins in Kingston (K.F.N.), 90+ in *Middlesex-Elgin* (DAM, LW),



Varied Thrush at Matheson, Ontario, December 25, 1989. The species staged a strong movement out of the northwest this season. Photograph/Percy W. Richter.

and 50 near Trenton were typical of the high numbers overwintering in the south. Much farther north at Thunder Bay, two appeared Dec. 31 and survived (SB). The 11 Varied Thrushes were more than the 1977–1989 winter average of six. Singles were near Dwight Nov. 30–Dec. 6 (M. Buss), Dorion and Thunder Bay for several days in early December (HA, CCL), Wesleyville Dec. 9–20 (PBr *et al.*), Little Redstone L., Haliburton, Dec. 27–30 (KB), London through December and January (PAR), Gore Bay Dec. 1–Jan. 9 (RCa, SW), Evansville Dec. 1–16 (*vide* DEB), Long Pt. from November to Feb. 28 (K & LS *et al.*), Brighton Feb. 2–5 (IV *et al.*), and all winter in Matheson, Cochrane (ph. GJ *et al.*). Single Gray Catbirds lingered at Erie Beach Dec. 1–12, only to be found dead Dec. 13 (KJB), and at Oakville Dec. 17 (*vide* MWD). Other tardy mimids were single Brown Thrashers on Manitoulin I. to Dec. 20, found dead Dec. 21 (DEB), London Dec. 17–Jan. 27 (D & WW), Wigle Creek, Essex, Dec. 30 (AW), and Wildwood L. Jan. 7 for Oxford's 2nd ever during January (JMH).

The province's first Am. Pipit during January in 7 winters appeared at Oshawa's Cranberry Marsh Jan. 5 (KR). For the 5th winter of the 8 since 1982, Bohemian Waxwings staged a very strong flight deep into s. Ontario, the signs of which were evident during this past autumn. Flocks containing up to several hundred birds reached Ottawa, Kingston, Peterborough, Northumberland, and Durham in the s.e., Huron and Lambton in the s.w., with lesser numbers penetrating s. to Niagara, Middlesex, Oxford, and to Pelee, where two and one were present Jan. 2 & 3 (ICP, GCP). The usual numbers of N. Shrikes were noted, of which one dined regularly on mice visiting a Westport feeder (ABJ) and another recovered dead siskins from road kills in Algonquin (MR). The Yellow Warbler in the Dundas marsh Dec. 3 was noteworthy for the extremely late date (JMcG). Exceptionally high numbers of Yellow-rumped Warblers wintered at Pelee and in other areas n.e. to Prince Edward and Amherst I. The last reports of Com. Yellowthroats were of singles in the Cranberry marsh Dec. 14 (*vide* MJB) and Meaford Dec. 27 (JH).

**CARDINAL TO FINCHES**—The first wintering Dickcissels since 1987 were singles at Chesley, Bruce, Dec. 1–31 (KW) and Long Pt. Dec. 16–Jan. 14 (JO, BJ). Noteworthy among the 10 Rufous-sided Towhees reported were the male well n. at Gore Bay Dec. 1–Jan. 14 (G & AA *et al.*) and the female of the spotted form at Erieau Dec. 17 (MWJ,AW). The latest Chipping Sparrows were singles at 2 Toronto feeders until Jan. 6 & 23 (D. Perk, DL *et al.*) and Oshawa to Feb. 28 (DDC). Tardy Lincoln's Sparrows were

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Increases in N. Cardinal numbers continue to occur in parts of its Ontario range. Near its northerly limits, the 85 sightings during November and 30 birds in February at Sault Ste. Marie were unprecedented there (TDM). A female overwintered successfully in Virginiatown (PWR) and another was at a Marathon feeder Dec. 2–16 (MG). How many of these pioneers will nest in these areas remains to be seen. Farther south, numbers were reported up sharply in Kincardine, Cypress L., Port Hope and Cobourg.

lone birds at Wheatley P.P. Dec. 18 (STP) and Cypress L. Dec. 20 (TRM). One Harris' Sparrow lingered at Thornbury Dec. 27–Feb. 10 (GKP, LF) and was the 6th during the past 8 winters. The E. Meadowlark at Pelee Feb. 17 was a record early arrival (AW). A ♂ Yellow-headed Blackbird was ensconced at a Brighton feeder Dec. 26–Feb. 26 (D & RO) and another was reported in the St. Clair marsh but without a precise date (SC). The 11 Brewer's Blackbirds were more than usual; nine were in the extreme southwest. They included singles on Walpole I. Dec. 23 (SC), Pelee Dec. 9–Jan. 2 (AW *et al.*) and Leamington Dec. 18 (MAK), two in e. Oxford Dec. 2–6 (CH *et al.*), and four in the St. Clair N.W.A. Jan. 1 (PAW). The only extralimital was an adult at P.E.Pt. Dec. 16 (JHE, RDW). The only report of a N. Oriole was of the male in York Dec. 4–26 (CK *et al.*).

Pine Grosbeaks were common from Kenora e. to Algonquin and Renfrew, s. to Bruce and Frontenac, although lesser numbers reached Northumberland, Middlesex, and Oxford. By the season's close, their numbers dwindled in the south. Purple Finches were scarce and sporadic everywhere. Red Crossbills appeared in large flocks only in Renfrew and the Sudbury area, but some were noted in Thunder Bay, Atikokan, Algonquin, Ottawa, Kingston, Peterborough, and Long Pt. Of the few that arrived in Dorset during late February, a male was killed on a road and its 80mm wing chord and 12mm culmen suggest the *L.c. sitkensis* race (RJP, RGT). White-winged Crossbills were numerous from Sudbury e. to Algonquin and Ottawa. Only isolated sightings were reported elsewhere s. to Waterloo, Wellington, Elgin, and Oxford. Large flocks of Com. Redpolls reached s. to a latitude joining Kenora, Sudbury, Algonquin, and Ottawa, but a few ventured farther s. to Kingston, Niagara, and London. Accompanying these big flocks of Commons were Hoaries, and 36 were reported. Widespread, but in varying numbers, were Pine Siskins all the way s. to the shorelines of L. Ontario at Kingston and L. Erie at Long Pt. and Pelee. By contrast, Evening Grosbeaks were in high numbers from Kenora e. to Algonquin and were few or absent everywhere else.

**CORRIGENDA** — AB 43:471, column 2, lines 60–61, delete the Swainson's Hawk at Pelee May 16; AB 43:1310, column 2, lines 12–13, delete the Am. White Pelican at Pelee June 11.

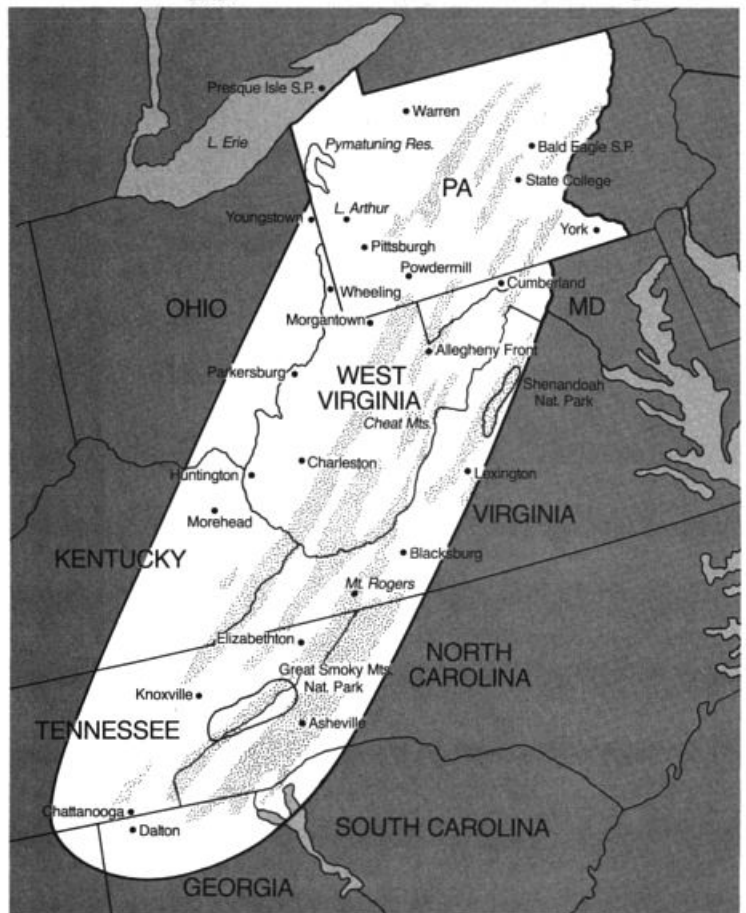
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## APPALACHIAN REGION

George A. Hall



**E**xcept for one brief period this was almost the year without a winter, and the birding was mixed. There were many interesting records, but many people found the winter a dull season. Early December continued the mild and dry weather of the fall, but at mid-month one of the strongest cold spells of the decade settled in. All stations reported the coldest December on record. Even as far south as eastern Tennessee, there were three consecutive nights of subzero temperatures; at Pittsburgh, December registered a temperature deficiency of 368 day-degrees. The month was drier than normal, but most precipitation came as snow, which covered the ground for the last half of the month even in the south. Most ponds and lakes froze.

Conditions reversed suddenly in January, with warm weather that continued through February. At Pittsburgh the first two months of the year accumulated an excess of 551 day-degrees. Precipitation in both months was above normal but it was essentially all rain.

The cold weather of December hit at Christmas Bird Count time, and forced postponement of some counts. Despite this, many places reported record counts for some species. Many of the stragglers survived the cold spell and were still present in January, but bird feeders were largely deserted during the mild weather that followed. The freezeup in December had driven out most waterfowl, and these generally did not return when the ice broke up in mid-January. By mid-February, spring migration was beginning, with some migrants arriving as much as two weeks early.

Aside from a great flight of Pine Siskins, there was no major influx of "northern invaders" this season.

**ABBREVIATIONS** — B.E.S.P. = Bald Eagle State Park, Centre, PA; Ch.N.F. = Chattahoochee Nat'l Forest, GA; G.P.P.P. = Gavin Power Plant Pond, Gallia, OH; P.N.R. = Powdermill Nature Reserve, Westmoreland, PA; P.I.S.P. = Presque Isle State Park, Erie, PA. Place names in *italics* are counties.

**LOONS TO WATERFOWL** — Four or five Com. Loons wintered at Watauga L., TN (RK), and other reports came from Kinzua Res., PA, Dec. 1 & 9 (DD); Percy Priest L., TN, Dec. 23 (R & AH); Tellico L., TN, Jan. 7 (R & AH); Vogel S.P., GA, Dec. 28; and Nottely, GA, Jan. 14 (DF). Pied-billed Grebes were found at Somerset L., PA, Dec. 2 and Jan. 28 (AM), and Kinzua Res., PA, Dec. 9 (DD), and an early migrant was at Colyer L., PA, Feb. 18 (K & JJ). Another early migrant was the Horned Grebe near State College, PA, Feb. 10 (J & BPe). Boone L., TN, had a high count of 37 Horned Grebes Dec. 8 (RK). The only Red-necked Grebes reported were singles at P.I.S.P. Dec. 2 (EK) and Jan. 14 (JM).

A flock of 194 Double-crested Cormorants was seen at Lock Haven, PA, Dec. 30 (G & PS). Cormorants were present throughout January at G.P.P.P. (MG, WA). Notable in Tennessee were reports from Boone L. Jan. 10, S. Holston L. Jan. 16 (RK), *Knox* Dec. 10 (AH), and Tellico L. Jan. 7 (A & RH); one was at L. Tahoma, NC, Feb. 17 (RR). More Great Blue Herons than usual were reported. The CBC at Chambersburg, PA, registered the highest count in 30 years (KG). At the heronry near Mercer, PA, 40 Great Blues had arrived by Feb. 27 (EB). Small numbers of Black-crowned Night-Herons wintered near Kingsport, TN (RK), and the two at Erie, PA, Jan. 1 furnished the first January record there (DS, EK).

Waterfowl were in good variety and fair numbers at most places in early December, but the mid-month freezeup drove most of them out. At Huntington, WV, winterers were felt to be down by 25% (WA), and most species were in below-normal numbers in E. Tennessee (RK). But the retreat from the north produced some unusual numbers in the south. For example, in *McDowell*, NC, counts of 117 Canada Geese and 355 Mallards Dec. 29 were unusually high (RR).

A few Tundra Swans remained in the Region in December: 2 flocks totalling 150 over Warren, PA, Dec. 18 (TK), and 50 there Dec. 22 (WH); the last at Quemahoning Dam, PA, Dec. 13 (AM); and one near Daleville, VA, Dec. 17 (BK). A January record came from L. Moomau, VA (LT), and a flock of seven wintered at Lock Haven, PA (G & PS). Two Trumpeter Swans from the Ontario reintroduction program were at P.I.S.P. Dec. 9–17 (DDa). Mute Swans were reported from *Somerset* Dec. 23 (AM), *Montour*, PA, Jan. 14 (SS), and Williamstown, WV, Feb. 23–28 (EA). A Greater White-fronted Goose in *Greene*, TN, Dec. 3 (R & AH) was noteworthy. Snow Geese were reported from Union City, PA, Feb. 21–24 (JiS, JeS); Mosquito L., OH, Dec. 17 (one white morph bird — CB) and Dec. 24 (two blues — DH); *Wood*, WV, Jan. 1 (JE); and G.P.P.P. Jan. 5 (MG). A Brant was seen in *Montour*, PA, Jan. 3 (SS).

A Wood Duck wintered at Warren, PA (BH), and one near State College, PA, Feb. 15 (BPe) was evidently an early migrant. American Black Ducks showed a slight increase in numbers, and N. Pintails were reported more commonly than usual. Canvasbacks continued to be rare, but a few more Redheads were reported than in recent years. Always scarce inland, 28+ Greater Scaup were at Johnson City, TN, Jan. 4–Feb. 28 (RK). Surf Scoters were seen at Quemahoning Dam, PA, Dec. 2 (AM) and S. Holston L., TN, Jan. 15 (BC), while the only reports of White-winged Scoters came from P.I.S.P. Dec. 3, Jan. 27, and 15 on Feb. 24 (JM). Both Hooded and Common mergansers were in above normal numbers.

**RAPTORS** — Black Vultures were at Princeton, WV, in early February (JP), and at Monterey, VA, Feb. 26 (LT). About 1000 vultures of both species were wintering at Gettysburg, PA (*vide* KG). Migrant Turkey Vultures arrived

in mid-February, somewhat early, at a number of places.

An Osprey at State College, PA, Feb. 23 (DB) provided the first local winter record, and what was probably the same bird was near Pine Grove Mills, PA, Feb. 24 (SG). Bald Eagles wintered at B.E.S.P. (MW), G.P.P.P. (MG), Green Bottom W.M.A., WV (WA), and S. Holston L., TN (RK). Reports elsewhere were of about 31 eagles from throughout the Region. By the end of the period, Bald Eagles were thought to be nesting at Mosquito L., OH (DH), and a pair had returned to the *Highland*, VA, site of last year's unsuccessful nesting (LT).

Unusual numbers of N. Harriers wintered. Reports came from 8 locations, from Mosquito L., OH (CB), to *Murray*, GA (HD). Northern Goshawks were reported near Warren, PA, Dec. 9 (DD, WH), Waterford, PA, Jan. 24 (JiS, JeS), and 2 locations in Botetourt, VA, Dec. 17 (KK) & 19 (BK *et al.*) There were several records of wintering Red-shouldered Hawks from the Mosquito L., OH, region (CB). Red-tailed Hawk numbers were notable at Chambersburg, PA (KG), and in *Murray*, GA (HD). A Red-tailed resembling the race *fuertesi* was carefully identified near Blairsville, GA, Jan. 14 (DF). It was a great year for Rough-legged Hawks: reports came from 14 areas, with southern records from Ft. Chiswell, VA (JGe), *Augusta*, VA (SR, YL), *Highland*, VA (LT), and *Sullivan*, TN, for an 8th local record (BC).

Golden Eagles were reported from Black Moshannon S.P., PA, Dec. 28 (B & JPe), Laughlintown, PA, Jan. 2 (RM), Cheat Mts., WV, several times (MG, CS), Watoga S.P., WV, Feb. 11 (DP), Princeton, WV, Dec. 17 (JP), *Highland*, VA, several reports during the season with a count of seven Dec. 7 (LT, MH), and Big Bald Mt., TN, Jan. 9 (RMa) with probably the same bird nearby on Roan Mt. Feb. 6 & 11 (BC, TM). Not many Am. Kestrels were reported, but the absence of prolonged snow probably allowed them to disperse from their usual posts near highways. A Merlin was seen in *Botetourt*, VA, Dec. 19 (BK *et al.*), and a Peregrine was seen on Roan Mt., TN, Feb. 6 & 8 (BC *et al.*).

**QUAIL TO GULLS** — A small flock of N. Bobwhites in *Shenandoah*, VA, in December and January furnished only the 3rd record there in 10 years (DDv). A roost of 25 Wild Turkeys at Markleton, PA, Dec. 21 was noteworthy (AM). At Ch.N.F., southbound Sandhill Cranes were seen as late as Dec. 6, and the northbound movement there began Feb. 14 (HD), with 3 flocks totalling 65 on Feb. 26 in *Murray*, GA, and 100 at Dalton, GA, Feb. 18 (HD).

Many Killdeer arrived in the north with the mild weather of early February. Least Sandpipers at G.P.P.P. Dec. 3 (MG) and Boone L., TN, Dec. 8 (RK) were unusually late. American Woodcocks were reported from *Botetourt*, VA, as early as Jan. 23 (MD), and many places reported woodcocks engaged in courtship flights by mid-February, as much as 2 weeks early.

As usual most of the rare gull records came from L. Erie, most often at P.I.S.P.: Little Gull Jan. 1; as many as seven Thayer's Gulls, now regular winter visitors, with four Feb. 24; at least 14 Iceland Gulls; seven Lesser Black-backed Gulls; and at least 15 Glaucous Gulls (JM, EK). The first Iceland Gull for B.E.S.P. was seen Jan. 17 with three Great Black-backed Gulls (+ES). Another Great Black-backed was at Chickamauga Dam, TN, Dec. 24 (A & RH), and two were at Mosquito L., OH, Feb. 25 (DH). Two Bonaparte's Gulls at State College, PA, Dec. 16 (M & CBa) provided the 3rd winter record there. Ring-billed Gulls were in above-average numbers at most places with a record high of 1758 at Boone L., TN, Feb. 13 (BC) and 3400 at Cherokee L., TN, Feb. 11 (RK). At P.I.S.P. a flight of about 250 gulls per minute was watched for half an hour Feb. 28 (JeS, JiS).

**OWLS TO WRENS** — Barn Owls occupied a new nesting site in *Washington*, TN, and returned to a previous site in Johnson City, TN (RK). One spent most of the winter at Green Bottom W.M.A., WV (WA, MG). A Snowy Owl was seen near Mt. Morris, PA, Dec. 16 (DHv). Up to two Long-eared Owls were present at P.I.S.P. Dec. 3–Jan. 13 (JM, EK) and two were there Feb. 10 (DH). A Long-eared in



This Barn Owl, photographed December 31, 1989, spent most of the winter at Green Bottom Wildlife Management Area, West Virginia. Photograph/Mike Griffith.

*Washington* Feb. 5 was the 3rd for n.e. Tennessee (RK). It was an unusual year for Short-eared Owls. Five were present all season near Gettysburg, PA (KG), and perhaps as many as 16 were in 3 locations in *Augusta*, VA, most of the season (RS). Five were at Mosquito L., OH, Jan. 28 (CB), and four were near Dublin, VA, in late December



Short-eared Owl at Glenwood Swamp, West Virginia, December 16, 1989. Unusual numbers wintered in the Appalachian Region. Photograph/Wendell L. Argabrite.

(JP). Green Bottom W.M.A., WV, had 3 single sightings in mid-December (WA, MG). Up to three N. Saw-whet Owls were at P.I.S.P. all season (DDa). Saw-whets were also reported from 3 locations in *Centre*, PA: B.E.S.P. Dec. 31, Tussey Mt. Jan. 24, and Keppler Rd. Jan. 30 (JPe).

The Rufous Hummingbird reported from Unicoi, TN, in fall was last seen Dec. 23 during the extremely cold spell (RK). There were only 5 reports of single Red-headed Woodpeckers: Ashton, WV (MG), *Wood*, WV (JE), *Highland*, VA (LT, MH), and Elizabethton, TN (RK).

Eastern Phoebes were found on CBCs at Elizabethton, TN (RK), and Blairsville, GA (DF), and by the end of the period migrants were reported from several places. A Tree Swallow at Tellico L., TN, Feb. 18 was quite early (R & AH). A record 23 Com. Ravens were in view at one time on Roan Mt., TN, Feb. 23 (RK, BC, FW), and two were seen at a low elevation in *Washington*, TN, Jan. 14 (RK). Six Fish Crows Jan. 7 near State College, PA, were unusually early (B & JPe).

Despite the good fall flight, Red-breasted Nuthatches were only at scattered locations and in modest numbers except in *Lycoming*, PA, where groups of up to 15 were seen (P & GS). Brown-headed Nuthatches were reported at Chickamauga Dam, TN, Dec. 24 (A & RH). Carolina Wrens continued to do well, even in northern locations. The cold December weather apparently had little effect on them — indicating once again that it is prolonged snow cover, not cold temperatures, that decimate this species. Reports of House Wrens came from *Whitfield*, GA, Dec. 16 (HD), Elizabethton, TN, Dec. 22 (GW, DL), and Austin Springs, TN, Jan. 15 (RK).

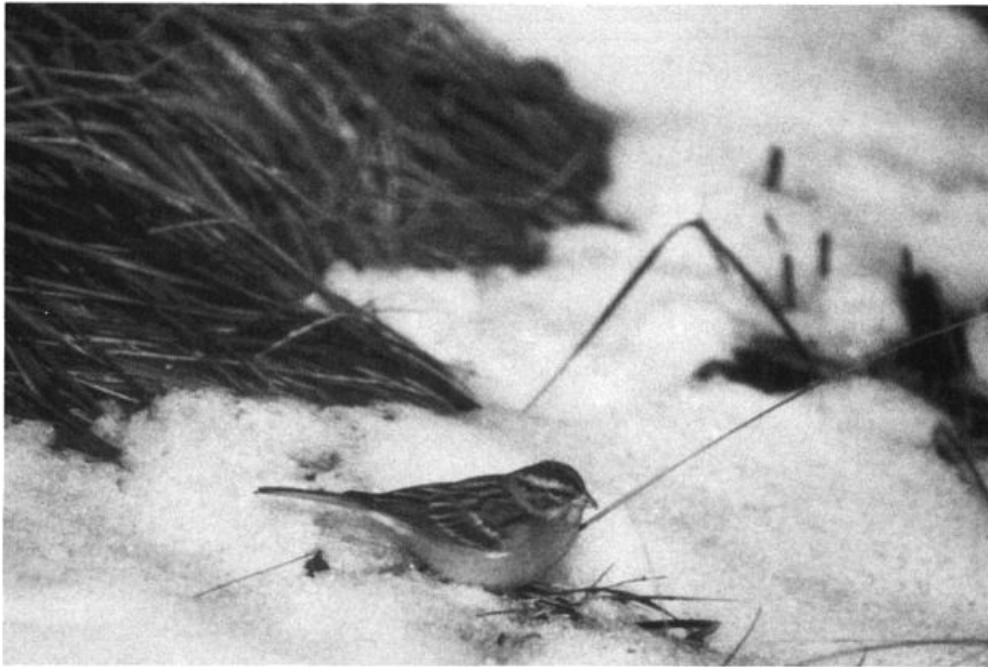
**KINGLETS TO SPARROWS** — After the heavy fall flight, Golden-crowned Kinglets were in unusually high numbers at many places, although this was not universal. A Ruby-crowned Kinglet at Edinboro, *Erie*, PA, Dec. 12 was unusually far north (DS). Almost all observers reported large numbers of Am. Robins throughout the season, even during the coldest weather, and E. Bluebirds were almost as common. The *Erie*, PA, CBC reported its first bluebirds in the 34 years of this count (JM). Hermit Thrushes were thought to be in low numbers in the Ch.N.F. and *Whitfield*, GA (HD). A **Varied Thrush** was seen Dec. 30 near the Peaks of Otter, VA (tBK *et al.*).

The only report of Gray Catbird came from Mosquito L., OH, Dec. 17 (CB). Brown Thrashers were found only at Salem, VA, Dec. 16 (Dht), and in the Elizabethton, TN, area (RK). A very late Am. Pipit was at P.I.S.P. Dec. 10 (CT). Northern Shrikes were reported from P.I.S.P. Dec. 17–Feb. 3 (DDa, GR), Lander, PA, Dec. 31–Feb. 17 (DW), and B.E.S.P. Jan. 27 (MW) and Feb. 18 (DBo, AF). In the *Rockingham*, VA, stronghold of the Loggerhead Shrike, the cold December may have produced considerable mortality. Elsewhere the picture was brighter: 8–10 sightings were near normal around Elizabethton, TN (RK), and more than usual were noted at Dalton, GA (HD). Other sightings came from Ft. Loudon and Gettysburg, PA (KG), *Highland*, VA (LT), and *Bath*, KY (MG).

Yellow-rumped Warblers were numerous at many places, including P.I.S.P., where there was a good crop of bayberries (JM). A Pine Warbler was at P.I.S.P. Dec. 9 (JM), and the species was singing on Bays Mt., TN, by Feb. 21 (FA). A Palm Warbler was at Austin Springs, TN, Dec. 1, one in *Washington*, TN, Jan. 5 had survived the December weather (RK).

A Dickcissel visited a State College, PA, feeder Dec. 25–Feb. 27 (DBo) and a female came to a Johnson City, TN, feeder Dec. 26–Jan. 19 for the 3rd e. Tennessee winter record (RK). Considering the mild winter, surprisingly few wintering Rufous-sided Towhees were reported. The Rector, PA, CBC listed 200+ Am. Tree Sparrows, the best count in 10 years (RM, RL), and the species was recorded at Austin Springs, TN, Jan. 5–9, the first records there since 1979 (RK). Elsewhere they were generally more common than they had been for several years, although some places still had very few. A Chipping Sparrow was at a feeder in Edinboro, PA, from Jan. 1 on, for the 2nd *Erne* winter record (DS). Other reports came from P.N.R. Dec





*Chipping Sparrow, north of its usual winter range, near Proctorville, Ohio, December 24, 1989. Photograph/Mike Griffith.*

12-16 (RL, RM), and 10 were seen near Proctorville, OH, in late December (ph. MG).

Fox Sparrow was another species that arrived early, in mid-February. White-throated Sparrows were generally felt to be in lower numbers than in recent years, but White-crowned Sparrows showed some increase. A **Harris' Sparrow** was at Marion, PA, Dec. 16 through February, and was seen by many (*fide* KG). "Oregon" Dark-eyed Juncos were seen at 2 locations in *Erie*, PA (DS, JeS, JiS), and one identified as "Pink-sided" was in *Augusta*, VA, Feb. 1-20 (YL). A record total of 18 Lapland Longspurs was found at Jersey Shore, PA, Dec. 30 (G & PS). They were also reported from P.I.S.P. Dec. 23-Jan. 1 (EK, JM), *Centre*, PA, Dec. 24 & 31 (*fide* JPe), and more unusually near Steubenville, OH, Feb. 11 & 17 (MA), *Greene*, TN, Dec. 3, and *Knox*, TN, Jan. 7 (R & AH). Snow Buntings were reported from Lander, PA, in early January (DW), Warren, PA, Feb. 9 (BH), *Centre*, PA, Dec. 18 (CY) and Jan. 18-19 (SG), and B.E.S.P. Dec. 31 (HH, GY). More unusual were the reports from the balds of Roan Mt., TN, Jan. 3-Feb. 8 (RK). The species was once regular at this site, but these were the first records since 1981.

**BLACKBIRDS TO FINCHES** — The mild February produced a host of early arrival dates for E. Meadowlarks, Red-winged Blackbirds, and Com. Grackles. An ad. ♂ Yellow-headed Blackbird visited a feeder in *Erie* Jan. 7, for the 10th county record (MWh).

Small flocks of Red Crossbills were reported from the Ch.N.F. Dec. 17 (HD), Roan Mt., TN, Dec. 29 (BC), *Johnson*, TN, Jan. 9 (RK), Pipestem S.P. and *Summers*, WV, in late December (JP), Cheat Mts., WV, Feb. 24 (MG), and Harvey's Knob, VA, Dec. 31 (BK, KK), as well as the more or less permanent station on Shenandoah Mt., VA (LT). There was a small but scattered invasion of White-winged Crossbills with reports from Roan Mt. Dec. 29 (BC), *Wood*, WV, Dec. 30-Jan. 1 (M & JB), *Centre*, PA, on various dates (JPe *et al.*), *Crawford*, PA, Feb. 18 (SL), and *Erie*, PA, Feb. 20 (B & HH).

Pine Siskins staged a major but patchy influx. Many places reported large flocks over long periods, but other places had them only occasionally and some places saw

none at all. At P.N.R. over 500 were banded this season (RL, RM). The siskins were sometimes accompanied by Am. Goldfinches, which were also unusually common, with 250 banded at P.N.R. (RL, RM). The Evening Grosbeak flight was also scattered, but numbers were generally low. Most places saw few or none, while a few places had larger flocks.

**EXOTICS** — There were two reports of exotic waterfowl, both no doubt pertaining to escapees. On Dec. 10 there were several Red-crested Pochards at Deep Creek L., MD (EM), and in late February a Ruddy Shelduck was a fairly regular visitor to a pond in *Jefferson*, WV (*fide* WHe).

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# WESTERN GREAT LAKES REGION

David J. Powell



The weather this winter came in two parts, very cold and very warm. The very cold was in December, when the Region was plunged into extreme cold for essentially the whole month. Grand Rapids, Michigan, had its coldest December on record, averaging 10.2 degrees below normal. In Minnesota, highs were only near 0, even in the south, and at Isabella, the high on Dec. 20 was -22, if one dares to call that a "high"! Precipitation was down in Michigan, but it didn't seem like it because it essentially all fell as snow and then stayed. In late December, the tide turned and winter all but left. It was near record warm throughout the Region until late February, but the temperatures were not records on a daily basis, just on an average basis. In Minneapolis/St. Paul, the mean daily temperature was above normal for 50 days in a row, which must be some sort of a record for there. The temperature never fell below 0 in January, for the first time ever in Minneapolis/St. Paul, resulting in the second warmest January on record. Eckert commented that he couldn't remember the weather doing anything the same way for anywhere near that number of days in a row. Michigan and Wisconsin echoed Minnesota in warm weather. In Michigan, precipitation was slightly above normal, but due to the warmth, snowfall was below normal until mid-February, when cold weather and snow moved through the southern parts of the Region, dropping 13 inches on Kalamazoo February 14, followed by an inch of freezing rain on the 15th.

It was a decent winter for rarities, with Minnesota's second Golden-crowned Sparrow, Michigan's first multiple observer Ferruginous Hawk (second accepted by the Michigan Bird Records Committee), and Wisconsin's third or fourth Mew Gull. Other birds of more than passing interest included an Ivory Gull in Minnesota, Lesser Black-backed Gull in Wisconsin, and Barrow's Goldeneye in both states. Winter finches returned to the Region in good numbers except in southern Michigan, and thrushes were seen in good numbers throughout the Region. In the account which follows, place names in italics are counties; and in an attempt to reduce unnecessary duplication, only the most exceptional Christmas Bird Count data are included.

**GREBES TO WATERFOWL** — Pied-billed Grebes were reported in above-average numbers in Minnesota, with late birds also present in Michigan and Wisconsin, with one overwintering at Kalamazoo. Mid-winter Horned Grebes were seen in all 3 states, with singles on Lake Superior in Cook, MN, Jan. 14 (PS) and at Two Harbors, MN, Jan. 27 (KE, MH), Jan. 13 at the Karn Plant, Bay, MI (JS, RW), and Feb. 6 in West Bend, WI (SD). A Red-necked Grebe was found Feb. 10 at St. Paul (PS), both an unusual time and unusual location. Two Eared Grebes were found, Dec. 1 at Lake Geneva, WI (PP), and Dec. 8 at Harbor Springs, Emmet, MI (PC, TW). Double-crested Cormorants were seen in all 3 states, with individuals overwintering in Michigan and probably in Wisconsin. Great Blue Herons were seen in above average numbers in Minnesota, and overwintered in s. Michigan and Wisconsin.

More Tundra Swans than normal were found in Minnesota, but most left early in Wisconsin. Ten Greater White-fronted Geese were found Feb. 10 at Pointe Mouillee S.G.A., Monroe, MI (RW). An impressive 210,000 Canada Geese were counted by the Minnesota D.N.R. Dec. 11 at Lac Qui Parle W.M.A., but they cleared out early in Michigan and Wisconsin. The warm weather in mid-February brought returning birds to both southern Michigan and southern Wisconsin right before the return of winter weather. American Black Ducks were seen in larger than normal numbers in both Michigan and Minnesota, with flocks of over 1500 seen at 2 locations in Michigan. Wood Ducks were also seen in larger than normal numbers in the Region. Harlequin Ducks were well represented, with two in Michigan, two or three in Wisconsin, and six in Minnesota, where as many as four were at Two Harbors Jan. 12 into February (m.ob.). The most unusual Harlequin was one Dec. 9 into March away from the Great Lakes at Madison, WI (m.ob.). Scoters were scarce Regionwide, with single Blacks and Surfs reported from Wisconsin (both Dec. 1 in Ozaukee (JB), and only a couple of reports of White-wingeds from Michigan and Wisconsin. Barrow's Goldeneyes were found at Port Washington, WI, an imm. male Jan. 3 (MK), and a female at Fergus Falls, MN, Jan. 1 into February

(SM, m.ob.). This species is at best casual in the Region.

**RAPTORS** — Turkey Vultures were both early and late, with a lingerer Dec. 19 in *Berrien*, MI (PU), and an early returner Feb. 21 in *Baraboo*, WI (SS). An Osprey lingered until the very late date of Dec. 27 at *Midland*, MI (GK). Bald Eagles were seen in above average numbers in both Michigan and Wisconsin, with a high count of 16 on Dec. 13 at *Shiawassee N.W.R.*, MI (DPe, BG). Northern Harriers were seen in above average numbers in Wisconsin, and a winter roost of 15+ in *Hillsdale*, MI (JR), was certainly a good count. Goshawks this winter tended to stay in the n. portion of the Region, with only one s. report in Michigan. Red-tailed Hawks were seen more often than normal this winter in Minnesota, probably owing to the scarce snow cover (KE). A **Ferruginous Hawk** found on Christmas Day by Jim and Cheryl Granland at the *Allegan S.G.A.*, MI, and thereafter seen by many through Jan. 27, furnished the first multiple-observer record for Michigan, and only the 2nd accepted by the Michigan Bird Records Committee. Rough-legged Hawks were more common than normal in both Minnesota and Michigan. Golden Eagles were also seen in good numbers, with three in Michigan, four in Wisconsin, and more than average in Minnesota. Single Merlins were seen in Michigan and Wisconsin, but Minnesota observers found them to be more common than



*Gyr Falcon photographed February 5, 1990, at Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, where the species might be annual in occurrence. Photograph/Robert Putnam.*

normal. This species used to be all but nonexistent in the Region in the winter, but has become much more regular in recent years. Gyrfalcons were seen Dec. 15 at *Alpena*, MI (RP); Jan. 10 at *Bay Beach Wildlife Sanctuary*, *Green Bay*, WI (MR *et al.*); and Jan. 27 and Feb. 17 at *Sault Ste. Marie*, MI (BP, PC, DB *et al.*), where Michigan observers feel they are present essentially every winter hunting along the *St. Marys River*. *Prairie Falcons* were found no

#### S.A.

The situation surrounding Peregrine Falcons in the Region has become muddled in recent years with all of the hacked-out birds in Michigan and Minnesota. This winter, there were birds seen in both states which were considered likely to be hacked-out birds, and one must wonder if the two birds seen at *Milwaukee* in January (JB *et al.*) were also hacked-out birds. While this species is certainly doing better in the Region, it is becoming considerably more difficult to clearly assess its status.

fewer than 6 times this winter in Minnesota, all in the west except for one at the *Twin Cities airport*, where one was seen last year.

**MOORHENS TO GULLS** — A Common Moorhen was found Dec. 23 on the *Dowagiac*, MI, CBC (JG, DP, BP). *Sandhill Cranes* returned to *Calhoun*, MI, Feb. 19 (MI), quite early. A Greater Yellowlegs lingered until Dec. 2 at *Metrobeach*, *Macomb*, MI (DL, LB), as did a Dunlin at the same location. A Baird's Sandpiper was present Nov. 28 to Dec. 1 at *Eau Claire*, WI (JP), the latest ever for Wisconsin. Common Snipe were seen in above average numbers Regionwide.

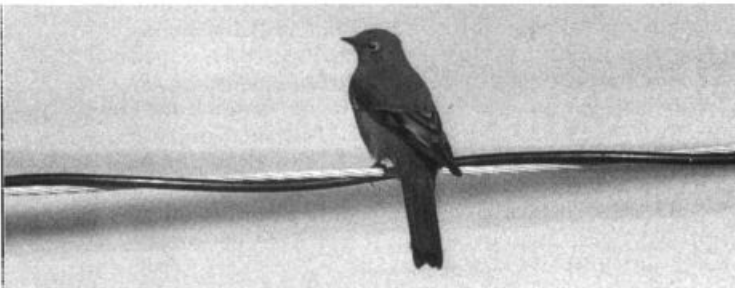
A full breeding-plumaged Franklin's Gull was at *St. Joseph*, *Berrien*, MI, Jan. 10 (RS), for the first local winter record for the species. A Little Gull was found Dec. 1 at *Benton Harbor*, *Berrien* (RS). An adult Mew Gull in winter plumage was found Jan. 7 along the *Milwaukee lakeshore* (TS *et al.*), where it was seen intermittently through late January for the 3rd or 4th Wisconsin record. Fewer Thayer's Gulls than usual were seen in Michigan and Wisconsin. Iceland Gulls were well represented, with 5 reports in Michigan, 3 in Wisconsin, and one Dec. 14–16 at *Duluth*, MN (KE *et al.*); the species is only casual in Minnesota. A Lesser Black-backed Gull found Jan. 15 at *Port Washington* (RS) was only about the 4th or 5th for Wisconsin. Glaucous Gulls are regular in the Region, but 30 on Dec. 18 on the *Saginaw R.*, *Bay*, MI (MW), made a very high count. Glaucous Gulls are almost exclusively denizens of the Great Lakes in the Region, so inland sightings at *Oshkosh*, WI, and *Oakland*, MI, were notable. A Black-legged Kittiwake was found Dec. 13 at the *Karn Plant*, *Bay*, MI (RW, MHu), for only the 3rd local record. An immature Ivory Gull was at *Grand Marais*, MN, Jan. 14 (PS), but unfortunately flew out over *L. Superior* after a few minutes, never to be seen again.

**OWLS TO WOODPECKERS** — Snowy Owls were found in normal numbers in Minnesota, but were absurdly scarce in Michigan and Wisconsin, with only about seven and six individuals respectively in each state. Northern Hawk Owls were scarce again this winter, as only three were found in Minnesota, and none stayed in the same location, as is more normal for this species. In contrast to last year's near record invasion (second largest in Minnesota), very few were found this winter. There was none reported from either Michigan or Wisconsin, and in Minnesota, where they were reported from only *Roseau* and *St. Louis*, none was reported from *Aitkin*, normally their most dependable location. Eckert commented that this was perhaps the worst winter ever for this species. Short-eared Owls were more common than usual in the s. portion of the Region, with roosts of 12 found in both Michigan and Wisconsin. Boreal Owls were also infrequently reported this winter, with one Feb. 24 in *Sawyer*, WI (DLA), and one Feb. 20 in *Duluth* (DK), the only reports away from their presumed breeding area in *Lake and Cook*, MN, where three were found.

A Belted Kingfisher Jan. 14 in *Baraga*, MI (LF), was n. of normal for the winter. Red-headed Woodpeckers wintered in good numbers in Wisconsin, but were scarce in Michigan. One was n. of normal in Minnesota on the *Grand Rapids CBC*. There were at least 5 reports of Red-bellied Woodpecker from n. Minnesota, where the species is rare/casual. Five Three-toed Woodpeckers were found between 3 n.e. Minnesota locations, more than normal. Northern Flickers were more common than normal in both Minnesota and Wisconsin.

**FLYCATCHERS TO SHRIKES** — An Eastern Phoebe lingered until Dec. 2 at Muskegon S.P., MI (GW). A surprising 750–1000 Black-capped Chickadees were in Sault St. Marie, MI, Jan. 27 (JG *et al.*). Red-breasted Nuthatches were in above average numbers in Minnesota and Wisconsin, but except for the Muskegon area were not so common in Michigan. As is to be expected after several mild winters, Carolina Wrens continue to do well in the Region, with reports from 8 Michigan counties and from 3–5 Wisconsin locations. This species is winter-limited in the Region, and though doing better has not returned to the levels it reached in the mid-1970s. A Marsh Wren on a Wisconsin CBC was notable as very few are seen there in winter. Winter Wrens were observed more frequently than in recent years in Michigan. Golden-crowned Kinglets were scarce in both Michigan and Wisconsin.

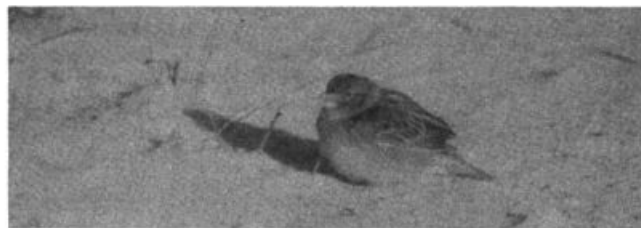
Eastern Bluebirds wintered in good numbers in the s. portions of the Region, with several reports also from Minnesota, where even one in the winter is considered unusual. A male Mountain Bluebird was at Port Washington, WI, Dec. 31–Jan. 1 (JM, SK *et al.*). This bird apparently wintered, as it was relocated in mid-February (RS). Two Townsend's Solitaires were found in the Minneapolis/St. Paul area, about normal for Minnesota. A Townsend's Solitaire w. of Lodi, WI, Jan. 10 into February



*Townsend's Solitaire in Houghton County, Michigan, February 19, 1990. Photograph/Bill Bouton.*

(KL, m.ob.) spent the winter feeding on cedar and juniper berries on a hillside. Another Townsend's Solitaire was in Houghton, MI, Feb. 4–17 (LF, m.ob.), providing one of the few "chaseable" members of this species for Michigan. American Robins were seen in above average numbers in Minnesota and in "impressive" numbers in s. Wisconsin, but were average to below average in Michigan. Varied Thrushes were average to slightly above average with 4 Michigan, 6 Minnesota, and 10–11 Wisconsin reports. It was a waxwing winter throughout most of the Region, with good numbers of Cedars and large numbers of Bohemians. Only s. Michigan and s. Wisconsin missed out on the Bohemians, and numbers approaching 1000 were present in several places, highlighted by the 4171 found on the Duluth CBC. Northern Shrikes were rather scarce although widespread in Michigan and Wisconsin.

**CARDINALS TO GROSBEAKS** — Northern Cardinals seem to be increasing in n. Minnesota where the species is rare/casual; this winter there were no fewer than 14 individuals from 7 locations. Four Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were found on CBCs in Wisconsin, quite unusual. More Rufous-sided Towhees than normal were reported Regionwide; this species is only infrequently seen in the winter. American Tree Sparrows were more numerous than normal and were found farther n. than normal in Minnesota, with birds in n. *St. Louis, Lake,* and *Cook.* Surpris-



*Grasshopper Sparrow in Lake County, Minnesota, December 9, 1989. First winter record for the state. Photograph/Dudley Edmondson.*

ingly, a Chipping Sparrow survived the frigid December weather and was seen Jan. 1 n. of Port Washington, WI (RS *et al.*). A Vesper Sparrow was found on the Cottonwood, MN, CBC (CB); the species is only casual in Minnesota in the winter. Savannah Sparrows were found on 3 Wisconsin CBCs; an average winter has none. Minnesota's first winter Grasshopper Sparrow was one found Dec. 9–10 in Lake (AB, BL, KE, DE). White-throated Sparrows were more common than usual in s. Michigan, with many apparently successfully overwintering. Minnesota's 2nd **Golden-crowned Sparrow** came to the Gilbertson feeder in Duluth November to Feb. 18, where it was seen and photographed



*This Golden-crowned Sparrow spent most of the winter of 1989–1990 in Duluth, Minnesota, providing a second state record. Photograph/Dudley Edmondson.*

by many. A White-crowned Sparrow was n. of normal on the Grand Marais, MN, CBC, as were Harris' Sparrows on the same CBC and the Gunflint Trail, MN, CBC. Harris' Sparrows were also more common than normal in Minnesota this winter. Lapland Longspurs were found in good numbers in Minnesota and Wisconsin, but were scarce in Michigan. Excellent numbers of Snow Buntings were found in Wisconsin, with flocks of 1000–3000, particularly December to mid-January. Blackbirds and meadowlarks were seen in above average numbers in Minnesota. Meadowlarks successfully overwintered in both Michigan and Wisconsin, a rare occurrence in recent years.

The winter finch picture was considerable better than in recent winters, particularly in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Pine Grosbeaks staged a major invasion in Minnesota, with birds found even in the extreme south, where they are rare/casual. The picture in Wisconsin was similar, with excellent numbers in n. areas, and good numbers filtering into the south. In Michigan, Pine Grosbeaks were in slightly above average numbers in the Upper Peninsula and n. Lower Peninsula, but were absent farther south, certainly not an invasion year. Purple Finches were scarce Regionwide. House Finches continued their inexorable march across the Region; they are common, almost abundant in s. Michigan, with small flocks now occurring in the n. Lower Peninsula, and some records from the Upper Peninsula; becoming common across the s. portions of

Wisconsin, with reports from 22 CBCs, only the extreme northern areas lacking; and in Minnesota, there were no fewer than 95 individuals reported from 11 locations, including Fergus Falls in the northwest. Red Crossbills were generally in low numbers, as is normal for this species. White-winged Crossbills were seen in excellent numbers throughout Minnesota, including reports from all 9 counties on the Iowa border, with the observations continuing throughout the season. Minnesota observers thought it might be the largest invasion ever there. They were also in excellent numbers in n. Wisconsin and n. Michigan, with good numbers into s. Wisconsin. Only s. Michigan did not have good numbers. Common Redpolls were in above average numbers in Minnesota and n. Wisconsin, but it was certainly not an invasion year. Redpoll numbers seemed to increase in February, when Hoarics were seen in all 3 states. Pine Siskins were in excellent numbers statewide in both Michigan and Wisconsin. In Michigan, siskins were the only winter finches to occur in good numbers in the south. Evening Grosbeaks were again very scarce in Michigan and Wisconsin, even in the north.

**CORRIGENDUM** — Kim Eckert wrote the great majority of the material in both of last winter's S.A.s and while some additional information was added, my oversight was not crediting Kim in either S.A. My apologies, Kim.

**CONTRIBUTORS** (This editor thanks the many individuals who submitted reports. The nature of this summary precludes listing every individual who sends in a report; therefore, only those observers with cited records are listed below. State editors are in boldface.) — Jeff Baughman, Leon Beitz, Al Bolduc, Don Brooks, Chris Buer, Phil Chu, Scott Diehl, **Kim Eckert** (Minnesota), Dudley Edmundson, Lynn Foss, Jim Granlund, Bob Grefe, Mike Hendrickson, Mark Hubinger (MHu), Mabelle Isham, Gene Kanaga, Don Kienholz, Mark Korducki, Steve Kupcho, David Lauten (DLA), Dick Leasure, Karl Legler, Bill Litkey, Jerry Meid, Steve Millard, Pat Parsons, Dave Peters (DPe), Rod Planck, Janine Polk, **David Powell** (Michigan), Bob Putman, Michael Reed, Jack Reinoehl, Joe Soehnel, Roger Sundell, Peder Svingen, Scott Swengel, **Daryl Tessen** (Wisconsin), Pat Underwood, Ron Weeks, Tex Wells, George Wickstrom, Myles Willard.—**DAVID J. POWELL**, 217 Montrose, Kalamazoo, MI 49001-4222.

## MIDDLEWESTERN PRAIRIE REGION

Bruce G. Peterjohn



December's weather suggested that it was going to be a long, cold winter. Arctic cold fronts ushered in below-normal temperatures during the first week of the month, and the bottom fell out of the thermometer during the third week as record-setting temperatures plummeted to  $-15^{\circ}$  to  $-20^{\circ}$  F in many areas. Snow cover blanketed the Region, reinforcing the severe cold. Despite moderating conditions after Christmas, temperatures averaged  $10-15^{\circ}$  below normal to make this the coldest December ever.

Weather patterns changed abruptly after January 1, with a very mild January and February contrasting sharply with December's extreme cold. Temperatures averaged  $8-12^{\circ}$  above normal. Precipitation was generally above average, primarily in the form of rain.

The cold weather during December froze streams and lakes, sending lingering waterbirds and half-hardy species to warmer climates. These conditions caused noticeable mortality among some resident species, although the extent of this mortality remains to be determined. Birds congregated at feeding stations, which enjoyed their greatest levels of activity in several winters. As the temperatures moderated during January, the season became exceptionally dull. Spring migration began early with waterfowl and other migrants appearing between late January and mid-February in most areas.

**ABBREVIATIONS** — L.B.L. = Land-between-the-Lakes, KY; Say. Res. = Saylorville Res., IA. Place names in *italics*

are counties.

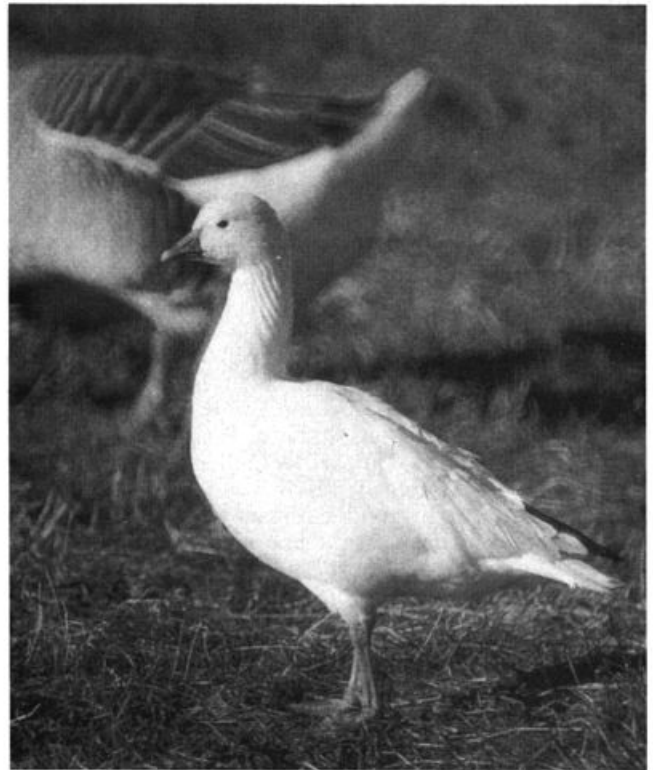
**LOONS TO HERONS** — A few loons lingered into early December and most departed by the middle of the month. Red-throated were represented by single late migrants at Whitewater S.P., IN, Dec. 7 (DD *et al.*) and Buck Creek S.P., OH, Dec. 2 (DO). Wintering loons were restricted to s.w. Missouri, where they sparked considerable interest. One or two **Pacific Loons** were discovered at Table Rock L., Feb. 23–28 (CL, HH, †m.ob.), establishing the first mid-winter record for this Region. As many as 13 Com. Loons were recorded there Feb. 17 (PM, JH), but most attention was centered on Missouri's first **Yellow-billed Loon** that graced Table Rock L. Feb. 14–25 (CL, †m.ob.). This species has been recorded from the Region on only one previous occasion, in Illinois during December 1986.

Late concentrations of migrant grebes peaked with 60 Pied-billed Grebes in Indiana and 40 Horned Grebes in Illinois, but these departed before January. Wintering Pied-billeds were widespread in small numbers n. to Cedar Rapids, IA (JF, SD), while Horned Grebes were scarce with few reports n. to Akron, OH (LR). Their spring passage began during February. The 400 Horneds tallied at Table Rock L. Feb. 18 (DEa *et al.*) easily established the largest concentration ever reported from Missouri. No Red-necked Grebes were reported, and Eared Grebes were represented by lingering fall migrants in s.w. Indiana and along c. Lake Erie through Dec. 3.

The latest Am. White Pelican lingered at Red Rock Res., IA, Dec. 10–16 (SD *et al.*). Small flocks of spring migrants returned to 2 Missouri locations Feb. 11–17. December's harsh weather caused most Double-crested Cormorants to vacate the Region. Small numbers wintered on several reservoirs in s. Missouri, while one at L. Barkley, KY, Jan. 26 (J & PB) and three in *Will*, IL, through Jan. 7 (JM) may have been wintering. Great Blue Herons were fairly plentiful during December with tallies of 40–96 encountered in every state except Iowa. Their numbers were markedly reduced after Jan. 1. As many as four Great Egrets lingered at 3 c. Illinois locations Dec. 2–10. The expected small numbers of Black-crowned Night-Herons wintered in the Chicago area, but none was noted at Alton, IL. One at Eastlake, OH, during January (TL, LR) furnished an unusual mid-winter record from c. Lake Erie.

**WATERFOWL**—Small numbers of Tundra Swans passed through the n. states during December. The largest flock totalled 13 at Caesar Creek Res., OH, Dec. 21 (DS); one bird at Ballard W.M.A., KY, through Dec. 10 (BP) was outside its normal range. Wintering Tundras were scarce with two near Princeton, IA (JF), two in *Jersey*, IL, Jan. 20–Feb. 18 (HW), five in *Seneca*, OH, Jan. 21 (TB), and one in *Allen*, IN, Jan. 16 (Haw). A few early migrants appeared after Feb. 20. Trumpeter Swans were limited to two in s.w. Missouri. Mute Swans continued to increase, an ominous sign for native waterfowl. The largest flocks totalled 52 in *Lake*, IL, Jan. 2 (EW) and 17 at L. Barkley, KY, Jan. 3 (CM, CP).

Numbers of wintering geese remained respectable. In addition to CBC reports, wintering Greater White-fronted Geese included singles in *Will*, IL, Jan. 26 (JM) and Muscatatuck N.W.R., IN, Jan. 27 (MMc, HC), two at Crab Orchard N.W.R., IL, Jan. 28 (BD), and up to five in *Wayne*, KY, Dec. 10–Feb. 7 (JE). The latter birds were thought to be of the Greenland race. Migrants appeared east to Ohio during February, with maxima of 30 in Iowa and Illinois. The largest reported flock of wintering Snow Geese



*This adult Ross' Goose, photographed March 1, 1990, was present most of the winter in Jackson County, Ohio, for a third state record. Photograph/Mary Gustafson.*

totalled 15,000+ at Ballard W.M.A., KY, Dec. 19 (CW). Smaller numbers elsewhere included 400 in *Gibson* Jan. 28 (GBo), an unusual concentration for s.w. Indiana. Ross' Geese are being detected with increasing frequency. Still novelties in the e. states, reports of single **Ross' Geese** consisted of a fall migrant in *Gibson*, IN, through Dec. 3 (GBo, †m.ob., ph.), a wintering adult in *Jackson*, OH, after mid-December but not discovered by birders until Feb. 17 (DM, TBn, †m.ob.), and a spring migrant in *Warren*, KY, Feb. 24–March 4 (GB, †m.ob.). Regular visitors in small numbers farther west, as many as four Ross' Geese were noted at Baldwin L., IL, through Jan. 13 (MF), while spring migrants were detected at one e. Missouri and 3 Illinois locations after Feb. 11. December's cold weather brought extraordinary numbers of Canada Geese to the Mississippi R. valley, with 871,000+ in s. Illinois Dec. 26 (DT) and 170,000+ at Ballard W.M.A., KY, Dec. 19 (CW).

Numbers of dabbling ducks were unremarkable. Most departed during December while migrants returned by mid-February, but in low numbers representative of recent years. Early migrants included small flocks of Blue-winged Teal in Indiana and Illinois Feb. 18–20. Diving ducks appeared in mediocre numbers as some mid-winter concentrations failed to materialize. Their migration began during the first week of February and was in full swing by the end of the month. The only sizable concentration of Canvasbacks totalled 4000 on the Mississippi R. at Montrose, IA, Feb. 9 (RCe), an encouraging sign after their scarcity there during the past 2 winters. Few Greater Scaup were detected on inland lakes. King Eiders were restricted to the Great Lakes, where singles at *Lake*, OH, Dec. 10 (LR, RHa *et al.*) and Michigan City, IN, Dec. 16 (KB) were late migrants. When compared with last winter's "invasion," fewer Harlequin Ducks wintered along the Great Lakes. At least four were detected in the Chicago

area Jan 20–Feb 17 (JL, WM), while L. Erie sightings consisted of two December singles and a wintering pair in *Lake* (LR *et al.*). These numbers were still above average for this Region. Oldsquaws remained scarce along the Great Lakes with a maximum of 29 along L. Michigan in the Chicago area. Inland reports consisted of one to three at 12 locations, above normal numbers for recent years.

Late Surf Scoters appeared along both Great Lakes and at single inland locations in Ohio and Illinois during December. One at Chicago Feb. 24 (WM) may have been an early spring migrant. It was a poor winter for White-winged Scoters with only small numbers along both Great Lakes and sightings from 4 inland locations. December's harsh weather produced local concentrations of Com. Goldeneyes in the n. states, peaking at 1000 in Illinois. At best a casual visitor to the n. states, an ad. ♂ **Barrow's Goldeneye** wandered south to c. Illinois, visiting Sangchris S.P. Dec. 25–31 and Springfield Jan. 1 (†DB). A respectable 500 Hooded Mergansers gathered at L.B.L., Dec 3–10 (BP, ER). Smaller flocks were reported elsewhere during December, but few remained after Jan. 1. Common Mergansers staged another good flight across the n. states with maxima of 10,000 at Powerton, IL, Jan. 1–13 (LA) and 4000–5000 at 2 Iowa reservoirs.

**HAWKS TO SHOREBIRDS**—The Black Vulture roost at Table Rock L., MO, totalled 100+ Feb. 18 (PM *et al.*). Smaller numbers wintered elsewhere at the northern edge of their range from s. Illinois to s. Ohio. Traditional winter roosts of Turkey Vultures produced estimates of 200–250 at Turkey Run S.P. IN (AB), and 100+ at Table Rock L., MO (PM *et al.*). Extralimital wintering Turkey Vultures were two at Big River S.F., IL, through Feb. 10 (LMk, MB) and one in *Lucas*, OH, through Jan. 11 (TK *et al.*). Mild weather in late January prompted an early return of Turkey Vultures, such as one in *Tuscarawas*, OH, Jan. 27 (*fide* ES), another in *Benton*, MO, Jan. 28 (SH), and six in *Huntington*, IN, Feb. 2 (*fide* SS). Numerous other migrants were detected during February. Wintering Bald Eagles continued to improve in most states. The mid-winter survey produced totals of 1539 in Illinois, approximately 300 in Kentucky, and 72 in Indiana, while the expected large concentrations developed in Missouri and Iowa.

As usual, N. Harriers received mixed reports. They were apparently most numerous in Kentucky and Missouri where as many as 30–65 were reported. Improved numbers of Cooper's Hawks were reported from several states. It was another poor winter for N. Goshawks: there were only 10+ sightings from the n. states and no adequately documented records farther south. Increased sightings of wintering Red-shouldered Hawks in n.e. Ohio and Kentucky were encouraging. A single Red-shouldered in *Woodbury* Jan. 7 (BH) provided one of few winter records from w. Iowa. Rough-legged Hawks were locally numerous, particularly in Ohio and Kentucky, where maxima of 20–33 were noted. Golden Eagles appeared in every state except Ohio, producing an above normal total of 15+ reports. Still a noteworthy discovery in Indiana, a Golden Eagle was found dead in *Gibson* Jan. 3 while two frequented L. Monroe during January (*fide* JC).

Merlins were more widely reported than normal. In addition to CBC reports, they were discovered at single sites in Kentucky, Ohio, and Illinois, 2 in Iowa, and 3 in Missouri, Dec. 12–Jan. 6. After early January, sightings were limited to a wintering Merlin in Carroll, IA (EWi), and one in *Jackson*, OH, Feb. 18 (BPj *et al.*). The winter status of Peregrine Falcons is definitely changing, no doubt reflecting the numerous releases in eastern and cen-

tral North America during the 1980s. Formerly very rare in winter, one to three Peregrines were reported from a total of 12 locations. Only Iowa observers did not detect any wintering Peregrines. It was a banner winter for Prairie Falcons in the w. states. There were 9+ reports from Missouri s. to Table Rock L., Jan. 30 (†CL), while at least eight were discovered in Iowa with most in the n.w. counties. Rare but regular winter visitors in Illinois, single Prairie Falcons appeared in *DeWitt* Feb. 4–17 (ASi, ASt, tm.ob., ph.) and in *Jersey* Feb. 18 (RG, TG).

Populations of most gallinaceous birds apparently survived December's harsh weather in reasonably good shape, although their true status will not be known until this summer. However, given the paucity of N. Bobwhite sightings after early January, I suspect their numbers were reduced by these weather conditions. Lingered rails were restricted to Illinois with a Virginia at Springfield through Dec. 14 (DB) and a Sora in *Will* Dec. 16–22 (JM, ph.) Migrant Sandhill Cranes were conspicuous across c. Kentucky through Dec. 21, including several flocks of 300–600. Three small flocks also passed through s.w. Ohio Dec. 1–3, and five cranes were unexpected in w. Kentucky at Ballard W.M.A. Dec. 10 (BP, DE). The only wintering Sandhill Crane was discovered in *Boone*, KY, Jan. 9 and remained through February (LM). Spring migrants returned to Kentucky and Indiana by Feb. 18 and one wandered into Iowa at Say. Res. Feb. 21 (SD).

A few shorebirds lingered into early December as evidenced by Dec. 2 sightings of single Black-bellied Plovers at 2 Illinois lakes and a Lesser Golden-Plover in *Gibson*, IN (SJ). Most Killdeer departed during December's harsh weather. Small numbers returned to the s. states by late January and Regionwide by late February. Kentucky produced the only Lesser Yellowlegs with one lingering through Dec. 10 at L. Pewee and three returning to *Warren* Feb. 25 (BP). Other late shorebirds were six W. Sandpipers in *Marshall*, KY, through Dec. 13 (CP), Least Sandpipers in 3 states through Dec. 2, up to five Purple Sandpipers along c. Lake Erie through Dec. 10, and a Dec. 13 Dunlin in Kentucky. Surprising numbers of Com. Snipe were noted during December including several groups of 13–29. They were noticeably reduced after Jan. 1, although wintering snipe were encountered in every state n. to Hawarden, IA (JV). January's mild weather apparently prompted an early return of Am. Woodcocks. The first migrants included singles in *Pope* and *Johnson*, IL., Jan. 22 (TF), *Washington*, MO, Jan. 30 (SDi), *Hardin*, KY, Feb. 5 (RHe), *Pickaway*, OH, Feb. 8 (*fide* BPj), and *Seneca*, OH, Feb. 11 (TB). They returned to most areas except Iowa by late February.

**JAEGERS TO TERNS**—The only jaeger sightings were of single Parasitics at 2 sites along the Cleveland–Lorain, OH, lakefront Dec. 7–10 (RHs, WK). During December's harsh weather, gulls congregated along c. Lake Erie and traditional sites on the Illinois, Mississippi, and lower Ohio rivers. As soon as the weather moderated, these gulls dispersed. With mild weather predominating after Jan. 1, few sizable gull concentrations developed, and most observers lamented that it was one of the worst winters for gulls in recent years.

A Franklin's Gull wintered in the Region, for the 3rd time in the past 4 years. This year's report was of an adult frequenting Say. Res., Jan. 16–Feb. 11 (SD *et al.*). A few Little Gulls remained along both Great Lakes through Dec. 3 and the fall visitor at Carlyle L., IL, was last noted Dec. 7 (BRu). Spring migrants returned to L. Erie by Feb. 17. A casual visitor to L. Erie, an ad. Com. Black-headed Gull

was studied at Headlands S.P., OH, Feb. 25 (†RHa). Most Bonaparte's Gulls departed by mid-December, while small numbers drifted N through Illinois by Jan. 20 and through Kentucky and Missouri during February. Most sizable flocks of Ring-billed and Herring gulls developed during December. Their numbers were noticeably reduced along L. Erie but normal elsewhere. Thayer's Gulls exhibited a typical winter distribution pattern with small numbers along both Great Lakes, on the Illinois R. near Peoria, the Mississippi R. near St. Louis, and at Kentucky L., KY, where two were noted Dec. 26–27 (BP, CM). The only other acceptable record was of one in Gibson, IN, Jan. 28 (GBo). Iceland Gulls exhibited a similar pattern but only appeared south to Alton, IL, with two Jan. 5–11 (WR, RG *et al.*). Single Icelands near Waterville, OH, Dec. 28 (TK) and at Springfield, IL, Jan. 14–15 (†DB) were outside their normal range.

The slowly increasing Lesser Black-backed Gull was represented by the expected small numbers along L. Erie plus the fall visitor in Gibson, IN, two at Peoria, IL, Dec. 15–Jan. 7 (KR, LA), one in the St. Louis area Jan. 14 (RG, TG), one at Kentucky L., KY, Dec. 26–27 (BP), and one at Bettendorf, IA, Feb. 17–19 (†PP *et al.*). Only small numbers of Glaucous Gulls were encountered along the Great Lakes, the Illinois R. at Peoria, and the Mississippi R. between the Quad Cities, IA–IL, and St. Louis area. One at Montrose W.M.A. Dec. 28 (†MR) established one of few Missouri records away from the Mississippi R. An impressive 800+ Great Black-backed Gulls were tallied at Lorain, OH, Dec. 17 (RHa). In contrast, L. Michigan hosted scattered singles. This species is beginning to appear regularly at some inland locations, such as singles at Davenport, IA, Dec. 13 (†TKn, †JF), Joliet, IL, Dec. 19 (JM), Peoria, IL, Jan. 4 (KR), and Alton, IL, Jan. 5–6 (WR, RG), and four near Waterville, OH, Dec. 20 (TK). Accidental winter visitors to Kentucky, a remarkable three Great Black-backed were studied at Kentucky L., Dec. 26–27 (†BP, CM). The only documented Black-legged Kittiwakes were single immatures at Red Rock Res., IA, Dec. 9–10 (†MP, m.ob.) and Stockton L., MO, Dec. 28 (†MR). An ad. Forster's Tern was a surprising discovery at Headlands S.P. Jan. 13 (LR, RHa), furnishing only the 2nd mid-winter record from Ohio.

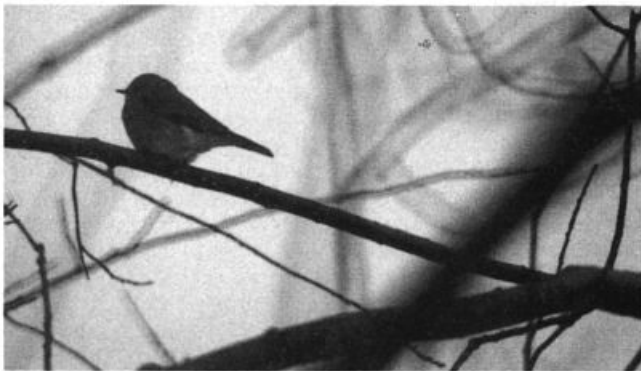
**OWLS TO SHRIKES**—No wintering Barn Owls were reported. Snowy Owls were decidedly scarce in the n. states, where there were only three records. Given this scarcity, the appearance of a Snowy Owl in s.e. Missouri near Big Oak Tree S.P., Dec. 5–Jan. 2 (SB, m.ob.) was completely unexpected. Long-eared Owls were most numerous in Iowa and Illinois where the largest concentrations totalled 28 wintering in Polk, IA (SD) and 28 in Cook, IL, Dec. 23 (AW). Groups of 12–16 were noted at 3 other sites. Smaller numbers were scattered across the other states, including 4 records in Missouri and 3 in Kentucky. Wintering Short-eared Owls were most plentiful in Kentucky, where an impressive 64 were counted in Muhlenberg during late December. Groups of 21–23 also appeared in Ohio and Illinois, but small numbers were the rule elsewhere. It was a poor year for N. Saw-whet Owls. They were restricted to the n. states, primarily as singles at traditional wintering locations. The largest numbers were discovered in Iowa, where four to six were found in 3 counties.

The ♂ Rufous Hummingbird in Grayson, KY, was last noted Dec. 16, probably succumbing during the subzero weather (KC). An unidentified hummingbird also lingered at a Ft. Wayne, IN, feeder through Dec. 14. While Belted Kingfishers wintered in reduced numbers, they remained

wherever open water was found, north to n.w. Iowa where one was noted at Hawarden Jan. 5 (JV). Fewer Red-headed Woodpeckers wintered in Ohio and Kentucky, although this trend was not apparent elsewhere. Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers wintered in expected small numbers, apparently undeterred by December's harsh weather. A few E. Phoebes lingered in Illinois and Ohio into the CBC period, but the only wintering phoebe was noted at Homer, IL, Dec. 16–Jan. 22 (JS *et al.*). A migrant returned to Pike, OH, Feb. 16 (DM). Horned Larks were conspicuous in the snow-covered fields during late December when flocks of 200–1500+ were reported from every state. A very hardy Tree Swallow was observed at Green River L., KY, Dec. 30 (JE), having survived a number of nights with subzero temperatures. February's weather enticed a few early migrants with single Tree Swallows reported from Clarence Cannon N.W.R., MO, Feb. 10 (NR) and Warren, KY, Feb. 18 (LRa), and three appeared at Muscatatuck N.W.R., IN, Feb. 17 (CK, RH).

Vermilion, IL, hosted an estimated 40,000 Am. Crows at its roost Jan. 1 (SBa), easily dwarfing the other roosts such as 17,000 at Springfield, OH (JG, LL), 5000 in Ames, IA (JD), and 3000 in Mercer, IL (LMk). Eleven early Fish Crows returned to Union, IL, Feb. 18 (BD). After last fall's flight, surprisingly few Red-breasted Nuthatches remained for the winter. Small numbers were reported from most areas with a maximum of 29 in Illinois. December's harsh weather caused some mortality among Carolina Wrens, with a 50% reduction in some local populations. However, these wrens fared remarkably well at the n. edge of their range, where there was only a slight decline in their numbers. One wandered north to Mason City, IA, Feb. 2–5 (FH, JW). Winter Wrens were generally scarce, although scattered individuals appeared north to c. Iowa and n. Illinois. The only Marsh Wrens detected were in Will, IL, where one or two remained through Dec. 14–24 (JM). Numbers of Golden-crowned Kinglets may have been reduced in the n. states by the severe cold weather. Relatively few Ruby-crowned Kinglets lingered into December, although a remarkable 17 were noted on one s.w. Ohio CBC. A Ruby-crowned Kinglet at Hoover Res. Feb. 8–14 (BM) provided one of few late winter records from Ohio.

Eastern Bluebirds declined in Ohio and Kentucky during December. They probably moved farther south during the inclement weather, since normal numbers returned by late February. Similar declines were not noted elsewhere, with good numbers in Illinois and a maximum of seven at scattered Iowa locations n. to Mason City. Ohio's first Mountain Bluebird appeared in Tuscarawas Dec. 14–Jan.



Mountain Bluebird in Tuscarawas County, Ohio, December 27, 1989. First state record. Photograph/Bruce Glick.



13 (DMi, †ES, †m.ob., ph.), a female wintering with a contingent of E. Bluebirds. Casual winter visitors to Iowa, two Townsend's Solitaires were noted in *Woodbury* Dec. 17–Jan. 14 (†BH *et al.*). Increased numbers of wintering Hermit Thrushes were evident in Ohio and Kentucky. Good numbers of Am. Robins were evident in every state. The largest flock totalled 2400 in *Lake*, OH, Jan. 20 (LR). Missouri's 3rd **Varied Thrush**, in *Jackson* Dec. 14 (†A & VK), highlighted a good winter for this species. Other Varied Thrushes were reported from Ft. Wayne, IN, intermittently after Dec. 7 (L & JHa, m.ob., ph.), *Ogden Dunes*, IN, Dec. 23–25 (†CF), *Libertyville*, IL, Dec. 25–Feb. 19 (†m.ob., ph.), *Mason City*, IA, Dec. 29–Feb. 15 (JW), and on an Iowa CBC.

Gray Catbirds were restricted to Ohio with one at *Headlands S.P.* Jan. 7 (RH, LR) and another in *Tuscarawas* where it successfully wintered for the 2nd consecutive year (ES). Northern Mockingbirds did not appear to be affected by the severe cold weather, and Brown Thrashers were noted in expected numbers with one north to *Rockford*, IL, Jan. 1 (DW). American Pipits remained in most states through Dec. 16–19, including several flocks of 26–85. An early migrant at *Red Rock Res.* Feb. 23 (A) was exceptional for Iowa. A Bohemian Waxwing was reported from a CBC in Iowa, where it is a fairly regular winter visitor. Their appearance in the other n. states is decidedly casual. Hence, single Bohemians in *Glencoe*, IL, Jan. 1 (†MCh, DK) and *Lucas*, OH, Feb. 21–25 (†ET, m.ob., ph.) were noteworthy. Cedar Waxwings were locally abundant in every state, although their numbers fluctuated as they decimated the local berry crops. The largest concentrations consisted of 2700+ on a s.w. Ohio CBC, 2000 in *Summit*, OH, Jan. 3 (*vide* LR), 1000 wintering at *Atterbury W.M.A.*, IN (SJ), and 1000 at *Don Williams L.*, IA, Jan. 15 (SD, EM). Reduced numbers of N. Shrikes were evident in Iowa, and there were only 13 sightings from the other n. states. Singles wandered S to *Crawfordsville*, IN, Dec. 23 (AB) and *Tuscarawas*, OH, through Jan. 6 (†ES). Loggerhead Shrikes wintered in normal numbers.



A very late-lingering Cape May Warbler in Grundy County, Illinois, December 11, 1989. Photograph/ Joe B. Milosevich.

**WARBLERS TO FINCHES**—Warblers produced few surprises, such as a lingering Cape May Warbler in *Grundy*, IL, Dec. 11 (†JM). Increased numbers of wintering Yellow-rumped Warblers were evident in Ohio, Kentucky, and Illinois. One Yellow-rumped in *Howard* Dec. 31 (MH) was noteworthy for n. Iowa. A late Pine Warbler tarried in *Lucas*, OH, through Dec. 16 (ET). One wintered at a Wor-

thington, OH, feeder for the 3rd consecutive year (BM), while small numbers were also reported from Kentucky. Early migrants returned to *Adams*, OH, Feb. 15 (DM), *Pope*, IL, Feb. 20 (TF), and *Makanda*, IL, Feb. 22 (DR). An Ovenbird remained near *Dunes S.P.*, IN, through Dec. 4 (†MC) while another was found dead at *Louisville* Feb. 9 (J & PB). The only lingering Com. Yellowthroat was reported from *Iowa City* Dec. 9–10 (†JF), for only the 2nd winter record from Iowa.

Rare anywhere e. of the Mississippi R., the "Spotted" race of Rufous-sided Towhee was represented by singles at *Crab Orchard N.W.R.*, IL, Dec. 16 (DR), *Rockford*, IL, Jan. 2 (DW), and *Meade*, KY, Dec. 31–Feb. 4 (BP, RC, ph.). Sparrow numbers were apparently normal in most areas. Lingering Chipping Sparrows were singles in *Hamilton*, OH, Dec. 13–17 (†PW), *Springfield*, IL, Dec. 17 (DB, DOe), *Murray*, KY, through Dec. 26 (CP), and *Summit*, OH, Jan. 5–Feb. 4 (†PH). The only reported Vesper Sparrows were singles at 3 Iowa locations during the CBC period. Wintering Savannah Sparrows were noted n. to *Fermi*, IL, Dec. 16 (MCh). Normal numbers of Le Conte's Sparrows wintered in s. Illinois. Fox Sparrows began their N migration by mid-February, at least 2 weeks earlier than normal. The only extralimital Lincoln's Sparrow noted was in *Portage*, OH, Dec. 17–26 (†LR).

White-throated and White-crowned sparrows were generally reported in below-normal numbers, although 68 White-throateds in *DuPage* Dec. 17 (EW, TBr) were unusual for n. Illinois. A White-throated Sparrow in *Woodbury*, IA, Jan. 7 (TBy) was near the n. edge of its winter range. A **Golden-crowned Sparrow** returned to *Green River Conservation Area*, IL, for the 2nd consecutive winter, where it was observed Dec. 15–Feb. 19 (JK, †m.ob.). The only Harris' Sparrow reported e. of the Mississippi R. appeared briefly at *Nicholasville*, KY, Jan. 25 (†EB). Lapland Longspurs were widespread during December but largely disappeared once the snow melted. Their numbers were not impressive, with maxima of 1000 near *Algona*, IA, Feb. 25 (MK) and 300 in *Indiana* and *Illinois*. Five Smith's Longspurs at *Prairie S.P.* Dec. 29–Jan. 25 (†MR *et al.*) furnished the 5th winter record for *Missouri*. Snow Buntings were also widely distributed during December, wandering south to *Muhlenberg*, KY, and *Jefferson*, IL. Numbers were generally low with the largest reported flock being of 300 in n.w. Ohio.

Blackbirds generally wintered in unimpressive numbers, no doubt reflecting the severity of December's weather. A W. Meadowlark was heard in *Fulton*, KY, Dec. 17 (BP *et al.*) for one of few winter records from that state. This winter's complement of Yellow-headed Blackbirds consisted of singles at *Dayton*, OH, Dec. 5–8 (ED), *Saline*, IL, Dec. 21–22 (JDe *et al.*), and *Columbia*, MO, Feb. 2 (GP), a fairly typical distribution of records. Above normal numbers of Brewer's Blackbirds were reported, with records from every state except *Indiana*. The largest flocks totalled 50 in w. *Missouri* and 22 on an *Ohio* CBC, while up to 15 wintering at *Libertyville*, IL (LB, EW, m.ob.) and in *Warren*, KY, Feb. 4–25 (m.ob.) were locally unusual. Given their scarcity in *Missouri* during recent years, flocks of 100+ Great-tailed Grackles at *Montrose W.M.A.* Feb. 11 (RF, MM) and at the *Jackson/Clay* county line Feb. 26 (L & RG) were unexpected. One Great-tailed wandered to *St. Charles* in e. *Missouri* Dec. 10 (†JZ).

The winter finch flight had to improve over last year, but was not impressive for most species. Purple Finches were scarce in most areas, although flocks of 40–60 were noted in several states and a maximum of 104 was reported from *Illinois*. In states with firmly established

populations of House Finches, Purple Finches have largely been evicted from feeders and most sightings are of individuals feeding on seeds in deciduous woods. Their inability to compete with the more aggressive House Finches at winter feeders is becoming well established, but whether or not it will result in a reduction of their numbers remains to be determined. House Finches are rapidly becoming plentiful in the w. states where the largest flocks totalled 75 at Springfield, MO (JHo), and 55 at Ames, IA (EM). Few Red Crossbills were encountered, primarily singles and small flocks at 2 Missouri, 3 Iowa, and 3 Illinois locations. Farther east, the only sighting was of 40 at L. Mogadore, OH, Dec. 12 (LR). White-winged Crossbills staged a moderate flight into Iowa and Illinois where they were widely distributed. Small numbers also appear at a few localities in Missouri and Ohio. Most reports consisted of five or fewer crossbills, although flocks of 15–22 were found in Iowa and n. Illinois. Most were noted during December but they became difficult to locate once the temperatures moderated. The s. limit of this flight extended to Springfield, MO (BR), Springfield, IL (DB), and Columbus, OH (m.ob.). A small flight of Com. Redpolls was also evident along the n. margin of the Region with individuals and small flocks s. to Independence, MO (m.ob.), Springfield, IL (DB), and East Fork Res., OH (CK, RH). Most reports were of 20 or fewer redpolls with a maximum of 150 in n.w. Iowa at *Cherokee* Feb. 13 (MBr). They were also most evident during December. Pine Siskin rated as the most numerous winter finch, becoming locally abundant in every state. An estimated 1000 siskins at Middle Fork W.M.A., IL, Jan. 19 (JS) dwarfed the maxima of 50–200+ in the other states. In contrast, Evening Grosbeaks were universally scarce with only scattered reports of individuals and small flocks in every state. The Eur. Tree Sparrow is beginning to expand into s.e. Iowa, where up to ten visited a feeder near Burlington Dec. 16–Jan. 14 (+JF, m.ob.).

**CORRIGENDUM**—The report of two Cinnamon Teal in

Ottawa, OH, Apr. 14, 1989 (*AB* 43: 487) should be changed to only one.

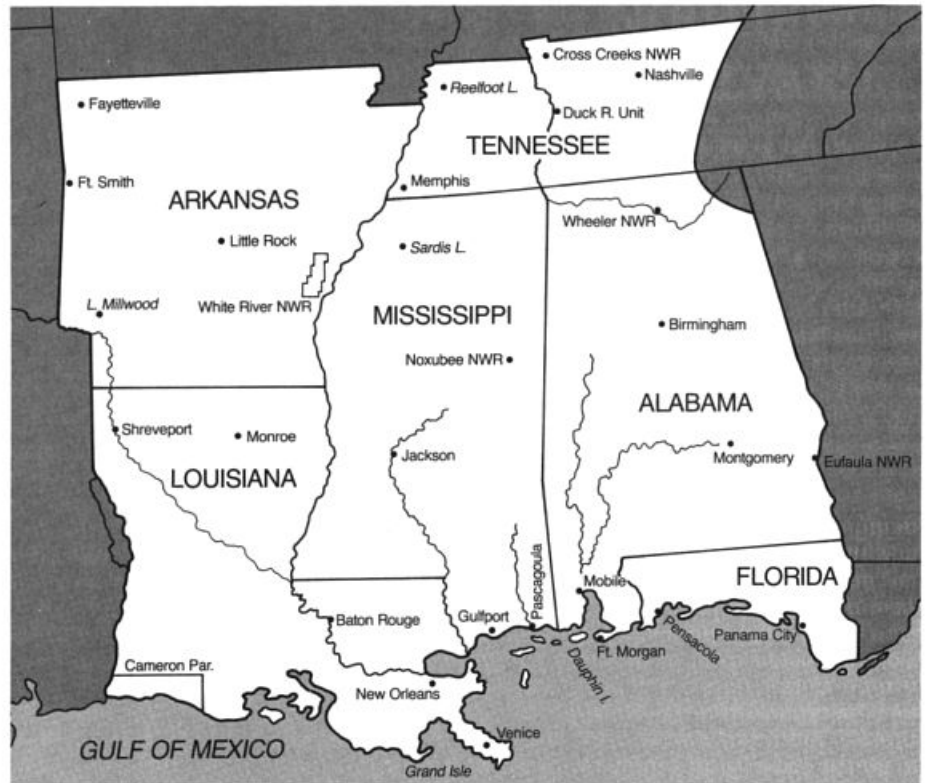
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TREVOR HERRIOT

# CENTRAL SOUTHERN REGION

David P. Muth



The weather news of the season was an extreme outbreak of arctic air that swept through the Region December 20–26. It produced record or near-record cold over the entire area. Northern portions of the Region experienced more than 130 hours of below-freezing weather, while near the coast the 80 or so hours of below-freezing weather was the longest stretch ever recorded. The freeze competed in intensity with the great freeze of February 1889, which held all the previous historical records. Temperatures on the 23rd reached eight degrees in Pensacola, 11 degrees in coastal Alabama, 11 degrees in New Orleans, eight degrees at Baton Rouge, and zero degrees at three northeast Louisiana stations. The statewide average daily temperature for the month of December in Louisiana was an all-time record cold 42 degrees, nearly ten degrees below average. A recent study of historical records concluded that extreme arctic outbreaks, with temperature in the low teens, occur here about once every 20 years. However, this was the *third* such outbreak this decade! Record cold was felt at Christmas 1983 and again in January 1985.

The cost of the freeze to poorly-insulated homes and industries, to crops and landscaping, to damaged automobiles, to municipal governments, will end up in the tens of millions. The cost to birds will be impossible to quantify. Mike Musumeche surveyed Spanish Lake in Iberia Parish, Louisiana, and reported the following dead: two Common Moorhen, one Northern Shoveler, one Green-winged Teal, one Anhinga, 150 (mostly young) Little Blue Herons, two Snowy Egrets, two Cattle Egrets, one White Ibis, and one Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Four inches of ice covered the lake for four days. Losses like that extrapolated Region-wide for susceptible species indicate a heavy toll. Other losses are documented in the report. Some species, of course, were in heavier than normal numbers along the coast. In addition to those mentioned in the summary, these included Tree Swallow, American Robins, and Yel-

low-rumped Warblers, and perhaps even Eastern Phoebe and Gray Catbird. However, higher than normal numbers along the coast for these species is probably a sign of stress farther north, and certainly doesn't bode well for them. Some small insectivores clearly suffered, perhaps foremost among them being Blue-gray Gnatcatchers. Meaningful analysis may be possible by examining CBCs and other long-term population studies. It is noteworthy that none of the irruptives erupted, though all were at least present somewhere this winter.

As if to make up for the cold, the rest of winter was very mild, and balmy temperatures and abundant rainfall ushered in the earliest spring many of us have ever seen. Many (non-tropical) plants flowered four to six weeks earlier than normal.

I am breaking with my habit in this report and including no CBC data this year. Though I have misgivings about ignoring a significant portion of the season's observer effort, the task of incorporating the CBC records has finally overwhelmed me. For one thing, there is too much data coming in as it is. Other reasons are more compelling: 1) despite repeated requests, I don't see all the reports; 2) I see almost none of the documentation, which is a problem, since the quality of the editing varies from compiler to compiler and from state to state; and 3) the state editors and I don't always agree, naturally, on what should or should not be accepted, and thus the published record is contradictory. Thus, anyone interested in a complete picture of the winter season should consult the CBC issue, where they will find quite a number of eye-openers. My thanks to those observers who diligently duplicated their reports on CBC sightings, and to those sub-regional editors who have, at great effort, sent in CBC material.

**LOONS THROUGH SPOONBILL** — No non-CBC Red-throated Loons were reported. A **Pacific Loon**, Alabama's

6th, was at Gulf Shores Jan. 1 (DMB). Another Pacific Loon was in nearby Gulf Breeze, Florida, Feb. 18 (PT). This species remains hypothetical farther west in the Region. A pair of Pied-billed Grebes with five chicks in Pensacola, FL, Feb. 6 (CLK) was not only a rare local breeder, it was very early, perhaps indicative of the Region's very early spring. Horned Grebes peaked at 70 on Beaver Lake in Carroll, AR, Feb. 25, a very large count for n.w. Arkansas (MML). **Sooty Shearwaters** were again seen from shore at Gulf Shores, AL, Dec. 30–31 (GDJ, HHK, RAD, LD, PT, BT). **Audubon's Shearwaters** were also seen there Dec. 31 (RAD, LD, PT, BT). The rash of shearwater sightings from that coast over the last few years is cause for a re-evaluation of pelagic potential there. It wasn't very long ago that any sighting of a N. Gannet west of Mississippi Sound was an event. Not anymore; birds were reported from every month and from the Chandeleurs to Johnson Bayou. Coupled with the increasing frequency of sightings off Texas, this trend in the western Gulf has to be regarded as either a sign of a significant population increase or a major non-breeding range shift.

Northerly Am. White Pelicans were reported from three Arkansas locations: Millwood L. Dec. 1–Feb. 28, up to six (CM); Lake Fayetteville, one Dec. 14 & 17 (MML, DJ); and one at Holla Bend N.W.R. Jan. 10 (G & EG). A flock of fifty flying west near Baton Rouge, LA, Feb. 22 must have been migrants (JVR). Personnel of the L.D.W.F. received a report of "hundreds" of dead Brown Pelicans on coastal beaches after the unprecedented Christmas cold snap. Such an eventuality might prove a disaster for the heretofore excellent recovery of this species in Louisiana. Fortunately, an aerial survey found only about 35 dead. In the weeks that followed, others, mostly immatures, died, or were found suffering freeze damage. At most, only between 100–200 birds are estimated to have died directly or indirectly—unfortunate, but not a disaster (*vide* RM, PG). One hopes that with common birds no news is good news, and there were few reports of Double-crested Cormorants. Still, high post-freeze counts from inland locations in Louisiana and Alabama are a good sign. Anhingas, on the other hand, which have been around in surprising numbers the last several mild winters, were unreported after the freeze, and I suspect there were none left to report.

A Green-backed Heron seen on University L. in Baton Rouge Jan. 26 (DLD, SWC) may have been the same bird seen on the pre-freeze CBC; if so, it survived a temperature of 8 degrees on Dec. 23. A surprising survivor as well was a Yellow-crowned Night-Heron in Jefferson, LA, Feb. 7 (GO). Far more unusual was a very late Yellow-crowned Night-Heron in Clark, AR, Nov. 13–Dec. 11 (DnH). Eleven *Plegadis* in Montgomery, AL, Feb. 17 were a real inland rarity (B & MS). There were three reports of Glossy Ibis for Cameron this winter. Diligent searches of dark ibis flocks there on the Texas border have always yielded this species in very small numbers, thus its tardy arrival on the Texas list was always perplexing. Roseate Spoonbills continue to show signs of a range extension into southeastern Louisiana, as evidenced by several reports this winter.

**WATERFOWL** — A Fulvous Whistling-Duck found dead at L. Catahoula, LA, Dec. 6 was late (*vide* JVR); ten in Vermillion Dec. 19 and Jan. 26 were rare winterers (SWC, DLD); finally, *three hundred* were early returnees to the rice fields Feb. 26 (DP, ph.). One Tundra Swan was reported for Arkansas, in Cross Dec. 10–11 (MAC). A **Tundra Swan** in Santa Rosa Feb. 1 provided n.w. Florida's fifth record (DB). One reached s. Alabama on the Mobile Causeway Jan. 14 (LD, RAD), and another was farther

north at Eufala Jan. 26 through February (B & MS). An immature swan, probably of this species, was sighted in the Chandeleurs off s.e. Louisiana Dec. 28 (TM) and four arrived in early January in Cameron (*vide* RM). A **Ross' Goose** at Gulf Shores Jan. 1–4 (DMB) was the fifth for Alabama and the first for its Gulf Coast. Though it seems incredible to those of us who searched for this species in vain over a period of decades, this winter again saw numerous reports from Arkansas and Louisiana, too many to merit separate listing. Suffice it to say that any careful search of large flocks of Snows is likely to be rewarded. *Maxima* reported were 12 at Holla Bend N.W.R., AR, Dec. 2 (CM, B & PL) and 45 Mar. 4 in *Jeff Davis*, LA (SWC, DLD, CAM). A count of 40 was achieved there Feb. 11 by examining a flock of more than 30,000 mixed Snows, Canadas (7000!) and White-fronts (4000); considering that only the first rank of a standing flock can be effectively searched, the total number of Ross' wintering in the western region is suddenly very high. This increase in Ross' Geese has occurred simultaneously with remarkable increases (in Louisiana) of wintering "Lesser" Canada Geese. The once abundant "Greater" remain scarce, but two were reported in the company of small flocks of "Lessers": one with three Dec. 3 at Spanish L. (MJM) and one with 74 Jan. 27 in *Vermillion* (DLD, SWC). The goose of the season was a **Brant** in *Crittendon* Jan. 13, Arkansas's first, and one of very few for the Region (JWi, M & HP, CM).

Ten thousand N. Pintails estimated in *Rapides* Jan 15 was a significant number in this little-birded part of central Louisiana (JWh, BF, PC, BV). One ♂ and two ♀ apparent Cinnamon Teal associated on the Creole Rd. in *Cameron*, LA, Dec. 9 for the only non-CBC report (MJM, DP, CAB). A Blue-winged x Cinnamon hybrid was discovered at the newly-created Cameron Prairie N.W.R. Feb. 26 (RJB). A ♂ **Eurasian Wigeon** discovered in *Lafourche* Jan 9 through February furnished one of about five documented Louisiana records (GC, m.ob.). Gadwall on L. Fayetteville peaked at 326 Feb. 21, representing a very high count for n.w. Arkansas (MML). Six Greater Scaup were noted on L. Atalanta, AR, Dec. 9, putting in an appearance for the 5th year running there (MML); three were at Beaver L. Dec. 26 (MML, RG) and four Jan. 7 (F & JR). One Greater was rare in *Jefferson* Dec. 15 (TAI) and another was in *Colbert*, AL, Jan. 14 (GDJ). Twenty to fifty thousand were estimated off *Cameron*, LA, Feb. 4 (SWC, DLD). Oldsquaw were widely reported: at Britton Ford N.W.R., TN, two Jan. 16 (MAG), two Feb. 4–5 at Gulf Shores and three Feb. 17 at Ft. Morgan, AL (PBL, GF); two at Beaver L. Dec. 9 (MML), and one at Hulsey Fish Hatchery, AR, Nov. 4–Feb. 25 (BL). Two Black Scoters in the surf at Fourchon Beach, LA, Dec. 2 (JMB, AWK *et al.*) furnished the only Louisiana reports. Three Black Scoters were at Gulf Shores the same day (GDJ, DGJ), and several others were found on coastal Alabama CBCs. There were also Surf Scoters about Dec. 2, with one at Gulf Shores, AL (GDJ), and one off Holly Beach, LA (PW, CS). After good numbers on coastal Alabama CBCs, five were still at Fort Morgan Jan. 27 (GDJ, DGJ). Four White-winged Scoters were seen at Gulf Shores, AL, Dec. 31 (GDJ), and two were in n. Alabama on L. Porter Dec. 15 (TAI). A White-winged Scoter on L. Pontchartrain in New Orleans during the fall was still present for the CBC Dec. 30. High counts of Com Goldeneyes for Arkansas were at Beaver L., with 206 Dec. 26 (MML, RG) and 36 Feb. 18 (DRM). Also there were 105 Bufflehead Dec. 3 (DRM). Common Mergansers may have moved with the big cold front; a very high count was of 27 at Beaver L., AR, Dec. 26 (RG, MML), and there were several reports from Alabama Dec. 30 through February.

Inland Red-breasted Mergansers were in Baton Rouge, LA, Dec. 5–Feb. 19 (AWK), and at Beaver L., AR, Dec. 26 (RG, MMI).

**VULTURES TO SHOREBIRDS**—Some 45 Black Vultures Jan. 6 and 84 Turkey Vultures Jan. 1 were unusual concentrations for Carroll, AR (FR). About 20 Turkey Vultures in N. Little Rock, AR, Dec. 2 may have been migrants (WMS). Twenty-seven Bald Eagles with the 84 Turkey Vultures in Carroll, AR, Jan. 1 were a notable concentration of, presumably, weather-related migrants (FR). The only Broad-winged Hawk was a late (and probably lost) immature at Grand Isle, LA, Dec. 3 (AWK). Two Rough-legged Hawks wintered at Guntersville, AL, where they are now expected (*vide* GDJ). One was reported for Louisiana, in Madison, Jan. 31 and Feb. 17 (HM, JBe). A Golden Eagle was quite unusual on the Alabama coast Jan. 31 and Feb. 5 (DBI *et al.*, MH). One was at a more expected location in Guntersville Feb. 10 (HHK). One was reported for Arkansas, at Holla Bend N.W.R. Dec. 9 (CM). One of the most astonishing reports of the season was of the two Crested Caracaras seen and photographed at Garner Ridge in Cameron, LA, Dec. 2 (PW, CS). A tiny precarious population nests at Gum Cove Ranch about 25 miles north of there, across a deep freshwater marsh. The one or two pairs at the ranch are the northeasternmost outliers of the world population. Assuming that these birds were not from the ranch, the sighting constituted only the third report of vagrants in recent decades. Inland Merlins were in Perry, AL, Jan. 23 (GDJ), near Memphis, TN, Dec. 17

#### S.A.

Louisiana provides critical habitat for a significant proportion of this continent's waterfowl, wading birds, marsh birds, swamp birds, and shorebirds. Yet though a great deal of attention has been given recently to imperiled shorebird habitat elsewhere in the U.S., scant attention has been paid to Louisiana. This is partly owing to the fact that the state has few birders, and that we birders have been guilty of ignoring the commonplace (*i.e.*, the huge numbers of shorebirds) and concentrating on the search for rarities. It is also because such an insignificant proportion of the state's wetlands are accessible by car, and therefore most of the available habitat remains unsampled. For instance, less than 15% of the state's 400-mile coastline and less than one per cent of the state's 3.3 million acre coastal marsh is accessible by car. Even less of its nearly 8000-mile tide-water shoreline can be censused. Prime shorebird habitat in the Mississippi's Birdfoot Delta and in the Atchafalaya River Delta is accessible only after a long boat ride. Ornithologists and birders should take note, however, that counted or uncounted, the hordes of birds that depend upon these wetlands are running out of time: Louisiana is washing away at an exponentially expanding rate now calculated at about sixty square miles a year. While the causes are complex, the cure is relatively simple. Right now, the land building potential of the Mississippi R., tens of thousands of tons of sediment a day, is being shunted through a ship channel at Southwest Pass over the edge of the continental shelf into the deep Gulf. If Louisiana's coastal marsh is to be saved, that sediment must be diverted to the task of delta-building. Control of the river is in the hands of the U.S. Congress through the Corps of Engineers, and that where the resolve and the money to prevent a catastrophe for North America's birdlife must come from. Let's not allow what has happened to this continent's interior wetlands to happen on the Gulf Coast: there is still time to act.

(HV) and Jan. 8 (JD), and at Percy Priest L., TN, Jan. 1 (DFV). Inland Peregrines were both near Memphis, TN, Dec. 17 (WB, BE) and Feb. 21 (WAJ). The Guntersville, AL, mystery Prairie Falcon was back for its sixth winter (DMB). A very rare **Prairie Falcon** was at Holla Bend N.W.R. Dec. 9–23 (CM, H & MP), for one of very few Arkansas (and Regional) records. The Cheneyville, LA, flock of Sandhill Cranes received good coverage this winter: 155 Dec. 9 (JPK *et al.*); about 230 Jan. 11, down to only five Feb. 27 (DP, CAB). A flock in Putnam, TN, of 30–55 birds was seen Feb. 14 & 27 (RWS).

One of the bright spots in Louisiana these days, both from the standpoint of habitat stability and increased awareness of its importance to birds, is the rice country, situated on the old wet Acadian Prairie north of the central coastal marshes. Though the original prairie vegetation is essentially gone, aquaculture of rice and crawfish continues to provide important habitat. In an innovative program, the L.D.W.F. and the U.S.F.W.S. are working with private rice farmers to create "Mini-Refuges"—farmland that is managed at critical times of the year for waterfowl. One such mini-refuge, the *one square mile* Vincent Refuge, was censused Feb. 11, and yielded the following numbers: 500 Black-bellied Plovers, 1000 Greater Yellowlegs, 2500 Lesser Yellowlegs, 500 Dunlin, 1000 Long-billed Dowitcher, 2500 Killdeer, 50 W. Sandpiper, 10 Least Sandpiper, 100 Black-necked Stilt, and 50 Common Snipe (DLD, CAM, SWC). The implications of numbers like these are being explored by researchers, but it's safe to say that the rice country will prove to be one of the most significant wintering areas in North America.

Lesser Golden-Plovers returned on a broad front across the Region in the last week of February. Ten Snowy Plovers at Fort Pickens, FL, Jan. 4 was a good count for this scarce species (D & JB).

#### S.A.

Since its "elevation" to the status of endangered, the Piping Plover has predictably received increased attention. The few Louisiana beaches that can be reached by car reveal a regular but small wintering population. Numbers for this winter were typical: nine at the east end of Grand Isle Dec. 2 (AW *et al.*), (on a mile long spit recently saved from sand mining by the Corps because of the propensity of this species to use this area); four on the beach at East Jetty in Cameron Dec. 10 (CAM, MSw); and a maximum count along the approximately five mile long Fourchon Beach of 36 Jan. 14 (JS, A & GS). But these accessible beaches are of necessity the most degraded and subject to human disturbance. Up to now, we haven't known how many were wintering on the vast stretches of remote beaches accessible only by boat. But we now have a clue: 142 were counted on a six mile stretch of beach at the north end of Chandeleur Island Jan. 26 (RM, GL, PG).

A Black-necked Stilt in Pensacola, FL, Dec. 26 (BM) furnished the first winter record there, and considering the date, it may have been a weather-refugee. Another was a local rarity in Gulf Shores, AL, Feb. 22 (PBI). Six Lesser Yellowlegs in Shelby, TN, Dec. 3–17 were rare so far north (MGW *et al.*). Two Spotted Sandpipers were way north in Washington, AR, Dec. 17 and Dec. 31 (RG, JN, MMI). The now annual Long-billed Curlews on the Mobile Causeway were seen Jan. 27 (OEF, MR). Six Red Knots furnished a first December record for n.w. Florida Dec. 17 at Fort Pickens; one was also east of there at Fort Walton Beach Jan. 4 (D & JB). Five W. Sandpipers provided a first local record for n.w. Alabama Jan. 28 (PDK, DEK). Least Sandpipers

were located at three locations in n.w. Arkansas during December away from the traditional Centerton Fish Hatchery (MMI). An amazing 544 Least Sandpipers were counted in *Shelby*, TN, Dec. 3 (MGW, JEW). First arrivals of Pectoral Sandpipers were 30 in *Calcasieu*, LA, Feb. 26 (RJB), two well inland in *Rapides* the following day (DP, CAB), and also Feb. 27 in *Morgan*, AL (DMB). A **Purple Sandpiper** (perhaps returning from last year), for a fifth or sixth Louisiana record, was at East Jetty Feb. 3 (DLD, SWC). Once again the rice country of Louisiana produced records of **Ruffs**: a male in basic plumage in *Acadia* Jan. 26 (AWK, KVR); another male (or the same?) not very far away in *Vermillion* at the Vincent Mini-Refuge Feb. 10 (JPK).

**JAEGERS TO OWLS**—A single unidentified jaeger was reported, off Gulf Shores, AL, Dec. 31 (RAD, LD, P & BT). One hundred fifteen Bonaparte's Gulls and 250–500 Ring-billed Gulls benefited from a freeze-induced fish kill at Beaver L., AR, Dec. 31 (RG, MMI). Unusual numbers of Bonaparte's Gulls were reported inland in Arkansas and Louisiana. More than 850 Ring-billed Gulls were estimated at Bull Shoals L., AL, Feb. 18 (DRM). Herring Gulls were local rarities for n.w. Arkansas on L. Fayetteville Dec. 17 (DJ) and Beaver L. Dec. 22 (MMI, JN). Alabama's fifth **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was at Wilson Dam Jan. 14–28 (GDJ, m.ob.); it or another was at nearby Town Creek Marsh Mar. 4 (NP). One was reported for Louisiana on Fourchon Beach Jan. 13 (JPK, EB). A **Glaucous Gull**, Arkansas' third, first found Nov. 30 in *Yell*, was relocated Dec. 2 (CM, BL). A Glaucous Gull was seen at Wheeler Dam in n.w. Alabama Jan. 15 (ALM, AWM) and Jan. 28 (NP, JP), for a first local record. A first-year Great Black-backed Gull was at the Ft. Walton, FL, dump Feb. 1 (RAD). Another was in *Cameron* just west of Holly Beach, LA, Feb. 18 (JPK, DR). Finally, one was seen at Percy Priest Dam, TN, Jan. 1 (WC). A ratty imm. Common Tern was hanging around the *Cameron*, LA, ferry Feb. 3, where, for whatever reason, they can be reliably found every winter (DLD, SWC). Forster's Terns were unusual inland on L. Chicot, AR, through the period (DRS); at the Greenville, AL, sewage lagoon Jan. 1 (CK); and very high numbers in the rice country of *Vermillion* and *Acadia*, LA, Jan. 27 (SWC, DLD).

A very large flock of 50+ White-winged Doves was noted throughout the period south of Leeville in *Lafourche*, LA (m.ob.). The scarcity of Com. Ground-Doves was noted by various observers, thus a count of nine in *Butler*, AL, was unusual (CK). Groove-billed Anis were far east (before the freeze) in Gulf Shores, AL, Dec. 7 (PBI, GF). Farther east still, on Dec. 16 a falconer's Harris' Hawk caught one ani in Pensacola, then later that day another at Ft. Walton! The hawk must have thought it had made it back to Texas (*vide* OEF). There were only two reports of Burrowing Owls, both from Louisiana at opposite ends of the coast: a returning pair at the east end of Grand Isle (m.ob.), and a bird at Holly Beach throughout the period (CAM). Four Long-eared Owls were reported, all from Arkansas. Only a few Short-eared Owls were reported, from Arkansas, Tennessee, and Louisiana.

**HUMMINGBIRDS THROUGH BUNTINGS**—The only non-Louisiana **Buff-bellied Hummingbird** was banded in Freeport, FL, Dec. 18 (B & MS), one of very few records for that state. The species made a good pre-freeze showing in Louisiana, and at least two were in New Orleans after the freeze. (The one in my yard spent the coldest day snuggled up to a heat lamp in a make-

shift plastic greenhouse on my front porch, a twelve-inch flight from a feeder. All of my plants froze, but the bird made it.) The latest Ruby-throats were at Venice, LA, Dec. 2 (DPM), Reserve, LA, Dec. 15 (RJS), and in Mobile, AL, Dec. 6 (B & MS). Three pre-freeze Black-chinned Hummingbirds were banded in Florida Dec. 18 & 19 (B & MS). Very few survived the freeze in Louisiana.

#### S.A.

The phenomenon of hummingbird wintering along the Gulf Coast remains mysterious. It is clear that small populations of Rufous and Black-chinned hummingbirds, and still smaller populations of Buff-bellied, Broad-tailed, Allen's, Anna's, and Calliope, arrive on the Gulf Coast each winter. (The occasional failure to depart by a Ruby-throat is another matter.) The fact that these birds generally don't appear at feeders until late November or early December leads one to speculate that some sort of reverse migration may be involved, since this arrival takes place long after their normal migration to Mexico is completed. However, the timing of this arrival may simply coincide with the depletion of wild naturally occurring food supplies. All of the western birds may arrive here because of mirror-image orientation problems during late summer and early fall, when migration is underway, and remain dispersed while food supplies last. There are now just enough documented July, August, and September arrivals to indicate that this might be the case. The Buff-bellied's situation is obviously somewhat different—the Gulf Coast is northeast of their breeding grounds. Whatever the method of arrival, the fate of these birds without the presence of our gardens and feeders is certain: in most winters, there is a period during December, January, and perhaps February when no naturally occurring plants are flowering. Until we came along these birds were doomed. In mild winters many now survive, feeding on tropical ornamentals and at feeders. Banded returns have now proven this to be a viable wintering area—in the short term. However, in a winter like the one just passed, when temperatures remained below freezing for several days, and reached single digits and below Regionwide, disaster strikes. A few made it through because of prodigious human effort: round-the-clock feeder warming, makeshift heated feeders, and, in some cases, because birds were lured into greenhouses, temporary enclosures, garages, and even homes. Absolutely astonishing, however, were the few birds that seemed to survive without obvious human intervention. The majority, however, certainly perished, indicating that the Gulf Coast remains a precarious wintering area at best.

Two Rufous were banded in Pensacola Dec. 19, one of which survived the freeze (B & MS). One Rufous was banded in N. Little Rock, AR, Dec. 2 (PF, TF, H & MP), and a *Selasphorus* survived until the freeze near Arkadelphia (D & DnH, JK). There were several reported post-freeze *Selasphorus* in Lafayette, Reserve, and New Orleans, LA. The best hummingbird of the season was Florida's first **Calliope Hummingbird**, Dec. 18–20, in Ft. Walton Beach (B & MSa). This is the first record of this species documented east of Laplace, LA.

Last fall Louisiana's first two unequivocal **Red-naped Sapsuckers** were found. The New Orleans bird, first seen Nov. 12 and "lost" shortly thereafter, was re-discovered by its original discoverer Jan. 19, and was seen into March (NN). A very surprising late winter Western Kingbird was at Ft. Morgan, AL, Feb. 17 (PBI). Red-breasted Nuthatches finally put in a modest showing Regionwide this winter,

though as is often the case, numbers were much lower than those seen during October. Where do those fall migrants go? Louisiana's third **Rock Wren** was in storm-displaced rip-rap along the beach highway in *Cameron* Dec. 3–17 (JPK, m.ob.). A Sedge Wren at Bob Kidd L. provided n.w. Arkansas' fourth winter record Jan. 4 (MML). A post-freeze Wood Thrush on Grand Isle, LA, Jan. 14 (JS, AS), was the only one reported. A very surprising find was of a reasonably convincing Yellow-throated Vireo in Montgomery, AL, Feb. 1 (DMc, JM).

An Orange-crowned Warbler in *Pulaski*, AR, Dec. 18 and later was well north (RC). Louisiana's second **Lucy's Warbler**, first found Nov. 25 (see Fall Report), cooperated for observers until the Johnson Bayou CBC Dec. 17. A very late Chestnut-sided Warbler was seen in Gulf Breeze, FL, Dec. 1 (DB). Two Yellow-rumped "Audubon's" Warblers were reported for s.e. Louisiana: one in Metairie Dec. 15–16 (MBa) and one at the Bonnet Carre Spillway Jan. 28 (A & GS). Louisiana's second winter record of a **Kentucky Warbler** was found, incredibly, not in some coastal hotspot, but way up in the extreme n.w., in *Caddo* Feb. 3 (JMc, LRR, WCL). Where was this bird when the temperature reached five degrees Dec. 23? A Yellow-breasted Chat was late at Peveto Beach in *Cameron*, LA, Dec. 2 (PW, CS). Much more unexpected was a chat at Ft. Morgan, AL, Feb. 4–6 (PBL, GF, m.ob.). Also in *Cameron* Dec. 2 was a Western Tanager (PW, CS). A more remarkable post-freeze bird was found in *Lafayette*, LA, Jan. 15 (B & LF). Another late bird in *Cameron* Dec. 2 (PW, CS) and seen again Dec. 10 (DH, MSw, CAM) was a ♂ Rose-breasted Grosbeak. Two post-freeze, post-CBC Indigo Buntings were reported at inland Louisiana locations: Baton Rouge Jan. 19–Feb. 5 (AWK) and in *Acadia* Jan. 27 (DLD). An adult ♂ Painted Bunting in Pensacola furnished a first local January record (FC). One was late at Venice, LA, Dec. 2 (DPM, CB).

**DICKCISSEL TO FINCHES**—A Dickcissel was at a feeder in *Lafayette*, LA, Jan. 1 (BF). Another wintered in cotton stubble in *Rapides*, LA, Jan. 11–Feb. 27 (DP, CAB). One in *Lauderdale*, AL, Jan. 27–Feb. 25, was the first in winter for the Tenn. Valley of Alabama (PDK, DEK). Another was quite unusual in Clarksville, TN, Dec. 29–Jan. 21 (AHH, NRH). Two of the rare western Rufous-sided "Spotted" Towhee were found in Louisiana: one at Garner Ridge in *Cameron* Dec. 2–10 (PW, CS, MSw, DH, CAM), another up north in *Caddo* Feb. 19 (JMc). The only reports of Am. Tree Sparrows came from Tennessee: three Feb. 3–4 at Reelfoot Lake N.W.R. (BB) and six Feb. 18 in Dyerburg (WGC). A Vesper Sparrow was well n. in *Rutherford*, TN, Jan. 6 (TJW, DMM). A couple of inland records of Le Conte's Sparrow were noted: one in *Washington*, AR, Dec. 3 (MML) and three in *Colbert*, AL, Nov. 19–Dec. 16 (NP). Twenty-five Fox Sparrows was an amazingly high two-day total for the Louisiana coast in *Cameron* Feb. 3–4 (SWC, DLD). A Harris' Sparrow at Ft. Morgan, AL, Jan. 1 through February was an exceptional rarity (A & DF, m.ob.). Somewhat more expected were birds in *Cameron* Dec. 3–Feb. 3 (JPK, m.ob.) and in *Calcasieu* Feb. 5 (RJB).

A Lapland Longspur on the beach, feeding in rip-rap in *Cameron*, LA, was unexpected Dec. 4 (PS, CKe). More out of range was a *Santa Rosa*, FL, bird Feb. 9 and a flock in the Memphis, TN, area, in the company of Smith's Longspurs Dec. 3–Jan. 1 (MLG, JWi, m.ob.). Also in the latter area was a W. Meadowlark, Dec. 3–Feb. 20 (MLG). A W. Meadowlark spent a second winter at Irish Bayou in e. New Orleans (NN). Six singing birds in *Acadia*, LA, Feb. 11 were surprising (DLD, SWC, CAM). The only Yellow-headed Blackbird reported was in *Cameron*, LA,

Feb. 18 (DR, JPK). A Rusty Blackbird overshot appropriate habitat and was found in saline marsh on Fourchon Rd. in *Lafourche*, LA, Dec. 2 (AWK). A Great-tailed Grackle was in a new area in *Clark*, AR, Dec. 16 (HP). Northern Orioles were unusually far north in Alabama: one in Montgomery Dec. 26 (RAD) and another at Wilson L. Feb. 11–25 (NP). There were more than the normal number of reports for the s. half of Louisiana; perhaps the freeze drove scattered winterers south and into parks and gardens. The only "Bullock's" was a female apparently returning for her third winter to my yard, where she survived the big freeze. A **Scott's Oriole** in *St. Landry*, LA, Jan. 27 was one of the rarest birds found this winter (BA, JPK).

Few observers commented on Purple Finches, but those who did reported in terms ranging from "fair" to "scarce." House Finches are another matter. Observers in Tennessee and Alabama don't even bother to report them, but what was a trickle in the coastal and western portions of the Region has become a flood. Only coastal Louisiana has yet to see them, and the day can't be far off. I hope that someone is studying the easternmost sedentary, natural population and the exotic eastern population, looking for biochemical differences, because when they meet up somewhere, perhaps on the Edwards Plateau in Texas, we're going to be presented with an incredible opportunity to learn something about population dynamics, speciation, and habitat selection. The Region was "invaded" by **White-winged Crossbills!** Well, there were three(!) reports: Feb. 22 in Clarksville, TN (EJW); three Jan. 23–Feb. 11 in *Van Buren*, AR (MAB, BP, PSc); and, finally, one was reported in *Clerburne*, AR Feb. 8 (*vide* H & MP). Needless to say, the species is a super-rarity in the Region. Pine Siskins were present in relatively small numbers in the n. part of the Region—they certainly didn't invade. Rounding out the non-invading northern finches for the season were Evening Grosbeaks: one report each for Louisiana and Arkansas, and a very few reports for Tennessee and Alabama.

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# PRAIRIE PROVINCES REGION

Rudolf F. Koes and Peter Taylor



The season was characterized by a bitterly cold December (10°F below average in Winnipeg), a balmy January (15°F above average—warm enough to rain a few times), and a near-normal February. Precipitation continued to be low across the south. Considering the trying conditions in December, a surprising number of half-hardy birds made it through the winter. These birds, and good numbers of winter finches in the east, provided the highlights in an otherwise uneventful winter.

**GREBES THROUGH FALCONS**—Manitoba's first winter Red-necked Grebe crash-landed on a Reston skating rink Feb. 5. After recovering, it was released on open water Feb. 9 (EB, DBr, CC). A Tundra Swan at Drumheller, AB, Dec. 16 furnished a local late record (LG). Large numbers of Mallards lingered in Saskatchewan and Alberta, high counts were of 700 at Medicine Hat, AB, Feb. 18 (RG), 1600 at Gardiner Dam, SK, Dec. 31, and 3225 at Boundary Dam near Estevan, SK, Jan. 19 (PC). Two thousand spent the winter near Cabri, SK, where "open water from springs, hailed crops and lack of snow made overwintering possible" (Sjo).

Unusual waterfowl included Calgary's first overwintering Canvasback (RT). Two Oldsquaws seen there in early December and again Feb. 11 provided another first local wintering record (JL). Common Mergansers outnumbered Com. Goldeneyes at Gardiner Dam in December, a record 164 vs. 110 (GW, PC), whereas at Pointe du Bois, MB, only two mergansers accompanied a record 59 goldeneyes in February (DF, PT *et al.*).

Single Sharp-shinned Hawks, very rare in winter, were in Calgary Dec. 11 (TK), Saskatchewan Dec. 4 (ph. HB), and at Balmoral, MB (CT). The Manitoba bird was the first in winter, and two Cooper's Hawks at the same location comprised only the second winter occurrence (ph. CT). Exceptionally early Swainson's Hawks were reported, without details, at Bassano and Suffield, AB, Feb. 18 (DBo, RG). More Golden Eagles than usual wintered in s.w. Manitoba, where 12 adults and two immatures were noted (DH, NS, RW, CC).

Possibly half a dozen Gyrfalcons were in the Calgary area. A male and female were seen displaying over the city (RD, JS). There were seven other reports in the Region. Prairie Falcon reports totalled 13 in Saskatchewan; one of two birds seen in Manitoba roosted regularly on a senior citizens' home in Winnipeg from Jan 27 (ED, EG, RK).

**GROUSE THROUGH KINGLETS**—Adventurous birders could find Willow Ptarmigan and Spruce Grouse in good numbers along the Ft. McMurray—Ft. Chipewyan

*Red-necked Grebe picked up from a skating rink in Reston, Manitoba, February 5, 1990. First winter record for the province. Photograph/Bruce Schwanke.*



winter road in n. Alberta (BR). American Coots at Ft. Qu'Appelle, SK, Dec. 1, Buffalo Pound Lake, SK, Dec. 15 and Jan. 7 (PC, PF), and Calgary Dec. 17 (*fide* RD) were unusual, but more so was a Com. Snipe seen Feb. 3 at  $-5^{\circ}\text{F}$  in storm-sewer runoff at Medicine Hat (RG).

A Ring-billed Gull at Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, Calgary, Dec. 5, surprisingly furnished the first city winter record of any species of gull (DE, *fide* RD). Other lingerers included a California Gull at Qu'Appelle Dam, SK, Dec. 3 (PC) and Glaucous Gulls at McArthur Falls dam, MB, Dec. 1-4 (DBy, PT, MSi) and Saskatoon about Dec. 10 (SSh). Snowy Owls were scarce except in the Saskatoon area, where nine were seen on the way to Kindersley Dec. 13 (DW) and nine en route to Kyle Feb. 19 (GW). Twelve Northern Hawk Owls in a 100-km band along the foothills west of Calgary from late December were unprecedented locally; seven were captured and banded (*fide* RD).

For the sixth time in 7 years, a Red-headed Woodpecker wintered near Kleefeld, MB (DF). A Red-bellied Woodpecker survived the winter at 2 St. Adolphe, MB, feeders (LL, m.ob.). Three-toed Woodpeckers were hard to find in Manitoba, while an out-of-range stray was the "best bird of the season" in Regina (P & SZ).

A Steller's Jay at Spring Valley, SK, Jan. 8 (FB) was about the 8th for the province; no details were provided. Seventeen Am. Crows, a locally high count, were at White-mouth, MB, Jan. 28 (DF). Across the Region, Com. Raven numbers outside the boreal forest continued to increase (KG, BR, m.ob.). Those at Melfort, SK, frequented fried chicken and burger outlets (FM)! A record 881 Black-capped Chickadees on the Calgary CBC contrasted with extremely low numbers in the nearby foothills (RD, JS). Red-breasted Nuthatches were found in excellent numbers in s. Manitoba (JH *et al.*), but were very low elsewhere. Brown Creepers and Golden-crowned Kinglets went virtually unreported after early December; they were presumably pushed out by the extreme cold.

**THRUSHES THROUGH FINCHES**—A male Mountain Bluebird near Pipestone, MB, Feb. 16 was exceptionally early (SSo, *fide* DH). Two Townsend's Solitaires, present since October, overwintered in Regina (FB, PC, B & SE, FL) and one was in Saskatoon Feb. 25 (FR, SSh). American Robin numbers were above average in Winnipeg, and some survived the season. Single male Varied Thrushes overwintered in Pinawa, MB (HH, PT, m.ob.), Calgary (RT), and Edmonton (SJu, JW). Also at a Pinawa feeder, a Brown Thrasher was the third to overwinter in the province (G & GN, PT); one found in Edmonton Dec. 18 also survived the season (EW, *fide* GL).

Bohemian Waxwings were common at many Saskatchewan locations, and especially abundant in Winnipeg and Calgary in December. Cedar Waxwing numbers were high from Winnipeg to s. Saskatchewan, with maximum daily counts (excluding CBCs) of 110 and 45, respectively, but we received no Alberta reports. An unfortunate **Palm Warbler** frequented a suburban garden and residential garage in Medicine Hat, AB, Dec. 8-15, probably a seasonal first for the Region (RG).

Northern Cardinals brightened the winter for many Manitoba birders, with four females in and near Winnipeg (RH, RKr, BN, BSt), another at Swan River (MSm, BSh, *fide* DH), and a male in Pinawa (BA, PT, m.ob.). Two in Prince Albert, SK, until early January at least, provided a local first (GG).

Highlights among straggling sparrows, all at feeders, were an Am. Tree Sparrow at Victoria Beach, MB, in February (L & RJ), a Fox Sparrow until at least Feb. 19 in

Winnipeg (RP, BN), and an overwintering Song Sparrow at St. Norbert, MB (RP, BSt, AA). A few Harris' and White-throated sparrows occurred in each province, with a Harris' in Edmonton (SJu, JF) and a White-throated in Medicine Hat (*fide* RG) being noteworthy. Exceptional numbers of Dark-eyed Juncos were present in s. Manitoba (193 in 14 of 17 CBCs, including unofficial counts) and Medicine Hat (RG), but the species was not remarked upon in Saskatchewan.

The Edson, AB, **Brambling** was present until at least the end of January (*fide* RD). Pine Grosbeaks were very numerous in s. Alberta and rural Manitoba, but less prominent in Saskatchewan. Red Crossbills were rarely seen, while White-winged Crossbills graded from abundance in s. Manitoba (at least until February) to scarcity in s. Alberta. A good cone crop on White Spruce in Manitoba, including ornamental trees, contrasted with reported natural cone failures in several parts of Alberta and Saskatchewan.

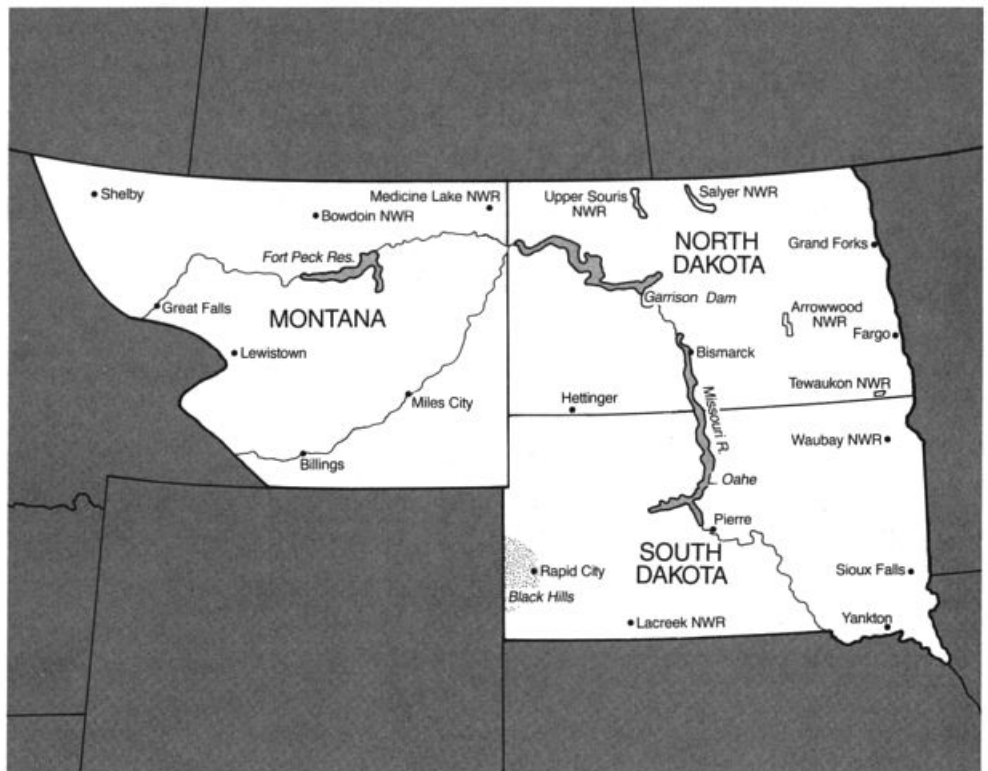
Redpoll numbers were generally high (frequently seen in hundreds), with Hoaries at the normal level of a few percent in the south. Evening Grosbeaks were patchily abundant in s. Manitoba, as usual in recent years, and generally scarce elsewhere. Finally, the infamous Eur. Tree Sparrow at St. François Xavier, MB, first seen in November 1986, was still going strong in January (J & HO, GH). Whatever its origin, it deserves special recognition!

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# NORTHERN GREAT PLAINS REGION

Ron Martin



Temperatures in the -30 degree range and below in some parts of the Region during mid-month resulted in a colder than average December. This was followed by record warmth in January and above average temperatures in February. Fargo and Grand Forks had the warmest January on record, and Minot the second warmest. Precipitation remained very low in most areas with one of the most open, snowless winters in recent memory. Most wetlands remained dry or much below normal and frequent dust storms in North Dakota left ditches drifted with dirt instead of the customary snow. Why most farmers persist in clean farming practices in this area is hard to understand. An exception to the dry trend was in the Black Hills, where they recorded the most snow in three to four years. There was more precipitation in the western reaches of eastern Montana than in most of the Region.

In eastern North Dakota, Lambeth called it "a reasonably birdy winter," but the rest of the Region was characterized as generally less than exciting. There were a few late waterfowl records, and numbers of Rough-legged Hawks and Short-eared Owls were of interest. Finches provided some excitement in eastern North Dakota and eastern South Dakota, but were not particularly noteworthy in the rest of the Region. Numbers of resident birds were low in western North Dakota, perhaps related to the drought conditions. The highlight of the season occurred in South Dakota, where a January Laughing Gull was most unusual.

**WATERFOWL** — The remains of a Trumpeter Swan released at Tamarac N.W.R., MN, were found near Genesco in s.e. North Dakota (*fide* JL). A flock of 250 Snow Geese in Brookings, SD, Feb. 28 was unusually early (JK, RWK). In extreme w. North Dakota a flock of 71 Canada Geese flying S Dec. 16 at Medora was late. At Ft. Peck, five Green-winged Teal Jan. 13 were unusual in winter (CC). Two Am. Black Ducks in Brookings, SD, Feb. 20 were rare migrants (DR). Six Mallards and one N. Pintail that remained at L.

Tewaukon until Dec. 26 apparently returned on Jan. 11 when an aerator and warmer weather made open water available. A flock of 15 Mallards returned to Fargo Feb. 19 (DDW), and 15 N. Pintails found open water at Freezeout L., MT, Feb. 24 (MS). An Am. Wigeon that remained at Garrison Dam to Dec. 10 furnished the 6th latest date for North Dakota (GBB). One Lesser Scaup lingered to Dec. 2 at Garrison Dam, and midwinter observations totaled 3 in South Dakota and Montana. Two Oldsquaw Dec. 17 at Garrison Dam were the 4th latest for North Dakota, and three birds wintered at the Yellowtail Afterbay (WR), normal for the area. The Surf Scoter last seen at Garrison Dam Dec. 2 (m.ob.) provided the 2nd latest record for North Dakota. Two Com. Goldeneye remained to Dec. 8 at Tewaukon N.W.R. and 800-1000 wintered at Ft. Peck.

**RAPTORS** — The 27 Bald Eagles on the annual January survey in North Dakota made a low total (RK), but good numbers wintered at Ft. Peck for the 2nd year in a row, with a peak of 41 Feb. 3 (CC). Early movement was underway by February in e. North Dakota, and numbers reported in Montana were normal. Numerous December reports of N. Harriers were received, and 3 February reports in North Dakota represented early migrants. Sharp-shinned Hawks totaled ten birds at 9 locations in North Dakota. Fifteen years ago, one or 2 reports would have been considered average. The growing popularity of feeders with their consequent prey base may be a contributing factor in this rise. Cooper's Hawks are very rare in North Dakota in winter, making a single at Bismarck Dec. 2 (MRN) and a bird present until Jan. 1 at Hettinger (D & CG) noteworthy. Five N. Goshawk reports was extremely low, and Malone reported no observations at Lewistown where at least one is observed most winters.

Red-tailed Hawk numbers were, at best, average for the season. The Buteo of interest this winter was the Rough-legged Hawk. After only two birds on as many CBCs in

North Dakota, birds apparently took advantage of the warm, open January to move north. Usually quite rare in n.c. and e. North Dakota in mid-winter, no fewer than 10 reports were received for this area, with five birds in one field at Clark Salyer N.W.R. Feb. 11 the highest count received (REM). At Westby, MT, Nordhagen reported that numbers in his area were up quite noticeably in January. In contrast, some areas of Montana reported numbers lower than normal. In South Dakota, Rough-legged Hawks were observed in 5 counties. Golden Eagle numbers reported were average in most areas. Exceptions were at Westby, where numbers higher than usual were noted, and e. and c. North Dakota, where reports were somewhat lower than average. Migrants were noted by mid-February in central North Dakota. Scattered Merlins wintered in normal numbers. Peregrine Falcons were recorded Dec. 7 in *Edmunds*, SD (S.L.N.W.R.), and Dec. 10 in *McLean*, ND (MWG). A single Jan. 23 at White Lake N.W.R. in *Slope* (DJB) added to a handful of January records for North Dakota. Three observations of a Gyrfalcon were received from the Garrison Dam area where a bird wintered last year. Other Gyrfalcons included an imm. white morph most of the period at Ft. Peck, a gray morph Jan. 20 at Ft. Peck, and another gray morph Feb. 17 at Lewistown (LM). Prairie Falcons were low in North Dakota but were noted weekly through the season in the Chester and Westby, MT, areas.

**TURKEY THROUGH WOODPECKERS** — Wild Turkey reports continue to increase in North Dakota and Montana with new releases and expansion of existing flocks. A Virginia Rail answered a tape near Park City, MT, Jan. 22 (WR) in an area where they have been found in previous winters. A group of 19 Am. Coots that began the season at Ft. Deck decreased to 16 by the end of the period. It was observed that this was probably a better survival rate than if they had migrated S and back. A Killdeer Dec. 30 at Lewistown was unusual, and a Com. Snipe wintered below the dam at Ft. Peck.

The bird of the season occurred Jan. 10 in *Yankton*, SD, when a **Laughing Gull** furnished the 2nd record for South Dakota (BKH, SUS) and the 5th for the Region. All 4 previous records were in spring and early fall. Herring Gulls peaked around 80 at the end of January at Ft. Peck, but were all gone by early February, when they were driven out by a short cold spell. Thayer's Gulls peaked at four at Garrison Dam and Ft. Peck in December, with the last Dec. 10 at Garrison. Two remained at Ft. Peck until late January. Two Glaucous Gulls were at Garrison Dam to the Dec. 17 CBC. The species peaked at seven Dec. 9 at Ft. Peck, where one remained to early February. A Dec. 9 report came from *Yankton* (WH).

The December cold drove out most Mourning Doves with only 4 December reports. An E. Screech-Owl Feb. 16 in a Wood Duck box at L. Ilo N.W.R. (DJB) was of interest since the species is not normally found away from towns, river valleys, or natural woodlands. Snowy Owl numbers were very low with only 14 reports for the entire Region. The two birds on North Dakota CBCs made the lowest total since 1963, and the five birds reported in e. North Dakota made the lowest total there in 13 years. Long-eared Owls Jan. 9 at L. Ilo (DJB) and mid-January at Arrowwood N.W.R. (TK) were of interest; while there are a fair number of CBC records, mid-winter observations are rare. The species was also in *Brown*, SD, Dec. 16 (DAT, DGP) and near Bowdoin N.W.R. Dec. 23 (J & KS). Short-eared Owls totaled 33 with observers in both Dakotas commenting on their use of CRP acreages. A peak of five Jan. 25 were in

one tree in *Grand Forks*, ND (EF). The only N. Saw-whet Owl reported was Feb. 3 in *Grand Forks*.

A Belted Kingfisher in *Roberts*, SD, Jan. 7 was away from usual winter areas. Wintering Red-bellied Woodpecker sightings were all in n.e. South Dakota and s.e. North Dakota, and totaled four. Northern Flickers were widespread in North Dakota with reports of wintering birds at many localities. One at Fargo with "reddish-orange" wing linings was unusual (RHO); Red-shafted types are very rare in the Red R. valley. Pileated Woodpeckers were in their usual haunts in e. North Dakota and n.e. South Dakota and a single was observed feeding on grapes in the Sheyenne Nat. Grasslands, ND, Dec. 17, about 12 mi. from the Sheyenne R. valley (JL).

**LARKS THROUGH WARBLERS** — Horned Lark movement was underway by late January in northern areas of North Dakota. A one day count of 32 Black-billed Magpies was tallied in *Grand Forks*, ND (EF). American Crows at 6 localities in w. North Dakota were twice the normal number and pairs were on territory in n.e. North Dakota by mid-February.

Wintering Red-breasted Nuthatches were generally widespread throughout the Region. Brown Creepers were reported in all 3 states, with 21 at Fargo Dec. 16 a very good total. No wintering Golden-crowned Kinglets were reported and there were only 3 December observations. Three E. Bluebirds wintered in *Day*, SD, at Pickeral Lake S.R.A. (DRS). Farther west, five Mountain Bluebirds were in *Jackson* Dec. 1 (KG). Townsend's Solitaires were present in good numbers with 25 on 4 North Dakota CBCs a new high. In e. South Dakota, reports came from *Day* Dec. 27 (DRS), and *Brown*, Feb. 11 (DGP). American Robins were low in the North Dakota badlands but were widespread in moderate numbers in the remainder of the Region. Varied Thrushes staged a minor invasion with five birds in North Dakota. All were reported in December, with an ad. male at Minot the only one that wintered (DA).



*The male Varied Thrush that spent the winter of 1989-1990 in Minot, North Dakota. Photograph/Duane Anderson.*

In Montana a Varied Thrush Dec. 16 was number 270 on Chuck Carlson's Ft. Peck bird list.

Late Brown Thrashers were at *Grand Forks* Dec. 7 (EF) and at *Long Lake* N.W.R. Dec. 19. Bohemian Waxwings were present in normal numbers in the North Dakota badlands but generally low elsewhere until mid-February, when movement was noted. Large flocks totaling 2500 birds were present Feb. 11 in the Bottineau, ND, area (GBB). With the exception of the badlands, Cedar Waxwings were more numerous than Bohemians in North Dakota with wintering flocks of 100 or more reported in several areas. Three reports came from e. Montana. Northern Shrikes were average with scattered winterers throughout the Region. The only warbler of the season was a Yellow-rumped Dec. 16 at Billings (*vide* LW).

**CARDINAL THROUGH FINCHES** — A N. Cardinal was in Fargo in early December (ML) and one spent the

period in Bismarck (*fide* RNR). Descriptions of a N. Cardinal were received from several observers in Minot, but the bird could not be verified. In North Dakota, Am. Tree Sparrows were present in a few areas where not usual. A Swamp Sparrow Dec. 4 at Fargo (GEN) was the 2nd latest for North Dakota. Harris' Sparrow reports were above average in North Dakota and Montana, and the species was present in 3 counties in South Dakota. The open winter kept Dark-eyed Junco numbers well above normal in North Dakota. Snow Buntings were quite low in n.c. North Dakota and e. Montana after movement was noted in December. In e. North Dakota, daily peaks of 50–1000 were recorded through the period with the highest count 1400 Jan. 23 in Ramsey (RM). No reports were received from South Dakota.

A W. Meadowlark near Malta Dec. 24 was late (J & KS). Four birds Feb. 16 near Mayville, ND (BK), were unusual. Pine Grosbeaks were scattered in small numbers in Montana and w. North Dakota. In the Turtle Mts. and e. North Dakota they were widespread, with 100 at Harwood, ND, Jan. 20 the highest count recorded (NH). Reports were also received from 2 n.e. South Dakota counties. Purple Finches were widespread in North Dakota with up to 10 birds at several feeders. House Finches continue to expand in the Region from both the east and west. New high counts were recorded on CBCs at Billings and Lewistown with 1187 and 12, respectively. At Miles City six birds were reported Dec. 16. On the e. edge of the Region, House Finches were present in 4 areas of Fargo and 10 wintered in Yankton, SD (WH). Another report came from Brookings Feb. 8 (DR).

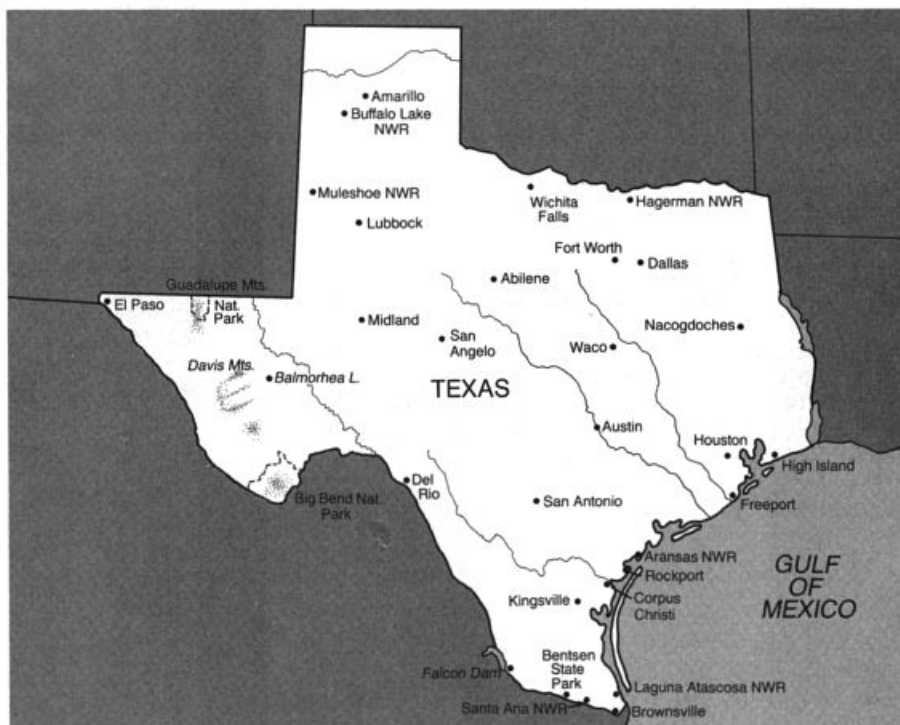
At the Denbigh Experimental Forest in McHenry, ND,

Red Crossbills peaked at 35 on Jan. 14 (GBB). Only 3 reports were received for the rest of the Region. A single White-winged Crossbill Dec. 31 in Lewistown (LM) furnished the only Montana report. This species did not winter at Minot, where normally a few birds are present. Widespread reports came from e. North Dakota and e. South Dakota, with up to 10 at some North Dakota feeders and a peak of 30 Jan. 4 in Codington, SD (BKH). In w. South Dakota, 12–15 wintered in Custer (DW). Common Redpolls were widespread and the open winter allowed many to winter in open areas. A few Hoary Redpolls were noted. Evening Grosbeaks were common only in the Turtle Mts. of North Dakota, where usually present. Three other reports were received, all from n.c. North Dakota.

**AREA EDITORS (boldface) AND CITED OBSERVERS.** MONTANA — **Chuck Carlson**, Larry Malone, Harriet Marble, Ted Nordhagen, James Phelps, Dwain & Thora Prellwitz, William Roney, Micheal Schwitters, Jim & Karen Stutzman, Lila Weber. NORTH DAKOTA — Duane Anderson, **Gordon Berkey**, Donald Bozovsky, John & Margaret Brophy, Eve Freeberg, Mike Goos, Dave & Carolyn Griffiths, Randy Hill, Neil Holland, Tom Klett, Brian Kouba, Randy Kreil, Jack Lalor, Mary Lamb, **David Lambeth**, William & Elaine Malaski, Ron Martin, Gary Nielson, Mike North, Bob O'Connor, Bob Randall, Mel Stone, Dennis & Diana Wiesenborn. SOUTH DAKOTA — Ken Graupman, Willis Hall, Bruce Harris, Jan Kieckhefer, Robert Kieckhefer, D. George Prisbe, Dan Reinking, Sand Lake N.W.R., **Dennis Skadsen**, Dan Tallman, Steve VanSickle, Duane Weber.—**RON MARTIN, Rt. 1, Box 59A, Sawyer, ND 58781.**

## TEXAS REGION

Greg W. Lasley and  
Chuck Sexton



Even when there are some recognizable general patterns across the state, we are always intrigued with the diversity of events emphasized by our correspondents. John Sproul, helping us out in the Trans-Pecos, stressed the continuation of the montane invasion from the fall. In the Panhandle, Ken Seyffert described it as the “winter of

the Northern Shrike” while far to the south Charlie Clark dubbed it the “winter of the woodcock,” each emphasizing an eye-catching species trend. Here from our perspective in central Texas, we expected that everyone would report they were overrun by robins and waxwings, a generalization that fell by the wayside as wider reports came

in. Seyffert, Carl Haynie, Ted Eubanks and their colleagues in north and east Texas suffered the brunt of what Haynie termed "that cruel late December cold front" while Paul Palmer joyfully reported on a "season of rarities in south Texas." We are certain these latter two comments are closely linked by cause-and-effect, as outlined below. The drought in west and south Texas still seriously affected bird distributions; in Midland, Frances Williams described the countryside as "dry and barren, and almost birdless."

**THE FREEZE**—Almost precisely 6 years after the Christmas freeze of 1983, a record-breaking cold wave pushed into and through the state December 21–24, 1989. This "single monstrous blast" (Eubanks) dropped temperatures below zero in the northern third of the state and resulted in the coldest temperatures of the century over much of the state. On the coldest day, Saturday December 23, high temperatures ranged from minus 5°F in the Panhandle to 22°F in McAllen. Laguna Atascosa N.W.R. suffered through 38 hours below freezing. This harsh freeze in the Rio Grande Valley came on top of the severe drought effects of recent years. As a result, areas such as Bentsen State Park and the Falcon Dam woodlands presented an eerie gray-brown landscape in January quite strange to anyone expecting to see the usual mid-winter greenery. On a nearly birdless beach at Mustang Island on Christmas Day, Tony Amos reported a vast die-off of salt-water invertebrates and a few road-killed rails displaced from frozen roadside ditches. In many areas of coastal and south Texas, "over-wintering" hummingbirds disappeared about one week after the freeze.

While the Valley and many other areas reported vast damage to vegetation, the effects of the cold on birdlife were not uniformly severe. Kelly Bryan reported "no noticeable effect" at Kickapoo Caverns State Park, although the drought-depressed avifauna was sparse there to begin with. The weather at Kickapoo and elsewhere rebounded to yield a mild to even record-warm January. Thankfully, many areas began experiencing a strange phenomenon in January and February...good rains! Surprisingly, the "dead zones" in the Valley had already greened up thoroughly for the arrival of the tityra in mid-February. Many deciduous trees in central and east Texas leafed out or bloomed fully 2 to 3 weeks earlier than normal, a hint of the early spring to come.

**DISPERSAL VAGRANTS** — Although the last major influx of Mexican species into south Texas occurred in winter 1987–1988 when weather patterns "were not especially unusual" (AB 42:286, 1988), we repeated the pattern of 1983–1984 when the last major Arctic weather blast was followed, as it was this season, by reports in this column of three species new to the United States arriving from the south (AB 38:334, 932–935, 1984). Herein we report the first documented U.S. records for Masked Tityra, White-throated Robin, and Yellow-faced Grassquit, all of which are resident species of central or southern Tamaulipas. We also received a well-documented Elegant Trogon record, and the Clay-colored Robin staged its best northward invasion ever. The freezing temperatures of late December reached far into Mexico. We suspect that extensive damage to tropical vegetation in lowlands and foothills of Tamaulipas and adjacent states caused a dispersal of many species seeking better cover or food supplies. Much of the "withdrawal" of these species was presumably to the south, but a minute fraction of the displaced avifauna dispersed in other directions, sending a

small but conspicuous handful of the birds north across the Rio Grande. Although this hypothetical scenario is quite speculative, we do have some corroborative evidence this season. Avian movements caused by the weather were noted by many observers in January who found foothill species such as Tufted Flycatcher, Fan-tailed Warbler, Blue-hooded Euphonias, Flame-colored Tanager, and Rufous-capped Brush-Finch to be common in the lowlands at Rancho Cielito in southern Tamaulipas. Equally intriguing, a male Blue Bunting seen at Bentsen State Park this season bore a U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service band. While the bird could not be netted to pin down its origin, to our knowledge the only location where this species has been banded is at Rancho Cielito (about 15 males banded in 1982, 1984, and 1985; *vide* Sherri Kuhl) which is about 220 miles south of the Rio Grande. We cannot completely rule out continuing drought effects, habitat destruction in northeastern Mexico or synergistic effects of these factors (or, dare we mention it, human-aided transport) to cause birds of northeast Mexico to show up in Texas, but it is most conservative to look at the obvious proximate (weather) factors first.

This column is dedicated to the memory of Tim Gates, a friend and frequent contributor in north Texas, who died tragically in an automobile accident on March 6, 1990 while in New Mexico.

#### S.A.

##### **NORTHBOUND RARITIES AFTER THE FREEZE**

A Masked Tityra (*Tityra semifasciata*), first discovered by James Middleton and Charles Bender with a S.A.A.S. group on Feb. 17 at Bentsen, was subsequently seen, described, and photographed by many. This was the first documented record for Texas and the United States. The bird was seen regularly until Mar. 4 and last sighted on Mar. 10 (*vide* R & LG). This was not, however, the first report of the species: We received brief details of a sighting several years ago which may now need to be re-reviewed.

Feeding on grapes alongside at least four Clay-colored Robins, a White-throated Robin (*Turdus assimilis*) visited a residential yard at Laguna Vista, Cameron, Feb. 18–25 for a first documented Texas and U.S. record (MK). Personal reasons of the property owner prevented an open invitation to the birding community at large to view this rarity. However, the bird was well documented and photographed by a small invited set of observers. These circumstances frustrated no small number of "listers" when rumours of the occurrence began to surface. The only previous U.S. report of the species (by multiple observers familiar with the species but lacking formal documentation) occurred in March 1984 in San Benito, a few months after the previous big freeze (AB 38:934, 1984).

An ad. ♂ Yellow-faced Grassquit (*Tiaris olivacea*) was discovered and described at Santa Ana Jan. 22 (DDeS, TB, m.ob.). The bird, furnishing a first U.S. record, was seen only through Jan. 24 but was photographed by at least two observers (CGP, JK, TK, ph. RDeG, ph. MP). The species is a common resident in weedy lowlands in Mexico within 150 mi of the Texas border and has long been expected to stray northward.

Based primarily on the timing of their occurrence, other vagrants which may owe their appearance in Texas to the ecological effects of the freeze might include the Elegant Trogon in Hidalgo, the Ruddy Ground-Dove found near Big Bend, the Santa Ana Golden-crowned Warbler, and perhaps the two Blue Buntings at Bentsen, including the aforementioned banded male.

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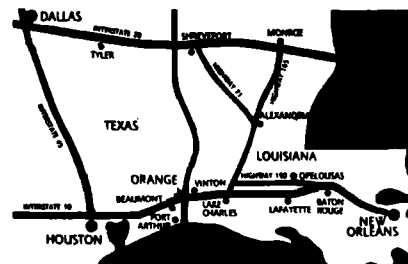
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**ABBREVIATIONS** — Ft. Bliss = Fort Bliss Sewage Ponds; G.M.N.P. = Guadalupe Mts. Nat'l Park; L.R.G.V. = Lower Rio Grande Valley; T.B.R.C. = Texas Bird Records Committee; U.T.C. = Upper Texas Coast. The following are shortened names for the respective county, state, or national parks, national wildlife refuges, etc.: Anahuac, Anzalduas, Aransas, Bentsen, Big Bend, Brazoria, Brazos Bend, Buffalo L., Caprock Canyons, Elephant Mt., Falcon, Hagerman, Kickapoo, Laguna Atascosa, Palo Duro, Sabal Palm, and Santa Ana.

**LOONS TO HERONS** — Red-throated Loons were noted in San Antonio Dec. 12–29 (ph. WS) and on L. Texoma Jan. 20 and Mar. 6–7 (two birds—HG, KH). Pacific/Arctic Loon has become a "regular" rarity although most reports are confined to the U.T.C., where there were 4 reports from mid-December to mid-February. Photographs and descriptions of two loons in Offatts Bayou, *Galveston*, Feb. 17 are likely the first to confirm the occurrence of Pacific, as opposed to Arctic, on the U.T.C. (TE, JM). A Pacific/Arctic was reported without details Jan. 6–23 on Falcon L. but some "sightings" of this bird, especially later in that period, were apparently based more on the power of suggestion than on hard facts or field marks (*vide* CS). There were a few impressive groups of Common Loons such as 52 at Rockport Jan. 20 (CC) and 76 on Cedar Creek Res. in e. Texas Jan. 21.

Single Horned Grebes were in *Crosby* Feb. 17 and at Lubbock Feb. 18 (L.E.A.S.) where they are scarce in winter. Sizable groups of Horneds were reported in several c. and e. Texas localities, most notably an amazing 320 on Cedar Creek Res., Feb. 10 (DF). At Balmorhea L., W. Grebe numbers were down from the previous 3 winters, but a single Clark's Grebe was present Dec. 1–16 (ML, ph. to T.B.R.C.). A probable W. Grebe at L. Benbrook Feb. 3 fur-

nished the 3rd winter record for *Tarrant* (KBb). The unidentified shearwater seen Dec. 17 on the Freeport CBC (DD) was without precedent for the U.T.C. in winter.

American White Pelicans again wintered in large numbers at a number of c. and e. Texas lakes, most notably at warm-water cooling lakes for power plants. The immense rafts of Double-crested Cormorants also continue to impress observers along the coast at concentration points such as San Luis Pass and Port Aransas. An Am. Bittern at L. Rayburn Jan. 31 represented one of the few winter records for inland e. Texas (NB). In *El Paso* and *Hudspeth*, Great Egrets were unusually numerous along the Rio Grande, with 45 present Feb. 4 (BZ). Most interesting among a handful of rare inland wintering ciconiiforms were a Tricolored Heron on the Guadalupe R. in *Kerr* Feb. 1 (E & KM) and five White-faced Ibises near Del Rio Dec. 28 (KB).

**WATERFOWL** — Fulvous Whistling-Duck continues to rebound as a wintering species on the U.T.C. with 3 scattered reports in December. Three Fulvous near Uvalde Dec. 19 were unusual (E & KM). There was a larger-than-normal handful of Tundra Swan reports. Three or four Tundras in *Chambers* lingered until Jan. 20. A pair was at Tankersley (near San Angelo) Jan. 1 through the period (*vide* DT) and single birds were at Ft. Hancock Res. in *Hudspeth* Dec. 17 (LJ) and in n. *Hays* Jan. 4–15 (m.ob.). The last bird apparently shifted and was joined by two other Tundras in n.w. *Hays* Jan. 18 (BF). An apparent imm. **Trumpeter Swan** was found below Falcon Dam Dec. 28 (MC, CT). The bird remained through Jan. 14 (m.ob.; ph. CS, etc.), providing the first modern record and first documented record for the state. Seven imm. Trumpeters banded in a Wisconsin capture/release program migrated

through Missouri and Oklahoma before winding up in Dallas Dec. 23–25 and nearby *Collin* Jan. 1–Feb. 6 (m.ob., *fide* KS, WP Sr.).

Two ad. Greater White-fronted Geese remained at Balmorhea L., Dec. 16 through the period, where they are accidental (ph. ML, ph. BZ, GL). The proportion of Ross' Geese among Snows remained unusually high (about 1 in 40) in the Coastal Bend and in the L.R.G.V. (PP, m.ob.). To make liars out of us [see Summer 1989 column], Muscovy Ducks were seen in record numbers along the Rio Grande this winter with high daily counts of eight to 13 birds occasionally reported (m.ob.). Fifty-seven Wood Ducks on the San Angelo CBC made a 25-year high (DT); this portended a handful of other w. Texas winter reports such as a male at G.M.N.P. present most of December (MF1, WF, ML), another in Lubbock all period (L.E.A.S.), and five more on L. Tanglewood, *Randall* (TJ).

Six Mottled Ducks in *Harrison* Jan. 2 were very unusual for n.e. Texas where Am. Black Duck (at least formerly) might have been as likely (N.E.T.F.O.). Eurasian Wigeons were on the perimeter of the state with drakes found at L. Sam Rayburn Feb. 9–10 (DF, MC, DW, m.ob.); Salineño Dec. 30–Jan. 13 (GK, MiP *et al.*; ph. CS); and El Paso Feb. 4 & 8 (ph. BZ, EWo). The Salineño bird was photographed on the s. side of the river for a very rare documented Mexico record (*fide* S. Howell).

There were record high numbers of waterfowl at Laguna Atascosa with 4 times the normal number of ducks during December (*fide* LD). Later counts showed 13,600 Canvasbacks and 105,800 Redheads in the 3rd week of January. Canvasbacks were also abundant on L. Rayburn with 2500–3000 present Jan. 26–Feb. 10 (DF, DW, NB). An impressive 5000 were on Sabine L. Jan. 20 (MA, m.ob.). Greater Scaup were more conspicuous at scattered inland lakes than normal. One to a few birds were reported at the Lorenzo sewage ponds, L. Tawakoni, Balmorhea L., and various e. Texas lakes. Most notable were 13 birds at Canyon L., *Blanco* Jan. 9–12 (WS, CS) and 75 at L. of the Pines Feb. 24 (N.E.T.F.O.). At the latter date and location, Nannek observed a presumed Greater Scaup x Ring-necked Duck.

We imagine Norman Boke went into "histrionics" describing a ♂ **Harlequin Duck** he discovered at S. Padre



Male Harlequin Duck at South Padre Island, Texas, February 4, 1990. First confirmed state record. Photograph/Arnold Moorehouse.

I., *Cameron*, Jan. 30; the bird was seen sporadically through Feb. 6 and thankfully photographed for the first documented Texas record (ph. MK, PM *et al.*). There are three previous sight records from *Aransas* in 1945 (2) and 1965. Oldsquaw, always scarce, were a bit more accessible this season (TE) with reports of eight birds scattered through n., c., and coastal Texas (m.ob.), many of which were relatively easily seen during their extended stays. White-winged Scoters were similarly "abundant" and widely scattered. Other interesting scoter records included a Surf at L. Rayburn Feb. 10–23 (m.ob.) and an

imm. ♀ Black at Balmorhea L. Dec. 16 (ph. ML). Common Goldeneyes were unusually plentiful in n.c. Texas. One hundred Buffleheads on a playa in *Randall* Dec. 3 were particularly noteworthy for the Panhandle (JoR). Observers reported numerous unusual mergansers records (high numbers and/or rare occurrences) statewide.

**RAPTORS** — For the 2nd year in a row, fewer than usual Black-shouldered Kites were noted in *Kleberg*, *Kenedy*, and *Willacy*. Their numbers were also considered discouraging in *Hidalgo*. An imm. Bald Eagle at Salineño Dec. 19 was a rarity for far s. Texas (OC, VE, KK). An ad. Bald over waterless Kickapoo Feb. 8 (KB) was unusual in an area where the species normally does not stray too far from perennial rivers. A Com. Black-Hawk was reported above Santa Margarita Ranch in *Starr* Dec. 30 (GK, MiP *et al.*). Two Harris' Hawks recorded on the Lubbock CBC were joined by a 3rd on Jan. 1 (GJ), making the largest group reported in the area and a new January record. White-tailed Hawks were plentiful in *Kleberg*, where expected (*fide* PP), but single White-taileds at Bentsen in early December and in Austin Jan. 20 were at unusual localities. A Zone-tailed Hawk Dec. 12 at Braunig L. in San Antonio (WS) was very unexpected. Ferruginous Hawks were definitely more numerous than normal on the s. coastal plain and Rough-legged Hawks may have been more numerous in n.c. Texas with 4 reports there.

If you want to set a world record Crested Caracara count, just do a driving transect in s.c. Texas from one commercial chicken farm to the next. Concentrations of up to 50–70 birds are routine at such choice "habitat" spots (*fide* PP). Wintering Peregrines attracted attention on the c. and s. Texas coast. One near Aransas Pass and El Paso's urban Peregrine both routinely feasted on Rock Doves (E & NA, JSp). A Prairie Falcon in *Kerr* Jan. 1 (E & KM) was perhaps the least expected of a handful of reports around the state.

**GALLIFORMES TO TERNS** — Despite a poor breeding season, Wild Turkeys seemed abundant on the ranches of s. Texas, whereas N. Bobwhite were scarce (AO, PP). Quail were also scarce around San Angelo (DT). Eubanks discovered an imm. Purple Gallinule lingering at Anahuac on the late date of Dec. 10.

Lesser Golden-Plovers appeared earlier than expected with a single bird at Galveston Feb. 17 and as many as 51 near High Island Feb. 25 (TE, JM). Two Snowy Plovers lingered until Dec. 3 at Midland (RMS). A Semipalmated Plover in *Harrison* Jan. 30 (DBro, GLu) was a surprise given the species' normal coastal tendency in mid-winter. Piping Plover concentrations reported to us included the 100+ on the Port Aransas CBC (TA) and 180 on Bolivar Flats, East Beach, and San Luis Pass (all on the U.T.C.) Jan. 21 (TE, JM, RU). An Am. Avocet lingering as late as Dec. 21 in El Paso provided the area's first December record (LJ, ph. GL, BZ). Austin's fall N. Jacana was not kind enough to linger for the CBC season; it was last reported Dec. 11. A Solitary Sandpiper first discovered on the Cypress Cr. CBC (TE) lingered at least to Jan. 31 (RU) and two were seen at Santa Ana Jan. 26 (DM). At least two Whimbrels wintered with Long-billed Curlews on Galveston Island (TE, RU).

There were unusually high numbers of Sanderlings on Mustang I. during February with a peak of 1012 Feb. 13 (TA). This was a prelude to a pattern of several early arrival dates for other sandpipers such as White-rumped and Pectorals during the period Feb. 18–24 in coastal and s. Texas (m.ob.). The Freeport CBC Purple Sandpiper (DD



*Purple Sandpiper at Freeport, Texas, December 18, 1989. This bird, which stayed through the winter, furnished the first confirmed Texas record in a decade. Photograph/Kelly B. Bryan.*

*et al.*) lingered into March. American Woodcocks were quite conspicuous in the e. half of the state with birds occasionally even reported on residential lawns (HE, CS, SHi, MS). There were well over a dozen woodcocks reported in the Coastal Bend (m.ob.) and a southernmost bird Feb. 11 below Falcon Dam (*fide* BH). Jaeger reports included single Parasitics at Laguna Atascosa Dec. 24 (KR) and Port Aransas Dec. 29 (RR), two Parasitics off the Freeport jetties Jan. 5 (CM, CCa, AK), and finally a Pomarine near Galveston Jan. 13 (SWi).

It was another remarkable season for gulls. A Franklin's Gull at L. Casa Blanca in Laredo Jan. 21 added another to a growing list of inland winter records (WS, J & BR). An ad. **Little Gull** (FB, JMu) joined an ad. **Common Black-headed Gull** on L. Waco Jan. 7 for a remarkable congregation. The latter had been around since Dec. 31 (JMu, m.ob.) and it later acquired full breeding plumage but proved very difficult to locate. On Dec. 11, Ft. Bliss hosted four Bonaparte's Gulls (BZ), rare in the El Paso area in mid-winter. Large concentrations of one to several thousand Bonaparte's were at L. Tawakoni and L. Lewisville in n.c. Texas and at Cedar Creek Res. in e. Texas. A record concentration of over 4500 Ring-billed Gulls was on Calaveras L. in San Antonio in late December (WS, m.ob.). A first-winter Cali-

fornia Gull, photographed on Galveston's East Beach Jan 27 (TE, JM, RU), remained though at least Feb. 1 (LA, PG) Lasley photographed a California Gull on Mustang I. Feb 13 (ph. GL, E & NA). Thayer's Gulls reported on the Freeport and Galveston CBCs were not reported thereafter

Lesser Black-backed Gull flirted with the status of "commonplace" this season (TE). At least 11 individuals were reported from Galveston to Laguna Atascosa. "Only" three Glaucous Gulls were found: one on Mustang I. Dec. 25 (ph. TA), one on East Beach Jan. 31 (MA), and one at n Padre I. Feb. 12 (RKg). First-winter Great Black-backed Gulls appeared at San Luis Pass Dec. 18 (TE, JM), at Bolivar Flats Feb. 1 (JGe), and on S. Padre I., *Cameron*, Feb. 27 (JGe). An ad. Great Black-backed was encountered on Mustang I. Feb. 11 (TA). The rare gull parade ends with an Iceland/Thayer's/Herring Gull (listed in decreasing order of probability) photographed at East Beach Jan. 28 (ph TE); photos and descriptions are being studied by various gull experts. A Caspian Tern at L. Tawakoni Jan. 20 (CH, JKa, RK, m.ob.) represented a first winter record for n c Texas and there were reports inland in e. Texas at L. Bob Sandlin and in w. *Harris* in February.

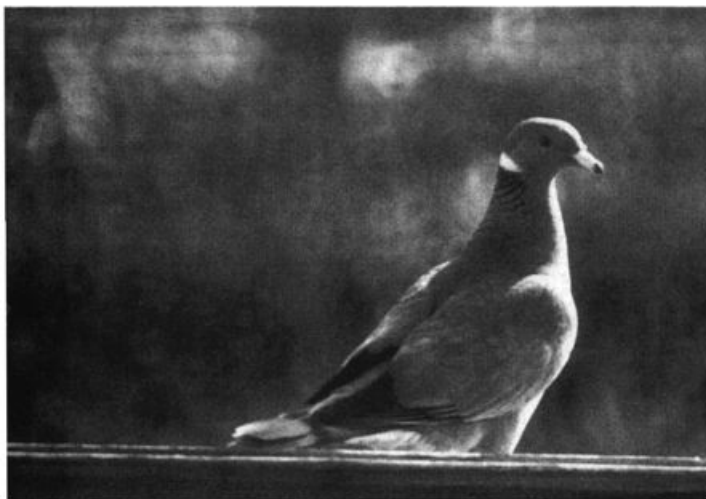
**PIGEONS TO WOODPECKERS** — Two Band-tailed Pigeons photographed at Kickapoo Dec. 29 (ph. KB, DStu) represented only the 4th or 5th winter record e. of the Trans-Pecos. A White-winged Dove in Granbury Jan. 5-11 (ph. JFu, *fide* WP Sr.) provided a first *Hood* record and more evidence of the northward expansion of the species A ♂ **Ruddy Ground-Dove** found at Lajitas near Big Bend Feb. 22 (PSM, ph. ML) remained into March.

About 46 Green Parakeets spent the winter in McAllen (SWe). Twenty were at a roost in Brownsville Jan. 13 along with 30 Red-crowned Parrots and three Yellow-headed Parrots (BH). Three Red-crowns were reported at San Ygnacio Feb. 10, well upriver from their usual haunts. A careful examination of psittacines in one area of Brownsville Jan. 30 produced eight Green Parakeets, one Olive-throated Parakeet, two White-fronted Parrots, 60 Red-crowned Parrots, two Lilac-crowned Parrots, two Red-lore Parrots, four Yellow-headed Parrots, one appar-



*Adult California Gull at Mustang Island, Texas, February 13, 1990. Photograph/Greg W. Lasley.*





Band-tailed Pigeon at Kickapoo Caverns State Park, Texas, December 29, 1989. The species is rarely found so far east in the state. Photograph/Kelly B. Bryan.

ent Red-crowned x Yellow-headed hybrid, and as many unanswered questions about the origins of the whole lot (TK). We know there are many illicitly transported psittacines, including species from the closest areas of Mexico, which are likely to be escapees at this border region; but we have long ago noted simple, plausible ecological explanations for the patterns of abundance and distribution of those individual psittacines which may be arriving on their own from nearby northeast Mexico. As just one interesting example, Tom Pincelli noted that in the winter of 1983–1984, after the last big freeze, Yellow-headed Parrots were encountered all over the L.R.G.V. In the years since, there have just been a few reports of this species. This year Yellow-headed Parrot reports were once again numerous. Any argument showing a preponderance of evidence that a given bird or flock or species had a wild or captive origin loses its utility to explain the origin of *all* of these birds. Discussions of this issue have regrettably become an exercise in futility.

A two-day exploration of the Norias division of the King Ranch Feb. 21–22 produced a total of 14 Ferruginous Pygmy-Owls (RW). Elf Owls were again noted in January at Bentsen (R & LG, m.ob.). A Barred Owl in *Mason* Jan. 6 was w. of its normal range (BoF). Short-eared Owl numbers seem to drop lower and lower each winter as favored grasslands are either mowed down, developed, or otherwise disturbed (CH). Only a single Short-eared was reported in n.c. Texas this season. A Lesser Nighthawk was found dead in *Nueces* Jan. 17 for a rare winter record (A & MC). Common Nighthawks lingered at Austin until Dec. 11 (GC, GL) and in San Antonio Dec. 10 (WS). The High Plains again had wintering White-throated Swifts in a few select areas such as Caprock Canyons in *Briscoe* for the 2nd year in a row; is this a new trend (KS)?

Along with the normal array of wintering hummingbirds on the U.T.C. (usually Buff-bellied, Ruby-throated, Black-chinned, Anna's, Broad-tailed, and Rufous), we added a ♀ Blue-throated Dec. 17 (Freeport CBC) and a Callope in the same vicinity the following week. Palmer reported on a mixed bag of 5 species of hummingbirds wintering in the Coastal Bend and s. Texas with some of them freezing to death in the cold snap, others surviving but departing later, and yet others toughing it out through the season. An Anna's Hummingbird in Midland in the fall remained until Dec. 9 (SM, *fide* FW).

An ad. ♀ **Elegant Trogon** at the Carter residence on Delta Lake, *Hidalgo*, Jan. 25–31 was well detailed and photographed (WC *et al.*, ph. OC *et al.*). There had been only one well-documented record out of a handful of modern reports. The Ringed Kingfisher at Brazos Bend, first reported in the fall, lingered through early December. In addition, a 2nd individual appeared in *Chambers* Dec. 9 (JPa), providing a 2nd U.T.C. record. Other Ringeds were at Ft. Clark after Jan. 3 (DP, KB *et al.*) and on the Guadalupe R. in *Kerr* Dec. 19–Feb. 1 (E & KM).

The montane invasion brought at least five Lewis' Woodpeckers to the Trans-Pecos: one in Balmorhea Dec. 16 (ph. ML) and a remarkable four at Elephant Mt. in *Brewster* Jan. 15 through the end of the period (DWd, ML). Two more Lewis' were in Midland from Dec. 3 onward (RMS, *fide* FW). A lost Lewis' in Lorenzo luckily lingered until Dec. 5 when Darleen's long lens locked in on it (ph. DS). An Acorn Woodpecker frequenting a yard in El Paso off and on since September was seen Dec. 25 (FF). Two more Acorns were seen in El Paso Dec 19 (ph. BZ, GL) while still others were in *Mason* Dec. 24 (DFe) and in Midland Dec. 26 to the end of the period (WK, *fide* FW). Out-of-range Red-bellied Woodpeckers were at Laguna Atascosa Jan. 9 (AE) and in *Crosby* Feb. 10 (JC, AG, AKI, DS). Red-naped Sapsuckers were described in *Guadalupe* Dec. 18–31 (NJ, SH, CBe) and in *Kenedy* Jan. 13 (AE) but it is unclear if "red-naped" variants of the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker can be eliminated from consideration. For direct comparison, you couldn't beat Madera Canyon picnic area in the Davis Mts. which hosted single ♂ Yellow-bellied, Red-naped, and Williamson's sapsuckers Feb. 9, all within 15 inches of one another at one time (MA *et al.*).

**FLYCATCHERS TO THRUSHES** — A Black Phoebe in Lubbock Dec. 10 (GJ, L.E.A.S.) was the first recorded there since 1978. It remained until the 2nd week of January. Eastern Phoebes were common along the coast but declined dramatically in the weeks following the freeze (TE). There were 3 reports of Say's Phoebe in n.c. Texas where the species is a vagrant; the species was more common than usual in the San Angelo area. A Couch's Kingbird in *Jim Hogg* Feb. 9 (SWi) was a bit far north for a wintering bird. An apparent ad. **Fork-tailed Flycatcher** was briefly observed at Aransas Dec. 4 (C & EB). If accepted, it will be the 6th Texas record. At least three different Rose-throated Becards toyed with observers at Anzalduas, Santa Ana, and Bentsen, December to February; only the latter individual was occasionally seen by many observers.

Two Barn Swallows seen s.e. of Kingsville Feb. 10 (EK, N & PP *et al.*) may have been overwintering. The Steller's Jay invasion of the fall continued into early winter with additional sightings in Amarillo in December (BPr, JPr); the species remained numerous around El Paso, Alpine, and the lower elevations in G.M.N.P. throughout the period. The celebrated Colleyville **Black-billed Magpie** disappeared Christmas Eve, but it or another was seen between Pottsboro and Hagerman Feb. 27 (J. Williams, *fide* WP Sr.). Another magpie n. of El Paso flirted with the New Mexico state line but was photographed in Texas Feb. 6 (ph. BZ). Given the montane invasion this season in that region, this bird is likely to have been a legitimate vagrant. A concentration of an estimated 12,000 American Crows s. of Wellman, *Terry*, Dec. 26 (ML) was truly remarkable. Red-breasted Nuthatches seemed to be well above normal in abundance in a broad band across the middle of the state including El Paso, Midland, San

Angelo, and e. to the Pineywoods. However, observers in n. and s. Texas reported relatively few. Commonly, observers reported a decline after late fall or especially after the freeze. Much the same pattern was repeated for the Brown Creeper. Pygmy Nuthatches, casual in El Paso in winter, were seen there Dec. 19 & 23 (ph. GL, BZ).

Bluebird movements seemed to be complex: Easterns were found in impressive numbers in parts of s. Texas but were reportedly sparse at G.M.N.P. Westerns were also low at G.M.N.P. but showed up in Lubbock, Midland, and Real, where they are normally uncommon (m.ob.). Mountains were, however, common at G.M.N.P.; they also pushed widely eastward to Big Spring, San Angelo, Fort Worth, and the e. Panhandle. The ♀ Mountain on n. Padre I. continued to be seen through February (A & MC, CC, E & NA). Bryan had all three species at Kickapoo in early December, but they were gone by Dec. 10. Townsend's Solitaires were abundant at G.M.N.P.; this species also spread eastward to several Concho Valley and Hill Country locations where it is rare to casual. At least 20 Clay-colored Robins were reported in s. Texas with the most



Clay-colored Robin at Laguna Vista, Texas, February 24, 1990. Exceptional numbers of Clay-colored reached southern Texas this season. Photograph/Mike Krzywonski.

notable occurrences on n. Padre I. and in Kingsville (A & MC, JG, PP, m.ob.). American Robins were more numerous in much of far w., s., and c. Texas but their numbers in parts of the Hill Country could only be considered astonishing. For example, in January, the Barton Cr. watershed in Travis harbored hundreds of robins *per acre* over tens of thousands of acres of juniper-covered hills (CS). A ♂ Varied Thrush visited a Fort Worth yard for about 2 hours Dec. 19 (MJ, JMa), for a first n.c. Texas record.

**MIMIDS TO WARBLERS** — A Gray Catbird Feb. 24 represented a first documented G.M.N.P. record (CB, DB). There were hundreds of Sage Thrashers at that park in December and January, while sizeable numbers of Sages moved into the San Angelo area and Kickapoo. A small handful of Sages penetrated deep into s. Texas brushlands by February. At Big Bend, a Long-billed Thrasher was at Rio Grande Village Feb. 5 (JSe). There were new county

records for Curve-billed Thrasher in Denton Dec. 14–Jan 10 (ME, *fide* WP Sr.) and Baylor Feb. 2 (CE), both in n.c. Texas. El Paso got its 2nd record of a Sprague's Pipit when one called several times as it flew over a residential area Jan. 22 (BZ). Massive numbers of Cedar Waxwings were reported in the San Angelo, Kickapoo, and Austin areas. For example, a flock of well over 1000 was noted near Wimberley Feb. 15 and similar numbers were mixed with the robins in the nearby Barton Cr. watershed A ♂ Phainopepla Jan. 9–30 in Abilene was well out of range (ph LBl, *fide* BHu). There were no fewer than five N. Shrikes reported in the Panhandle: two in Amarillo Dec. 10 (KS), one near L. Tanglewood Dec. 17 (TC, JHa, TJ, KS); one at Buffalo L., Feb. 18 (KS); and one at Palo Duro Feb. 25 (KS)...all immature birds and all documented with written details to the T.B.R.C.

A Bell's Vireo at Santa Margarita Ranch Jan. 13 was a rare mid-winter find (OC). Observers sent in a long list of late-lingering and overwintering warblers, primarily from the coastal zone and deep s. Texas, but a rather routine list at that. The more significant occurrences included a well-documented Yellow Warbler Dec. 10–17 at Brazoria (DM, MA *et al.*) along with three N. Waterthrushes on the latter date (DM, RT); a Prairie Warbler in Nacogdoches Feb. 10 (DW); an Ovenbird in Dallas Jan. 13 which originally had been banded at the same site the previous September (CSn); and a first MacGillivray's for Dallas in Garland Jan. 30 (MFr, *fide* WP Sr.). The Golden-crowned Warbler at Sabal Palm lingered until Jan. 6 (*fide* M & RF) and another Golden-crowned was present Jan. 1–Feb. 15 at Santa Ana (*fide* R & LG, m.ob.). Many thanks to those observers who took the time to send in written details and photographs on both of these birds.

**TANAGERS TO LONGSPURS**—Winter W. Tanager records included a female at Rockport Dec. 27 (TS) and a male near Weesatche, Goliad, Jan. 23 (DM). Pyrrhuloxias pushed eastward and "city-ward" along a broad front from coastal s. Texas up to the U.T.C. Probably reacting to severe drought conditions, the birds showed up in residential neighborhoods in Kingsville, Corpus Christi, Victoria, and elsewhere (PP). At least three individuals seen in w. Harris throughout the season were the easternmost reported. A smattering of Black-headed Grosbeaks was noted near the coast including an overdue first *Matagorda* record at Bay City Dec. 21–22 (FS, JuH). The ♀ Blue Bunting reported on the Aransas CBC Dec. 21 can not accurately be described as a vagrant from the frozen south (where it hadn't frozen yet) unless she had had a premonition! Two Blue Buntings at Bentsen, including the aforementioned banded male, were present yet elusive through much of January and February. Lazuli Buntings were at Salineño Jan. 29–Feb. 17 (m.ob.) and a pair was at Sabal Palm Feb. 17 (RH, BO). Green-tailed Towhees followed the Pyrrhuloxia's lead and shifted eastward and coastward this winter with over a dozen reports of the species spread from Falcon to Houston (m.ob.).

As our observer network expands and fills in many gaps in our knowledge, we continue to be impressed by the regional responses of wintering sparrows. Perhaps more than any other species group, they are like putty upon which local and regional moisture patterns seem to sculpt an ever-shifting montage. Sparrows were particularly sparse in the Midland area and other portions of drought-ridden w. and s. Texas, yet several species such as Vesper, Savannah, Fox, Song, Lincoln, and White-crowned were "common" at San Angelo in the midst of that region. The Guadalupe Mts. harbored several noteworthy strays,

including two Am Tree Sparrows (BSw), two Fox Sparrows (SW), a Swamp Sparrow (ML), and a White-throated (SW) all on Dec. 27, and a Field Sparrow Jan. 31 (MFl). Cassin's Sparrows showed an intriguing pattern: while being very hard to find in Midland, they were more numerous to the west in El Paso and to the east in the Kingsville (FW, BZ, JSp, PP). Rufous-crowned Sparrows, perhaps drought refugees, were reported at Laguna Atascosa Jan. 9 (KR, LP) and at Falcon Dam Jan. 14 (MG, BP), far to the s. of their normal range. Another out-of-range Am. Tree Sparrow was in *Guadalupe* from Jan. 22 onward (DH, DBE). After a single fall report, Freeman found several Brewer's Sparrows near Buda Jan. 8; this was only the 2nd area record.

A flurry of excitement was set off when a possible Worthen's Sparrow (*Spizella wortheni*) was reported at Falcon Heights, Starr, Feb. 10 by an observer with some familiarity with this nondescript species (SWi). Other searchers attempted to relocate the bird but many came away confused or skeptical. The bottom line: We seem to lack definitive criteria to identify this species. Any suggestions from researchers familiar with *wortheni* would be greatly appreciated. Unfortunately, only the original observer submitted a written description and the bird was not photographed.

Vesper Sparrows were cited as being particularly common in the Coastal Bend and interior s. Texas (PP, AO). Single Fox Sparrows were in El Paso, where they are very rare, Dec. 23 (BSa, *fide* BZ) and Jan. 17 (KBe, *fide* JD) and the species was far more numerous than normal in c. and coastal Texas. Reports of Golden-crowned Sparrows at Laguna Atascosa Dec. 21 and Caprock Canyons Jan. 1 will be reviewed by the T.B.R.C. No longspurs were reported in Midland but it was considered a good longspur winter in n.c. Texas (FW, CH). In the latter region, Laplands were predictably the most numerous, with far smaller numbers of McCown's and Chestnut-collareds. A McCown's Longspur in w. *Henderson* Jan. 21 (DF) would have to be considered e. of its normal range. A Lapland Longspur found at Ft. Bliss in November was last spotted Dec. 3 (LJ). Fisher discovered over 300 Smith's Longspurs in *Lamar* Dec. 29–Feb. 10. This area receives so little attention from birders that we hesitate to guess whether or not the species should be expected there (TE). In n.c. Texas, where we do expect the species, newly discovered sites for Smith's included a field in *Hunt* n.e. of Dallas where a flock of up to 75 birds spent Jan. 24–Feb. 17 (MW). A probable Smith's was reported Feb. 5 from s.e. *Tarrant*, where the species is virtually unknown (TG).

**BLACKBIRDS TO FINCHES** — As usual, careful observers detected a minute handful of Yellow-headed Blackbirds mixed in with Red-wingeds or cowbirds in a few s. Texas localities. Two Yellow-headed near Indianola Feb. 9–24 (RM) were a bit less expected. Palmer and others in s. Texas observed that numbers of Bronzed Cowbirds remained "mercifully" (and inexplicably) low, but their Brown-headed relatives seemed about as abundant as ever. Up to 12 Audubon's Orioles at one yard in Salineño in January furnished the most noteworthy oriole record (DM); the species continued to be widely reported in s. Texas brushlands.

Purple Finches were in low numbers in n.c. Texas and perhaps a bit higher than normal in Austin. One Purple showed up unexpectedly at a Sinton feeder for the 3rd confirmed Coastal Bend record (CC, LS, *fide* SB). Though down somewhat from the fall, Cassin's Finch numbers at G.M.N.P. remained impressive into December. Several

House Finches visiting feeders in Denton (first county record) and Dallas raised questions as to their population origin (*fide* WP Sr., CH). Small numbers of Red Crossbills were present in El Paso, where they are rare and local in winter. Pine Siskins were generally well above normal numbers in n.c. Texas, San Angelo, Austin, Comfort, the Pinewoods (where abundant), and thence southward into s. Texas. Their abundance notably *increased* in our Region after the December freeze. Interesting Lesser Goldfinch reports came from Archer City in n.c. Texas Dec. 26–29 (*fide* AV) and at Goliad Feb. 11 (SWi). As with other fall invaders, Evening Grosbeaks were fewer in number later in the season at G.M.N.P. but did stay through the winter, two Evening Grosbeaks near Weatherford Feb. 17 provided a first *Parker* record (CE).

**CORRIGENDA** — The following records, reported here, were not accepted by the T.B.R.C.: Red-necked Grebes, Sept. 23, 1988 in Lubbock (AB 43:129); Connecticut Warbler Oct. 10, 1988 in Corpus Christi (AB 43:132). Delete the report of a dead Elf Owl at Santa Ana Jan. 31, 1989 (AB 43:337).

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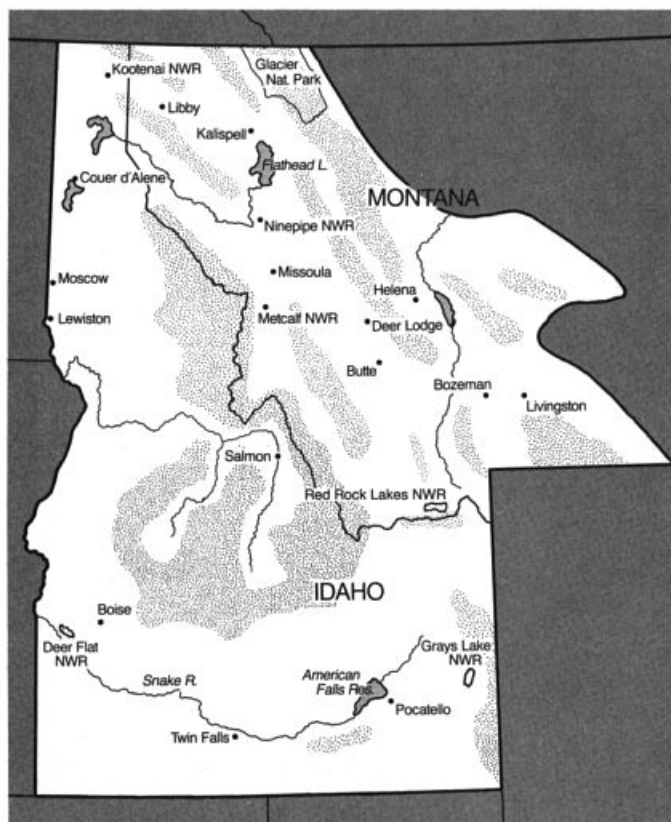
## IDAHO-WESTERN MONTANA REGION

Thomas H. Rogers

**W**inter was mild, particularly in January, which was the warmest month! Precipitation was generally low, with scant snow cover, though February brought the mountain snow pack more nearly to normal. Most water remained unfrozen, resulting in high numbers of wintering waterfowl. In some instances departures were delayed and spring arrivals were early. A few observers reported low numbers of birds, perhaps because mild conditions allowed them to remain dispersed. Some northern species of small birds appeared in large numbers.

**LOONS TO WATERFOWL** — Hayden L., ID, hosted single Red-throated, Pacific, and Com. loons and also several Horned and Eared grebes in late December and early January (PH). Five Double-crested Cormorants were sighted in the Grandview-C.J. Strike Res. area of s. Idaho's Snake R. Feb. 10 (AL). Wintering Trumpeter Swans at Red Rock Lakes N.W.R., Lima, MT, averaged 370, about normal. A Tundra Swan with them was supposedly an injured bird (JB). At Kootenai N.W.R., Bonners Ferry, ID, the latter species stayed later and returned earlier than normal. Sixteen Greater White-fronted Geese visited Mann's L., Lewiston Orchards, ID, Feb. 4 (CG); one appeared at Thompson L., Harrison, ID, Dec. 11 (SS, SHS), and one was at McArthur W.M.A. Feb. 26 (MB). Canada Geese wintered there in more than usual numbers and high numbers wintered on Couer d'Alene L. in n. Idaho. Very large numbers of waterfowl, especially of Canada Geese, wintered in the Rupert, ID, area.

A February thaw at Kootenai N.W.R. brought in several species of ducks a month early but a freeze drove them back south (LDN). The Boise R., ID, had 25 Wood Ducks Dec. 2 (AL). Single Oldsquaws appeared at Cascade, ID, Jan. 10 (AL), on Hayden L. Nov. 16 & 29 and Dec. 8 (PH), and near Townsend, MT, Dec. 27 (LM). A White-winged Scoter was sighted Feb. 19 on the Missouri R. 12 mi n.e. of Helena (DS). Fifteen Com. Goldeneye in the Grandview-C.J. Strike vicinity Feb. 10 were noteworthy, as was a Bufflehead at Cascade Jan. 10 (AL). A ♂ Red-breasted Merganser was found on American Falls Res., ID, Jan. 2, and about 10 were flushed from the Snake R. near Hammett, ID, Feb. 3 (CHT).



MAP ILLUSTRATION/KENN KAUFMAN

**EAGLES TO HUMMINGBIRDS** — Idaho's official eagle count found 800 Bald Eagles (68% ad., 32% imm.), an increase of 18% over 1989 and the 2nd highest ever. North Idaho had the highest count area with 214 and the Idaho Falls area was 2nd with 176. American Falls Res. and downstream provided 55. Bald Eagle numbers at Wolf Lodge and Beauty Bays, Coeur d'Alene L., ID, reached 30 Dec. 12 (JW). A few were in the areas of Fortine, MT; Deer Flat N.W.R., Nampa, ID; Kootenai N.W.R.; and Lewiston, ID, during the winter. Idaho's Golden Eagle count of 95 (76% ad., 24% imm.) was a slight increase from last year. None was found in n. Idaho. The Gardiner, MT, area had 40-50 wintering eagles (Bald and Golden) (TM). Two Merlin, 2 Prairie Falcon, and 4 Gyrfalcon sightings were reported.

A California Gull was sighted at Lewiston Dec. 3 (C.B.) and Feb. 4 (CV). Several Herring Gulls spent the winter at the Polson, MT, dump, and a 2nd-winter Glaucous Gull

seen there repeatedly was suspected of being a hybrid with a Herring Gull (DH, PLW). Up to three first-winter Glaucous Gulls appeared at the Kootenai Co. landfill, Coeur d'Alene (JW). An **Ancient Murrelet** landed on the road near Osburn, ID, Jan. 29 and was photographed (SW).

A Barn Owl in the Grandview-C.J. Strike Feb. 10 was apparently that area's first (AL). A Snowy Owl appeared at Big Southern Butte n. of Springfield, ID, Jan. 3 for the only report (DW). A Barred Owl was seen off and on all winter in the vicinity of Mica Bay, Coeur d'Alene L. (CS), and one was seen often at Ninepipe N.W.R., Charlo, MT [fide PLW]. One was sighted at Moscow Mt. n.e. of Moscow, ID, Dec. 16 (C.B., P.A.S.). A Great Gray Owl was discovered Jan. 20 in Knox Canyon in the Deep Creek Mtns. s.e. of Pocatello, ID (CHT, CW), and one appeared at Weydemeyer's ranch near Fortine, MT, Jan. 2. A Boreal Owl was found along Badger Cr. s. of Tetonia, ID, Jan. 25 (MD) and one was at Smith Mt. w. of Troy, MT, at February's end (MNO). C.J. Strike Res. had a N. Saw-whet Owl Feb. 10 (AL). An Anna's Hummingbird that arrived at a Clinton, MT, feeder in November was captured in mid-December and flown to California but didn't survive (BT).

**JAYS TO WARBLERS** — Apparently two Blue Jays frequented Missoula, MT, feeders during the winter (TT, LB) and one was sighted 7 mi s.e. of Helena, MT, during the fall, all of December, and in late February (SN). In Idaho one wintered at Pocatello (JJ) and one was seen in Nampa throughout January (LP). Gardiner, MT, had 30-40 wintering Pinyon Jays (TM). A flock of 25 Bushtits was frequenting the pinyon pines at the Silent City of Rocks s.e. of Oakley, ID, Jan. 1 (CHT, CW). A Hermit Thrush visited a Missoula yard Feb. 10 for w. Montana's first winter record (WK) and one appeared at Lewiston Dec. 2 (JP, DP). A Varied Thrush in a Boise, ID, park Jan. 1 was unusual (CWe).

A N. Mockingbird was identified at Thompson L. near Harrison, ID, Jan. 3 (JWN). An Am. Pipit at Ninepipe N.W.R. Dec. 17 furnished w. Montana's 2nd December record (DH). Bohemian Waxwings were reported in moderate numbers or not at all. Their absence at Fortine was noteworthy (WW). A ♂ **Black-throated Blue Warbler**, the



*Male Black-throated Blue Warbler at Missoula, Montana, December 26, 1989. First ever for western Montana. Although the season seems odd for a stray warbler, there have been mid-winter records of this species elsewhere in the interior of the West. Photograph/Orville Daniels.*

first ever for w. Montana, was photographed Dec. 25 at a home w. of Missoula. After 2 days there it disappeared, reappearing Jan. 20-Feb. 4 (OD). A Yellow-rumped Warbler was sighted at Missoula Feb. 12 (VV).

**SPARROWS TO FINCHES** — A Rufous-sided Towhee was seen near Lewiston Dec. 2 (JP, DP). Large flocks of Am. Tree Sparrows wintered at Red Rock Lakes N.W.R., where they have not been seen for the last few winters (JB). A Lincoln's Sparrow was sighted at Mokins Bay, Hayden L., Jan. 1, and a Fox Sparrow was there the next day (PH). One of the latter species appeared at Townsend, MT, for the latilong's first winter record (LM). The species is rare in that area even in summer. A Harris' Sparrow wintered at a Culatesac, ID, feeder (C.B.) and one was seen near Lewiston Dec. 2 (JP, DP). A pair of Lapland Longspurs at the National Bison Range, Moiese, MT, apparently made a latilong first (JM). Numerous large flocks of Snow Buntings spent the winter at Red Rocks Lakes, and the species was sighted in December at Fortine and n. Yellowstone N.P. for the only other reports.

A Com. Grackle at a Missoula feeder Mar. 1 made w. Montana's first winter record (PLW). Flocks of 50 to 300 Rosy Finches visited feeders all winter in the Helena Valley area at slightly higher elevations (GH). Some 200 of these birds wintered in the Gardiner area (TM). Pine Grosbeaks were noted at Red Rock Lakes, Missoula, and several localities in n. Idaho. Five pairs of Red Crossbills were at Lakeview, Red Rock Lakes, Feb. 2. Numerous large flocks of Com. Redpolls stayed all winter there. North Yellowstone N.P. also had an invasion, with flocks of 150-200, and flocks up to 100 were seen periodically in the Helena area. A flock of about 60 was seen s. of Pocatello Dec. 2 and a few were noted near Sandpoint, ID (JW). They were common in the Missoula area and many were reported for the Flathead Valley, MT. At Fortine they were not noted after November. A large flock of Pine Siskins wintered at Red Rock Lakes and this species visited Lewiston feeders during late winter. Evening Grosbeaks were scantily reported.

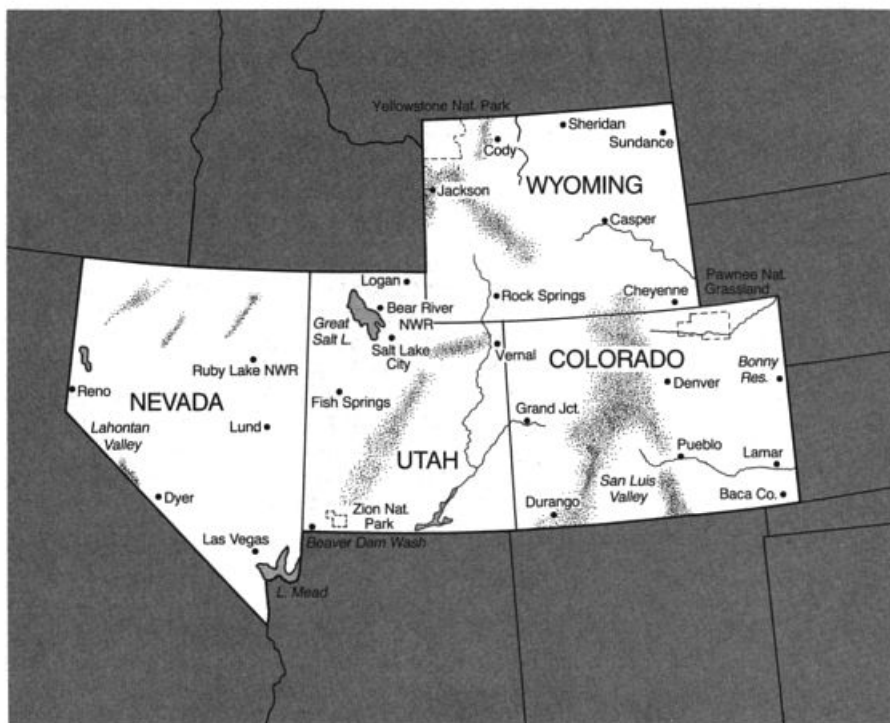
**ADDENDA** — A Surf Scoter appeared on Hayden L. Sept. 16 (PH). The two N. Mockingbirds that summered at the s. end of Flathead L., MT, remained until at least Aug. 15. One was there in the summers of 1986 and 1987 but not in 1988 (MT).

**OBSERVERS CITED** (Subregional editors in boldface) — Janissa Balcomb, Lee Ballard, Canyon Birders, Mel Branch, Orville Daniels, Mike DeLate, Charlene Gaiser, Denver Holt, **George Holton**, Peg Hughes, Joe Jeppson, **Dean Jones**, Will Kerling, **Merlene Koliner**, Al Larson, John Malcolm, Lawrence McEvoy, Terry McEneaney, Larry D. Napier, Sharon Nicholls, John W. Nigh, Mary Nell Oechsner, Jeff & Deanna Palmer, Palouse Audubon Society, Leon Powers, Sandy Schultz, Charles Schwartz, **Shirley H. Sturts**, Dan Sullivan, **Marjorie Swanson**, Bessie & Bill Teague, Maureen Theiler, Terry & Carole Toppins, **Charles H. Trost**, Carole Vande Voorde, Virginia Vincent, Cheryl Webb, Crain Weiford (CWe), Susan Weller, Winton Weydemeyer, Duane Wilson, **Philip L. Wright**.—**THOMAS H. ROGERS**, E. 10820 Maxwell, Spokane, WA 99206.



# MOUNTAIN WEST REGION

Hugh E. Kingery



A rather lackluster winter makes this account shorter than usual, although Christmas Counts found two new state species—Eastern Bluebird at Moab, Utah, and *Pyrrhuloxia* at Holly, Colorado.

Poor food crops, resulting from dry spring and summer weather, had more impact on Mountain West birds than mild winter weather. During the winter the whole Region experienced warm temperatures and little precipitation (except in northern Wyoming). Southern Colorado's mountains, with 45% of normal winter snowfall, were suffering severely from a prolonged drought. Of course, the weather rarely produces a consistent pattern: Denver's temperature averaged, in December, 27.3 degrees (5.3 degrees below normal), and in January, 36.4 degrees—6.9 degrees above normal.

Food and weather patterns affect different groups of birds differently. Open water owing to the mild temperatures permitted waterfowl to remain, and some shorebirds wintered in Utah. Presumably, available food changes little whether the water freezes or remains open. In contrast, a prairie dog die-off meant Ferruginous Hawks abandoned the Rocky Mountain Arsenal, which last year had a staggering concentration (200 in 27 square miles); Rough-legged Hawks replaced them, perhaps because they use a different prey base and because they did not have to compete for space with the larger hawks. Food availability (or its lack) apparently affected the landbirds more conspicuously. Some mountain birds, especially some conifer feeders like Steller's Jays, Mountain Chickadees, and Cassin's Finches, dropped into the valley towns and plains cities. Crossbills largely disappeared. Fruit-eaters like waxwings, robins and solitaires appeared irregularly through the Region. In contrast, southern Utah and southern Colorado had large numbers of sparrows, and several unusual sparrows wintered in Grand Junction, Colorado.

**ABBREVIATIONS**—L/L/B/L = Longmont/Lyons/Berthoud/Loveland area, CO, using Foothills Audubon Club records; *1st Lat* = First latilong record (a latilong is

outlined by one degree each of latitude and longitude, and measures about 50 by 70 miles; † = Written description of file with Regional Editor; †† = Written description on file with, and subject to approval of, state or local records committee.

**LOONS TO WATERFOWL**—A **Yellow-billed Loon** stopped Dec. 9–14 at Chatfield Res. near Denver (††JK *et al.*). December 1–Jan. 7 saw a handful of observations of Pied-billed, Eared, Western, and Clark's grebes in Colorado and Wyoming. In Boulder, CO, two to three Double-crested Cormorants wintered at a power plant pond. Las Vegas posted its first winter Least Bittern, seen Dec. 9–10 at Corn Creek (J & MC *et al.*). As has become standard since 1983, a Great Egret wintered at Fish Springs N.W.R., UT. Not standard, a White-faced Ibis stayed there until Jan. 18 (another had remained to Dec. 20—JE).

Counts in n.e. Colorado dropped from 82,300 ducks and 119,291 geese on Dec. 12 to 76,503 ducks and 76,884 geese on Jan. 23—ducks up 31–40% over last winter and geese up 12–32%, probably owing to more open water (C.D.O.W.). At Fish Springs, 60–65 Tundra Swans wintered, and 12 wintered at nearby Ruby Lake N.W.R., NV. January counts of Trumpeter Swans were of 238 at Jackson, WY, 228 at Yellowstone, 20 at Ruby L., and seven at Fish Springs. Snow Geese began appearing in late February, with 8100 reported in the Arkansas Valley, CO, Feb. 20–24. Small numbers wintered at Rocky Ford, CO (380 Jan. 3) and Grand Jct., CO (24—G.V.A.S.). Two Ross' Geese wintered at St. George, UT (SH), and one at Salt Lake City (JV *et al.*). At Denver, D.F.O. field trips counted only 6092 Canada Geese, the lowest in a 5-year range of 6187–12,366.

Migrating ducks began arriving in February. On Feb. 13 Bunn encountered heavy fog on the high point of the highway between Denver and Colorado Springs a half hour before sunrise; "I saw a flock of Redheads land on the [6 lane] highway in the middle of traffic. I don't know how many were killed, but on the way back that evening I

found six dead Redheads and one dead Mallard." Where the C7 Canal enters the Great Salt Lake, apparently rich in nutrients, Utahans found among 20,000 N. Shovelers several less common ducks Jan. 14–Feb. 11: three Greater Scaups, two Oldsquaws, two Surf Scoters, one to two Barrow's Goldeneyes, and one Hooded and two Red-breasted mergansers. Two Surf and four to eight White-winged scoters wintered at Rawhide power plant near Carr, CO, the only notable ducks there this winter (WH). One Surf and one White-winged scoter appeared at Casper Jan. 12 and Dec. 6 (J & VH, M.A.S.); three White-wingeds stopped at Sheridan Dec. 3 and one at Denver Dec. 16–18 (HD, VW). Barrow's Goldeneyes spread throughout w. Colorado, with a number of December observations plus one or two at San Luis L. near Alamosa (J & ER—1st Lat). Small flocks of Hooded Mergansers wintered at Grand Jct., Pueblo, and Denver.

**HAWKS, EAGLES**—Yellowstone nests fledged 70 young Ospreys last summer, up from 63 in 1988. On the other hand, Bald Eagles fledged only three, probably owing to poor weather.

A **Black-shouldered Kite** skirmished with a Red-tailed Hawk, then drifted away from observers at Las Vegas Feb. 22 (†MC); Nevada has about 10 records. In n.e. Colorado, C.D.O.W. counted 149 Bald Eagles Jan. 12, about normal; the 19 in s.e. Utah Jan. 11 was half the previous lowest count there (NB). The Colorado count, conducted in conjunction with waterfowl counts, did not include birds at dryland roosts like the 36 that used Rocky Mtn. Arsenal near Denver. A very white N. Goshawk, thought to belong



*This almost-white Northern Goshawk was found at Rock Springs, Wyoming, in the winter of 1989–1990. The possibility was considered that this might have been a stray from northeastern Siberia (where such white variants are relatively frequent), but it was more likely a variant from a local population. Photograph / Paul Knezovich.*

to the Siberian race (and if so the first North American record), hung around Rock Springs, WY, Dec. 15 until it died Feb. 10 from a protozoan infection, likely caught from local pigeons (†FL, ph.). In n.e. Colorado, fewer Ferruginous Hawks wintered where prairie dogs were numerous (BW). In the Denver area 30–35 wintered at Buckley Field, a similar number to last year, but a plague-induced die-off of 95% of the prairie dogs at Rocky Mtn. Arsenal caused a big drop in Ferruginous Hawks there. At the Arsenal, Rough-legged Hawks increased somewhat, pre-

sumably because they had fewer Ferruginous with which to compete. The rest of the Region sent mixed reports of Rough-leggeds—usual numbers in Nevada, few in Wyoming, down in s. Colorado, good numbers in n.e. Colorado (BW counted 216 during the period). The northward migration began in early February in n.e. Colorado with a steady and significant increase in ad. males all February (BW). The Regional total of 67 reported Merlins was high, although not so high as in 1988–1989. Last summer in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem, Peregrine Falcons fledged 22 young; three came from Yellowstone Park. Sheridan had its usual Gyrfalcon, Jan. 15–21 (RM, HD).

**SHOREBIRDS TO WOODPECKERS**—Fish Springs and the Great Salt L. held small contingents of shorebirds through the winter. At Fish Springs, Greater Yellowlegs dropped from a peak of 27 on Jan. 12 to 11 on Feb. 8, and eight Least Sandpipers wintered (JE, DG). On Feb. 6–8, a Lesser Yellowlegs stopped there. Great Salt L. reported a Black-necked Stilt Dec. 3 and an Am. Avocet Jan. 7 (TS), a Greater Yellowlegs Jan. 20 (JV), and three to 18 Least Sandpipers Jan. 7–19 (DG, TS, JV).

A Mew Gull spent Jan. 2–Feb. 8 at Pueblo (†DS, †MJ, VT *et al.*), a 1st Lat, 13th state record, and only record resem-



*Mew Gull in first-winter plumage at Pueblo, Colorado, January 22, 1990. Photograph/Dave Griffiths.*

bling a wintering bird. Another Mew Gull was seen at L. Mead, NV, Jan. 17 (†KB), the first Nevada bird in 2 years. In Denver D.F.O. counted 150 Herring Gulls Dec. 3, a substantial count. Las Vegas had one Thayer's Gull (PS, ph.), and e. Colorado reported four Dec. 2–3 and singles Feb. 4 & 23. Pueblo and Great Salt L. had the only Glaucous Gulls, Dec. 2 and Jan. 14–20 respectively.

The 78 Mourning Doves in January at 5 Colorado locations exceeded the usual winter counts. In the fall an **Inca Dove** stayed a week at a Moab, UT, feeder Oct. 28–Nov. 4 (†GL *vide* NB, 1st Lat). Twelve Short-eared Owls included six at L/L/B/L. At Wilson, WY, LJ found a dead Boreal Owl Dec. 26. In the Las Vegas area, three Anna's Hummingbirds wintered (R.R.A.S.). A Costa's Hummingbird had arrived at L. Mead on Feb. 27 (MCR).

Each year Utah reports more Lewis' Woodpeckers; Salt Lake City had several observations this winter (TS) and two wintered at Provo (DK); they have recovered from reduced numbers at Glenwood Springs, CO, as well. Yet at Sundance, WY, and Rye, CO, they were virtually absent (usually 40–50 live within a 5-mile radius of Rye—DS). An Acorn Woodpecker visited Las Vegas Jan. 12 (A & BR). The two Red-bellied Woodpeckers at Holly, CO, Dec. 18 provided at 2nd Lat (DBr). Coloradans reported five Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, in Denver, Lyons, Greeley, and

Ft. Collins, all in December. A Williamson's Sapsucker at Ft. Collins Dec. 11 was more unusual (DL).

**FLYCATCHERS TO GNATCATCHERS**—Three observers watched a Black Phoebe Feb. 3 at Salt Lake City, where it is rare any time of year (DJ, MH, TS). After a Dec. 9 snow at Denver two lingering flycatchers were seen no more: a Say's Phoebe (†AH) and a Vermilion Flycatcher (RM, m.ob.).

Steller's Jays led a parade of mountain birds to the valleys and plains, although the influx did not involve big numbers. They appeared in Salida, Eagle, Pueblo, L/L/B/L (122 vs. 40 last winter), and Ft. Collins, CO; Salem, Logan, and Salt Lake City, UT. At Ogden, UT, Killpack banded 32, twice last year, and saw 10–13/day at his feeders. Steller's outnumbered Scrub Jays at Carrizo Canyon, *Baca*, CO; Scrub Jays appeared at 3 widely-scattered metro-Denver feeders (D.A.S.). Yet in s. Utah, Steller's stayed in the mountains and normal numbers of Scrubs visited Cedar City. A poor pinyon nut crop may have explained the unusual numbers of Pinyon Jays in Salida. They also wandered to Kelly, WY, and wintered in Lyons, CO, as well as more normal locations like Eagle and Penrose, CO.

American Crows massed and flocked in several locales: 2100 at Provo Feb. 27 (NB), 225 at Moab Feb. 15, 300 wintering at Woodland Park, CO, 350/day in *Grand*, CO, and 150 coursing over 15 square miles in e. Denver. Fort Collins on Dec. 13 had 21 Com. Ravens in town (D & FH). Mountain Chickadees also descended from the mountains. L/L/B/L reported 81 this winter after only nine last year. Many Denver yards hosted them and Cheyenne had a few, but farther out on the plains at La Junta, CO, and *Baca*, those seen in the fall disappeared as winter went on. The Utah valleys did not record a noticeable influx. A Bewick's Wren in Green R. provided Wyoming's first winter record (FL). The 15 Ruby-crowned Kinglets tripled the number normally seen in a Mountain West winter. One spent the winter in Denver (†AH, *1st Winter Lat*). January records came from Story, WY (KG), Grand Jct., and Rye, CO (DS). Blue-gray Gnatcatchers apparently wintered in Grand Jct., with two seen 6 times (TT).

#### S.A.

The Region is reporting more Eastern Bluebirds, farther west, than historically. Boschen found Utah's first two **Eastern Bluebirds** on the Moab CBC; he showed them to enthusiasts Dec. 16–23, photographed them, and turned in excellent details. He felt, from the brightness of the plumage, that they belonged to the eastern subspecies rather than the more sedentary Arizona race. On the same day, Dexter found two E. Bluebirds on the Hotchkiss CBC, in almost the same place where that CBC had reported them several years ago (†CD). Colorado Atlas workers confirmed nesting last summer in 2 new Latilongs. In fall and winter they now appear regularly along the Front Range from Pueblo to Cheyenne.

**THRUSHES TO WARBLERS**—At Mesa Verde Nat'l Park 12–15 W. Bluebirds wintered, feeding on mistletoe berries. Boulder had 11 in December, one on Jan. 31. Both mountain and plains reported high numbers of Townsend's Solitaires. Janos found small numbers on nearly all his field trips in s.e. Colorado, and they increased at L/L/B/L, also on the plains. Yet they remained in above average numbers in the mountains in *Grand*, and Eagle, CO, and Cedar City, UT. Sheridan and Denver reported fewer solitaires than usual. Single Hermit

Thrushes stayed to Jan. 28 at Grand Jct. (TT, RL) and Jan. 24 at Logan, UT (KA). Ogden, UT, had two or three Varied Thrushes (MK, TS, CK), Logan may have had one, and one crashed into a Ft. Collins window (JB, DL, \*D.M.N.H.). A N. Mockingbird wintered at Ft. Collins and s.e. Utah had high numbers (12 on the St. George CBC—SH). A remarkable *three* Brown Thrashers wintered in the Colorado mountains—at Aspen (LV, *1st Winter Lat*), Evergreen, and Westcreek (CG, RWi).

American Pipits seemed more numerous than usual: Grand Jct. reported a peak of 100 on Jan. 28 (G.V.A.S.), Fish Springs had 36 in January (JE), and one to three spent January s. of Colorado Springs (RGB). Scattered and erratic flocks of Bohemian Waxwings cruised around the Region. Wyoming had only a few modest flocks of 10–50. Colorado had more: at L/L/B/L a seasonal count of 1017, most in December; at *Boulder* 564, over half in February; and at Ft. Collins flocks of 15–200. Utah had about a dozen reports, including the biggest Regional winter flock of 300 at Ogden Jan. 17 (MK). An Orange-crowned Warbler wintered in Las Vegas (VM), and an unusual number of Yellow-rumped Warblers wintered—five to 10 at Cedar City, Pueblo, La Junta, and Grand Jct. January records came from Reno, NV, and Salt Lake City. A Com. Yellowthroat lingered at Grand Jct. Dec. 4–11 (CD, TT).

**PYRRHULOXIA TO FINCHES**—Colorado's first **Pyrrhuloxia**, a female found on the Holly CBC, stayed Dec. 17–20; she was a different individual than the one found at the same time 60 mi s. at Elkhart, Kansas (†MJ *et al.*). A well-documented Chipping Sparrow wintered in Boulder (H & AW, ††PG). In *Baca* Feb. 10 were *five* Field Sparrows—an exceptional number at any time of year (SS). Grand Jct. boasted four unusual mid-winter sparrows: Vesper Sparrows apparently wintering (seen 3 times with a peak of 30—G.V.A.S.), a Lark Sparrow Jan. 25 (RL), a Lark Bunting Dec. 1–Jan. 18 (CD, TT, m.ob.), and a wintering Swamp Sparrow (m.ob.). A Fox Sparrow spent a month in Glenwood Springs Dec. 24–Jan. 27 (VZ, *1st Winter Lat*). At Pueblo Silverman estimated that perhaps 100 Swamp Sparrows and 100 White-throated Sparrows wintered, phenomenal numbers. White-throateds also wintered in Cheyenne, Logan, and Cedar City. In s. Utah record numbers of White-crowned Sparrows wintered—4 CBCs counted 7100 (SH). Harris' Sparrows really do winter all over the Region; this year reports came from w. of the mountains in Las Vegas, 4 sites in Wyoming, 5 locations in Utah, and 3 in w. Colorado. The Region reported few Lapland Longspurs, and Snow Buntings only from Jackson and Yellowstone.

The Region had a plethora of unusual wintering blackbirds. A well-described **Rusty Blackbird** at Fish Springs Jan. 7–Feb. 10 (JE, m.ob.) provided Utah's 10th record (approximately). One wintered at Colorado City (A.V.A.S.). Great-tailed Grackles spent some or all of the winter in Salt Lake City and 4 locations in w. Colorado (including one at McCoy Dec. 12–Jan. 11 for the first wintering record in that Latilong—ME). They made shorter forays into 4 sites in e. Colorado. At La Junta, 45 Com. Grackles wintered, and one to four spent the season at Ft. Collins. Brown-headed Cowbirds wintered at Fruita and Pueblo.

Warren Finch pulled a purple ribbon from his pocket and tied it to a hemlock stalk to mark the Denver site where he discovered a Purple Finch (Jan. 15–Feb. 1). Others were at Ft. Collins Dec. 31 and Evergreen Jan. 15. Mountain reporters mentioned few to no Cassin's Finches, while few finches patronized feeders in the valleys and





*Rose-breasted Grosbeak at Hygiene, Colorado, December 1989. Photograph/Virginia Dionigi.*

plains. Northern Colorado reported more than usual—L/L/B/L counted 192 over the season, compared with 53 last year. Two Cedar City feeders had flocks of 20—“good numbers”—but Killpack banded only 12 Cassin’s at Ogden. Wintering House Finches increased on the e. slope at Cheyenne and L/L/B/L, but dropped on the w. side of the mountains at Durango and Ogden (a drastic reduction: 92 banded vs. 656 a year ago—MK). Only 7 places reported Red Crossbills, and those had only a few. On the plains, they were encountered only at Ft. Collins. White-winged Crossbills spent January with some Reds in a Ft. Collins cemetery, and one wintered at Green R., WY (always with a Red-breasted Nuthatch—†FL, 1st Lat).

The Region enjoyed more Com. Redpolls than most winters, with observations as far south in e. Colorado as *Boulder* (the most ever including 94 in February—B.A.S.), and in w. Colorado to Durango (one Jan. 26—GC). From 30 to hundreds ranged over n. Wyoming, 40 wintered w. of Boulder at Ward, CO, and singles were found at Ogden Dec. 2 (banded—MK) and Logan Feb. 9 & 10 (ASt, KD). This winter did not repeat last year’s dearth of Pine Siskins; they spread from Zion and Cedar City, Cortez, Durango, and Penrose, CO, n. to Cheyenne and Casper. The 620 banded at Ogden tripled last year’s 168 (MK). Three locations reported Lesser Goldfinches: three at Salt Lake City Jan. 7, nine at Reno Jan. 21 (EK), and one in Baca Feb. 10 (SS). Good numbers of Evening Grosbeaks thronged Regional feeders from Sheridan to Penrose and from Cedar City to Logan. Reno had eight Feb. 11 and Zion had its first in 2 years on Jan. 4 (JG).

**CORRIGENDA**—Change the date of the first observation of the Little Gull at Pueblo (AB 43(5): 1347) to July 23 by Silverman. The Acorn Woodpecker s. of Rock Springs (AB 43(5): 1347) furnished the 2nd Wyoming record, after one at Jackson in June 1975. The Great-tailed Grackles at Moab (AB 43(5): 1348) were far from a 1st Lat since Boschen

found them breeding in Moab in 1984, 1985, and 1987, and the Moab CBC reported 16 on Dec. 17, 1988. Note that documentation was received for the following records listed in the preceding issue (AB 44(1)): Brown Pelican Oct. 10 at Las Vegas (†MCR); Eur. Wigeon Nov. 21–Dec. 4 at Pahrangat N.W.R. (†VM, AMa); Yellow-throated Vireo Oct. 7–8 at Corn Creek (†MCR).

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## SOUTHWEST REGION

### ARIZONA

David Stejskal and  
Gary H. Rosenberg



Relatively mild temperatures through most of the period until mid-February kept Arizona birders and Arizona birds active, with the former finding some excellent examples of the latter. Some of the highlights from the season included an obliging Yellow-billed Loon at Lake Havasu, numbers of Ruddy Ground-Doves (especially in the Phoenix area), a reliable Blue Jay at St. David, a couple of Rufous-backed Robins, North America's first wintering Golden-winged Warbler in Madera Canyon, and a single-observer male Streak-backed Oriole.

The fishing/tourist town of Puerto Peñasco, Sonora, Mexico, a mere sixty miles from the Arizona border, produced a number of quality birds during the season, including a pair of second records for Mexico: a female Rusty Blackbird at the local sewage holding ponds and three female Harlequin Ducks at nearby Pelican Point. Arizona birders are again discovering the avian richness that this area possesses.



Yellow-billed Loon in first-winter plumage at Lake Havasu, Arizona, December 24, 1989. Second state record. Photograph/Peder Svingen.

**ABBREVIATIONS** — B.T.A. = Boyce Thompson Arboretum; L.C.R. = Lower Colorado River; M.F.L. = Many Farms Lake; S.P.R. = San Pedro River; V.O.C. = Village of Oak Creek

**LOONS TO WATERFOWL** — A Pacific Loon at Patagonia L. Dec. 2 was a real surprise, as there are only a handful of records for this species in the state away from the L.C.R. (GR *et al.*). Astounding was the discovery of a **Yellow-billed Loon** at L. Havasu Dec. 24 († & ph. P. Svingen, S. Barton *et al.*). Luckily for both Arizona and California birders, this bird remained at or near the original site through the period. It represented only the 2nd record for the state. This bird was often seen in the company of both Pacific and Common loons (also an unconfirmed report of a *Red-throated Loon* during the same time) and offered most observers excellent comparative looks. A few Horned Grebes were found at unusual locations with one at the Snyder Hill sewage ponds w. of Tucson Jan. 6 (JBo) and one to two at Fountain Hills Jan. 10–11 (SGa, TC).

Abnormally high numbers of Am. White Pelicans were reported throughout the period and included large numbers in the Yuma area (*vide* JW), five at Granite Reef Dam e of Phoenix Jan. 27 (m.ob.), two at L. Pleasant n. of Phoenix Feb. 6 (HM), at least 200 on Alamo L. Feb. 13 (TG), and 15 at Ehrenberg on the L.C.R. Feb. 20 (GM). American White Pelican is normally quite rare in winter, especially away from the L.C.R. Slightly more unusual, however, were an adult and an imm. Brown Pelican among the many Am. White Pelicans at Alamo L. Feb. 13 (*vide* TG); there are very few winter records for this species in the state.

A Double-crested Cormorant at Camp Verde on the Verde R. Dec. 18–Jan. 18 (VV), and another in Tucson Feb. 2 (GM), were at unusual winter locations. Two to three Olivaceous Cormorants were reported during the first week of December at Patagonia L., where they have proven to be quite regular non-breeding visitors (GR, CDB *et al.*). Two Am. Bitterns, always a surprise to find away from the larger marshes in the state, were found during the period with one in Nogales Dec. 3–29 (S. Edwards *et*

al.), and another at Peck's L Dec 4 (VG). A Least Bittern along the Gila R. e. of Estrella Mtn. Park Feb. 8 was in an area where it is rarely recorded in winter (TC).

Single Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks, rare in winter in the state, were reported from Tempe (SGa) and from Phoenix (R. Jones) during January, but 24 at a pond in Chandler in late February (B. Walker) and another group of ten at Tucson Feb. 24 (S. Levy) were good numbers for the winter months. Arizona rarely sees more than a few Tundra Swans at a time during the winter, so a group of 12 at Big Ortega L. in the White Mts. Dec. 26 was unexpected (GM). A single imm. Tundra Swan at M.F.L. Dec. 3 was in an area where they are seldom reported (CL). Two Greater White-fronted Geese discovered on Alamo L. Feb. 13 were noteworthy (A. McLuckie), as was a single Ross' Goose at Sun Lakes Jan. 21–Feb. 4 (PB, TG *et al.*).

Impressive, but not unprecedented in the Verde R. Valley area, was a group of 50 Wood Ducks at V.O.C. Dec. 4 (B. Bowell). One of the ♂ Eur. Wigeons reported from Black Mesa this past fall remained in the area until Dec. 5 (CL). Although still quite rare in the state, two ♂ Greater Scaup below Parker Dam on the L.C.R. Dec. 10 were not totally unexpected (SGa). A ♀ Greater at Kino Springs Dec. 27 (ph. CDB) and two more males at Avondale s.w. of Phoenix Jan. 28 (TC) were considerably more unusual. In a totally different league (but s. of the Arizona border) was the discovery Jan. 12 of two ♀-plumaged **Harlequin Ducks** in the n. Gulf of California at Pelican Pt. near the town of Puerto Peñasco, Son., Mex. (T. Wurster). By Mar. 4, there were three birds present here (SB *et al.*). This represented only the 2nd record of this species for all of Mexico, with the only other record also coming from here in March 1977. It is probably only a matter of time before this species is found somewhere along the Arizona side of the L.C.R. (the likely route taken by these birds to reach the Gulf of California).

Small numbers of Hooded Mergansers were again reported from the s. one-half of the state during the period, but noteworthy were both a female on Black Mesa through the period (CL), and a large concentration of 18 found n.w. of Phoenix at Arrowhead Ranch Feb. 18 (TC). Two hundred Com. Mergansers also at Arrowhead Ranch on the same day likewise made an extraordinary concentration at an unlikely location.

**RAPTORS TO OWLS** — Ospreys reported away from the L.C.R. and the Salt and Gila Rivers near Phoenix included two at Roosevelt L. Jan. 17 (J. & P. Peters) and a single bird at Clear Cr. near Camp Verde Feb. 28 (AG *et al.*) The only Black-shouldered Kites reported for the season were one at the Empire Cienega near Sonoita Dec. 2–Jan. 23 (J. Shiebé, JBo), and two s.w. of Phoenix from mid-December to Feb. 3 (J. Burns *et al.*). At least six different Bald Eagles (slightly more than usual) were reported from s.e. Arizona during the period, with one-half coming from the Sulphur Springs Valley and the other one-half coming from the Sonoita–Parker Canyon L. region (m.ob.). Additional sightings in n. Arizona came from M.F.L. Dec. 3–Jan. 6 (CL), Ganado L. Dec. 16 (P. Ryan), and Cornville Jan. 15 (J. Studer). A N. Goshawk in n.e. Tucson Jan. 15 was a surprise (WR). The **Red-shouldered Hawk** reported for the fall near Parker was last seen Feb. 10, and the individual at the Phoenix Zoo was present until at least mid-December (both R. Jones).

Large numbers of Sandhill Cranes continue to be reported from the s. Sulphur Springs Valley near McNeal, with 5000–10,000 present here through the period (GR, JWh, m.ob.); wintering numbers in this valley seem to be

increasing annually. A very late Black-bellied Plover was found at Topock Marsh n. of L. Havasu City Dec. 10 (SGa); this species is usually absent from the state after mid-November.

Reports of unusual gulls this winter were, unfortunately, tainted by a lack of supporting details and/or photographs: a first-year Heermann's Gull, always a surprise in the state and especially so in mid-winter, was reported from Tubac Jan. 4 (J. Murray); and possibly two different *Thayer's Gulls*, one first-year bird at Parker Dam Dec. 30 (TC) and another (?), first reported in late November, was seen again Feb. 3–18 at Bullhead City on the L.C.R. (m.ob.). There are only about a half dozen records of *Thayer's* for the state. Observers should be aware that a *lack of supporting details makes an evaluation of a record impossible for us or for anyone else at the present or in the future*. Two Herring Gulls were reported from Tempe Feb. 22 (SB).

Interesting gulls at Puerto Peñasco, Son., during a late February visit included two first-winter and one third-winter W. Gull (very rare in the Gulf of California) on the 26th, a first-winter **Glaucous Gull** (about the 4th or 5th record for Sonora) on the 25th, and a first-winter **Black-legged Kittiwake** (few Sonoran records) Feb. 25–27 (all KK, LHK). Puerto Peñasco is *the* place for Arizonans to study a large number and variety of gulls, within easy reach of both Tucson and Phoenix.

Band-tailed Pigeons appeared at lower elevations than normal this winter with three in Sabino Canyon Dec. 17 (JBo) and two in a Phoenix yard Jan. 23–Feb. 26 (RBr). A Com. Ground-Dove found dead at Camp Verde Dec. 16 was well north of that species' normal range (VV, \* to Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology). The numbers of **Ruddy Ground-Doves** in the state this winter were remarkable, with at least ten and possibly 12 reported for the period. Nine were in the Phoenix area with at least five (3♂♂ & 2♀♀) at Ft. McDowell on the Verde R. Dec. 18–Feb. 17 (†DS, m.ob.), and four in Avondale s.w. of Phoenix early January to Feb. 17 (DR, m.ob.). Another male was found s. of Parker Dec. 10 (RF, RN), and an additional unconfirmed report came from Camp Verde in mid-December. The plethora of records here and elsewhere in the Southwest calls to mind the invasion of the Inca Dove in Arizona during the late 1800s (see *The Birds of Arizona* by Phillips, Marshall, & Monson, 1964), and makes us wonder if the Ruddy Ground-Dove will likewise become established in the near future.

A Western Screech-Owl, rarely reported from n. Arizona, was found ten mi w. of Cameron on the Little Colorado R. Feb. 24 (CL). Individual Spotted Owls were found at lower than normal elevations with one at 2300' at Punkin Center near Roosevelt L. Dec. 12 (ph. HM), one in Sabino Canyon Dec. 17 through the period (m.ob.), and another in the n.w. foothills of the Santa Rita Mts. Feb. 4–5 (A. Schmiener). A major movement of N. Saw-whet Owls to the Arizona lowlands s. of the Mogollon Rim was evident this year as at least three dead or dying birds were found in the Phoenix-Scottsdale area, in addition to the individual reported in the Fall summary (*fide* TC). Another bird reported from West Sedona Feb. 4 (M. Crawford) may have been part of the same movement.

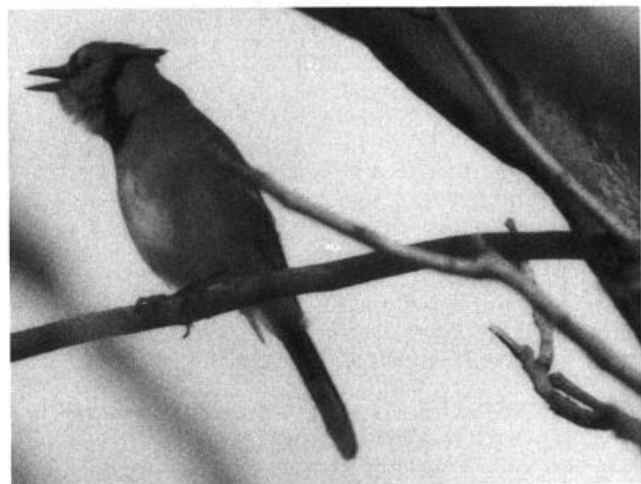
**HUMMINGBIRDS TO WOODPECKERS** — Individual Broad-billed Hummingbirds, which rarely linger in the state into the winter months, were reported from n.e. Tucson Dec. 20 (†C. Lee) and Jan. 6 (K. Nickey). Farther north, a ♀-plumaged bird was seen in a Tempe yard in mid-February (*fide* SGa). Even more unusual were two differ-

ent Violet-crowned Hummingbirds during the period: one was observed in w. Tucson Dec. 17–Feb. 16 (L. Rogers), and another was found in n.w. Tucson Jan. 12 (W. Hogg). There are only about 8 or 9 previous winter records for the state. An early Black-chinned Hummingbird was seen in West Sedona Feb. 23 (VG). Four Anna's Hummingbirds wintered in Sedona, n. of their usual Arizona range (R. Breitmaier *et al.*). A single ♂ Green Kingfisher continued to be seen along the upper S.P.R. throughout the period (DK).

As mentioned in the Fall summary, Lewis' Woodpeckers were widely reported in the lowlands across the state, and some additional records of this species for the period included one to two at St. David Dec. 26 through January (JH *et al.*), a few individuals at least through December in the Yuma area (*vide* JW), and numbers in the Parker area built up to at least ten through the period (SGa *et al.*). An Acorn Woodpecker spotted in Tempe Jan. 15 was probably part of the general movement of montane species to the lowlands across the state this fall/winter (D. Laush, R. Dummer). A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, very rare in the state and worthy of substantiating details, was reported s.w. of Phoenix Feb. 17 (DR). A Red-breasted Sapsucker was photographed near Sedona at Slide Rock S.P. Dec. 11 (ph. A. Earnshaw), providing one of the few well-documented recent records for this species in the state. Two other Red-breasteds were reported for the period: one at Sycamore Res. in the Santa Catalina Mts. Dec. 17–Jan. 16 at least (JBo *et al.*), and the other from Tucson Jan. 6 (W. Clark). A ♀ Williamson's Sapsucker, unusual in the lowlands, was found at Tucson Dec. 19 (P. Koenig), and another ♀ Williamson's wintered at B.T.A. (*vide* CT).

**FLYCATCHERS TO THRUSHES** — Two E. Phoebes were found during the period, at Kino Springs Dec. 6–10 (CDB *et al.*) and at Cook's L. on the lower S.P.R. Feb. 3 (C. Haney). Two or three E. Phoebes are found in the state each winter. A Vermilion Flycatcher at Camp Verde Feb. 28 may have been a very early returning migrant (T. Hager). Three Bank Swallows in a mixed flock of Tree, N. Rough-winged, and Cliff swallows along the Gila R. near Estrella Mtn. Park Feb. 8 probably represented early migrants rather than wintering birds (TC). A single Cliff Swallow in late January at the same location was likely an early migrant also (DR).

Very exciting was the discovery of a **Blue Jay** at St. David Dec. 15 (A. Goodman, m.ob.), representing only the



*Blue Jay at St. David, Arizona, January 1990. Fourth state record. Photograph/Gary H. Rosenberg.*

3rd or 4th record for the state. It remained in the area until at least Jan. 24, allowing most of Arizona's active birders to add it to their state lists. Clark's Nutcrackers are infrequently reported in s.e. Arizona, so one in Stump Canyon, Huachuca Mts., Dec. 6 was noteworthy (JWh). Unprecedented numbers of Am. Crows showed up in s.e. Arizona this winter, possibly part of the larger downslope movement of montane birds to lowland areas. Some 300–400 Am. Crows were found in the s. Sulphur Springs Valley n. of Elfrida Dec. 1 (DS, J. Lasley) and nearly 500 were discovered due north of there near Safford Jan. 20 (GW). Additionally, 11 were seen near Dudleyville Jan. 25 (GM) and ten were found at St. David Feb. 14–21 (JWh). The Dec. 1 flock was thought to comprise mainly young birds.

As has become the norm recently, a few Am. Dippers appeared in some of the more well-watered canyons in the mountains of s.e. Arizona with one at Cave Cr. Canyon, Chiricahua Mts., Dec. 3 (J. Paton *et al.*), one at Ramsey Canyon Dec. 6 through the end of the period (JWh *et al.*), and another at Sabino Canyon Dec. 22 (G. Clark). Two Rufous-backed Robins were reported during the period, one in early January at Ahwatukee s. of Phoenix (PB), and the other at the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum near Tucson Jan. 17 through the period (N. Hyde, m.ob.). The Varied Thrush reported for the fall at B.T.A. remained through the period (m.ob.).

**MIMIDS TO WOOD-WARBLERS** — A N. Mockingbird at M.F.L. Jan. 6 provided one of the few winter records for n. Arizona and the first for the extreme northeast (CL). Echoing last winter's invasion, at least five different N. Shrikes were observed in the Kayenta-Black Mesa area of n.e. Arizona through the period (CL), but more surprising was one found Dec. 2 at Empire Cienega e. of Sonoita (GM). Very interesting was a Bell's Vireo seen at Parker Dec. 10 (SGa); the overwhelming majority of winter records for the state (<10 overall) come from the L.C.R.

Amazingly, the **Golden-winged Warbler** found in Madera Canyon in November attempted to winter there, the last sighting being Jan. 12 (D. Flower, JBo *et al.*). This record, we believe, represents the first winter record for this species in North America. A Tennessee Warbler was found in Madera Canyon Dec. 30 while the observer searched for the Golden-winged (+JC). Across the border in Puerto Peñasco, Son., an ad. **Cape May Warbler** was found Dec. 16, providing the state of Sonora with its first record (+DS). Two Black-and-white Warblers were found in the Phoenix area this winter with one at Granite Reef Dam from mid-December through the end of the period (SGa *et al.*) and the other along the Salt R. s.w. of Phoenix Feb. 17 (BN). The Black-and-white found at Parker in November was last seen Dec. 10 (RF, RN), and the bird at B.T.A. was last seen Dec. 2 (TC, H. Fibel, CB). A ♀ Am. Redstart was seen at Patagonia Jan. 15 (R. Hosseth), two more were found s.w. of Phoenix along the Salt R. Jan. 20 into February (CB, BN), and another was in a Phoenix yard in late January (E. Mayer). *Four* Louisiana Waterthrushes were recorded for the period with one at the Southwestern Research Station in the Chiricahuas Dec. 2–3 (+DK *et al.*), one at Sycamore Res., Santa Catalina Mts., Dec. 17 (JBo), another at Madera Canyon Dec. 25–Jan. 14 (DJ *et al.*), and one more at Garden Canyon, Huachuca Mts., Feb. 3 (J. Epler). A very late MacGillivray's Warbler was last seen at B.T.A. Dec. 7 (CT). A Wilson's Warbler along the Salt R. s.w. of Phoenix Jan. 20–Feb. 3 provided one of the few recent winter records for this species in that area (CB, BN, TC). A single Painted Redstart was reported from Cave Cr. Canyon Jan. 11

through the end of the period (*fide* RM).

**BUNTINGS TO CARDUELINE FINCHES** — The six Lazuli Buntings near Sedona Feb. 21 surely must represent birds that wintered locally, providing what is probably the first winter record for the n. one-half of the state (A. Jaskulski). A record such as this, however, requires some form of documentation. A Grasshopper Sparrow at Cottonwood Jan. 27 was very unusual as there are few winter records for this species away from the grasslands of s.e. Arizona (†V.G.). No fewer than 17 Fox Sparrows were reported from across the state during the period, making this one of the better winters for this species recently (m.ob.). Only two Harris' Sparrows were found in the state this winter, one all period at V.O.C. (V. Todd) and the other at Camp Verde Dec. 10 (T. Hager). Like Fox Sparrow, Golden-crowned Sparrow put in a better than average showing during the period with at least 13 reported across the state (excluding n.e. Arizona) (m.ob.). Greater than average numbers of White-throated Sparrows were reported, mainly from the s.e. part of the state.

A ♂ Yellow-headed Blackbird in Kayenta Dec. 5 furnished by far the latest fall record of that species in n.e. Arizona (CL). A ♀ Rusty Blackbird found on the Ramsey Canyon CBC Dec. 16 remained in the area until at least Dec. 25 (DK, T. Godfrey, m.ob.). Another ♀ **Rusty Blackbird** was found near Puerto Peñasco, Son., Dec. 16, providing the first record for Sonora and the 2nd record for all of Mexico (†DS, SGa). This bird was still present Jan. 12 (T. Wurster). Two **Common Grackles** were found during the period with the first at Kayenta Dec. 15–21 (CL, R. Johnson) and the 2nd at St. David Dec. 29–Jan. 23 at least (RF, RN *et al.*). There are still only a few records for the state. Single ♀ Brown-headed Cowbirds in Kayenta Dec. 5 and Feb. 23 probably involved different birds (CL); Brown-headed Cowbirds are generally absent from n. Arizona after mid-October. A ♂ **Streak-backed Oriole** was seen briefly but well at Cook's L. on the lower S.P.R. Jan. 25 (†GM); Streak-backed Oriole has been seen in s.e. Arizona the last 3 winters in a row.

Southern Arizona records of Purple Finch this winter were few and included one Dec. 20 in Miller Canyon, Huachuca Mts. (JS), one at St. David Dec. 29 (SGa), another at Miami Gardens, Miami, Feb. 1 (J. Spencer), and one more at Bisbee Feb. 14 (JWh). Good numbers of this species were again seen in the Prescott area during the period (*fide* CT). Lowland reports of Cassin's Finches included a few at St. David Dec. 29 (JS *et al.*), one in n.e. Tucson Jan. 25 (JBo), another the same day at Seven Springs near Carefree (SD, LH), and another at B.T.A. Feb. 11 (SGa). Lawrence's Goldfinches were reported sporadically throughout s.e. Arizona, but numbers in the Cottonwood area built from two Jan. 11 to 35 by Feb. 7 (CVC).

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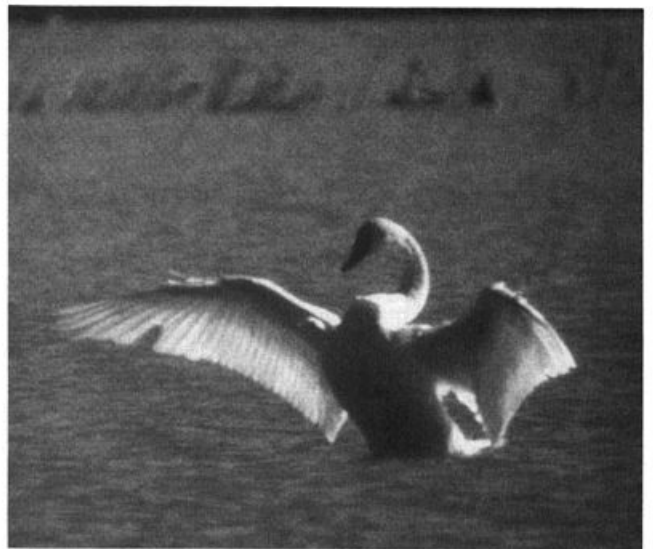
## NEW MEXICO

### Sartor O. Williams III and John P. Hubbard

**ABBREVIATIONS** — Bitter Lake = Bitter Lake Nat'l Wildlife Refuge; Bosque Refuge = Bosque del Apache Nat'l Wildlife Refuge; C.C.N.P. = Carlsbad Caverns Nat'l Park; E.B.L. = Elephant Butte Lake; L.V.N.W.R. = Las Vegas Nat'l Wildlife Refuge; T/C = Truth or Consequences; Zuni = Zuni Indian Reservation. Place names in *italics* are counties.

**LOONS TO WATERFOWL** — A probable Pacific Loon was at E.B.L. Jan. 24, while Com. Loons included two to six at E.B.L. Jan. 24–Feb. 7 (PJ *et al.*). A possible Red-necked Grebe was at L.V.N.W.R. Feb. 13 (CR); the species is unverified in New Mexico. Over 2000 Eared Grebes were at E.B.L. Jan. 24 (PJ *et al.*), while northerly were one to two at L.V.N.W.R. Jan. 13 (JH, J. Vaught) and two near Zuni Dec. 2 (DC). Western Grebes outnumbered Clark's at least 5:1 in a flock of over 4000 *Aechmophorus* at E.B.L. Jan. 24 (PJ *et al.*). Early Am. White Pelicans were five to seven on Caballo L. through February (PJ *et al.*), plus one at E.B.L. Feb. 27 (PS). Highs for cormorants at Caballo L. were 450 Double-crested Dec. 17 and 150 Jan. 21, plus 350 and 250 Olivaceous on these same dates (BZ *et al.*). Unusual were one to two Am. Bitterns in Albuquerque Dec. 16 (ph. A. Swain) and near Hobbs Dec. 25 (JS), while late was a White-faced Ibis at Bosque Refuge Dec. 7 (JB *et al.*).

An adult **Trumpeter Swan** at Bosque Refuge Dec. 27 was eventually joined there for the winter by two adult Tundras (m.ob.; ph. JS); the three left the refuge together Feb. 17 (SOW). Elsewhere, two Tundras were at Cochiti L. Feb.



*Trumpeter Swan at Bosque del Apache National Wildlife Refuge, New Mexico, December 31, 1989. Photograph/John W. Shipman.*

22 (PS) and eight at Roswell Dec. 16 (*fide* SBi). Unusual were six Greater White-fronted Geese at Albuquerque Jan. 22 (HS), while 19 were at San Antonio Jan. 13–24 (v.o.). An estimated 28,000 Snow Geese were at Bosque Refuge Dec. 30, including 661 blue-morph birds and 408 Ross' (SC *et al.*). Aerial waterfowl surveys Jan. 8–12 yielded 80,000 Canada Geese (the highest number in the state in

recent years), with 32,646 in the northwest and 38,468 in the northeast (D. MacCarter).

Wood Duck reports included up to five birds at Santa Fe, Roswell, Silver City, Percha Dam, and Las Cruces (v.o.), plus an impressive 73 at Albuquerque Dec. 16 (HS *et al.*)—some probably the result of releases by a local aviculturist. Early Cinnamon Teal were two at Rattlesnake Springs Jan. 28, increasing to seven by Feb. 10 (*fide* BB). "Mexican" Ducks included one to three at Bosque Refuge Dec. 30 (SC *et al.*), two to three at Percha Dam Feb. 22–28 (D. Miller, SOW), and others at Mangas Springs Jan. 16 and Feb. 24 (RF). Three Greater Scaup were at L.V.N.W.R. Feb. 15 (P. Snider *et al.*) and at Evans L. Dec. 21 (RF); one was at Caballo L. Dec. 17 (BZ *et al.*). Rare in New Mexico, a female **Oldsquaw** was at Bitter Lake Dec. 23–Jan. 15 (R.



*Oldsquaw at Bitter Lake National Wildlife Refuge, New Mexico, December 23, 1989. Photograph/Robert Kasuboski.*

Kasuboski *et al.*, ph.), and a male was at Caballo L. Jan. 3–31 (JB *et al.*). Noteworthy were 379 Common Goldeneyes near Loving Dec. 21 (SW *et al.*), while very unusual were three **Barrow's Goldeneyes** below Navajo Dam Feb. 10 (ph. DC). Notable Hooded Merganser concentrations were of 85 birds near Loving Dec. 21 (SW *et al.*) and 30 at Bitter Lake Dec. 24 (JS). Extremely high was a count of 315 Red-breasted Mergansers near Loving Dec. 21 (SW *et al.*), while a single bird was at Bluewater L. Dec. 28 (DC, SI).

**RAPTORS TO ROADRUNNERS** — An Osprey was at T/C Jan. 24 (PJ *et al.*). Bald Eagles wintered in the state in record numbers, including up to 62 at Maxwell N.W.R. in December (W. Mobley). Aerial surveys Jan. 15–17 yielded 512 birds (compared to a mean of 307 for 1986–1988), 113 of which were at E.B.L./Caballo L. (SOW *et al.*). Unusual were two Harris' Hawks at Albuquerque Dec. 16 (LG *fide* HS) and six near Deming in January and February (RF). Up to 18 Merlins were reported statewide during the period.

The thriving Wild Turkey population introduced at Bosque Refuge provided 30 birds that were released at La Joya State Wildlife Area Jan. 30 (*fide* SOW), while eight at Mangas Springs in December furnished a local first (RF). Noteworthy December quail numbers were 34 Montezumas in the Peloncillo Mts. (RS *et al.*), 27 Scaleds at Española (BL *et al.*), and up to 28 Scaleds at Zuni (DC). Single Common Moorhens were along the Black River and near Loving in December (SW). Only 116 Sandhill Cranes were counted in the Gila–Cliff area Dec. 30 (RF *et al.*) while notable were 100 at Estancia Jan. 17 (PJ *et al.*) and 300 Feb. 18 (SOW). Twelve ad. Whooping Cranes wintered in the middle Rio Grande Valley of New Mexico,

with one other in Chihuahua (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service).

A Greater Yellowlegs at Bosque Refuge in January–early February (v.o.) was joined by up to 12 on Feb. 17–18 (RT, SOW), while unusual were single Long-billed Curlews at Hobbs Dec. 25 (JS) and Carlsbad Jan. 9 (SW). Three to four Western Sandpipers and one to two Dunlins were at E.B.L. Jan. 14 & 24 (PS *et al.*), plus six Least at Holloman L. Jan. 11 (PJ, JS) and 30 at Hatch Jan. 17 (CS). Thirteen Long-billed Dowitchers at Bosque Refuge Jan. 4 increased to 28 by Feb. 1 and 41 Feb. 17 (RT *et al.*).

Notable were 40 Bonaparte's Gulls at E.B.L. Feb. 19 (DC), as were two **California Gulls** there Feb. 1 (JB *et al.*) and up to three at Caballo L. Dec. 17 (BZ) and Feb. 9 (PJ) Twenty Herring Gulls were at E.B.L. Feb. 7 (PJ, D



*Glaucous Gull (with Ring-billeds and Californias) at Caballo Lake, New Mexico, January 21, 1990. About the fifth state record Photograph/Barry R. Zimmer.*

Kendall), while at least 40 were at Caballo L. Jan. 21 (BZ), with one to three imm. Thayer's Gulls there Dec. 17–Feb 7 (v.o.). Unusual was a second-year **Glaucous Gull** at Caballo L. Jan. 9 until at least mid-February (R. Ketchum *et al.*, ph. BZ), for perhaps the 5th state record. Even more unusual was a 2nd-winter **Glaucous-winged Gull** there Jan. 21–24 (BZ *et al.*, ph.), plus the same or another at E.B.L. Feb. 7 (PJ); there are no previous well-documented records of the species in New Mexico.



*Glaucous-winged Gull at Caballo Lake, New Mexico, January 21, 1990. First state record. Wing pattern, tail pattern, head shape and bill shape clearly indicate this species. Photograph/Barry R Zimmer.*

White-winged Dove highs included 30 at Socorro (JS), three at Roswell (V. Hefley), 30 near Alamogordo (RJ *et al.*), and 50 near Carlsbad (SW). Inca Dove reports included up to six birds in Socorro through Jan. 4 (JS, PJ), 19 in the Alamogordo area Dec. 30 (RJ *et al.*), a vagrant at Mangas Springs Feb. 18 (ph. RF), and four at Carlsbad Dec. 2 (SW). A Common Ground-Dove at Socorro Dec. 17–Jan. 4 (JS, PJ) was a notable straggler, and even more so was an ad. male **Ruddy Ground-Dove** near Rodeo Dec. 31 and several weeks thereafter (RS *et al.*). Northerly Greater Roadrunners were two to three at Santa Fe Jan. 14–17, Zuni, and Bluewater L. (v.o.).

**OWLS TO CORVIDS** — Thirteen Barn Owls were at 2 roosts in salt-cedar thickets near Caballo L. Dec. 17 (BZ *et al.*), while 15 Barns and 15 Long-eareds were roosting near Las Cruces Dec. 20 (BZ *et al.*)—with three Long-eareds at Dripping Springs in the nearby Organ Mts. Jan. 10 (CS, EW).

#### S.A.

Previously verified only once in New Mexico, a **Whiskered Screech-Owl** was tape-recorded in Cottonwood Canyon, Peloncillo Mts., Feb. 10 (C. Black, T. Huning) and up to four were there and in adjacent Clanton Canyon Feb. 16 (LG, PJ). Although several species of birds have expanded their ranges in the Southwest in historic time, owls are not generally among this group. However, the discovery of as many as four calling birds in the Peloncillo Mts. may well represent a case of such expansion, based in part on the species' apparent absence in the area in the period 1951–1955. In those years, the pine-oak avifauna of Clanton Canyon was intensively surveyed by the noted owl expert Joe T. Marshall, Jr., who found no Whiskered Screech-Owls during 10 visits—including 8 overnight stays (Pacific Coast Avifauna 32, 1957). Subsequently, J.D. Ligon took a single in Clanton Canyon in April 1974, and D. & S. Huntington had a likely one respond to taped calls there in May 1979. These 1970s records could have been the vanguard for the 1990 occurrences, even though none was reported there in the 1980s. It will be important to monitor this area in the 1990s, to see how the population there fares. However, as a cautionary note, we urge birders to refrain from excessively playing recorded vocalizations and other actions that could prove detrimental to the Whiskered Screech-Owls in the Clanton/Cottonwood canyons area.

A Short-eared Owl was at Zuni in December (JT, DC), while an injured N. Saw-whet Owl at Randal's Pool Dec. 22 (ph. BZ) may have been the first verified for *Doña Ana*. White-throated Swift reports included 65 birds at C.C.N.P. Jan. 1 (*fide* BB), four in the Organ Mts. Jan. 10 (CS, EW), two in the Peloncillo Mts. Feb. 16 (PJ, LG), and up to 25 in n.w. *Grant* Feb. 23–24 (SOW). The ♂ **Rufous Hummingbird** in Socorro remained there until Dec. 10 (PJ); another, plus a ♂ Anna's, were at a Las Cruces feeder throughout the period (ph. BZ). A ♀ *Selasphorus* (believed to be a Broad-tailed) was at C.C.N.P. Dec. 5 (BB). An ad. ♂ probable Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was in Santa Fe Jan. 19–28 (SB, LH) and another at C.C.N.P. Dec. 16 (*fide* SW). A Three-toed Woodpecker was in the Zuni Mts. Dec. 28 (DC, SI).

Late were one to two Vermilion Flycatchers at Bosque Refuge in December and January (v.o.). Also late was a Tree Swallow at Cochiti Dam Jan. 6 (PS), while early were nine at Percha Dam Feb. 15 (SOW) and up to 20 at Bosque Refuge Feb. 19 (DC). At C.C.N.P., the first Cave Swallows

arrived Feb. 9, increasing to 225 by Feb. 25 (SW). Jays from last autumn's dispersal included scattered Steller's in Santa Fe and Albuquerque, plus December counts of over 30 at Roswell, 30 in the Gila Valley, four in the Rodeo area, 45 at Percha Dam, and 259 at Rattlesnake Springs (v.o.). Westerly Blue Jays included one to three in December in Los Alamos, Española, and Santa Fe (v.o.), El Rito through February (DS), Albuquerque into February (BO), Socorro into January (JS, PJ), and Mesilla Dec. 20 (ph. BZ); also, four wintered in Clayton (WC), and up to 48 were in Roswell in December (*fide* SBI). December counts of Scrub Jays included 47 in Albuquerque, 10 at Bosque Refuge, 11 in the Roswell area, over 40 in Las Cruces (BZ), and 22 at C.C.N.P. (v.o.). An easterly Gray-breasted Jay was at Percha Dam Jan. 13 (LG). Southerly Pinyon Jays included December counts of 95 in the Gila Valley, 25 around Silver City (v.o.), and two at C.C.N.P. (v.o.).

Unusual was a Black-billed Magpie in the Sandia Mts. in December (T. Bulow), plus an even more remarkable one (natural occurrence?) s. of Las Cruces Feb. 4–6 (ph. BZ). Wintering Am. Crows in the Rio Grande Valley included 426 at Española Dec. 30 (BL *et al.*), several thousand at Bosque Refuge December to February (v.o.), and "huge flocks" at Percha Dam—where the species is usually scarce (BZ); moderate numbers were also in the Gila Valley (RF), but the species was rare in the Glenwood area in December (JH). Chihuahuan Ravens were common near Hobbs Dec. 25 (JS), while notable were two at Plesanton Dec. 31 (JH) and one at Socorro Jan. 22 (JS).

**CHICKADEES TO THRUSHES** — A lowland influx of Mt. Chickadees included up to 11 birds at Bosque Refuge all season (v.o.), "large numbers" in the lowlands of *Doña Ana*—including five at Mesilla Dec. 20 (BZ), 13 at Rattlesnake Springs Feb. 7 (*fide* BB), and five near Loving Dec. 21 (SW *et al.*); easterly was one at Clayton in December (WC). Unusual were one to two Verdins at Sevilleta N.W.R. (JS, PJ), Bosque Refuge (SC *et al.*) and at Mangas Springs (RF) in December. Lowland Bushtits included 10 at Socorro Jan. 2 (PJ), while unusual were 22 Red-breasted Nuthatches near Las Cruces Dec. 20 (BZ, GL). Two House Wrens were near Española in late December (G. Lonewolf *fide* BL), while the only Winter Wren was in Frijoles Canyon, Bandelier Nat'l Mon., Dec. 24 (PS). One or two Sedge Wrens were reported at Bosque Refuge in January and February (PJ *et al.*) and another near Rattlesnake Springs Feb. 7–8 (JB, BO). Dispersing Am. Dippers included singles at Villanueva Feb. 11 (SOW), Bluewater L. Dec. 30 (DC *et al.*), Albuquerque Dec. 16 (B. Halstead), and Waterfall Canyon, Sandia Mts., Feb. 26 (HS).

Westerly E. Bluebirds were one-four at Santa Fe (*fide* PI), Galisteo (PI, LH), the Socorro area (JS *et al.*), and Percha Dam (ph. BZ); most unusual were 13 in the Peloncillo Mts. Dec. 28 (RS *et al.*), while a very high count was of 101 at C.C.N.P. Dec. 16 (SW *et al.*). Other bluebirds were widespread and locally numerous, including December counts of 695 Westerns at Silver City, 193 in the Peloncillo Mts., and 25 in the Organ Mts. (v.o.), plus 30 at Percha Dam Jan. 11 (PJ, JS). Mountain Bluebirds were numerous in the northwest, south-central, and southeast—with December highs of 1661 at Sevilleta N.W.R. (TS *et al.*) and 511 at C.C.N.P. (SW *et al.*). December highs for Townsend's Solitaires were of 135 at Zuni (JT *et al.*) and 151 at Sevilleta N.W.R. (TS *et al.*), while easterly were four at Roswell (SBI *et al.*). *Twenty-three* Hermit Thrushes at Albuquerque Dec. 16 (HS *et al.*) made a very high count. American Robins were numerous in the Rio Grande Valley from Española southward and in the southeast (v.o.), with

1095 at C.C.N.P. Dec. 16 (SW *et al.*). One or two **Rufous-backed Robins** were s. of San Antonio Dec. 9–21 (C. Hundertmark *et al.*, ph. JB, JS), providing New Mexico's 2nd verified and 3rd overall record—all in the Rio Grande Valley (Socorro-Percha Dam). A ♂ **Varied Thrush** was in Santa Fe from Dec. 12 through mid-February (SB *et al.*, ph. JS).

**MIMIDS TO CARDUELINES** — Northerly for December were one to two N. Mockingbirds at Española and Zuni, plus single Sage Thrashers at Española, Santa Fe, and Zuni (v.o.); another Sage was at Zuni Feb. 11 (DC), while the high was 338 at C.C.N.P. Dec. 16 (SW *et al.*). Unusual were four Curve-billed Thrashers at Albuquerque Dec. 16 (*fide* HS) and a possible two at Santa Fe Dec. 17 (PI *et al.*). Westerly Brown Thrashers were singles at Bosquecito, Socorro, Jan. 13 (PJ, JS) and Percha Dam Dec. 17 (BZ). Noteworthy was a Bendire's Thrasher singing s. of Deming Feb. 11 (RF). The high for Am. Pipits was of 483 at Bosque Refuge Dec. 30 (SC *et al.*), while a **Bohemian Waxwing** at El Rito Jan. 19–Feb. 22 (DS) furnished the only report. Eight N. Shrikes were reported, including three n. of Tres Piedras Feb. 4 (PI, CR). Notable was a **Solitary Vireo** of the *plumbeus* race at Mesilla Park Dec. 20 (BZ, GL) and another of undetermined race at Las Cruces Dec. 21–31 (CS).

Also notable were three Orange-crowned Warblers at Mesilla Park Dec. 20 (BZ, GL), plus another at Percha Dam Jan. 13 (LG) and Feb. 13–15 (SOW). A **Chestnut-sided Warbler** at Las Cruces Dec. 21–31 (CS) provided the state's first winter report. Also unusual was a Northern Waterthrush at Percha Dam Jan. 13 (LG), which would be perhaps the 4th winter report for New Mexico. High was a count of 30 N. Cardinals in the Gila Valley Dec. 30 (RF *et al.*), while notable were singles in December in the Peloncillo Mts., Rattlesnake Springs, and near Loving (v.o.). High counts for Pyrrhuloxias in December were of 14 near Rodeo (RS *et al.*) and 53 at C.C.N.P. (SW *et al.*).

Southerly were two to three Am. Tree Sparrows at Albuquerque (*fide* HS) and Bosque Refuge in December, plus a high of 12 at Roswell (v.o.). Noteworthy were three Cassin's, one Lark, and 14 Grasshopper sparrows in the Peloncillo Mts. Dec. 28 (RS *et al.*), as were two possible Clay-colored Sparrows at Columbus Jan. 27–28 (BO), a **Field Sparrow** at Percha Dam Dec. 17 (BZ), and a Black-chinned at Mangas Springs Jan. 15–17 (RF). Sage Sparrows counts included 133 birds at Sevilleta N.W.R. Dec. 16 (TS *et al.*), plus a northerly bird at Zuni Dec. 16 (*fide* JT). Lark Bunting reports included over 12,000 birds at Columbus Jan. 27–28 (BO) and 900 near C.C.N.P. Dec. 16 (SW). A grayish Fox Sparrow (cf. *schistacea*) at El Rito Jan. 19 was joined by a reddish one Feb. 28 (DS); other gray birds were one to two at Glenwood Dec. 31 (JH),

Mangas Springs in January (RF), Silver City Dec. 16 (DZ), and Tularosa Jan. 22 (CS). December numbers of Chipping, Brewer's, Savannah, and Lincoln's sparrows were up at Caballo L. and Las Cruces (BZ). Up to five Swamp Sparrows were reported from 6 localities in the south, while northerly were one to two birds near Zuni (DC). Unusual were two black-lored White-crowned Sparrows (cf. *orianta*) that wintered at Mangas Springs (RF). Single Harris' Sparrows were present in the period at Española (BL *et al.*), Albuquerque (LG), near San Antonio (PJ), Mangas Springs (ph. RF), Columbus (SB), and Las Cruces (ph. BZ).

Up to six Lapland Longspurs and three Chestnut-collareds were among about 150 McCown's near Moriarty in late December to late January (v.o.). Chestnut-collareds were more numerous in the south, plus northerly reports of four at Zuni December to February (JT, DC), five at Datil Jan. 4 (PJ, P. Basham), and over 50 at Bosque Refuge Jan. 8 (PJ); others included December counts of two at Silver City (DZ), 410 near Loving (SW *et al.*), and 200 near Hobbs (JS). Noteworthy were ten Yellow-headed Blackbirds at Zuni through the period (DC); counts at Bosque Refuge were of 33 on Dec. 30, 10 Jan. 8, and six Feb. 1 (SC *et al.*). A ♂ Com. Grackle was at Zuni Dec. 29 (DC), and up to 10 birds were in Socorro December to January (JS, PJ). An ad ♂ **Scott's Oriole** was at Columbus Dec. 29 through at least Feb. 22 (SB *et al.*, ph. JB), with another in n.w. Grant Feb. 24 (SOW).

Among the few Rosy Finches was a count of 150 "Brown-capped" at Vallecitos, *Rio Arriba*, Feb. 19 (DS). A male probable **Purple Finch** was at Silver City Dec. 8–16 (N. & J. Strickling). Lowland Cassin's Finches were present in low to moderate numbers, south to the Gila Valley, Silver City, Caballo L., and Organ Mts. (v.o.); two at Roswell Dec. 15 (K. Herman) were new for that CBC. Lawrence's Goldfinch, irregular in New Mexico, included six at Columbus Dec. 29 (SB) and one at Dripping Springs, Organ Mts., Dec. 8 (CS). Evening Grosbeaks were widespread in moderate to high numbers in submontane areas, including Santa Fe, Española, Gallup, Zuni, and Bluewater L., plus highs of 255 at Albuquerque, 148 at Sevilleta N.W.R., over 20 in Socorro, 30 in Roswell, 25 in Silver City, 25 near Alamogordo, and 11 at C.C.N.P. (v.o.)

**INITIALED OBSERVERS** — Sy Baldwin, Sherry Bixler (SBI), James Black, Bill Bourbon, David Cleary, Wes Cook, Steve Cox, Ralph Fisher, Larry Gorbet, Lois Herrmann, John Hubbard, Stephen Ingraham, Pat Insley, Robert Jenness, Philip Johnson, Greg Lasley, Burton Lewis, Bruce Ostyn, Christopher Rustay, Catherine Sandell, Robert Scholes, Hart Schwarz, John Shipman, Dale Stahlecker, Ted Stans, Paul Steel, Ross Teuber, John Trochet, Steve West, S.O. Williams III (SOW), Eleanor Wootten, Barry Zimmer, Dale Zimmerman.—**SARTOR O. WILLIAMS III and JOHN P. HUBBARD, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, Santa Fe, NM 87503.**







Resurrection Bay at Seward this winter was an imm. ♂ Common Eider (2nd local record) and six King Eiders Dec. 3–Feb. 3 (RLS). Both of these species are difficult to find away from their very local traditional winter sites in s.c. Alaska. The Steller's Eider winter peak was a miserable 4343 Jan. 10 (CPD) in the Izembek Lagoon area, but biologists felt that winter dispersal this year was greater than normal.

**EAGLES TO COOTS** — Low numbers of late-spawning Chum Salmon in the Chilkat R. near Haines produced a very low and early winter peak count of scavenging Bald Eagles there. Where normally 3000+ eagles can be counted in December, this season's peak, which reached only 1228 Nov. 21, dwindled quickly to fewer than 10 birds by Dec. 16 (MJ, RFo). Of the 62 Bald Eagles radio-tagged in summer 1989 in Prince William Sound after the *Exxon Valdez* oil spill, by late February, ten were unaccounted for, five were dead, three were located near Homer (320 km west), and one had moved 650 km east to the Chilkat R. by November (MJ, TB). The remaining birds either stayed on nesting territories or were scattered along the Prince William Sound coast. Bald Eagle numbers were slightly above average and encountered regularly inland in Upper Cook Inlet this winter, no doubt attracted to the late-winter die-off of starving moose.

There are only sporadic winter reports of N. Harrier in the Region from the Pacific Coast, so one at Kodiak Dec. 22 (RAM) and one and two at Adak I. Dec. 24 and Jan. 6 (GVB, LL) were noteworthy, especially given the year's snow accumulations. Single **Rough-legged Hawks** provided 2nd local winter records for *Upper Cook Inlet* (e. Anchorage Feb. 23, RLS) and Kodiak I. (Dec. 31–Feb. 19, RAM, DWM, TR). There are very few winter records for the Region. Merlins were noted at the n. limit of the species' winter range. Singles were near Soldotna Jan. 8 (MAM) and at Hope on Turnagain Arm all season (WT) and two lingered to at least Dec. 16 in Anchorage (*vide* DFD). Another Merlin at Adak Dec. 11–Feb. 9 (LL, GVB, JPF, RV) furnished one of very few Aleutian winter records. The only Am. Coot winter report after December was of a single at Sitka through the period (MW).

**SHOREBIRDS TO OWLS** — A very tardy Ruddy Turnstone was present with other shorebirds in Glacier Bay N.M. Dec. 16 (BBP). It appears that Rock Sandpipers attempted to winter in *Upper Cook Inlet*. Flocks of 125 Dec. 10 and 200+ Feb. 20 (MRD, BA) were noted on tidally-scoured gravel beaches on the west side of the inlet between the mouths of the Beluga and Susitna Rivers. The closest known winter concentrations of Rock Sandpiper are in Kachemak Bay, some 190 km south in lower Cook Inlet. The season's peak Dunlin count was of an exceptionally high 631 along Petersburg's Wrangell Narrows Jan. 31 (PJW). Late Bonaparte's Gulls were found at Petersburg Dec. 16 (PJW) and at Homer Dec. 17 (DE). Two different Slaty-backed Gulls, a 2nd-winter bird Feb. 13 and one in first-winter plumage Feb. 19 (RAM), appeared briefly in the gull concentrations at Kodiak's seafood canneries. There are very few Alaska midwinter records. A single Least Auklet, the Kodiak Archipelago's rarest winter alcid, was in Kiliuda Bay, Kodiak I., Jan. 25 (JBA). Northern Pygmy-Owl reports were confined to Mitkof I., where there were 8 sightings of at least four individuals Dec. 3–Feb. 28 (PJW).

**WOODPECKERS TO KINGLETS** — Two Red-breasted Sapsuckers near Craig Dec. 16 (MD), and two

Feb 2 and a single Feb 10 on Mitkof I (PJW), were about average for this rare winter visitor in s.e. Alaska. Most unusual were the two Red-breasted Sapsuckers that were located near *Kodiak* Feb. 4–6 (RAM, JBA, TR, MW, CJ). There are 4 previous Kodiak winter records of this form, a casual fall wanderer beyond its s.e. Alaska breeding range to the North Gulf of Alaska coast. Northern Flicker was well represented in the southern portion of the Region, where it may well be annual and rare in winter. The *Anchorage* bird (Yellow-shafted type) reported from November (see Autumn) remained at a feeding station through February (TGT) where it provided a 2nd winter record. It apparently "learned" to eat sunflower seeds. Another lingered at Homer to at least Dec. 17 (DE) while Red-shafted types were at Sitka, one all season (MW), and Mitkof I., three all season (PJW). A hybrid flicker was at Petersburg Feb. 17–24 (PJW).

Black-billed Magpies were reported from the fringes of the species' range at Fairbanks, where *five* were unusual Dec. 16 (BEL), at Bethel, where one was found Dec. 22 (BJM), and on Baranof I. on the outer coast of s.e. Alaska, where at least one wintered (MW). An interesting behavior note about Common Ravens came from Prudhoe Bay. The small resident group of 15 birds scavenge from dumpsters and waste disposal sites in well-lighted areas for most of each day's 24 hours (EB). Following the Autumn (*q.v.*) incursion into s.e. Alaska, up to five (max. was three Dec. 16) **Mountain Chickadees** spent December and January in the Juneau area (MEI, m.ob.), the highest number ever for the Region. The four Boreal Chickadees that overwintered at Juneau feeders (MEI, m.ob.) provided s.e. Alaska's best showing ever of this White Spruce–Birch forest form. Another Boreal Chickadee that ventured to the coastal Sitka Spruce forest near Cordova in early December (*vide* MEI) provided about the 3rd winter record for that locale in e. Prince William Sound. MacIntosh assessed this winter's Winter Wren population on Kodiak I. as showing a very slight, if any, increase after the extended freeze of winter 1988–1989 (RAM). The s.c. Alaska winter populations of Golden-crowned Kinglets were quite low throughout (DFD, RLS, *vide* MEI), as they still recoil from the previous winter's Omega Block freeze. At Kodiak, where an average winter daily count is normally 180+ birds, only four were seen all season, despite considerable observer attention (RAM).

**THRUSHES TO ICTERINES** — American Robins were only sporadically reported and there were no concentrations anywhere within their normal s.e. to s.c. Alaska winter range. Surprising then were the six Am Robins that appeared in Anchorage Feb. 25–March 1 (KF, MRD). Bohemian Waxwing December concentrations in s.c. Alaska were about average but, at least in Upper Cook Inlet, these numbers decreased only slightly by late January when normally the species becomes casual until spring. Around the fruit-laden Mtn. Ash trees in residential Anchorage, there was an attendant flock of 500+ birds (TGT) all season. Smaller flocks were present elsewhere in Upper Cook Inlet all winter. A first for *Kodiak* and the only ones reported for the season, were up to three **Cedar Waxwings** in the downtown area Dec. 4–Dec. 11 (PS, +RAM, WED). There are only 2 other Cedar Waxwing records (both in Fall) from the n. Gulf of Alaska coast w. of the species' breeding areas of mainland s.e. Alaska. Extralimital Eur. Starling reports came only from Homer where one was found on the Christmas Count Dec. 17 (DE). The Palmer area's starling stronghold population reached an average 151 birds this season Dec. 17 (LF)

Delinquent Orange-crowned Warblers were reported Dec. 16 from both Petersburg (WHP) and Haines (RFo, no details). The Region's previous latest record was from late November. A **Yellow-rumped Warbler** made a brief feeder visit during sub-zero weather in Juneau Jan. 23 (MEI) for one of very few post-December records for the Region. Of the commoner semi-hardy sparrow species that attempt to overwinter in coastal communities only Fox Sparrow and Dark-eyed Junco seemed widespread and in above average numbers. Up to nine Fox Sparrows were found in the vicinity of Kodiak Dec. 30 (RAM), one of which appeared to be of the Interior form *zaboria* (RAM, ph.). Singles were found in 4 other towns from Seward s. to Prince of Wales I. Four records of single Lincoln's Sparrows were slightly above average, at Homer December Feb. 22 (GCN), at Seward Dec. 9-30 (DWS, RLS), at Juneau Dec. 16 (MEI), and at Kodiak Dec. 29 (RAM). The Petersburg **Swamp Sparrow** (see Autumn) disappeared after Dec. 1 (PJW). The mild Fall and warmish December temperatures allowed high numbers of Dark-eyed Juncos to linger. Most s.c. CBCs had well above average junco counts, notably at Kodiak where the 49 found Dec. 30 (WED, m.ob.) was nearly three times the December average. At least two Dark-eyed Juncos wintered at a Fairbanks feeder (DDG). Only one Harris' Sparrow spent the winter at Juneau, the only location in the Region where the species has been annual in winter (since 1964, RBH). Two Red-winged Blackbirds survived the winter at a *Palmer* feeder to at least Feb. 11 (MJ, MTB). There are no other midwinter reports of this icterine north of Juneau, where this season up to three remained the winter (MEI). Rusty Blackbirds made a good winter showing, at least in s.c. Alaska, where they are irregular at that season. Up to eight overwintered near freshwater seeps at Portage (*vide* TGT), and a group of 20 at Seward Dec. 9 (DWS) dwindled to about eight by Feb. 2 (RLS). Far more unusual was the Rusty Blackbird that lingered to Dec. 27 near the Noatak R. mouth north of the Arctic Circle (WRU). This constitutes the northernmost winter record for the Region.

**FINCHES** — This winter's Brambling sighting came from Kodiak, where one that appeared at a feeder Feb. 21 (JBA, RAM, ph.) was the 3rd for the Kodiak Archipelago.

A single Brambling was at the same feeder in December 1988. Alaska's resident finches showed few trends that were widespread or interconnected. Pine Grosbeaks were ubiquitous throughout Upper Cook Inlet early in the season but they were dispersed by mid-January. The only other comment on Pine Grosbeaks came from the w. Interior where their numbers were also above average (TOO) at least through December. Still considered casual and irregular fall to spring in s.e. and s.c. Alaska, a female **Purple Finch** turned up at a Petersburg feeder Dec. 13 and remained through the period (PJW). Red Crossbills were unreported except for two at Seward Dec. 30 (JS) and a few at Kodiak all season (RAM). White-winged Crossbills were mostly common throughout the Region in December. Noteworthy was a group of 40 near Bethel Dec. 22 (BJM) at the w. limit of the species' range. Post-December numbers dwindled everywhere, however, and the species was mostly difficult to find by late winter. It was a Common Redpoll year from the Alaska Range into s.e. Alaska, especially after early January when most mainland stations reported an influx of above average numbers. Pine Siskins showed a similar pattern of increase through the season and they were most abundant from the Kenai Peninsula to Upper Cook Inlet. The Anchorage high count of 873 Dec. 16 (m.ob.) set a new local record and a single feeding station estimate of 565 at Homer in late February was exceptional (GCW). The lone Pine Siskin at *Adak I.* Dec. 10-Feb. 1 was easily 900 km s.w. of the species' normal forest habitat. This was the Central Aleutians' first Pine Siskin.

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*Brambling at Kodiak, Alaska, February 21, 1990. Photograph/ Richard MacIntosh.*



# BRITISH COLUMBIA AND YUKON REGION

Chris Siddle

December was one of the mildest on record, dry in the south, with record rainfalls in many northern areas. In the northeast, Fort St. John, for instance, recorded its first Christmas Eve with rain in 48 years of instrument record. Such warm weather kept open water courses, allowing several water loving species to linger north longer than usual. January continued the mild trend. Central and northern British Columbia experienced the first arctic outbreak during the last week of the month. February was colder than normal virtually everywhere with record snowfalls in southwestern British Columbia. Vancouver reported 46 cm of snow, most of it arriving in one day. Contrast this to Vancouver's average February snowfall, 8 cm a month!

The very mild weather during December encouraged many observers to participate in Christmas counts. For example, 200 people helped with the Victoria CBC. As a result, Victoria recorded all time high counts for Golden-crowned Kinglets, Rufous-sided Towhees, Song Sparrows, Golden-crowned Sparrows, Dark-eyed Juncos, House Finches, Pine Siskins, and House Sparrows during its CBC.

A Slaty-backed Gull, a Smew, two Tufted Ducks, and three Bramblings added Siberian spice to a season also enlivened by British Columbia's first Hooded Warbler.

I would like to thank Richard Cannings, Gary Davidson, Mike Force, Doug Kragh, and Wayne C. Weber for helping with this report.

**ABBREVIATIONS** — Q.C.I. = Queen Charlotte Islands; Van. = Vancouver; V.I. = Vancouver Island; Vic. = Victoria.

**LOONS TO HERONS** — Red-throated Loons were much more common than usual around the Queen Charlotte Islands this winter. Eight were found on the Masset count, 19 were tallied on the Skidegate CBC (compared to a previous high of three), and 98 turned up on the Rose Spit CBC (previous high of three) (*fide* PH). A high count of 400 Pacific Loons was made at Pt. Roberts, WA, Feb. 4 (WCW). Counters on the Comox CBC found 142 Common Loons Dec. 17, a near record (*fide* WH), while 99 Commons on the Vancouver CBC of Dec. 17 were an impressive total (WCW). Yellow-billed Loons were much scarcer than usual along the s.w. coast, perhaps due to the Valdez spill. For the first time in over a decade none was found around Van. V.I. had only one, at Roysten Dec. 4 (DI). However, the Queen Charlottes were a different story with a new high of four tallied on the Masset CBC Dec. 17 and two, new to the Skidegate, Q.C.I., Christmas Count Dec. 16 (*fide* PH). One was seen at Vernon Jan. 12 (PR).

Two Clark's Grebes were reported without details on the Sooke CBC Dec. 30 (*fide* MSh). A Laysan Albatross was seen 42 km s.w. of Nootka I. Feb. 3 (KM). This winter only one Short-tailed Shearwater could be found, on the Masset CBC Dec. 17 (*fide* PH).

A Great Blue Heron was seen on the Prince George CBC near the Nechako R. in the downtown area Dec. 30 (DR, CAn). This was the 2nd winter in a row that this species



MAP ILLUSTRATION/KENN KAUFMAN

has lingered into the season. Green-backed Herons are casual or very rare in s.w. British Columbia during winter. An immature, present all fall, continued to frequent Brydon Lagoon, Langley, Dec. 3–Feb. 8 (+DT, +WCW, v.o.) while one was discovered Dec. 17 on the Vancouver CBC (CH). After a sizeable fall influx of Cattle Egrets, only one was reported for British Columbia this winter, at Roberts Creek, Sunshine Coast, Dec. 21 (LH).

**WATERFOWL** — Trumpeter Swan populations continue to grow. Ladner had 282 on Dec. 23 (*fide* JG) while a Trumpeter Swan count on Feb. 11 set a new high total of 136 in the Victoria area (DSt). The count at Comox turned up 1166 adults and 214 immatures Jan. 28 (Comox-Strathcona Natural History Society). In northern British Columbia, small numbers of Trumpeters were reported from the Bulkley River between Telkwa and Smithers (DS) in early December, on Lakelse Lake Feb. 1, 18, & 27 (DS), at Walcott Feb. 27 (DS), and at the mouth of the Nilkitkwa Lake near Fort Babine all winter (ML). Sixty-five Trumpeters were at the traditional Crooked River wintering spot 80 km north of Prince George Dec. 27 (LL, JBy).

As usual Greater White-fronted Geese were rare winterers in British Columbia with one on the Pitt Meadows CBC Dec. 31 (WR), nine on the Victoria CBC Dec. 16 (MMc), four at Reifel I. Dec. 9–Feb. 28 (JI, m.ob.), one at Burnaby Jan. 7 (SZ), and one at Stanley Park Jan. 12 (WCW). One was at the Delkatla Wildlife Sanctuary, Masset, Dec. 14 to Jan. 13 (MH). An Emperor Goose, casual in s.w. British Columbia, frequented the Victoria–Saanich area from Jan. 20 until at least Feb. 23 (MT, RTo, WCW). Brant wintered in s.w. British Columbia in the highest

numbers since the early 1960s, with a high count of 270 at Roberts Bank, Delta, Dec. 30 (WCW).

Small numbers of Canada Geese lingered farther n. than usual. Six on the Crooked River near Bear L. 60 km n. of Prince George Dec. 27 made the first winter record for the Prince George checklist area (LL, JBy). Another first winter record involved a Canada Goose at Grand Forks all season (DHm). Both Vancouver and Victoria CBCs set new all time high counts with 1773 and 1555 Canadas, respectively (*vide* WCW, MMc).

A new high record of 126 Gadwalls was found on the Vernon CBC Dec. 17, probably owing to the extensive areas of open water (*vide* PR). Both Vancouver and Victoria reported unusually low counts of American Wigeon during their CBCs. Victoria's 4436 made the lowest count since 1968 (*vide* MMc). Ten male Eurasian Wigeon on the Port Clements CBC Dec. 19 (*vide* PH) suggested that this species is at least as frequent on the Queen Charlotte Islands as it is on the mainland where 11 were found on the Sooke CBC (*vide* MSh), 20 were on the Victoria CBC (MMc), and 27 were tallied on the Ladner CBC (JG). The only interior record was of one at Revelstoke Jan. 16 (DP). Four Eurasian x American Wigeon, more than usual, were reported from the Vancouver-Delta area (BL, DMP, WCW). Prince George CBC reported a single Blue-winged/Cinnamon type teal Dec. 30, a very late date (*vide* NK). Five Cinnamon Teal were seen on Lulu Island Dec. 23 (AL). This species should now be considered rare rather than casual in winter in s.w. British Columbia.

Two Tufted Ducks were reported: a female at Sunrise L., Langley, Dec. 31 to Jan. 20 (MP, m.ob.) and a male at Iona I. Feb. 11 (RTo, BT). Two hundred ninety Oldsquaws on the Comox CBC of Dec. 17 almost matched 1988's record high of 306 (*vide* WH). Where do you go to see large numbers of Black Scoters in British Columbia? Try Deep Bay, V.I., where 687 were tallied for the CBC Dec. 30. This is twice last year's record high (*vide* WH).

A **Smew**, providing British Columbia's 4th record and the first since 1975, was found in Surrey Dec. 30 during White Rock's CBC (EP, BH, +WCW). It was last seen Feb. 1 at Latimer L. Park, Langley (PH). A Hooded Merganser x goldeneye hybrid, first seen Nov. 15, continued to stay at Blackie Spit, Jan. 23-Feb. 26 (+WCW). Vernon had two Red-breasted Mergansers, always rare in the interior, on the CBC of Dec. 17 (*vide* PR), the second year in a row for this species, while Castlegar had six on Jan. 14 (ME). Also on the Vernon CBC were two Ruddy Ducks (*vide* PR). One Ruddy was at Castlegar Jan. 14 (ME).

**VULTURES TO RAILS** — Two Turkey Vultures at Sooke Dec. 30 were very late or overwintered (*vide* MSh). Other reports from the Saanich, VI, area included two Jan. 20 (VG), one Jan. 23 (BDi), and one Feb. 27 (Vic. Rare Bird Alert). An Osprey was reported by a reliable observer at Castlegar Dec. 28 but no details were forwarded (BD). The winter occurrence of this migratory species has been satisfactorily documented for British Columbia only 2-3 times. An all time high count of 190 Bald Eagles was made during the Ladner CBC of Dec. 23 (*vide* JG). In Prince George, Bald Eagles gathered at a poultry farm during a February freeze-up. The highest number was 23 adults and four immatures Feb. 21. Thereafter numbers rapidly dwindled. Sub-regional editor Jack Bowling wonders, "This raises the spectre of possible transmission of avian diseases from fowl to raptor if any stricken chicken carcass is disposed of out in the fields. Hopefully any such carcasses are otherwise disposed of." A single Cooper's Hawk on the Bamfield CBC Dec. 29 was boldfaced as unusual though

no details were forwarded (*vide* AB). Victoria CBC had an all time high count of 29 Cooper's on Dec. 16 (*vide* MMc). Small numbers of Northern Goshawks were reported: one at Marsh L. near Whitehorse, Yukon, Dec. 17 (CO); two on the Kelowna CBC Dec. 16 (*vide* BTh); one on the Victoria CBC Dec. 16 (*vide* MMc); three on the Squamish CBC Dec. 16 (*vide* DK); two on the Prince George CBC Dec. 30 (*vide* NK); four on the Kluane Lake, Yukon, CBC Dec. 16 (*vide* MN); and three on the Vancouver CBC Dec. 17 (*vide* WCW).

A late Red-tailed Hawk was near Quick, the Bulkley Valley, Dec. 10 & 14 (WE). A 'Harlan's' Red-tailed, very rare in s.w. British Columbia, seen in Delta Dec. 15 may have been the same bird that wintered there last year (BL).

A single Golden Eagle was seen on the Haines Junction, Yukon, CBC of Dec. 26 (*vide* KS). How often do Golden Eagles winter so far north? During early winter, American Kestrel numbers were high in the interior and very low as usual on the Lower Mainland. There were 11 on the Kelowna CBC Dec. 16 (*vide* BTh), 15 on the Vernon CBC Dec. 17 (*vide* PR), and nine on the Penticton CBC Dec. 30 (*vide* RJC). The northernmost was a female at Tyhee L., near Telkwa, Dec. 22 (NT). In contrast were the Vancouver, Chilliwack, and Ladner CBCs that tallied only one, one, and three birds respectively (*vide* WCW, RJC, JG). Merlins were also more common than usual in areas that they normally leave for the winter. One or two Merlins wintered in Prince George (JB) while one or two were seen at Revelstoke and another one or two were at Brouse, near Nakusp, Dec. 30 (GD, ET). One was at Skonun Point, near Masset, Dec. 14, and another was at MacIntyre Bay, Dixon Entrance, Q.C.I., Jan. 14 (MH). Even a traditional wintering area like Victoria reported its second highest CBC count ever of 11 Merlins Dec. 16 (*vide* MMc), while Ladner set a new all time high for the count of 14 Merlins (*vide* JG).

A new count high of nine Peregrine Falcons was set on the Ladner CBC Dec. 23 (*vide* JG). Five Gyrfalcons were reported this winter. One put in 3 appearances around Vernon Dec. 17, Jan. 17, and Jan. 20 (PR, CS). The 2nd was at Rose Spit, Q.C.I., Dec. 18 (*vide* PH). The 3rd wintered at Tyhee L. near Telkwa from December to early February (NT). Two gyrs were reported from Delta Dec. 2-Feb. 25 (BL, MF, m.ob.). A Prairie Falcon, believed to be the same bird that wintered in Delta 1988-1989, returned to the Beach Grove-Roberts Bank area Nov. 5 and was seen Dec. 10-Feb. 18 (+WCW). This makes it the 3rd Vancouver record.

California Quail were common in the Okanagan with 2200 tallied during the Penticton CBC Dec. 30 (*vide* RJC). Victoria CBC reported 358, its highest count since 1968 (*vide* MMc). Chukars were virtually nonexistent in the Okanagan (RJC). Large numbers of both Willow and White-tailed ptarmigan in the lowlands were reported from the Quick area s.e. of Smithers (DH).

Thirty-five Virginia Rails were found on the Vancouver and Ladner CBCs in December. During the heavy snows and cold of mid-February, two Soras were forced into the open along ditches and tidal streams on Lulu Island (Feb. 17-20) (+PS, BS, +GA). Soras are listed as casual in winter in the Van. area; perhaps they may be rare but regular and are usually overlooked.

**PLOVERS TO OWLS** — Record numbers of Semi-palmated Plovers wintered in British Columbia. One at Masset Dec. 14 (MH, PH) provided a first winter record for the Queen Charlotte Islands. Two were also found at Skidegate Inlet, Q.C.I., Dec. 17 (*vide* PH). Three at Beach

Grove, Delta, Jan. 17–Feb. 28 furnished Van.'s 4th winter record (†AP). A Killdeer was photographed in Prince George Jan. 10 (JB ph., DR, HA). Far north of its usual winter range, it disappeared after the first cold snap, in late January. A Killdeer was also at Revelstoke Dec. 30 (GD).

Twenty-five Greater Yellowlegs made a new high count for the Sooke CBC Dec. 30 (*fide* MSh) while 19 were an all time high for the Vancouver CBC Dec. 17 (*fide* WCW). One hundred thirty Surfbirds were also a high count for Sooke. Both a Willet and a Whimbrel wintered at Blackie Spit (WCW, m.ob.). The Willet, present since August, furnished only about the 4th winter record for Van. and the first to remain all winter. The Whimbrel had also wintered during 1988–1989 and made the 3rd Van. winter record. Rock Sandpipers continue to decline as wintering birds in the Victoria area. There were only two reports from Victoria all season (*fide* DF). A new high of 241 Long-billed Dowitchers was tallied Dec. 17 on the Vancouver CBC (*fide* WCW). A Common Snipe near Purden L., 60 km e. of Prince George, Dec. 31 furnished the first winter record for the area, and a testament to the warm and wet December (DKi).

A Mew Gull at Nelson Feb. 12 was unusual for the interior (GD) as was one at Vernon Jan. 12 (PR). In the past many observers have failed to distinguish Thayer's Gulls. This seems to be changing. Four hundred five Thayer's Gulls were reported on the Bamfield CBC Dec. 29 (*fide* AB) while the Vancouver CBC reported 303 (*fide* WCW), Ladner CBC had 1395 in a new all time high (*fide* JG), and Victoria CBC reported its 2nd-highest count of 1546 on Dec. 16 (*fide* MMc). An ad. **Slaty-backed Gull**, for Vancouver's first acceptable record and only the third for British Columbia, appeared in Delta on Nov. 18 and stayed until Feb. 6 (†MF ph., RJC, m.ob.). Glaucous-winged Gulls now seem to be regular winter visitors to the Okanagan Valley. Kelowna birders found 12 on their CBC Dec. 16 (*fide* BTh) while Penticton CBC had three Dec. 30 (*fide* RJC). WCW

spotted two first-year birds at Penticton Dec. 7. Glaucous Gulls were well reported, owing to the efforts of observers to find the Slaty-backed. One to five Glaucous Gulls were at Burns Bog Dec. 9–Feb. 24 (BL, MF, MS). A 2nd-year Herring x Glaucous Gull was photographed at the Van. Landfill, Delta, Feb. 24 (MF). A Black-legged Kittiwake turned up on a suburban lawn in Victoria Feb. 11 (MMc).

Tony Greenfield witnessed a southbound migration of 1500 Marbled Murrelets and 500 Ancient Murrelets from Wakefield Point to Mission Point, Sechelt, Dec. 11. The two species were mixed but kept in identifiable groups—the Ancients in tight flocks like shorebirds, the Marbleds in small loose flocks or lines. Two thousand birds passed during the 2 hours TG watched. How long the flight went on, no one knows. Victoria CBC reported its 2nd-highest count of 2231 Ancient Murrelets Dec. 16 (*fide* MMc). A new high count of 473 Mourning Doves was made on the Vernon CBC Dec. 17 (*fide* PR).

A Western Screech-Owl on the Sunshine Coast CBC was the first for the area in many years (*fide* TG). Other lone Western Screech-Owls were found on the Bamfield, White Rock, and Vaseux CBCs (*fide* AB, MS, GD). One was heard near Telkwa Dec. 3 (ML). Only two Snowy Owls were reported in what was obviously a very off-year. One Snowy was at 72 St., Delta, Dec. 1 (HM, JM), while the 2nd was on Westham I. Dec. 9–24 (RPh, JI, GA, m.ob.). There was a scattering of Northern Hawk Owl reports. One at Kelowna from Dec. 16 to Jan. 21 was quite unusual (BB, JBu) as was another at Keremeos Jan. 20 (Mell). One at Prince George Dec. 30 (*fide* NK), five at Kluane Lake Dec. 16 (*fide* MN), and two near Marsh L., Yukon, Dec. 17 (HG, GJ) were more expected. Smithers would like to proclaim itself "hawk owl capital of North America" with four–five birds reported during the period (WE). Northern Pygmy-Owls were scattered across the southern half of British Columbia. Vancouver reported five. The Prince George area had three, including one at Bear L. Dec. 27 (LL, JBy).

*Adult Slaty-backed Gull (center) at the Delta landfill, Vancouver, British Columbia, January 27, 1990. Third record for the province. Photograph/ Mike Force.*





*This bird (center)—photographed at the Delta landfill, Vancouver, British Columbia, on February 24, 1990—was felt to be a second-winter Herring Gull x Glaucous Gull hybrid. Photograph/Mike Force.*

A Short-eared Owl at Gibsons Feb. 21 furnished the first winter record for the Sunshine Coast (TG). A Short-eared Owl was seen at Prince George Dec. 30 (*vide* NK) and another was present at Sandspit, Q.C.I., Dec. 8 (MH). Four were at Telkwa Jan. 3 (RP). One Long-eared Owl was found on the White Rock CBC Dec. 30 (*vide* MS). Three frequented the Reifel Refuge during December and early January (JI, m.ob.). Two were seen along the west dyke on Lulu I. Dec. 13–Feb. 25 (BSp, PSp, m.ob.). One found dead at Swan L., Vic., Dec. 16 (MJO'S, NS, BMc) was significant, as Long-ears are very rare on V.I. A Boreal Owl was heard near Telkwa Jan. 22 (ML) with another killed on a trapline near Prince George (DKi), and a 3rd picked up starved to death in Revelstoke Feb. 14 (DP). A Northern Saw-whet Owl at Taber L., Prince George, answered to a tape Jan. 18 (JB, HA), confirming this species' presence in winter. Although two or three Saw-whets are usually present on Reifel I. each winter, this year up to seven were there (JI).

**KINGFISHERS TO SHRIKES** — Victoria CBC reported an all-time high of 71 Belted Kingfishers Dec. 16 (*vide* MMc). Vancouver CBC had a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** at Shaughnessy Park Dec. 17, for a first confirmed Vancouver record (+TH, +RJC). (The photos of a previous 1975 Stanley Park bird cannot be located.) A second sapsucker, either Yellow-bellied or Red-naped, was seen about 3 km away in January but was never positively identified. The only other coastal British Columbia record for Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was near Victoria in December 1987. A White-headed Woodpecker was seen on the Vaseux CBC Dec. 28 (DB). A Three-toed Woodpecker at Paradise Meadows, Courtney, Feb. 19 furnished one of very few V.I. records (JC). Four Northern Flickers at Prince George Dec. 30 were very late and far north of the species' usual winter range in the province (*vide* NK). Penticton CBC had a healthy tally of 290 flickers Dec. 30 (*vide* RJC) and Victoria CBC set an all-time high of 433 Dec. 16 (*vide* MMc).

Fifteen Eurasian Skylarks were counted in N. Saanich, V.I., Feb. 20 (PE). A Cliff Swallow frequenting the Reifel Refuge Dec. 7–10 became the first winter record for Van. and the province, though there have been previous Van. records as late as Nov. 23 (+HM, JI, RTc). A few Barn Swallows lingered until early and mid December in Delta,

with two at Centennial Park Dec. 10 (GP) and one at Boundary Bay Dec. 15 (BL). This is a close to average departure date!

The warm December was easy on Bushtits. New high counts were made at Sooke (142), Vancouver (1042), and Victoria (1095) CBCs (*vide* MSh, WCW, MMc). Red-breasted Nuthatch numbers were high (56) for the Vancouver CBC Dec. 17 (*vide* WW) but their numbers in the Okanagan were normal (*vide* RJC). However, following 2 summers of high pine seed production, White-breasted and Pygmy nuthatch numbers were high in the Okanagan. Penticton CBC had an all-time high of 64 White-breasted Dec. 30 and set a new Canadian record of 515 Pygmy Nuthatches (*vide* RJC).

A Canyon Wren was singing near Syringa Creek Prov. Park w. of Castlegar Feb. 25, which is logical considering that a small population breeds there (HS, JS). Two Rock Wrens lingered to be counted on the Vaseux CBC Dec. 28 (*vide* RJC). Vancouver CBC set two new highs Dec. 17: 78 Bewick's Wrens and 426 Winter Wrens (*vide* WCW).

Record highs were counted for both kinglets on the Vancouver CBC: 1548 Golden-crowned Kinglets and 254 Ruby-crowned Kinglets (*vide* WCW). Victoria CBC set a new high of 2812 Golden-crowneds. Its 284 Ruby-crowneds were the second highest count (*vide* MMc).

A Mountain Bluebird at Sechelt Jan. 1 was very unusual (*vide* TG) as were three on the Vaseux CBC Dec. 28 (GD, MDo, FM). One appeared at N. Saanich Dec. 8 (JAnd, GAnd). Northbound Mountain Bluebirds began to appear in the Yukon as early as late February. Ten were at Kluanne L. Feb. 23 (*vide* CR) and a male was at Liard Hotsprings, B.C., Mar. 2 (FD). A Townsend's Solitaire on the White Rock CBC was considered unusual (*vide* MS). A single American Robin turned up on the Prince George CBC Dec. 30 (*vide* NK). Varied Thrushes were very scarce in the Queen Charlotte Islands, the Sunshine Coast, and the Okanagan this winter (*vide* PH, TG, RJC). Only 13 were found on the Sooke CBC Dec. 30 (*vide* MSh); however, a normal count of 233 was made on the Vancouver CBC (*vide* WCW). Sixteen American Pipits were new for the Masset CBC Dec. 17 (*vide* PH). Bohemian Waxwing numbers in the Okanagan were lower than usual with 1151 on the Penticton CBC Dec. 30, only half the average number (*vide* RJC). A Northern Shrike, a species rare in winter in the Yukon, appeared near a feeder in Whitehorse Jan. 28 (HG). Vancouver observers noted that N. Shrikes were very scarce this winter (*vide* DK, WCW).

**VIREOS TO BLACKBIRDS** — Good numbers of Hutton's Vireos wintered with one on the Bamfield CBC Dec. 29 (*fide* AB), a new high of nine on the Vancouver CBC Dec. 17 (*fide* WCW), six on the Victoria CBC Dec. 16 (*fide* MMc), and 12 at Pt. Roberts, WA, Dec. 23 (BL).

Only one Orange-crowned Warbler was reported, on Sea Island Feb. 24 (ASt). A Nashville Warbler, casual in winter on V.I., was seen by m.ob. Dec. 19–Jan. 31 in Vic. (*fide* DF). Yellow-rumped Warblers were widely reported from southern British Columbia during mid to late December, attesting to the mild winter. Two were at Vernon Dec. 17 (*fide* PR). Up to five were seen daily at the Creston Management Area (EMc). One was spotted in downtown Sechelt Dec. 14 (TG). Seven were present on the White Rock CBC Dec. 30 (*fide* MS). Vancouver CBC had only two, one of each form (*fide* WCW), while Pitt Meadows CBC had three Dec. 31 (*fide* WR) and Victoria CBC had four Dec. 16 (*fide* MMc). Five Townsend's Warblers were seen on the Skidegate CBC Dec. 16 (*fide* PH) and one was spotted on the Victoria CBC Dec. 16 (*fide* MMc). This season's only Palm Warbler was at Cowitchan Bay, V.I., Jan. 14 and Feb. 10 (DM). A Wilson's Warbler, casual in winter, was in Stanley Park Dec. 2 (†RJC). A Common Yellowthroat, very rare in winter, turned up in the Vic. area Feb. 2–3 (*fide* DF). British Columbia's first **Hooded Warbler** was in Tofino Dec. 14–16 (AD).

A lingering **Western Tanager** was seen in Vancouver Dec. 17–Jan. 31 for a first Van. winter record and only about the 2nd provincial winter record (EH, †RJC, †WCW). Both Vancouver and Victoria CBCs set new high counts for Rufous-sided Towhees: 705 in Vancouver Dec. 17 (*fide* WCW) and 652 in Victoria Dec. 16 (*fide* MMc).

Vancouver, Victoria, and Penticton CBCs had record high counts of Song Sparrows. Vancouver CBC also had a new record of 291 Fox Sparrows (*fide* WCW). Lincoln's Sparrows lingered with one at Delkatla Wildlife Sanctuary, Masset, Dec. 14 (MH), and a high of 10 at Serpentine Fen, Surrey, Dec. 10 (JM, HM). There were 19 other Van. and area records. Swamp Sparrows are turning up so regularly in s.w. British Columbia that they should be considered rare rather than casual winterers. Van. had four: two at Brunswick Point on Dec. 1, and one on Dec. 3 & 23 (PG, DT, DMP); one at Brydon Lagoon, Langley, Dec. 7–9 and Jan. 2 (JM, WCW); and one at Stanley Park Dec. 17 (WCW, †CAi, BMK). Three were reported from the Saanich, Central Saanich, and Duncan areas of V.I. (*fide* DF). The interior reported one Swamp Sparrow, Nakusp's first, at a feeder daily from Dec. 31 until March 24 (MA, GD).

There was a scattering of White-throated Sparrow sightings: one at Nakusp Dec. 10 (GD), two at Vernon Dec. 17 (PR), one at Naramata Dec. 30 (RJC, RO, SO), and a record high of five at Victoria Dec. 16 (*fide* MMc). Vancouver reported a higher than average number of Harris' Sparrows with one at Serpentine Fen Dec. 9 (EK), two along McBain from Dec. 15 to Feb. 11 (SM), one along Maple from Dec. 16 to Jan. 30 (WCW, m.ob.), one at Beach Grove Feb. 14 & 25 (WCW, GA), and one at Boundary Bay Feb. 17 (BL). Victoria had three during the season. The interior had fewer than usual Harris's. One appeared at Nakusp Dec. 31 and Jan. 7 (GD); Revelstoke had one Dec. 8 and Feb. 26 (DP). Victoria CBC had two on Dec. 16 (*fide* MMc). Three Dark-eyed Juncos, rare in winter in the Yukon, remained near a Whitehorse feeder all season, surviving temperatures as low as –43C (HG). A Snow Bunting appeared at Kluane L., Yukon, Feb. 22 (CR). Small parties of 10–30 followed in early March.

A Yellow-headed Blackbird at Kelowna Dec. 16 was quite unusual, becoming the 7th winter record for the

Okanagan (*fide* BTh). A few Yellow-headed also occurred around Vancouver, where the species is considered very rare in winter. A male was at Reifel Refuge Dec. 1–8 and Jan. 4–March 10 (JI). A male was on Iona I. Dec. 24 (†BL). Two males were at Jerico Park Feb. 10 (JV). A Rusty Blackbird at Revelstoke Jan. 16 was not as unusual as a Common Grackle which remained all winter (AC).

**FINCHES** — Amazingly, two **Bramblings** wintered in Revelstoke. The first was found Dec. 27 and remained until period's end, while the second appeared during the same time period. Several times both birds were seen at the same time but at different feeders (DP). Another Brambling frequented the w. end of Queen Charlotte City from Nov. 5 until at least Mar. 5 (MM).

A flock of 60 Rosy Finches was discovered along a logging road above Port Mellon on the Sunshine Coast Dec. 16 (DB), where this species is a very rare winter visitor. Two hundred Rosy Finches reported on the Williams Lake CBC Dec. 30 were a little more expected, perhaps (*fide* AR). Very rare in winter in the Yukon, one of the Gray-headed coastal form successfully overwintered at a feeder in Whitehorse, surviving cold snaps as low as –43 C (HG).

Pine Grosbeaks were more common than usual in the interior. One hundred twenty-eight Pine Grosbeaks on the North Pine (Fort St. John) CBC Dec. 16 set a new high for the count (*fide* DCo). In the Prince George area, Jack Bowling reported that Pine Grosbeaks in flocks of three to 10 were widespread up to mid-February. Nakusp, Revelstoke, and the Okanagan reported larger numbers than usual this winter (GD, DP, RJC). Two House Finches on the Bamfield CBC Dec. 29 were considered unusual (*fide* AB), as were three at Revelstoke all winter (DP).

Red Crossbills were absent from the Queen Charlotte Is. this winter (PH), and either absent or present in very low numbers in British Columbia's interior. However, a new count high was set for Vancouver with 224 Dec. 17 (*fide* WCW). White-winged Crossbills were more evenly spread over the province, albeit in small numbers; 110 White-winged seen on the Masset CBC feeding in alders (Dec. 17) were the first for a Q.C.I. count. These birds were part of a small invasion to the Q.C.I. and some coastal areas, 35 others were seen Dec. 15 in Masset and 30 were in Port Clements Dec. 19 (all *fide* PH, MH). A flock of 30 White-winged Crossbills at Sechelt Dec. 20 furnished the 3rd record for the Sunshine Coast (TG). Forty plus were at Dove Creek, near Courtney, V.I., Dec. 31 (DI, MI). In the interior of the province, Revelstoke noted the absence of White-winged this winter (DP).

Common Redpolls were present in slightly higher than average numbers in the Okanagan (*fide* RJC). Thirty were at Sechelt Dec. 16 (BL), while in Prince George and Nakusp they were far fewer than last year. Hoary Redpolls were at Emerson Creek in the Bulkley Valley in groups of 25 and 50 on Feb. 11 & 14 (EL). One Hoary was reported with excellent details from Nakusp Feb. 25 (GD). North Pine (Fort St. John) Christmas Bird Counters lumped their 70 redpolls, a rather low count, into "redpoll sp." (DCo). Pine Siskins were very abundant in some areas but absent in others. Vancouver reported 6133 on its CBC Dec. 17 (*fide* WCW); Victoria CBC had 3735, an all-time high. While Christina Lake e. of Grand Forks reported larger flocks than usual (RW) this season, both Nakusp and Revelstoke noted the species' virtual absence (GD, DP). Provincially Evening Grosbeak numbers were very low. For example, Vancouver CBC reported only 48 while in the Prince George area numbers crashed after the record



highs of last year—23 on this year's CBC compared to 1907 the previous year (JB)!

**EXOTICS** — The numbers of free-flying Mandarin Ducks seem to be declining in the Vancouver area. The only winter records were of a pair present at Stanley Park Dec. 17 & 28 and Jan. 12 (WCW, m.ob.) and a single at Richmond Nature Park all winter (HM, JM). The sighting of a male Mandarin x Wood Duck at Stanley Park on Dec. 17 & 28 (WCW) suggests that one reason for the decline might be hybridization.

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## OREGON/WASHINGTON REGION

Bill Tweit and Jim Johnson

Observers in all parts of the Region agreed that the winter was mild and dry. There was substantially more open fresh water than normal, especially in the high desert parts of the interior. Interior observers attributed a broad variety of unusual winter records to the mild winter: American White Pelican, Ferruginous Hawk, Canada Goose, Anna's Hummingbird, Red-winged Blackbird, Lapland Longspur. Precipitation was less than 50% of normal in the interior, and much closer to normal on the west side of the Cascades.

A major wind storm hit the Columbia basin January 8, with gusts up to 81 mph, but no effects were noted on birds. On the west side, a major storm February 10 drove Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels and Black-legged Kittiwakes onshore in Washington and left numbers of seabirds dead on the beach in northwest Oregon.

For the second consecutive winter, Bud Anderson conducted a mid-winter survey of the raptor populations on the Skagit and Samish flats of northwestern Washington. The winter was notable for low numbers of Rough-legged Hawk and record low numbers of Snowy Owls.

The spice of the winter was a splendid number of 'eastern' birds, including Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Eastern Phoebe, Hooded Warbler, three records of Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and good numbers of Swamp Sparrow and White-throated Sparrow.

**ABBREVIATIONS** — Malheur = Malheur Nat'l Wildlife Ref., Harney, OR; S.F.W.R.C. = Skagit Flats Winter Raptor Census; S.J.C.R. = south jetty of the Columbia R., Clatsop, OR.



MAP ILLUSTRATION/KENN KAUFMAN

**LOONS TO CORMORANTS** — There were only three reports of Red-throated Loons from the Portland area of the Columbia R. (JJ, David Irons, GGi, DL), fewer than the last two winters, when unusual numbers have occurred. Pacific Loons at Wallowa L., OR, Jan. 13 (DL) and in Chelan, WA, in December (DP, RO-T) were the interior reports. There were four Yellow-billed Loons reported from Washington: one on the outer coast (Bob & Georgia Ramsey, JS), two along the Strait of Juan de Fuca (Mark

Oberle, RM), and one in northern Puget Sound (Dave Celmer). Oregon had an additional two reports: one on the outer coast at Netarts Bay, *Tillamook*, Feb. 19–March 5 (Bill Shelmerdine, Tim Shelmerdine) and one on Fern Ridge Res., *Lane*, Dec. 31–Jan. 3 (DFI, Steve Heintl). The Fern Ridge bird furnished the second inland record in Oregon for this species. This total of six was slightly above recent winter averages.

A count of 47 Horned Grebes on the Columbia R. at Hood River, OR, Feb. 25 (DA, DL) made a very large number for the interior, where Horned Grebes only winter regularly at favored sites on the Columbia. A Red-necked Grebe at Richardson Point, *Lane*, OR, Feb. 18 (*fide* BC) was unusual; the only regular wintering locales in western Oregon are a few coastal sites. An Eared Grebe at the Philomath Sewage Ponds, *Benton*, OR, Dec. 19 (RHo) was unusual for the same reasons. There were four Clark's Grebe reports, but only two with details, from Washington. One at Tokeland, *Pacific*, Jan. 14 (+G & WH) was felt to be an intergrade. The other substantiated report was from Winslow, *Kitsap*, Feb. 3 (Paul Cozens). There were eight individuals reported from Oregon, none with details. Six were at Yaquina Bay, *Lincoln*, Dec. 10 (KM), one was at Seaside, *Clatsop*, the same date (MP), and one was at Hammond, *Clatsop*, Dec. 17 (DL). Until the wintering status of Clark's and intergrades is more fully understood in the Region, observers are urged to document their sightings.

The pelagic trip out of Westport, WA, Jan. 20 (TW) found only a few more tubenoses than were reported from shore: three Black-footed and one Laysan albatrosses, eight N. Fulmars, one Sooty and 17 Short-tailed shearwaters, and no storm-petrels. Two Black-footed Albatrosses were seen from shore at the Coos R. mouth, *Coos*, OR, Jan. 16 (DFI); they are very rarely seen from shore at any season. Seven N. Fulmars, one Short-tailed Shearwater, and one Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel were found dead on Clatsop Beach, *Clatsop*, OR, Feb. 11 (MP). Two Short-tailed were seen at S.J.C.R. Dec. 31 and another was found dead on Clatsop Beach Jan. 6 (MP). Three Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels were seen in Washington: on Puget Sound near Kingston, *Kitsap*, Jan. 1 (Jan Sleight), on Willapa Bay, *Pacific*, Jan. 27 (MD), and in Port Angeles, *Clallam*, Feb. 10 (*fide* FS).

After above average numbers all fall, Am. White Pelicans in Washington wintered on the Columbia R. near Richland. The high count was of 28 on Jan. 30 (RW). That number had dwindled to one by Feb. 28. None wintered in eastern Oregon, but 47 lingered as late as Dec. 10 at Cold Springs N.W.R., *Umatilla* (Paul Sullivan), near the Washington stretch of the Columbia where they wintered. Double-crested Cormorants were more common than usual on the Columbia R. in *Hood River*, OR (DA, DL). One immature was at Clarkston, WA, on the Snake R. during January (J & DP, CW), where they are rare in winter.

Numbers of wintering Great Blue Herons were down from the last few years' levels at Malheur (GI) and at Sumner L., *Lake*, OR (MSL), even though the winter was milder than the last two. A first-year **Little Blue Heron** appeared at Brownsmeade, *Clatsop*, Jan. 20 (MP, m.ob.) and was present through the end of the period. This was the 3rd record for Oregon, and came on the heels of Washington's 2nd record, Oct. 14–28, 1989. A few more Cattle Egrets than had appeared this fall were reported in December. On Dec. 1, nine were in *Tillamook*, OR (*fide* JJ), and one in *Lincoln*, OR (*fide* BB). One of the *Tillamook* birds remained until Feb. 3 (CR). One that appeared in Seattle Dec. 17 was found dead Dec. 25 (Kaethe Barton,

Fred Bird, \*Univ. Wash.).

**WATERFOWL TO FALCONS** — Trumpeter Swans in n.w. Washington were distributed farther away from the estuarine areas than in past years, as standing water in the inland areas was almost unfrozen this year and they seemed to be taking advantage of the usually unavailable habitat (TW). Up to 18 Trumpeters wintered at Maple Grove, *Polk* (RG), their only known wintering location in w. Oregon. In e. Oregon, the Trumpeter Swan population at Malheur has been declining. Only 20 were counted there this winter (GI); at least five more were seen in northern *Lake* (MSL, GI). Greater White-fronted Geese returned early to the interior. A flock of 25 migrants was found Jan. 10 at Rest L., *Lake* (MSL). The first arrivals at Malheur were Feb. 11 (GI) at which time 250 were at Rest L. Migrant Snow Geese were first noted Feb. 22 at Malheur (GI) and on the 23rd in *Lake* (MSL). The only Emperor Geese reported were two at Charleston, *Coos*, OR, Jan. 20 to Feb. 15 (m.ob.). Numbers of Canada Geese wintering at Malheur were increased 170% from last winter (GI), probably in response to the mild conditions.

There were only three reports, below average, of Eur. Green-winged Teal, all from the west side. A bird identified as a male Mallard x Gadwall hybrid was at Eckman L., *Lincoln*, OR, Jan. 21 (+KM, +Roy Lowe). The peak count of Eur. Wigeon was of 40 birds, with three hybrids, on the Samish flats, *Skagit*, WA, Feb. 3 (BT). There were five eastside reports of Eur. Wigeon, which is average: one on the Snake R. at Clarkston, WA (CVV, J & DP), three along the Columbia R. (RW, DA, DL, CC), and one at Klammath Falls (SS). There were two reports of 'pure' Tufted Ducks, one Dec. 11 to 13 near Lynden, *Whatcom*, WA

#### S.A.

For the second time in recent years, a duck that had been identified as a Tufted for several consecutive winters has been re-identified as a **Tufted Duck x scaup hybrid**. The bird that has wintered on the Monmouth sedimentation ponds, *Polk*, OR, for three years was present this winter (m.ob.) as was the hybrid which has wintered on Green Lake in Seattle for four winters now (m.ob.). We urge observers to be careful with Tufted Duck identifications, especially of those individuals showing apparent signs of immaturity, i.e., short tufts and sides that are not pure white.

(Paul DeBruyn, *fide* TW) and another at Cave Junction, *Josephine*, OR, Feb. 17 (*fide* HN), near where one was reported last winter. The species composition of the scaup flocks wintering on the Columbia R. has changed markedly recently. Lessers used to predominate, but they are now becoming more and more difficult to find (RW). Large counts of Greaters on the Columbia included 80 in Richland, WA (RW), and 500 east of Cascade Locks, OR (DA, DL). There were no Oldsquaw reports from the interior, which is unusual. However, interior reports of scoters, which included two Surfs at Suttle L., *Jefferson*, OR (LR), a Surf and a White-winged on Ana Res., *Lake*, OR (MSL), and 15 White-wingeds on Fish L., *Chelan*, WA, in December (*fide* RO-T), were about average.

A few Turkey Vultures appeared very early. One in the Blitzen Valley Jan. 18 (GI) was the earliest ever for the Malheur area. The following day, a kettle of 12 was noted over Ashland, *Jackson*, OR (*fide* MM), and there were two more reports from the Rogue valley in January. Migrants were reported throughout w. Oregon in February, as usual. Two late vultures were reported in n.w. Washington in December, one at Lummi flats, *Whatcom* (Frank Lapansy,

*fide* TW), and one on Lopez I., *San Juan* (Ward Beecher). The northernmost lingering Osprey was at Nolte S.P., *King*, WA (Joe Terlouw), Jan. 18, and three more were in Oregon. A few Ospreys attempt to winter annually. Thirty Black-shouldered Kites were reported from w. Oregon; of those, 14 were in the Rogue valley. The adult kite reported this fall at Klamath in the Oregon interior was last seen Dec. 22 (SS). There were six Washington kite sightings, a lower number than in the previous 3 winters. All were from customary locales in the s.w. corner.

Some Washington observers commented on the unusual numbers of Bald Eagles this winter, both in the Columbia basin (KK) and in the Puget Trough (BT), but the S.F.W.R.C. count of 249 was slightly lower than the 1989 count. The N. Harrier count on the S.F.W.R.C. (75) was down by 20% from 1989. Just over 50 each of both Sharp-shinned Hawk and Cooper's Hawk sightings were reported, with the majority of each from the west side. Thirteen N. Goshawk sightings were received. As expected, two-thirds were from the east side. Only two Red-shouldered Hawks were reported in Oregon away from *Curry*, one at Central Point, *Jackson* (*fide* MM), and one at Coos Bay, *Coos* (*fide* LT). The Red-tailed Hawk count on the S.F.W.R.C. of 228 was equal to the 1989 count. Two Ferruginous Hawks wintered in the Columbia basin near Boardman, *Umatilla*, OR (CC), and one was seen near Clyde, *Walla Walla*, WA, Dec. 28 (MD). Ferruginous do not winter regularly in the Region, except in southeasternmost Oregon. The numbers of Rough-legged Hawks on the S.F.W.R.C. (46) were off by a third from last winter. Rough-legged numbers were down as well in w. Oregon (JJ) and at Malheur (GI).

There were 68 Merlin reports, most from w. Washington, although a surprising number (23) were from e. Washington. Twenty-one Peregrine reports from w. and two from e. Washington, and two from e. Oregon, were average. Gyrfalcon reports included two on the Oregon coast (m.ob.), one along the Washington coast (Alan Richards, RM), three in n.w. Washington (DSS, S.F.W.R.C.), four in e. Washington (BT, GGe, Jerry Hickman, *fide* TR), and two in e. Oregon (DL, Julia McHugh). Prairie Falcon reports from the west side included one in *Skagit*, WA, in January (*fide* Bob Kuntz) and a well above average 12 in Oregon. They are very rare on the Oregon coast, where there were two reports: one at Tillamook Dec. 16 (Otis Swisher, GGI) and the 3rd *Coos* record at Myrtle Point Jan. 15 (LT).

**CRANES TO SHOREBIRDS** — Two Virginia Rails along Asotin Cr., *Asotin*, Feb. 10 furnished J & DP's first winter record for s.e. Washington. Wintering Sandhill Cranes normally are found only along the lower Columbia R. near Portland. This winter, records from elsewhere included one at Myrtle Point, *Coos*, OR, Jan. 15 (LT) for the 3rd county record, seven at North Albany, *Benton*, OR, Jan. 26–28 (*fide* DS), three wintering near Lynden, *Whatcom*, WA (TW), and one wintering at Dungeness, *Clallam*, WA (D & SS).

Six Snowy Plovers during December at Bayocean, *Tillamook*, OR, their northern wintering limit, were not present later (CR). Farther south, near Bandon, *Coos*, 15 were noted Jan. 20 to Feb. 4 (*fide* DS, *fide* BC). The two Mountain Plovers reported, without details, south of Bandon Dec. 6 (Bill Stotz) would furnish the 5th record for Oregon if acceptably documented. A Lesser Yellowlegs was at Alsea Bay, *Lincoln*, OR, Dec. 17 (KM); they are very rare in winter. A Willet wintered on Ediz Hook, *Clallam*, WA, where one has been present every winter since 1980 (D & SS). The other Willet reports were also from their

usual locales: nine on Willapa Bay (RM) and four on Yaquina Bay (JJ). Eight Whimbrels wintered at Ediz Hook (D & SS); they have become regular winterers there in the last decade. A few Ruddy Turnstones winter in most mild winters. There were 30 at Ediz Hook (D & SS) and four reports along the Oregon coast. The other lingering shorebirds were underreported.

There were some almost incredible shorebird records from e. Oregon, apparently a function of the mild winter conditions. Seven Semipalmated Plovers at Malheur Dec. 16 (Dave & Charlotte Ganskopp) were very late. Seven W. Sandpipers arrived at Malheur Feb. 14 (GI). The previous early arrival date there was April 2. There was also an early W. Sandpiper in eastern Washington, Feb. 25 near Toppenish, *Yakima* (Debie Brown). A late Dunlin was at Haystack Res., *Jefferson*, Dec. 17 (LR). The most extraordinary of this collection was a **Wilson's Phalarope** at Summer L., *Lake*, OR, Dec. 19 (GI, CM), remarkable for its tardiness.

**JAEGERS TO ALCIDS** — Two Pomarine Jaegers were found on the Jan. 20 pelagic trip out of Westport (TW). They are apparently scarce but regular in the winter off our coast. An imm. Franklin's Gull Dec. 1 off Speiden I., *San Juan*, WA (DP), was about a month late. An adult Franklin's Gull at Chickahominy Res., *Harney*, OR was reported without details Jan. 13 (Forrest Cameron). If correct, this would be the first mid-winter record for the Region. Two adult Little Gulls wintered on American L., *Pierce*, WA (TB, m.ob.), for their 2nd year in a row at this location and one of few winter records for the Region. Interior Mew Gulls included at least one in Spokane (JW) and a dozen at Hood River, OR (DA, DL); they are rare at all seasons east of the mountains.

An adult *glaucoides* **Iceland Gull** was reported at the base of the north jetty of Yaquina Bay, *Lincoln* Jan. 21 (+Hendrik Herlyn, RHo), but was not present subsequently. If accepted by the records committee, this will be the first Oregon record. A W. Gull was at the John Day Dam on the Columbia R. Jan. 14 (JJ); they are very rare in the interior. Glaucous Gull reports were about average, including four in the interior: two immatures at Spokane (JA) Dec. 9, a first-year bird at Richland Dec. 22 to Jan. 13 (RW), and an adult on the Columbia R. south of Chelan Falls, *Chelan*, WA, Dec. 28 (DP). On the west side, there were seven first-year and 2nd-year birds in Washington, and nine in Oregon, including at least one 3rd-year and one adult. Adult Glaucous Gulls are quite rare in the Region. The pelagic trip off Westport Jan. 20 found 481 Black-legged Kittiwakes (TW). Small numbers of Black-legged Kittiwakes appeared in Puget Sound and the e. Strait of Juan de Fuca after the early February storms (DP, m.ob.).

The Jan. 20 Westport pelagic trip reported 10,600 Com. Murres and one **Thick-billed Murre** (TW, +BT, photos). The Thick-billed, which furnished about the 7th record for the state, was the westernmost alcid recorded that day. Also recorded were 346 Cassin's Auklets, four Rhinoceros Auklets, and no puffins of either species. Ancient Murrelets remained in large numbers until late January in the e. Strait of Juan de Fuca and Admiralty Inlet (BS). Small numbers of Ancients, up to 15, were reported as usual along the Oregon coast during December. The inland Ancient found in November on the Columbia R. at John Day Dam was last reported Dec. 3 (DL). One Tufted and twelve Horned puffins were picked up dead on the beach at Clatsop Beach, *Clatsop*, OR, between Feb. 11 & 18 (MP, HN), and one was reported live off the nearby S.J.C.R. Feb. 17 (MP)

**PIGEONS TO TROGLODYTES** — It is tempting to attribute a Rock Dove nest with begging young found Dec. 22 in a Bellingham stable (Geri Walker) to the mild winter, but that may be making too much of a good theory. On the other hand, what other reason is there? The only Snowy Owls found were in e. Washington, three near Moses Lake, *Grant*, Dec. 28 to Feb. 25 (Ron Friesz, BS) and one near Davenport, *Lincoln*, Jan. 16 to Feb. 10 (JA). This was the lowest total in years, and the first winter in memory that there have been no Snowy Owls found in w. Washington. Six Burrowing Owls near Burns, *Harney*, OR, Feb. 18 (Barbara Chadwell) beat the previous first arrival date for the county by 9 days. Four Burrowing Owls wintered at regular locales in w. Oregon. They are rare in w. Washington, where they were found on Ediz Hook and Dungeness Spit, *Clallam* (Ken Brunner, D & SS). Six Long-eared Owls wintering at E.E. Wilson W.M.A., *Benton*, OR (m.ob.), provided the only report of this uncommon species on the west side. Short-eared Owl numbers were apparently underreported, but it was clear it was not a good year for them. A Boreal Owl was found Dec. 20 west of Conconully, *Okanogan*, WA (AS, GGe). There have been several fall records from this area.

Anna's Hummingbirds were able to survive the mild winter in the interior at Wenatchee, WA (RO-T), and Bend, OR (TC). Rufous Hummingbirds were first noted Feb. 7 in *Coos* on the s. Oregon coast (*fide* LT) and Feb. 17 on Vashon I., *King*, WA (Joy Nelson), roughly average for arrivals. Unusual numbers of Lewis' Woodpecker were reported through the winter at Lyle, *Klickitat*, WA (WC, m.ob.), where up to 20 were seen, and in the n. Willamette valley, where there were 24 reports (*fide* BB). The Willamette valley numbers would have been typical 15 or more years ago. At least four members of the flock of Acorn Woodpeckers found last October at Lyle remained through the winter (WC, m.ob.), for Washington's first winter record of the species. The first Washington record of **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was of an adult male found at Ellensburg, *Kittitas*, Dec. 17 (PM) until Feb. 18 (†BT, m.ob.). An early Red-naped Sapsucker was near Ochoco L., *Crook*, OR, Feb. 24 (TC). There were 3 winter records of Red-breasted Sapsucker on the east slope of the Cascades in Washington, where it is scarce but regular. The 3rd *Lincoln* record of White-headed Woodpecker, very rare in w. Oregon, was near Toledo Jan. 22 (DFa).

An **Eastern Phoebe** at Bay Center, *Pacific*, Dec. 16 to 23 (†Dick Wilson, photos) furnished the first record for Washington. The first migrant Say's Phoebe was at Fairbanks, *Wasco*, OR, Feb. 4 (DA, DL). Tree Swallows were not early; the first were along the Columbia R., *Clark*, WA, Jan. 31 (WC), about 20 days before they were first sighted farther south, and on the east side the first were at Summer L., *Lake*, OR, Feb. 27 (MSL). Violet-green Swallows were first noted Feb. 26 near Corvallis, *Benton* (*fide* ME), and Feb. 27 near Yelm, *Thurston*, WA (Robert Smith); often they are widespread by the end of the month. The last fall migrant Barn Swallows were noted Dec. 1 near Finley N.W.R., *Linn*, OR (*fide* ME), and Spanaway L., *Pierce*, WA (Sam Agnew, *fide* TB). The usual few Blue Jay records included one at Davenport, *Lincoln*, WA, from October until Dec. 6 (Steve Gigliotti) and one through the winter at Albion, *Whitman*, WA (J & DP). Red-breasted Nuthatches were in very high numbers in the Spokane and nearby *Whitman* areas (TR, BT) and in *Lake*, OR (MSL). A Rock Wren at Seattle Feb. 21 (KA) provided the only report for the region, although they winter sporadically on the west side. A Bewick's Wren at Little Spokane River Park, *Spokane*, Dec. 9 to Feb. 24 (JA) furnished the

northernmost record for e. Washington. Bewick's are steadily expanding their interior range along the river corridors. They were found in 2 areas of the Butter Creek drainage, *Umatilla*, OR (CC), 30 mi s. of the Columbia, and they wintered successfully, as is now usual, along the Snake R. near Clarkston (CVV, J & DP) and along the Columbia R. below the Snake confluence (CC).

**THRUSHES TO WARBLERS** — Western Bluebirds are rare in winter in Washington, so the following records were noteworthy: a female wintering in Parker Heights, *Yakima* (AS), and a pair in Olympia, *Thurston* (Lola Smith), Dec. 23. Washington's first migrant bluebirds appeared at Ft. Lewis, *Pierce*, Feb. 23 (George Walter). American Robins were abundant in the north half of *Harney* this winter, apparently responding to a good crop of juniper berries (GI). Thousands were present in the forests north of Burns. Thousands also wintered near Irrigon, *Umatilla*, in the cultivated Columbia basin (CC). Varied Thrushes were only sparingly reported, and no major influxes occurred into the interior. A N. Mockingbird in Bend Dec. 18 to 24 (Bob LeBlanc, TC) furnished the 2nd *Deschutes* record. In w. Oregon, up to two mockingbirds were at Denman W.R.A., *Jackson* (*fide* MM), and one was at Beaver Creek, *Lincoln*, Feb. 17 (*fide* DFa), a slightly below normal number of winter records for the west side.

A flock of 100+ Am. Pipits, rare in winter in the interior, was at the Umatilla N.W.R., OR, Jan. 20 (CC). Numbers of Bohemian Waxwings were low throughout e. Oregon, except for the n.e. corner (TC, JJ), and equally low in Washington's Columbia Basin (RW). They were in normal numbers on the east slope of the Washington Cascades from Ellensburg, *Kittitas* (PM), north, but relatively scarce along the e. border of the state until February (KK, JW, CVV). No Bohemians were reported west of the mountains, which is unusual. Northern Shrikes were reported in normal numbers in *Umatilla*, OR (CC), but were scarce in the Columbia basin just to the north (RW), and were elsewhere unremarked. A wintering Loggerhead Shrike was seen near Prineville, *Crook*, OR, Dec. 30 (LR), and another near Irrigon Feb. 18 (CC) had either wintered or was an early migrant.

An Orange-crowned Warbler wintered at Irrigon (CC), and another along the Snake R. near Clarkston Feb. 11 (*fide* CVV) was a very early migrant or a winterer. Wintering Yellow-rumped Warbler numbers in the interior were above average (J & DP, m.ob.). There were only two Palm Warbler reports from Oregon, both in December: at the Salmon R. meadows, *Tillamook*, on the 10th (JJ), and at Tillamook on the 16th (JJ). Washington had one December record, at Tokeland, *Pacific*, on the 9th (BT), and two February records: Washougal, *Clark*, on the 24th (WC) for a first county record, and Ocean Shores, *Grays Harbor*, on the 26th (JS). There were two reports of Com. Yellowthroat each from Washington (Scott Atkinson, Keith Brady) and Oregon (JJ, m.ob.). A male **Hooded Warbler** at Pullman, *Whitman*, Dec. 1 to 11 (J & DP) provided the 2nd Washington record. The first was also a winter record in 1975–1976 in Seattle.

**GROSBEAKS TO WEAVER FINCHES** — The three Rose-breasted Grosbeak records included a male at a feeder in Chehalis, *Lewis*, WA, Jan. 13 to 16 (George & Betty Wister, JS, m.ob., photos), one at a Florence, *Lane*, OR, feeder Dec. 6 to 14 (m.ob.), and a male at a feeder near Brookings, *Curry*, OR, Nov. 26 to Dec. 6 (*fide* Jim Rogers). There are fewer than 10 records for Washington and not quite 20 for Oregon. American Tree Sparrow numbers

were low; the largest flock reported in the interior, where they are regular, was of 13 near Bridgeport, *Douglas*, WA, Dec. 20 (GGe). Eight were found in w. Washington and two in w. Oregon (*vide* HN, NL), where they are casual. A Chipping Sparrow was at the Skagit flats, *Skagit*, Jan. 10 (†RM) for one of very few well documented winter records for the Region. A Vesper Sparrow, also unfamiliar in the winter in the Region, was at Sauvie I. Dec. 23 (†NL). The earliest previous arrival date for Sage Sparrow in the Malheur area was Feb. 17, but GI found one on Feb. 14 this winter. Swamp Sparrows were well distributed and in excellent numbers. Five were found in w. Washington (EH, BT), including the first *Clallam* record at Ozette L. Jan. 14 (FS), two in e. Washington (JW, RW), 35 were found in w. Oregon, and one in e. Oregon near Umatilla (KK, CC). The largest number was 20 at the Rain R. Reserve, *Tillamook*, Dec. 16 (JJ *et al.*), one of the highest counts ever for the Region. White-throated Sparrows also seemed more common than usual, with an unusually high proportion of adults reported. Eight were in w. Washington and 24 were reported from w. Oregon. In the interior, one in Bend Jan. 27 (TC) furnished the 5th *Deschutes* record and one wintering along Asotin Cr., *Asotin*, provided one of very few s.e. Washington records. Nine Harris' Sparrows were reported from e. and five from w. Oregon, and seven from w. and five from e. Washington.

A winter adult **McCown's Longspur** at Lower Klamath N.W.R., *Klamath*, Jan. 13–15 (†SS, Ray Ekstrom) provided the 3rd Oregon record. One of the two previous records was also of a winter bird in *Klamath*. Lapland Longspurs do not winter regularly in e. Washington. This winter small numbers were found with the Horned Lark and Snow Bunting flocks in *Douglas* Jan. 21 (AS), two were north of Anatone, *Asotin*, Jan. 27 (J & DP, CVV), and three were near Moses L., *Grant*, Feb. 25 (RM). On the west side, two were at Yaquina Bay, *Lincoln*, OR, Jan. 12 (RG) and 15 at Ocean Shores, *Grays Harbor*, WA, Jan. 19 (G & WH). Small numbers of Snow Buntings were reported from the interior and from the west side as far s. as Neskowin Beach, *Tillamook*, Dec. 30 (*vide* HN). Wintering Red-winged Blackbirds were more common than usual at Malheur (GI) and the Summer L. area, *Lake*, OR (MSL), attributable to the mild conditions.

The minor flight of Pine Grosbeaks noted in the Cascades during the fall did not materialize in the lowlands. There were two reports from w. Washington (Hal Opperman, Phil Hotlen) and three from the east slope of the Cascades (AS, GGe, RO-T), the normal low numbers. Small numbers of Red Crossbills were noted in

s.w. Washington (G & WH) and they were otherwise ignored. White-winged Crossbills were scarce. There were two reports from s.w. Washington (John Paterson, RM). In Oregon, 20 were at Crater Lake N.P. Dec. 29–30 (MM) and two were in Elgin, *Union*, Jan. 13 (JJ). Common Redpolls were widely distributed in the higher elevation areas of e. Washington, but were uncommonly reported in e. Oregon. There were four sightings in w. Washington (KA, BS, Barbara Bashaw, Mary McKnight) and two in coastal Oregon, where they are always rare: one at Florence, *Lane*, Dec. 16 to Feb. 14 (Ruth Warren), and another at Astoria, *Clatsop*, Feb. 1 to 17 (*vide* MP). Lesser Goldfinches wintered in several areas where they are unusual. Up to 30 were at Lyle, *Klickitat* (BT), for the first winter records for Washington. Also along the Columbia R. was one in Rufus, *Sherman*, OR, Feb. 17 (JJ); they are infrequent away from The Dalles. A pair was at Garibaldi, *Tillamook*, Dec. 19 (CR); they are rare on the n. Oregon coast. Evening Grosbeaks were fairly common in the Olympia area (G & WH), sporadic in the Oregon desert (GI, MSL), and unremarked elsewhere.

The pair of North Bend, *Coos*, OR, Eur. Tree Sparrows reported since the summer of 1989 was present through Jan. 20 (*vide* ME), and an adult appeared at an Astoria, *Clatsop*, feeder Dec. 2 to 4 (*vide* MP).

**CORRIGENDA** — Craig Miller should receive credit for finding the Boreal Owls in the central Oregon Cascades (*AB* 44:152). The Nashville Warbler reported in Sedro Wooley, WA, Sept. 18, 1989 (44:153) was actually a Com. Yellowthroat.

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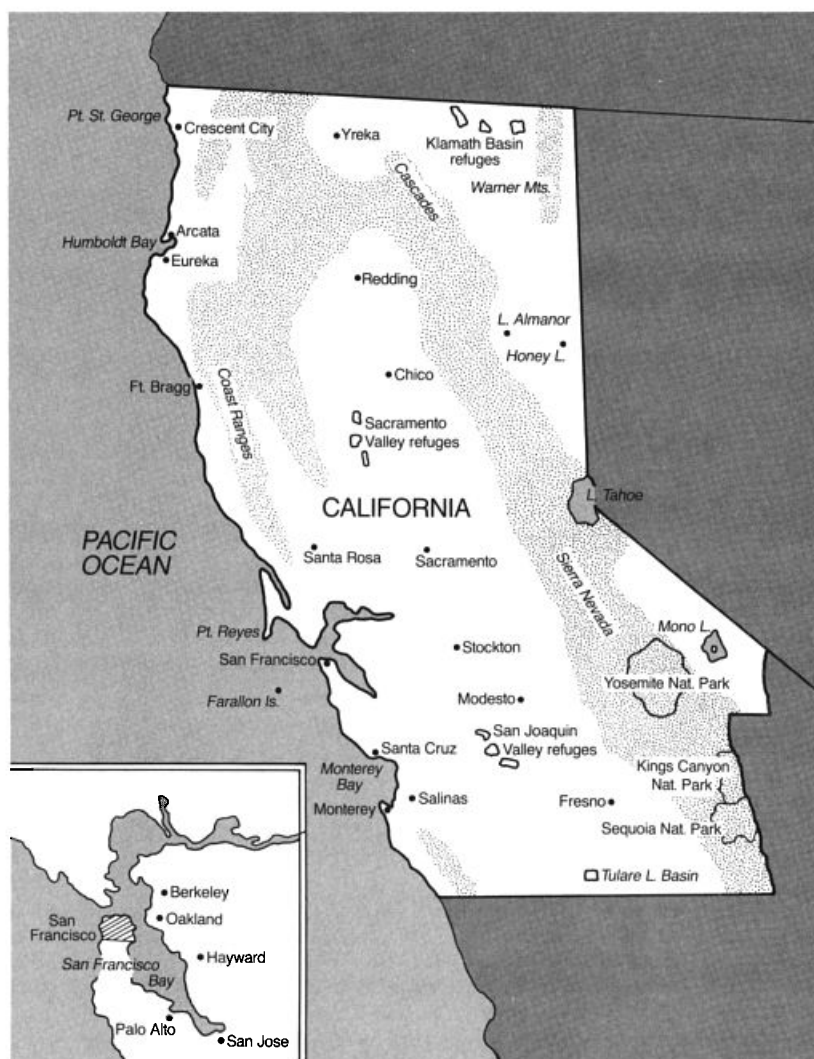
#### S.A.

**Tricolored Blackbirds** appear to be undertaking a major range expansion in eastern Oregon. In the summer of 1989, a Tricolored colony was located near Hermiton, *Umatilla* (*AB* 43:1345), along the Columbia R. and over 300 mi northeast of their regular breeding areas in *Klamath*. During the fall, 30 were found in Prineville, *Crook* (*AB* 44:154), which is approximately halfway between the *Umatilla* and *Klamath* sites. This winter, three were found with other blackbirds in *Deschutes* Jan. 6 (TC) and 70 were found in a large blackbird flock in *Jefferson* Feb. 18 (TC, CM, LR). Both of these locations are within 60 mi of the fall sighting. Until 1989, Tricoloreds were unknown in e. Oregon away from the Klamath Basin. The winter records represent the largest winter numbers recorded in Oregon.



# MIDDLE PACIFIC COAST REGION

Richard A. Erickson,  
Stephen F. Bailey, and  
David G. Yee



**A** February 13 gale and subsequent storms deposited many seabirds along our coast, both dead and alive. The emaciated condition of the casualties, plus elevated water temperatures at Southeast Farallon Island, led David G. Ainley to announce that a new El Niño phenomenon was starving the birds, but it was the storms that brought the weakened birds ashore. Notably affected in this wreck were Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel, Rhinoceros Auklet, and Horned Puffin.

Among waterfowl, the diving ducks drew the most attention in terms of number extremes and unusual occurrences. It was a poor season for almost all northern and montane irruptive passerines, but a good one for more southerly wintering insectivores.

We are grateful to Kurt F. Campbell for compiling the landbird reports for Erickson's analysis.

**ABBREVIATIONS** — C.A.S. = California Academy of Sciences; C.B.R.C. = California Bird Records Committee; C.V. = Central Valley; F.I. = S.E. Farallon I.; S.F. = San Francisco; ph. = photo *on file* with Regional Editors. All records from F.I. should be credited to Pt. Reyes Bird Observatory. Place names in *italics* are counties.

**LOONS TO FRIGATEBIRD** — A Pacific Loon at Clearlake Park Dec. 23–24 (L. Hood, JPM, JRW) and a Red-necked Grebe at Sulphur Bank Mine Dec. 5–9 (JRW *et al.*)

both furnished 2nd *Lake* records. Only two Laysan Albatrosses were reported: 5 mi w.s.w. of Pt. Pinos, *Monterey*, Jan. 25 (N. Black, J. Guerrero, *vide* AB) and 14 mi s.s.w. of Davenport, *Santa Cruz*, Jan. 27 (AB, DLSh, DGY). Northern Fulmars had increased before the gale brought 200 close to Pt. Pinos Feb. 13 (DR). A Flesh-footed Shearwater on Dec. 27 extended this species' almost annual occurrence on the Monterey Bay CBC (AB, DLSh). Astounding was the dark morph **Wedge-tailed Shearwater** over the surf at Drakes Beach, *Marin*, Dec. 16 (†DDeS, †C. Johnson, †R. Laws). If accepted by the C.B.R.C., it will be the 3rd or 4th for California (one is in review), but the first not in summer or early fall. Counts of Black-vented Shearwaters were small except for 300 offshore *Monterey* Feb. 11 (DLSh).

The February gale pushed many Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels into harbors and left others dead on beaches from *Sonoma* to *Monterey*. Beginning with 15+ on Feb. 13 (AB), *Monterey* Harbor counts peaked at 60 the next day (AB), before trailing off through Feb. 19 (m.ob.). Other high counts included 15 at F.I., 13+ in *Santa Cruz* Harbor (CKF), and five or more at Moss Landing (MFe), all Feb. 17.

The drought probably caused the unusual occurrence of Am. White Pelicans at numerous localities from the C.V. to the coast. For example, those on the *Monterey* Bay coastal plain may have been displaced from L. San Antonio, which was almost dry (AB). Brown Pelicans lingered in

numbers, with 2200 on Año Nuevo I., *San Mateo*, Dec. 10, and 150 still there Feb. 10 (both GJS). Farther north, 65 were in s. *Marin* Dec. 30 (*fide* DSI), and three wintered on Humboldt Bay (m.ob.). Increases in Double-crested Cormorants around Stockton (DGY) and Monterey (AB) may also be related to displacement owing to drought. A Magnificent Frigatebird at Pacific Grove Feb. 1 was reported as an *adult male* (C. Trollman).

**BITTERN TO WATERFOWL** — American Bittern reports from the coast and the C.V. again suggested low numbers that have been typical of recent years. These may be drought related but habitat loss also comes to mind. Charleston Slough's resident Snowy Egret x Little Blue Heron was present yet another Winter Season Dec. 4–Jan. 9 (WGB *et al.*). *Humboldt's* imm. Little Blue Heron apparently successfully wintered at Arcata Marsh to Jan. 29 (*fide* RAE) but an imm. **Reddish Egret** at Elkhorn Slough/Moss Landing, *Monterey*, Dec. 28–Jan. 25 (†C. Rodgers, †m.ob.) failed in its attempt. This dark morph bird was the Region's 2nd (one at the same locale in Fall 1967) and was the season's highlight for many until it was found dead Jan. 28 (AB, \*C.A.S.). Cattle Egret numbers were meager throughout the Region for the 5th consecutive winter.

The Region was blanked on Trumpeter Swan after 4 straight winters of multiple sightings. The 50,000+ Greater White-fronted Geese over Mandeville I., *San Joaquin*, Dec. 10 (DGY) constituted about one-quarter of the state's entire winter population. Such concentrations are very rare this late in the season, as they disperse widely after arriving in the state in early November (BED). Among 20 coastal Snow Geese was a blue morph at Pajaro Dunes, *Santa Cruz*, Jan. 15–Feb. 17 (ALE, CKf), only the 4th to be found on our Region's coastline. Twelve coastal Ross' Geese constituted a good showing but, surprisingly, no blue morphs were reported anywhere. A statewide census estimated 200,000 Ross' (as well as 300,000 Snows) wintered in the state, twice their mid-1970s estimates (*fide* BED).

*Santa Clara* and *Marin* each had two ♂ Eur. Green-winged Teals. The Season's waterfowl rarity was an imm. ♂ **Garganey** taken by a hunter at Mendota W.A., *Fresno*, Dec. 3. The bird's wing was seen at the Waterfowl Parts Collection Survey in February (BED). Such a find at the Survey is not unprecedented for the Region, as this group has provided the C.A.S. with another similarly plumed wing found Oct. 23, 1977, from *Solano* (*fide* SFB). However, both have yet to be reviewed by the C.B.R.C. Hybrids are always rare but a Blue-winged x Cinnamon Teal at Palo Alto Baylands Dec. 11 (†GFi, M. Plant) and a male Eur. x Am. Wigeon at Bolinas Lagoon Feb. 25 (†JW) were of mixtures now annually reported.



*Male Tufted Duck at San Francisco, California, January 14, 1990. Photograph/W. Edward Harper.*

Redhead reports were way down and among those received, only one had a total greater than 10: 32 at Berkeley Aquatic Park Feb. 14 (JMR *et al.*). The ♂ Ring-necked Duck x scaup sp. in Oakland Feb. 10 (JM) returned for its 6th winter. It was another bountiful winter for Tufted Duck with six in the greater S.F. Bay area. The imm. ♂ King Eider at Pt. Reyes pleased the masses by remaining



*Male King Eider at Point Reyes, California, January 27, 1990. Photograph/Ed Greaves.*

through the Period and molting into its fancy grown-up duds (ph. EDG, †m.ob.).

Harlequin Ducks formerly nested (and may still) in the Sierra Nevada but fewer than five had been reported in the C.V., so a ♀-plumaged bird at the Stockton sewage ponds Dec. 22 (†DGY) was quite a surprise. An ad. ♂ Oldsquaw at the Modesto sewage ponds, *Stanislaus*, Dec. 17–Feb. 2 (†WRA, †HMR *et al.*) was one of few Regional wintering birds for the interior and constituted a county first. Our only inland scoter was a ♂ Surf on the American R. in Sacramento Dec. 24 (†G. Koch *et al.*). Thirty-two Com. Goldeneyes at the Klamath R. mouth, *Del Norte*, Jan. 1 (ADB) made an impressive concentration for the n. coast. Barrow's Goldeneye was even more impressive along the c. coast where 102 at Vallejo's Glen Cove, *Solano*, Dec. 28 (JCL, V. Beckenhauer) was a Regional high count and 49 on the S. Marin CBC Dec. 30 doubled their previous high (*fide* DSI). The 1500 Com. Mergansers on Turlock L. Dec. 23 (HMR) was record high for *Stanislaus*. Two Red-breasted Mergansers at Sulphur Bank Mine, *Lake*, Dec. 16–17 (JRW, JPM, W. McKenny) and one along the Feather R. at Oroville, *Butte* (AM, †TDM) were inland rarities.

**RAPTORS** — Osprey, Bald Eagle, Red-shouldered Hawk, Merlin, and Peregrine Falcon all continued to increase, as did Turkey Vulture wintering on the n. coast. Immature Broad-winged Hawks were near Middletown, *Lake*, Dec. 9 (†R. Scalf) and at Bridgehaven, *Sonoma*, Dec. 28 (†JEP, BDP *et al.*). An adult was in S.F. Dec. 28 (†J.J. Keane). Swainson's Hawks continued to suggest wintering in *San Joaquin*. Seven dark morph birds on Empire Tract and Venice I. Dec. 10 showed no signs of migrating (DGY), and singles were seen in this area Dec. 16 (MJL, MFe) and Feb. 18 & 24 (DGY). Another Swainson's was reported from Mendota W.A., *Fresno*, Jan. 8 (T. Poole).

Ferruginous Hawks were patchy, scarce in many areas but up in others. Among the dark morphs was an adult at Jenner, *Sonoma*, Jan. 25, where it was rare on the coast (†JW). Rough-legged Hawks were scarce almost everywhere. A presumed escaped Crested Caracara flying over the S.F. Presidio Feb. 24 (T. Kellogg) added to the question of natural occurrence of the recent Regional records. There were 4–5 reports of Merlins of the prairie race *richardsoni* (ph. MRo, m.ob.). As this distinction is new to most California birders, we cannot know whether this race is increasing here.

**CRANES TO SHOREBIRDS** — Thirteen Sandhill Cranes at Modoc N.W.R. Feb. 24 (EckB) were the "first of

spring." In contrast to fall, we receive few spring arrival dates.

Two Semipalmated Plovers at Turlock L., *Stanislaus*, Dec. 10 (†HMR) and one in the Yolo Bypass, *Yolo*, Dec. 22–23 (†WEH) were rare for the interior but fit a pattern of late fall migrants. Coastal Mt. Plovers included one seen all Period at MacKerricher State Beach, *Mendocino* (DT—same bird as 2 years ago?), and *Monterey's* first coastal winter records: two at Moss Landing W.A. Jan. 11 (MDC, N. Cudney) and 16 s. of Moss Landing Jan. 27–28 (MJL, †DR *et al.*).

A Greater Yellowlegs at Hot Cr., *Mono*, Feb. 8 (ES) was only the 3rd in winter for the Mono Basin. The Leslie salt ponds in Newark, *Alameda*, have the reputation of holding large numbers of wintering Lesser Yellowlegs, but 73 Jan. 27 (WDS) apparently made the Region's highest concentration ever during winter. Exceptional was the Region's 2nd winter record of **Solitary Sandpiper** at Pinto L. *Santa Cruz*, Jan. 1–6 (GWP, LES, DSg). For the 5th straight winter a Sanderling inhabited the Modesto-Ceres sewage ponds, *Stanislaus*, Dec. 3–Feb. 2 (HMR). A fall Ruff near Lemoore, *Kings*, was last glimpsed Dec. 21 (KH). Another was observed at Hayward Regional Shoreline Feb. 24 into March (D. Bedford). We have averaged one Wilson's Phalarope a winter for the past 10. This winter we had two: Ceres sewage ponds, *Stanislaus*, Jan. 5 (†HMR) and s. of Huichica Cr. Wildlife Area, *Napa*, Jan. 8 (†M. Berner).

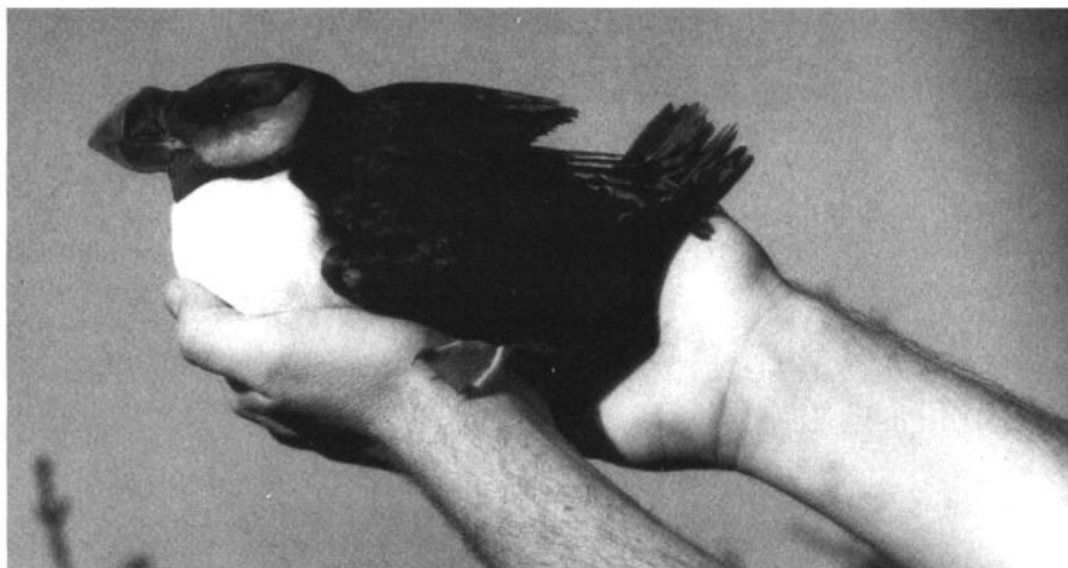
**GULLS TO ALCIDS** — Three Franklin's Gulls included one in mostly alternate plumage Feb. 15 at Crescent City (ADB). An ad. Bonaparte's Gull on Black Butte Res., *Tehama*, Jan. 3 was locally rare (BED). Mew Gulls are regular in the C.V. in small numbers, but 37 in Sacramento Feb. 18 (GEw, MDC) were presumably driven in by the storms. An ad. Ring-billed Gull in Pacific Grove Dec. 9–Jan. 27 (RER, DR) furnished the first acceptable record for the rocky shore of the Monterey Peninsula. Eight Glaucous Gulls were fewer than average. Black-legged Kittiwakes were few until a big increase around the mid-February storms, after which there were "several hundred" offshore *Monterey* (RT). Obviously storm-driven was the adult at the Stockton Yacht Harbor Feb. 21, *San Joaquin's* first and only the 2nd or 3rd for the C.V. (†DGY). Fourteen Caspian Terns spanning Dec. 10–Feb. 19 continued this species' winter increase. Inland one was as far north as Colusa N.W.R. Jan. 15 (RSTh).

Two Com. Murres ashore near Berkeley Feb. 14 and later (T. Condit), including a banded bird dead in a street, were releases from the nearby Bird Rescue Center. The disclosure that they routinely release offshore marine birds so far inside S.F. Bay was appalling, both for the welfare of the birds and for the assessment of natural distribution patterns. Two **Thick-billed Murres** remained at Monterey at least through Feb. 11 (m.ob., DLSh), with one through Feb. 19 (GHF, MP). Another visited Moss Landing Jan. 1–26 (†BS, †KLG, †GMcC). High counts of 66 Marbled and 35 Ancient murrelets were made on Half Moon Bay, *San Mateo* Dec. 16 (PJM). The dozens of Rhinoceros Auklets seen on our beaches Feb. 17–28 represented only a small fraction of the total wreck mortality. *Seventeen* Horned Puffins were also found, 12 of them dead or dying on beaches from *Humboldt* to *Santa Cruz* (ph. RS, m.ob., 7\*\*C.A.S., \*S.C.M.). One found alive in *San Mateo* was rehabilitated and released at Devil's Slide in March (K.S. Anderson). Live birds included two at F.I. Feb. 17, one at Pigeon Pt. Feb. 21–22 (BS, MLR), and one 5 mi w. of Pt. Reyes Feb. 25 (S. Anderson).

**OWLS TO WOODPECKERS** — A Burrowing Owl near Ft. Bragg Oct. 25 to the end of the Period (DT) and a Long-eared Owl in Manchester Dec. 30 (†JRW) were *Mendocino* rarities. North of Hollister, the remains of a Short-eared Owl found Feb. 6 (DES) were said to represent the first record for *San Benito* (KVV). The only Vaux's Swift seen was in S.F. Feb. 13 (JMR, FGB).

A ♂ Anna's Hummingbird collecting nest material in Sacramento Feb. 1 (TDM) was participating in a nontraditional sex-role. Two Costa's Hummingbirds were found in the East S.F. Bay Area and one in *Monterey*; the distribution of this species was recently summarized by Baltosser (*Western Birds* 20:41–62). A ♂ Allen's Hummingbird *displaying* for a ♀ *Selasphorus* at Bodega Bay Dec. 21–28 (DE, BDP) was disturbing to those of us who attempt to categorize records in part based on the behavior of individual birds. I am unaware of previous records of courtship behavior among presumably wintering *Selasphorus* in this Region. A ♀ Allen's was already on a nest at Mt. San Bruno, *San Mateo* Jan. 28 (J. McCormack). And last among the hummingbird curiosities this winter was a potential Costa's x *Selasphorus* hybrid (a male, of course) at Bodega Bay Dec. 9–31 (RS, †RAR).

Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers again outnumbered Red-naped this winter with one in *Humboldt*, two in *Marin*,



*Horned Puffin at Point Reyes Beach, Marin County, California, February 21, 1990. Photograph/Rich Stallcup.*



and a returning bird in Solano. Three Red-naped were all in the S.F. Bay Area and unidentified birds (Yellow-bellied/Red-naped) were in *Solano* and *Trinity*. Red-breasted Sapsuckers were also newsworthy. One at F.I. Feb. 18 furnished the first winter record there and one showing "all characteristics" of the race *ruber* at Tomales Bay S.P. Jan. 10–11 was said to provide the first such record for *Marin* (RS). *San Benito's* first Williamson's Sapsucker was seen in Bitterwater Cyn. Dec. 30 (KiK, *vide* DSg). A Pileated Woodpecker was seen again in *Alameda* at Redwood Regional Park Dec. 17 (DPM).

**FLYCATCHERS TO VIREOS** — Second Regional winter records were provided by a **Willow Flycatcher** in S.F. Jan. 20 (+SWM) and a Least Flycatcher near Inverness, *Marin*, Dec. 16 onward (BDP, ph. +RS, +JW *et al.*). Although Least has been found many times in winter in s. California, this was only the 4th winter record of Willow in the state. The identity of the only other *Empidonax* seen ("Western"/Hammond's? near Pescadero Jan. 2–10, *vide* JM) was never resolved. Eastern Phoebe was found at Lost L., *Fresno*, Jan. 28 (*vide* RHG) and near Prunedale, *Monterey*, Feb. 19–26 (+KVV). As with most of its predecessors, the Region's 6th **Dusky-capped Flycatcher** was a cooperative individual seen by many at Pine L. Park, S.F., Dec. 28 to the end of the Period (+DPM, DSg, ph. +m.ob.). Ash-throated Flycatcher is almost as rare in winter; singles were at Salinas Jan. 9 (C. Gottlund), Arcata Jan. 13–Feb. 2 (J. Booker, GSL, +RAE *et al.*), and American R. College, *Sacramento*, Feb. 4–18 (R. Storey, MJL *et al.*). Please provide documentation for any winter *Myiarchus*. A Tropical Kingbird at Moss Landing Jan. 2 (PJM) was the only one seen.

Two Horned Larks at Ft. Bragg Dec. 1 (DT) were in *Mendocino*, where the species' status is unclear. They are common to the south and very rare to the north as wintering birds. A Barn Swallow near Moss Landing Dec. 11 (DLSu) was considered a late migrant (DR) and one at Pescadero Marsh, *San Mateo*, Feb. 18 showed characteristics of Eurasian forms (+JM; see also AB 43:1369).

Beginning in late October and extending through the Winter, Steller's Jays were found at unusually low elevations in the Cascade/Sierra foothills and adjacent C.V. from *Shasta* to *Fresno*. Most notable were up to four in the Sutter Buttes Dec. 28–Feb. 28 (PBS, BED), the first ever recorded there. A **Blue Jay** was reported near Hawkin's Bar, *Trinity*, Feb. 9 or 10 with scant details (+R. Cinnamon); if accepted by the C.B.R.C. this would represent only the 12th record for California. Two Yellow-billed Magpies in Fall R. Valley, *Shasta*, Dec. 16 were considered "unheard of in . . . Black-billed country" (BY, CY).

On Mt. Saint Helena Dec. 2, two Mt. Chickadees were *Sonoma's* first (BDP). American Dippers do disperse, but nevertheless one flying high over a canyon at Tomales Bay S.P. Feb. 25 was indeed an "odd sight" (JW).

Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were more widely reported than usual in the n.w. portion of the Region with one in *Del Norte*, four in *Humboldt*, one in *Lake*, and three in *Sonoma*. Five or six in central *Stanislaus* to Dec. 21 were also more than expected (HMR). Above average numbers of Mt. Bluebirds were in the Coast Ranges s. of S.F. Bay, two in *Napa* (*vide* RbL) and one on Pt. Reyes Jan. 30–Feb. 3 (+JMR, S. Shafer) were vagrants, but reduced numbers were found in central and e. *San Joaquin* (DGY).

The myth that **Swainson's Thrush** would not winter in California was shattered when a fresh window-killed individual was found on the Humboldt St. Univ. campus in Arcata Jan. 24 (\*H.S.U.). Although this species has been

reported many times on CBCs, one Dec. 1, 1964, and a crippled bird Dec. 15–16, 1979, both in *San Diego* (Garrett & Dunn. 1981. *Birds of Southern California, Status and Distribution*. L.A. Aud. Soc.) were the only previous reliable Winter records. Observers beware, the floodgates are not now open, and any future claims of this species outside normal temporal patterns will still be handled with the utmost care.

The **Bendire's Thrasher** near Acampo, *San Joaquin*, was last seen Mar. 3 (DGY). Another wagtail may have to be left unidentified since descriptions of the **White/Black-backed Wagtail** at Pajaro Dunes, *Santa Cruz*, Dec. 3–11 (J. Warriner, +G. Ledec, +R. Kovak) appear inconclusive (*vide* JM). Some observers may wish these forms were never considered separate.

Five Solitary Vireos were more than expected. Two in *Humboldt*, one in S.F., and one on Mt. Diablo were all December *cassini*, and the 5th, at Reichmuth Park, *Sacramento*, Nov. 3–Mar. 7 (+TDM), was of the race *plumbeus*. A Warbling Vireo in Milpitas, *Santa Clara*, Dec. 17 (+PMB, E. Laak) furnished about the 6th winter period report for the Region. Like most others, this bird was never seen after December and appears not to have successfully overwintered.

**WOOD WARBLERS TO FINCHES** — Warblers rebounded after last winter's poor showing. *Humboldt* was especially productive and accounted for nearly half of all records of seasonally rare species. Coastal reports included 10 Tennessees (one a Dec. 1 arrival at F.I.), 21 Nashvilles, three Yellow-billed (very low), 53 Palms, 14 Black-and-whites, and 10 Wilson's. The only inland reports of these species were of two Wilson's in *Sacramento*. The most unusual sightings were of a **Lucy's Warbler** near Pescadero Jan. 1–28 (*San Mateo's* 2nd—+RSTh *et al.*), a Chestnut-sided Warbler near Smith River, *Del Norte*, Dec. 17–30 (BED *et al.*), Am. Redstarts in S.F. Nov. 27–Feb. 21 (R. Kovak *et al.*) and on the Big Sur coast, *Monterey*, Feb. 14–21 (M. Deal), an **Ovenbird** near Manchester Dec. 13–30 (2nd Regional winter record and first ever for *Mendocino* — N. Menken, R. Balzer, +JRW *et al.*), and three N. Waterthrushes (Arcata Marsh Sept. 3–Apr. 13—GSL *et al.*, a returning bird near Ferndale, *Humboldt*, Jan. 13—JCS; and *Sacramento's* first, near Cal Expo on the American R. Parkway Dec. 23–Jan. 1—BWb, +DGY, +TDM *et al.*).

Summer Tanagers were at Pine L. Park, S.F., from Dec. 28 onward (+DPM *et al.*) and Freedom, *Santa Cruz*, Jan. 1 (a returning bird—BBrr). Flowering eucalyptus concentrated three W. Tanagers in Palo Alto Dec. 18 (*vide* WGB), the only other one reported was in Freedom Jan. 1 (BBrr). Grosbeaks fit the typical pattern this winter with Rose-breasted at Pt. Lobos State Reserve, *Monterey*, Dec. 4–15 (BJW) and Sunny Brae, *Humboldt*, Jan. 28–Feb. 5 (SWH *et al.*), a Black-headed near Pescadero Jan. 6 (MiW), and one left unidentified in Tiburon Dec. 30 (+JCo).

Rufous-sided Towhees rarely elicit comments in this Region as it is normally difficult to distinguish migrant from resident individuals. This year was an exception in the central Region where record CBC totals obtained in *Sacramento*, *Stockton*, *Benicia*, and s. *Marin* and additional anecdotal evidence from *San Joaquin* indicated exceptional numbers were present. Clay-colored Sparrows were very selective in their appearances this Season with three each in *Humboldt* and *San Mateo*. Three of these fit the usual pattern and were never seen after the CBC season but one in Blue Lake, *Humboldt*, Dec. 1–Apr. 23 (with sporadic singing from Jan. 20 on—MM *et al.*) and two in *San Mateo* in February (+RSTh *et al.*) were clearly

overwintering. A Vesper Sparrow near Ft. Dick, *Del Norte*, Dec. 8–Feb. 16 (ADB) and two at the Ukiah sewage ponds Dec. 23 (†JRW) were in unexpected wintering areas. A Grasshopper Sparrow at Millerton Pt., Tomales Bay, Jan. 22 apparently furnished the first winter record for well-worked *Marin* (RS). Four Sharp-tailed Sparrows wintered at Bolinas Lagoon and three or four at Palo Alto Baylands.

Bright Fox Sparrows, presumably of the race *zaboria* (see AB 44:41), were found in *Humboldt* (two—RAE), *San Mateo* (two—†RSTh *et al.*), and *Sacramento* (TDM) while only one *altivagans* type was reported (*Sacramento*—TDM). *Zaboria* is certainly more likely than *altivagans* to draw the attention of observers, thus skewing statistics in its favor. Nevertheless, contrary to what has been written, *zaboria* appears to be the predominant rusty form along the coast (especially in the north) while the reverse is true inland, and possibly on the s. coast. And what of the relative abundance of “sooty-brown” vs. “gray-headed” forms? Readers are encouraged to send in their thoughts and observations. Swamp and White-throated sparrows were reported in record numbers Regionwide, with 100+ and 150+ respectively. *Humboldt* again outproduced all other counties. A total of 14 Swamp Sparrows was found in such unexpected counties as *Napa*, *Solano*, *San Joaquin*, and *Santa Clara*. Eleven White-throated Sparrows were together in Inverness Dec. 16 (KH). Seven Harris’ Sparrows were found along the coast from *Marin* north and three or four were in *Shasta/Butte*. The only Chestnut-collared Longspur was near Ferndale, *Humboldt*, Dec. 31 (RLeV).

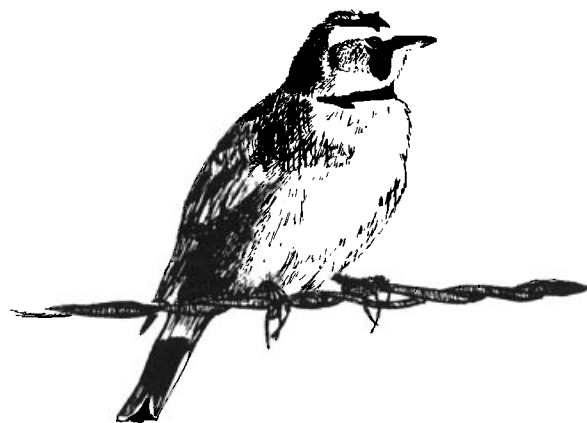
Up to four Yellow-headed Blackbirds at Moss Landing Jan. 4–Feb. 11 (JB, DEG) and singles at Lower Klamath N.W.R. Dec. 6 (ph. SEF) and Clearlake Dec. 9 (JRW) were unusual in winter away from the C.V. A Rusty Blackbird near Pescadero Jan. 7–Feb. 18 (J. Murphy, BS) may well have been one of two birds that wintered in that area in 1986 and 1987. The pair of Great-tailed Grackles in S.F. continued to be seen through December (*vide* JM); both birds have been known present over 10 years. A Hooded Oriole was at Reichmuth Park, Sacramento, Oct. 30–Dec. 23 (†TDM). Surprisingly, only four “Bullock’s” Orioles were reported (three from *Humboldt/Del Norte*), plus a possible “Baltimore” Oriole in *Marin*. Presumably others were simply unreported, especially in s. coastal areas.

Cassin’s Finches made a strong appearance in the S.F. Bay Area with four seen as follows: Mt. Diablo Dec. 3 (KGH, RJR), F.I. Dec. 11, Sky Londa, *San Mateo*, Jan. 1 (MCM), and Livermore Jan. 25 (†ALE). Significant Lawrence’s Goldfinch sightings included up to 25 at Hopland Field Station, *Mendocino*, in December with seven still present by Season’s end (RJK), 12 at Monte Bello Open Space Preserve, *Santa Clara*, Dec. 18 (ph. CB), and hundreds at Henry Coe S.P., *Santa Clara*, in December and January (JY, AL).

**CORRIGENDUM** — The bird reported as a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in San Jose last winter (43:363) should be changed to a Yellow-bellied/Red-naped Sapsucker.

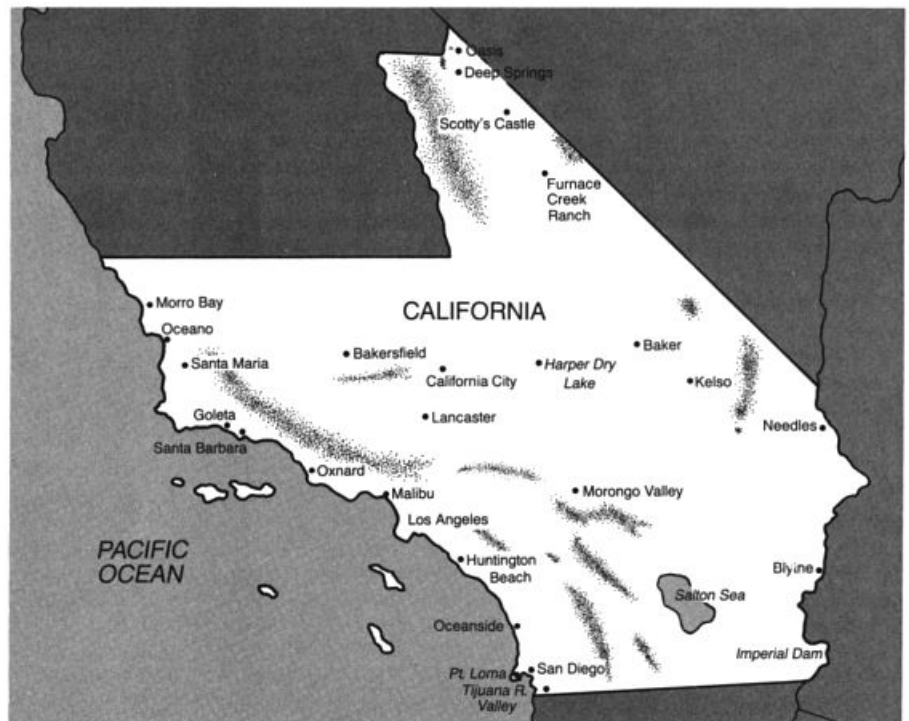
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# SOUTHERN PACIFIC COAST REGION

Guy McCaskie



Dry weather continued on through the winter, the rains in February giving little relief to the drought conditions. Most wintering species appeared to be present in average numbers, with above-average numbers noted for Hermit Thrushes, Varied Thrushes, and Purple Finches. An interesting variety of flycatchers was found, and the numbers of our rare but regular wintering species of wood warblers were about normal. A good number and variety of tanagers and orioles occurred along the coast, and some sparrows of interest were found. Highlights among the rarities were a cooperative Curve-billed Thrasher near the Salton Sea, and an equally cooperative Louisiana Waterthrush in San Diego.

**ABBREVIATIONS** — C.L.N.W.C. = China Lake Naval Weapons Center in extreme n.e. Kern Co.; F.C.R. = Furnace Creek Ranch in Death Valley, Inyo Co.; N.E.S.S. = north end of the Salton Sea, Riverside Co.; S.B.C.M. = San Bernardino County Museum; S.C.R.E. = Santa Clara River Estuary near Ventura; S.D.N.H.M. = San Diego Natural History Museum; S.E.S.S. = south end of the Salton Sea, Imperial County; U.C.S.B. = University of California in Santa Barbara. Place names in *italics* are counties. As virtually all rarities found in s. California are seen by numerous observers, only the observer initially identifying the bird is included. Documentation is on file with the California Bird Records Committee (c/o Don Roberson, 282 Grove Acre, Pacific Grove, CA 93950) for all rarities listed in this report, and such records submitted without documentation are not published.

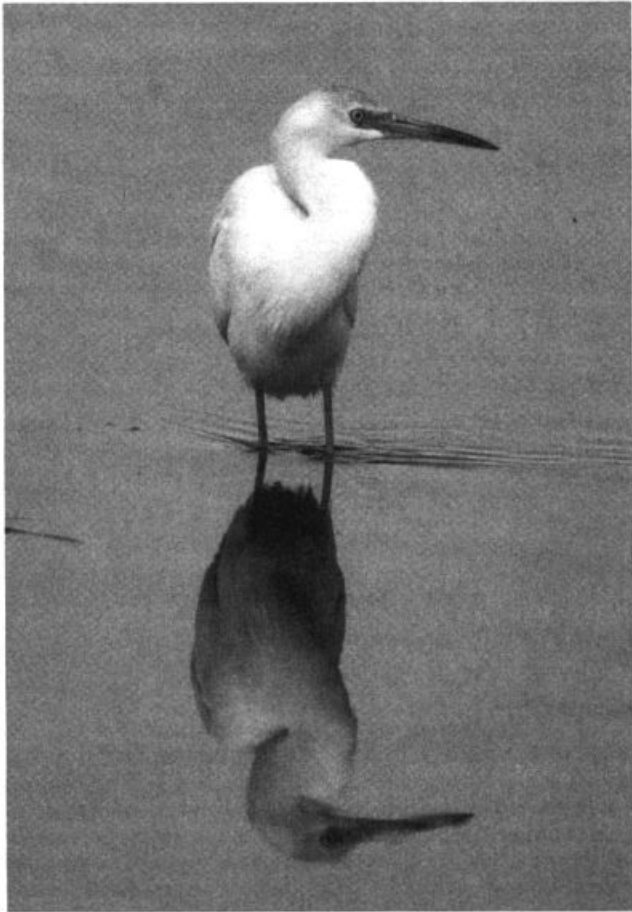
**GREBES TO PELICANS** — Reports of Horned Grebes inland included 50–100 on L. Perris, *Riverside*, all winter (RMcK), this species being regular in such numbers on the large freshwater reservoirs; one at S.E.S.S. Dec. 21–Jan. 27 (GMcC) was in an area where this species is considered rare.

As may well be normal, small numbers of Short-tailed Shearwaters were present offshore including four off San

Diego Jan. 28 (JO'B) along with one or two somewhat regularly there through Mar. 5 (JO'B). Black-vented Shearwaters were relatively common offshore as indicated by counts of 100 off Morro Bay Dec. 10 (TME), 2500 off Pt. Mugu, *Ventura*, Dec. 3 (REW), up to 4000 off n. *Los Angeles* in December (KLG), and as many as 2000 off La Jolla Jan. 13 (GMcC). The strong westerly winds of mid-February pushed large numbers of Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels close to shore as indicated by counts of 250 off Morro Bay Feb. 14–17 (JMcd). In addition, a number were found farther south than usual, including two off the Santa Maria R. mouth, *Santa Barbara*, Feb. 18 (BS), one off Pt. Arguello, *Santa Barbara*, Feb. 16 (AA), up to four in the harbor at Santa Barbara Feb. 14–16 (FS), three more off Santa Barbara Feb. 18 (AA), one found dying on the beach in La Jolla, *San Diego*, Feb. 14 (*fide* PU,\* S.D.N.H.M.), and two more seen from shore there Feb. 19 (GMcC, REW).

American White Pelicans were more numerous and widespread than usual along the entire coast this winter as indicated by such reports as 90 on L. Piru, *Ventura*, Nov. 2–Mar. 11 (RJM), over 100 in Anaheim all winter (DRW), up to 65 in Carlsbad, *San Diego*, during February (JK), and up to 100 on nearby San Elijo Lagoon at the same time (LS); they were in greatly reduced numbers on the Salton Sea from those reported in recent years, suggesting a major change is taking place at the latter locality. A Brown Pelican at S.E.S.S. Dec. 6 (RMcK) was the only one found inland this winter.

**HERONS TO RAPTORS** — A Great Egret near Independence, *Inyo*, Feb. 1–26 (T & JH) was among very few to be found in this area of California in winter. An imm. Little Blue Heron on Upper Newport Bay, *Orange*, Jan. 28–Mar. 11 (AD) was the only one found away from San Diego. The ad. Reddish Egret that has spent the past 7 years on s. San Diego Bay remained through Jan. 23 (MBS). A White-faced Ibis near Los Osos, *San Luis Obispo*, Dec. 27 (EE) was a little farther north than usual for this time of year, and in an area where considered very



*Immature Little Blue Heron at Upper Newport Bay, California, February 8, 1990. Photograph/James R. Gallagher.*

rare at any season.

Up to six Fulvous Whistling-Ducks at S.E.S.S. during December and January (GMcC) were most unusual, since this species is considered exceptionally rare as a wintering bird in California. A Tundra Swan at Saratoga Springs at the s. end of Death Valley Nat. Mon., *San Bernardino*, Dec. 27–28 (FT) and another at Galileo Hill Dec. 30 (MTH) were at unusual localities; two Tundra Swans near Brawley, *Imperial*, Jan. 16 (NH), another near Corona, *Riverside*, Jan. 23 (CMcG), and an immature swan believed to be of this species near Chino, *San Bernardino*, Feb. 10–12 (MAP) were unusually far south. An adult blue-morph Ross' Goose, a very rare color variant, at S.E.S.S. Feb. 24 (REW) was the first to be reported in s. California. A Cackling Canada Goose, quite rare in s. California, was in Encino, *Los Angeles*, Jan. 10 (JLD).

Twenty-five Eur. Wigeon were reported, including 10 males together in San Jacinto, *Riverside*, Jan. 7 (RMcK), giving us an average number for this time of year. A ♂ Eurasian Green-winged Teal was in San Luis Obispo Jan. 14 (GPS), one in Goleta, *Santa Barbara*, Dec. 16–Jan. 30 (AB) was evidently the same bird as present here during the past 8 winters, and a 3rd was in San Diego Feb. 17–19 (JO'B). Four Tufted Ducks were reported: a female in Saticoy, *Ventura*, Dec. 21–Mar. 10 (RJM), a male on Pyramid L., *Los Angeles*, Jan. 28 through February (JLD), a male on the Elderberry Forebay of Castaic Res., *Los Angeles*, Jan. 28 (JLD) for its 2nd winter, and another male on Puddingstone Res., *Los Angeles*, Jan. 14–27 (KR). Up to four Harlequin Ducks on n. Vandenberg Air Force Base, *Santa*



*Female Tufted Duck at Saticoy, California, winter 1989-1990. Photograph/Don Desjardin.*

*Barbara*, Dec. 17–Jan. 1 (KH) were unexpected considering the scarcity of this species in s. California. An Oldsquaw at S.E.S.S. Feb. 11 (JO'B) with two there Feb. 17–24 (EAC) were inland, and 12 more were found along the coast with one or two in San Diego all winter being the southernmost.

Twenty Black Scoters remained along the coast of Vandenberg Air Force Base throughout the period after some 50 were found there in November (KH), but the species was virtually unrecorded elsewhere in the Region. Unexpected was the presence of up to eight Surf Scoters at S.E.S.S. throughout the period (GMcC) and another at Salton City, *Imperial*, Feb. 11 (HEC), this species being most unusual inland other than as a migrant. Two to four White-winged Scoters at N.E.S.S. Jan. 10–Feb. 28 (RMcK) were equally unexpected. An imm. ♂ Barrow's Goldeneye near Santa Maria Dec. 1–Jan. 6 (KJZ) was a long-awaited first for *Santa Barbara*. Interesting hybrids included single ♂ Eurasian X American Wigeon in Goleta Feb. 15–Mar. 29 (SEF), Pt. Mugu Dec. 3–Jan. 20 (RJM), Encino Jan. 22–Feb. 6 (JLD), and San Jacinto Jan. 7 (RMcK), and a Green-winged Teal X Am. Wigeon in San Jacinto Jan. 7 (RMcK).

An Osprey near Independence Jan. 1 (MTH) was at an unusual locality for this time of year. An imm. Bald Eagle at Silver L. near downtown Los Angeles Feb. 10–25 (KLG) was at a most unusual locality, one at Upper Newport Bay Feb. 3 (DRW) was a marked bird released on Catalina I., and another near Brawley Jan. 27–29 (MAP) was in an area where considered casual. An ad. Harris' Hawk at Finney L. near S.E.S.S. Jan. 2–Feb. 24 (DPa) was most likely an escapee, but could have wandered from the reintroduced population along the Lower Colorado R., or possibly strayed from the native populations in Arizona or Baja California; this species nested around S.E.S.S. until the early 1950s. A Red-shouldered Hawk in Bard Dec. 29 (JLD) was one of very few ever found along the Lower Colorado R. An ad. Zone-tailed Hawk on the Plano Trabuco near Mission Viejo, *Orange*, Dec. 12 (PDeS) was undoubtedly the same individual that had spent at least part of the 4 previous winters here. A Harlan's Red-tailed Hawk around Irvine Jan. 14–Mar. 3 (BED) was the 2nd to be found in *Orange*. Reports of Rough-legged Hawks were fewer than usual, but included an adult at S.E.S.S. during December and January (GMcC).

**SHOREBIRDS TO ALCIDS** — A Sandhill Crane at Upper Newport Bay Jan. 27–28 (AD) was only the 2nd to be found in *Orange* in 30 years. Reports of Lesser Golden-Plovers, all believed to be of the Asiatic form *fulva*, included up to five near Santa Maria throughout the period (BHi), up to seven on n. Vandenberg Air Force Base all winter (KH), one near Ventura Jan. 1–7 (CR), five near Pt. Mugu Dec. 16 (RJM), and up to 11 in Seal Beach through at least Mar. 17 (DRW), these mostly being at localities where this species is regularly found wintering. Two or three Mountain Plovers in Encino Dec. 31–Jan. 1 (IW) were on the s. coastal slope where now considered very rare. A Solitary Sandpiper in Temescal Canyon near Corona Jan. 23–26 (CMcG) and another in Santee, *San Diego*, Mar. 6 (CGE) were totally unexpected since there were only 6 previously accepted records of this species in s. California in winter. A Ruddy Turnstone, most unusual inland in winter, was at S.E.S.S. Dec. 18 (JML). Ten Sanderlings on the Salton Sea in Salton City Jan. 14 (GMcC) were undoubtedly wintering at this inland locality. A ♂ Ruff was inland in Bakersfield Dec. 31–Jan. 28 (RS), another spending its 8th winter on s. San Diego Bay remained through Mar. 18 (GMcC), and a female was in Imperial Beach, *San Diego*, Dec. 16–31 (JO). A Wilson's Phalarope at S.E.S.S. Dec. 18–Jan. 28 (JML) and another in Salton City Feb. 11 (HEC) were probably wintering locally. Over 1000 Red Phalaropes seen moving south off Vandenberg Air Force Base Jan. 15 (KH) made a noteworthy concentration.

A first-winter Franklin's Gull, most unusual in winter, was present in Chula Vista, *San Diego*, Jan. 16–Feb. 11 (EL). A first-winter **Common Black-headed Gull** seen with Bonaparte's Gulls off Point Loma Jan. 23 (JO'B) was the first to be found in *San Diego*. An ad. Little Gull photographed in Carpinteria, *Santa Barbara*, Jan. 8–9 (LRB) was apparently a different bird from that present at nearby S.C.R.E. in November. An ad. Mew Gull photographed at the Buena Vista Aquatic Recreation Area near Bakersfield Feb. 3–4 (MOC) was the first for *Kern*; two at N.E.S.S. Feb. 24 (CMcG) and another at S.E.S.S. Feb. 24 (MAP) were also far inland. A dark-mantled gull in Riverside Jan. 24

(CMcG, RMcK) was felt to be an ad. Lesser Black-backed Gull, but had an entirely white head. As appears to be normal, a few Glaucous-winged Gulls were present as far inland as the Salton Sea, where at least five individuals were found during the period. Three Glaucous Gulls were reported: a first-winter bird photographed on n. Vandenberg Air Force Base Feb. 5 (AA), another seen near Otay, *San Diego*, Jan. 25–Mar. 10 (DPa), and an adult inland at S.E.S.S. Dec. 21–24 (GMcC).

Four hundred Rhinoceros Auklets in the San Pedro Channel off *Los Angeles* Feb. 25 (KLG) made a large number for s. California waters.

**DOVES TO WOODPECKERS** — Band-tailed Pigeons were more numerous than usual in the coastal lowlands as indicated by such reports as "thousands" around Atascadero all winter (KJZ), a flock of 1000 near San Luis Obispo Feb. 17 (JF), numerous flocks of up to 100 birds in Malibu Canyon, *Los Angeles*, during December (KLG), flocks of up to 150 in Fullerton, *Orange*, throughout the period (DRW), and 170 near Del Mar, *San Diego*, Jan. 18 (BZ); however, they appeared to be absent from the mountains of *San Diego*. A Band-tailed Pigeon in Brawley Feb. 24 (GMcC) was only the 4th ever found in that area of California, and at a most unusual time of year for a vagrant. Single White-winged Doves were found along the coast near Santa Maria Dec. 17 (KP), in Goleta Dec. 30 (PEL), and in Ventura Oct. 23–Jan. 20 (JL); 50 scattered along the w. edge of the desert in e. *San Diego* throughout the period (D & LS) were in the only area where this species is regularly found in winter in California. The presence of up to seven Inca Doves in Brawley after Jan. 21 (PP) extended the range of this species in the Imperial Valley some 30 mi northward from Calexico. Two ♂ Ruddy Ground-Doves at F.C.R. Apr. 1 (MAP) had been present since the fall.

A Lesser Nighthawk in Anaheim Feb. 28 (DPu) was apparently too early for a spring migrant, hence best treated as a wintering bird. A Com. Poorwill near Santa Barbara Dec. 30 (GT) furnished an interesting record for winter. A Vaux's Swift at Pt. Mugu Dec. 22 (RJM) was unexpected, but a flock of 10–15 near Oceanside in



Adult Little Gull (front/center) at Carpinteria, California, January 8, 1990. Photograph/ Allyn Bissell.

December and February (GMcC) was undoubtedly wintering, this being the place where similar numbers are found every winter. A ♀ hummingbird identified as a Black-chinned in La Jolla Jan. 13 (JO'B) was undoubtedly wintering locally. A ♂ Costa's Hummingbird in Bakersfield Nov. 26–Feb. 18 (MOC) was a little farther north than usual for winter.

Lewis' Woodpeckers were widely scattered throughout the Region, including the s.e. portion, where up to six could be found in Brawley during January and February (PP). Three Acorn Woodpeckers at the Mt. Whitney Fish Hatchery near Independence Feb. 11 (T & JH) were outside the species' known range, but at a locality where others have been found in previous winters, and following a heavy flight in the fall. Reports of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers included an immature near Santa Maria Dec. 12 (M & MB), a male near Solvang, *Santa Barbara*, Jan. 7–26 (RPH), an immature in Goleta Dec. 3–26 (AB), a male in Desert Hot Springs, *Riverside*, Dec. 23–Jan. 7 (CMcG), and a female in La Jolla Nov. 22–Feb. 16 (JoM). A ♀ Williamson's Sapsucker in Piru, *Ventura*, Feb. 25 (KK), another in Anaheim Mar. 2–3 (DRW), and a male at La Jolla Dec. 22–Feb. 16 (JoM) were in the coastal lowlands, where most unusual. Northern Flickers were far more conspicuous than usual, indicating more than the usual numbers were present this winter.

**FLYCATCHERS TO SWALLOWS** — An Olive-sided Flycatcher in Santa Barbara Oct. 20–Dec. 30 (LB) was evidently the same bird as present here during the past 5 winters. A Greater Pewee was present in Malibu Dec. 10–16 (KLG), and another in San Diego Dec. 16 through February (DHe) was apparently the same bird as present here during the past 2 winters. A Willow Flycatcher photographed at Point Mugu Jan. 13–Feb. 11 (RJM) was only the 3rd to be found in California in winter. A Least Flycatcher, a casual straggler to California, was present in Ventura Jan. 1–Mar. 11 (PEL). The only Hammond's Fly-

catcher reported this winter was one in Fullerton Jan 23–Feb. 23 (DRW). A Dusky Flycatcher, exceptionally rare in winter, was at Puddingstone Res. Jan. 24–Feb. 11 (JSu, MAP), and another near Bakersfield Dec. 1–3 (JCW) was evidently an exceptionally late fall migrant. Five Gray Flycatchers were found, all in the southern portion of the Region as expected. Only four "W. Flycatchers," assumed to be Pacific-slope Flycatchers, were found, all being along the coast as expected.

Single E. Phoebes were present in San Simeon Jan 7–Mar. 14 (JA), Goleta Dec. 26–Jan. 23 (AB), Santa Barbara Nov. 1–Feb. 19 (RWH) for its 2nd winter, Arcadia, *Los Angeles*, Dec. 16–Mar. 2 (BKC), and Irvine Dec. 4–Feb. 28 (DRW). A ♀ Vermilion Flycatcher that spent the winter at F.C.R. (T & JH) and a male near Santa Maria Dec. 15–Feb. 11 (PEL) were both at the n. extreme of the species' range. The only Ash-throated Flycatchers reported were one in Huntington Beach Nov. 15–Mar. 21 (DRW) and another at Finney L. near S.E.S.S. Feb. 8 (JiM). A Tropical Kingbird at Los Serranos L. near Chino Jan. 23 (CMcG) was one of very few ever found inland in California, but at the same location where one spent the winter of 1981–1982, and was reported again Feb. 4, 1984. Single Tropical Kingbirds were also present along the coast in San Simeon Jan 11–14 (BS), Goleta Oct. 4–Feb. 25 (HPR), and Santa Barbara Dec. 23 (HM). The **Thick-billed Kingbird** found spending its 8th winter near Tustin was still present Mar 31 (LRH).

A N. Rough-winged Swallow in Ventura Dec. 23–25 (RJM) was one of few to be found along the coast of California in winter. One or two Bank Swallows seen near Niland, *Imperial*, Dec. 10–21 (MAP) were probably wintering locally.

**JAYS TO VIREOS** — A Steller's Jay at San Marcos Pass near Santa Barbara Dec. 29 (MAH) and another in Encino Jan. 17–Feb. 3 (JLD) were both well away from the closest areas of normal occurrence. A flock of 150 Pinyon Jays found in the Laguna Mts. Jan. 6 (D & MH) with two flocks numbering over 200 there the following day (JO, D & LS) and smaller numbers through Jan. 12 (GMcC) established one of very few records for this species in *San Diego*; one in Blythe Jan. 7 (KR) was at a most unusual locality.

A Winter Wren in Los Angeles Dec. 29 (GB), another in Long Beach Dec. 8 (DRW), and a 3rd in Laguna Hills, *Orange*, Dec. 10 (DRW) were the southernmost along the coast this winter. A sad piece of news was that the last of the remaining habitat for the California Gnatcatchers on the Palos Verdes Peninsula is slated to be bulldozed, thus extirpating this species from *Los Angeles*. Hermit Thrushes were clearly more numerous and widespread than usual. Some observers felt Am. Robins were present in larger than normal numbers, this supported in part by concentrations such as the 2500 coming to a roost in Redlands Jan. 4–14 (RMcK). Varied Thrushes were clearly more numerous and widespread than normal with the southernmost being about 25 found in *Orange*, another 10 found in *San Diego*, and one present in Whitewater Canyon, *Riverside*, Dec. 23–Jan. 22 (DAH).

Sage Thrashers were widely scattered, being found in some unexpected localities as indicated by three near Big Pine, *Inyo*, Dec. 31–Feb. 26 (T & JH) and three different birds along the coast. A Bendire's Thrasher, unusual in winter, was near Blythe Jan. 1–7 (JSt, MAP) with a second there Jan. 7 (MAP). A **Curve-billed Thrasher** in Brawley Jan. 21–Mar. 3 (PP) was only the 6th found in California away from the Colorado R. Valley. A Sprague's Pipit on the Plano Trabuco near Mission Viejo Dec. 2–Feb



Willow Flycatcher at Point Mugu, California, January 21, 1990. The species is very rarely identified in North America in winter. Photograph/Bob Heffer.

19 (BED) was the first to be found in *Orange*. The N. Shrike found at C.L.N.W.C. Nov. 9 remained through Dec. 17 (RH) and was the only one reported this winter.

Twenty-three Solitary Vireos, far more than expected, included eight gray birds of the interior race *plumbeus*; all were along the coast except for two of the gray birds found wintering around Bakersfield (MTH, JCW). A Warbling Vireo, most unusual in winter, was in Carpinteria Jan. 8 (RWH).

**WOOD WARBLERS** — Reports of wintering Tennessee Warblers included four around Santa Barbara between Dec. 30 and Jan. 6 (RAH, JLD, JC, BA), one in Ventura Dec. 25–Feb. 24 (JSta), one in La Jolla Feb. 10 (JO'B), one on Point Loma Jan. 6–Feb. 3 (REW), and another there Feb. 3–6 (REW). Fifteen Nashville Warblers along the coast were about average for this time of year. Unexpected were four wintering Virginia's Warblers inland, with one in Riverside Feb. 25–Mar. 4 (MAP), another in Palm Desert, *Riverside*, Nov. 25–Dec. 23 (MG), one spending its 2nd winter at Finney L. near S.E.S.S. Dec. 2–Mar. 17 (DS), and the 4th in Brawley Feb. 17–24 (CM); in addition, single individuals were along the coast in San Diego Jan. 31–Feb. 3 (DF) and in Imperial Beach Jan. 21–Feb. 16 (REW). A Lucy's Warbler in Loma Linda, *San Bernardino*, Feb. 2–4 (DRW) was the first to be found inland in winter, and single birds were along the coast in Santa Barbara Dec. 30–Jan. 21 (SEF) and in Mission Viejo Dec. 9–17 (BED). Two N. Parulas were found with one seen at S.E.S.S. Dec. 21 (GMCC), and the other present in San Diego Dec. 28–Feb. 19 (DA) spending its 3rd winter at this location.

Thirty-five Yellow Warblers along the coast were more than usual, but two or three around S.E.S.S. were slightly fewer than expected. A Chestnut-sided Warbler was in Loma Linda Nov. 25–Dec. 23 (HMe), and another found at Finney L. near S.E.S.S. Feb. 11 (HEC) was still present Mar. 31. A ♀ Black-throated Blue Warbler in Huntington Beach Dec. 27–28 (JP) was probably a late fall vagrant. Thirty-five Black-throated Gray Warblers were found along the coast, and six more were around Bakersfield where small numbers appear to regularly winter. Eight Hermit Warblers were present in the n.w. portion of the Region where small numbers are found every winter, but one in Vista, *San Diego*, Dec. 23–Feb. 19 (JO) was the only one found away from that area. At least 14 Palm Warblers were found along the coast including one apparently of the race *hypochrysea* in Goleta Dec. 30–Apr. 1 (RPH); in addition, a single bird in Bakersfield Jan. 1–21 (JCW) and a banded individual at Los Serranos Lake Jan. 13 through February (MAP) were inland, where considered exceptional.

Nine wintering Black-and-white Warblers were found along the coast, a few more than normal. As usual three or four Am. Redstarts were found around S.E.S.S., where small numbers regularly winter, and two more were at NE S.S. Dec. 17–23 (MAP), but one in Santa Ana Dec. 31–Feb. 16 (LL) and another in San Diego Jan. 13 (JO) were the only two found along the coast. An Ovenbird near Upland, *San Bernardino*, Dec. 10–Jan. 28 (*fide* DG) was apparently only the 4th ever found wintering in s. California. Six N. Waterthrushes were reported this winter with one at S.C.R.E. Oct. 28–Jan. 1 (BHe), another in Ventura Jan. 5 (SE), two at Pt. Mugu Jan. 13–Mar. 3 (RJM), one at Doheny State Beach, *Orange*, Dec. 2 (BED), and the 6th in Irvine Oct. 8–Feb. 11 (TEW). A **Louisiana Waterthrush** found in La Jolla Feb. 9 (JO'B) was still present Mar. 21. This was only the 3rd to be recorded in California, and the first ever in winter, the previous two

being found in August, but a very small number appear to occasionally winter in s.e. Arizona. Forty Wilson's Warblers along the coast was a larger than expected number. A Painted Redstart in San Diego Jan. 30–Feb. 27 (MEG) was undoubtedly wintering locally; one or two of these birds have been found somewhere in s. California each winter in recent years.

**TANAGERS TO FINCHES** — A ♂ Hepatic Tanager in Santa Barbara Nov. 10–Apr. 1 (DH) was spending its 8th winter at this location. Sixteen Summer Tanagers were found along the coast with one in Oceano Oct. 15–Feb. 17 (JSR) being the northernmost. As is normal about 60 W Tanagers were found along the coast, virtually all frequenting flowering eucalyptus. Seven Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were reported along the coast, but five of these were seen only during December, leaving a male in Silverado Canyon, *Orange*, Dec. 25–Mar. 18 (GM) and another in San Diego Dec. 17–Jan. 12 (DHe, \*S.D.N.H.M.) as obvious wintering birds; a male in Brawley Feb. 11 (HEC) was apparently the first away from the coast at this time of year. Single Black-headed Grosbeaks in Goleta Jan. 7 (TEW) and Santa Barbara Dec. 10–Jan. 21 (JEL) were both clearly wintering locally, this species normally being scarcer than the Rose-breasted Grosbeak at this time of year.

A Green-tailed Towhee in O'Neill Regional, *Orange*, Dec. 21–Feb. 25 (JP) was the northernmost found this winter. Most observers checking the s.e. portion of the Region felt Rufous-sided Towhees were more numerous than usual in that area of California. An American Tree Sparrow near Lakeview Dec. 19–Feb. 17 (BC) was one of very few ever found in *Riverside*, and another in Fullerton Dec. 30–Jan. 28 (BO'C) was the first for *Orange*. A Clay-colored Sparrow, not normally found in s. California in winter, was at Atascadero Dec. 26 (KJZ), another was in Orange Nov. 25–Mar. 2 (JB) and a 3rd was in Yorba Linda, *Orange*, Jan. 15–Mar. 22 (BED); these followed a heavy influx of this species last fall. A Brewer's Sparrow, very rare along the coast in winter, was in Yorba Linda Jan. 15–Mar. 22 (JLD). The **Field Sparrow** found in Orange Nov. 25 was present through at least Jan. 6 (JP). The only Lark Bunting found this winter was in Mecca, *Riverside*, Dec. 17–Jan. 20 (TM, \*S.B.C.M.). Savannah Sparrows of the large-billed race *rostratus* were found in coastal marshes north to Morro Bay, where one was banded Jan. 26 (GPS). This was the 2nd winter significant numbers have been found along the coast, indicating a return to the status of 50 years ago. The Sharp-tailed Sparrow found in San Diego Oct. 16 was still present Dec. 12 (JW). Forty-five Swamp Sparrows were reported with all being on coastal slope except for one near Lakeview, *Riverside*, Dec. 22–Jan. 14 (CMcG) and another near El Centro Feb. 16 (JML). Only 16 White-throated Sparrows were found, all being along the coast, and 11 of these in *Santa Barbara*. Nine Harris' Sparrows scattered throughout the Region were about average.

A ♂ McCown's Longspur near S.E.S.S. Jan. 31 (JLD) was the only one found this winter. Six Lapland Longspurs were at Pt. Mugu Dec. 3 (RJM), up to three were present on the Plano Trabuco near Mission Viejo from November through Feb. 19 (MTH) and one was seen near Needles Jan. 15 (J & MC). A flock of 25–30 Chestnut-collared Longspurs was present on the Plano Trabuco from November through Feb. 19 (MTH), five more were in Irvine Dec. 31–Jan. 1 (WG), and one was seen in the Fremont Valley of e. *Kern* Feb. 10 (MTH).

The only Rusty Blackbirds found this winter were one on Santa Cruz I. Dec. 9 (MAH, \*U.C.S.B.), the bird initially

found at S.C.R.E. Nov. 25 that remained through Dec. 20 (RJM), and a 3rd at C.L.N.W.C. Jan. 1–Feb. 10 (MTH). The only reports of Orchard Orioles were of two males spending their 4th winter in Irvine Nov. 19–Feb. 25 (MTH), and an imm. male in Santa Ana Feb. 24–Mar. 3 (BED). Of the six Hooded Orioles reported from along the coast, five were seen only in December, leaving a drab female with other wintering orioles in La Jolla Mar. 3 (GMcC) as the only one definitely present through the period. Seven “Baltimore Orioles” were found among the 90 or so N. Orioles wintering along the coast. As usual, small numbers of Scott’s Orioles were found along the w. edge of the desert in the extreme s. portion of the Region, but nine found scattered along the coast were more than expected in that area. Two Great-tailed Grackles near Bakersfield Dec. 3–26 (RS) added to the very few records for the San Joaquin Valley.

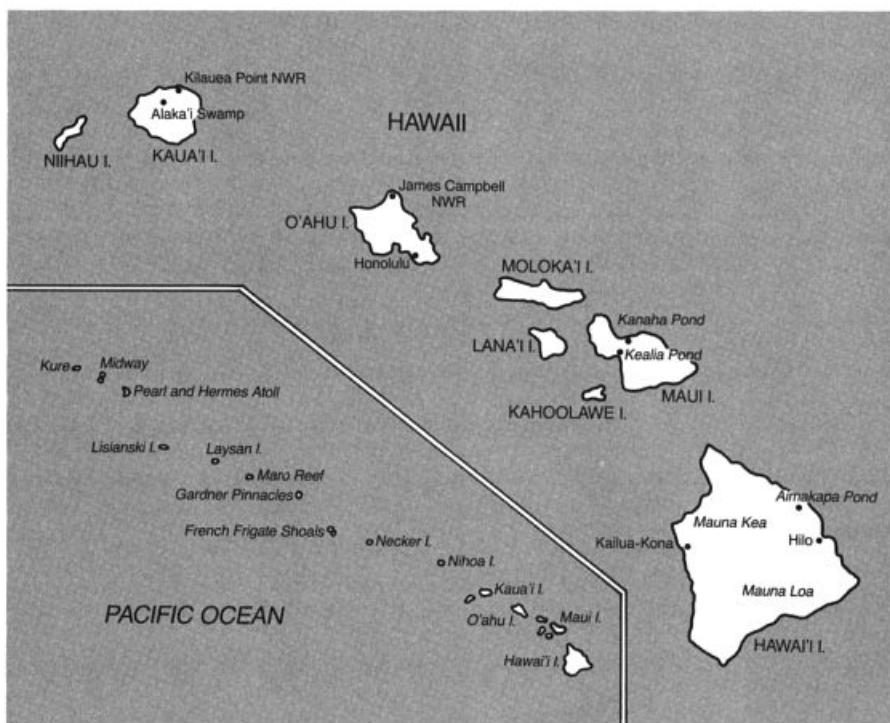
Five Rosy Finches along the Saline Valley Road near Whip-poor-will Canyon, *Inyo*, Dec. 30 (FT) were in an area where flocks regularly occur at this time of year. Many observers felt Purple Finches were slightly more numerous than usual along the coast, this being supported by 50 in O’Neill Regional Park Dec. 17 (DRW). An Evening Grosbeak on Big Pine Mt., *Santa Barbara*, Dec. 3 (MAH, \*U.C.S.B.) was the only one reported.

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## HAWAIIAN ISLANDS REGION

Robert L. Pyle



**A**fter a dry November and December, the rains returned in January and February bringing totals for the two months to well above average at 29 of 32 reporting stations. Instead of heavy rains accompanying just a few winter storms, the rains were light and persistent with cloudy

weather and strong winds on most days of January and February. Temperatures dropping into the high 50s set some new cold records for several dates. Landbird nesting was probably impacted, and wintering waterbirds that dispersed to temporary wet areas went unobserved.



**ABBREVIATIONS** — F.F.S. = French Frigate Shoals; H. = Hawai'i I.; K. = Kaua'i I.; M. = Maui I.; O. = O'ahu I.; J.C.N.W.R. = James Campbell Nat'l Wildlife Ref., O.; K.P.N.W.R. = Kilauea Point Nat'l Wildlife Ref., K.; P.H.N.W.R. = Pearl Harbor Nat'l Wildlife Ref., O.

**ALBATROSSES TO HERONS** — Two Short-tailed Albatrosses came to Sand I., Midway, this winter. One bird wearing band #000 had appeared regularly since 1984 and was found this year Dec. 14. A second bird, in subadult plumage and with band #015, was seen daily Dec 8–12 (KM, *fide* CR).

Two courting Black-footed Albatrosses were observed on Mokuaeae Islet off K.P.N.W.R. Jan. 2. Later, one sat on an egg which may have been an abandoned Laysan Albatross egg (*fide* DM). Three were seen in the area the next day, and single Black-footeds were reported several times in January around the Laysan colony (SL *et al.*). Two were seen flying offshore of Kahuku, O., Jan. 29 (PD). Black-footeds are reported only occasionally around the main Hawaiian Is.

The Laysan Albatross colony at K.P.N.W.R. continues to grow. This year 46 nest starts were recorded Nov. 20–Dec. 12, and many more non-nesting courting birds were present in all parts of the refuge. Unsuccessful nest attempts were reported at other nearby sites, including three in residential areas at Princeville several miles from K.P.N.W.R. (DM). The small colony across the island at Pacific Missile Range remains a hazard to aviation activities, and further use of the site by the birds is being discouraged.

An oiled Newell's Shearwater (*Threatened*) found freshly dead near Kapaa, K., Jan. 23 (SL) furnished an unusual record for mid-winter. The carcass was turned over to K.P.N.W.R. The shearwater salvage program on Kaua'i October to December recorded 1401 Newells picked up, banded, and released, and 91 others found dead. Also banded and released were eight Hawaiian (Dark-rumped) Petrels (*Endangered*), one Bulwer's Petrel, and two Band-rumped Storm-Petrels (TTel), all rarely recorded around Kaua'i. An ad. ♂ Lesser Frigatebird wintered again this year at Tern I., F.F.S. (JM *et al.*). A Great Blue Heron, a straggler to Hawaii, was seen at Hanalei N.W.R., K., Jan. 17 (SL), and one seen Feb. 21 across the island at Kipu Kai (*fide* TTel) may have been the same individual.

**GEESE TO COOTS** — Ten adult Fulvous Whistling-Ducks and 10 juveniles were found at Amoriant Aquafarm, O., and an adult with 12 small chicks was seen at Ki'i Unit, J.C.N.W.R., all on Feb. 12 (PD). This species has established itself naturally in this area after a small group appeared here 8 years ago.

The new population of Hawaiian Goose (Nene, *Endangered*) introduced at Kipu Kai, K., is doing well. A pair with six young, and another 17 subadults, were found there Jan. 20 (TTel). An aged Nene with an injured leg was picked up near Paliku Cabin in Haleakala Crater, M., Dec. 14. It was wearing a band from Slimbridge, England, indicating that it was from a group of 55 raised at Slimbridge and released at Haleakala in October 1970 (RG). This was part of the early captive propagation program that brought the Nene back from the brink of extinction.

Migrant N. Pintails and N. Shovelers were down in numbers this winter, and fewer of the scarcer migrant duck species were reported. One of the better spots was Honouliuli Unit, P.H.N.W.R., where 35–50 pintails and 65 shovelers were counted during January (PD). Other species observed there through the winter included one

Brant, up to seven Green-winged Teal, two Garganey, one male Eur. Wigeon, four or five Am. Wigeon, and two Ring-necked Ducks (PD *et al.*). All are uncommon migrants. Gadwall, normally a rarely recorded vagrant in Hawaii, appeared in unprecedented numbers this winter. Three were found at Honouliuli Dec. 16 (MO, RLP) & 26 (BE, CC), and nine were seen there throughout January (PD). Five Gadwalls seen at nearby Waiawa Unit, P.H.N.W.R., Dec. 16 (MO, RLP) were probably part of the Honouliuli group. A pair was also seen at Waiakea Pond, H., Dec. 24 & 29, Jan. 2 (KI), and Feb. 1 (JL). Three Buffleheads, occasional visitors to Hawaii, were at Punamano Unit, J.C.N.W.R., Dec. 12 (PD), and single birds were reported at Waiawa Unit, O., at Kakahaia N.W.R., Moloka'i, and at Hanalei N.W.R., K.

The Osprey seen sporadically at Waiawa Unit was reported there several times this winter (PD, MM). One was also observed Jan. 22 at the mouth of Pelekunu Valley in an isolated section of the n. shore of Moloka'i (EM). This season's only Peregrine report was of one that made several passes over the ponds at Waiawa Unit Dec. 15 and then flew off (MM). Several flocks of Wild Turkeys totaling 65–70 individuals were found along Keanakolu Rd. on the slope of Mauna Kea, H., Jan. 1 (KI). Thirty-one Hawaiian (Com.) Moorhens (*Endangered*) at Ki'i Unit, J.C.N.W.R., Feb. 12 (PD) made an unusually high number. High counts of Hawaiian (Am.) Coot (*Endangered*) this winter included 97 at Ki'i Unit, up to 70 each at Honouliuli and Waiawa Units, and 54 at Salt Lake, all on O'ahu (PD).

**SHOREBIRDS TO TERNS** — Numbers of wintering Lesser Golden-Plovers, Lesser Yellowlegs, Ruddy Turnstones, and dowitchers seemed below average this year, perhaps reflecting dispersal to temporary rainponds. Two Semipalmated Plovers were at Ki'i Unit and adjacent Amoriant Aquafarm through the winter (PD, MM), and two Black-bellied Plovers were reported at Kealia Pond, M., Jan. 10 (SL). A count of 81 Hawaiian (Black-necked) Stilts (*Endangered*) at a temporary rainpond by the dump at Kaunakakai, Moloka'i, Jan. 14 (BE, CC) made an extraordinarily high number for that island. With them were eight Bristle-thighed Curlews, providing another extraordinary mid-winter record. One Greater Yellowlegs at Hanalei N.W.R., K., Jan. 17 (SL) and one at Honouliuli Unit Jan. 17 and Feb. 17 (PD), were unusual stragglers to Hawaii. A Solitary Sandpiper found at Waip'o, O., Jan. 17 & 29 (PD) provided the state's 2nd record for this species. It remained into March. One to two Sharp-tailed Sandpipers reported at Ki'i Unit through the season (PD, MM) were unusual for mid-winter.

Six Pomarine Jaegers were observed offshore of Sand Is., O., Feb. 18 (PD). Hundreds of this species could be seen off Sand Is. 10–20 years ago before the sewer outfall was closed, but only a few can be found there now. One or two Laughing Gulls were at Ki'i Unit throughout the winter (v.o.), and single birds were reported at South Pt., H., Feb. 17 (BM), at Papohaku Beach, Moloka'i, Feb. 19 (CC), and at Kealia Pond, M., Mar. 3 (FD). A Bonaparte's and a Ring-billed Gull also wintered at Ki'i (v.o.) and at least two Ring-billeds were seen at Kealia Pond, M., in mid-January (SL, TC). A Herring Gull at Ki'i Feb. 12 (PD) and a Glaucous-winged at Keahole Pt., H., Feb. 19 (BM) rounded out quite a good winter for gulls. Most of the gulls cited above were in first-winter plumage. No gulls are regular migrants to Hawaii.

A single Caspian Tern was seen at Kealia Pond, M., in mid-December (FD) and Jan. 10 (SL); three were found

there Jan. 15–16 (TC). The first Caspian for Hawaii was recorded a decade ago, and since then one or two have appeared in the state in most winters. The Great Crested Tern found in October 1988, as the first and only record for Hawaii and for the A.O.U. Checklist area, remained through 1989 and was recorded on its second Christmas Bird Count Dec. 16 (RW). A Blue-gray Noddy on the ground briefly at Tern I., F.F.S. Jan. 26 (JM) was unusual there, and 24 White Terns in a feeding flock offshore of Diamond Head Dec. 3 (MO) made an unprecedented high concentration of this species for O'ahu .

**KINGFISHERS TO CROWS** — An active birder from mainland U.S. visiting in Kailua, O., was sitting in the backyard facing a canal one evening (Feb. 19), and was startled to see a **Belted Kingfisher** fly in to perch for a few moments on a tree overhanging the canal, and then fly on (JE). Kingfishers have been recorded in Hawaii fewer than 10 times, and never before on O'ahu. Word was spread; local birders came to kayak on the canal and found the bird again Feb. 27 (PD) and Mar. 3 (RLP) and again later in March. How long it has been there, and how much longer it will stay, remain mysteries. Another Belted Kingfisher, not impossibly the same individual, was studied closely at Hanalei N.W.R., K., Jan. 17 (SL, TTex, *fide* TTeI).

A vagrant Short-eared Owl sighted at Sand I., Midway, Dec. 8–10 (KM) was more likely of an Asiatic race rather than the Hawaiian race, Pueo, wandering from the main islands. Eight Pueo were counted in a 4-mile stretch of Keanakolu Rd. on Mauna Kea, H., Feb. 15 (BM). No 'Alala (Hawaiian Crow, *critically Endangered*) were found in a return survey visit Jan. 26–27 to the McCandless Ranch area on Hawai'i I. (*fide* FD), where a flock of 10 was well-observed last November.

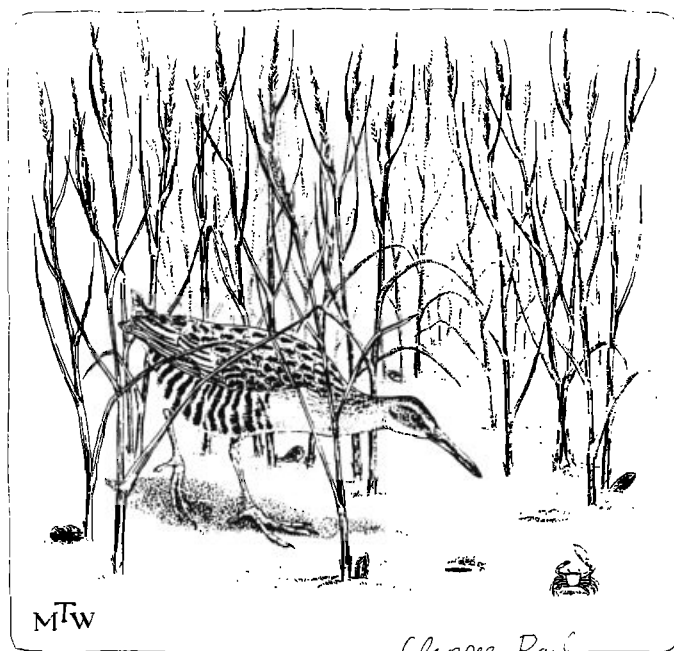
**LEIOTHRIX TO ESTRILDIDS** — Red-billed Leiothrix continue to be reported on O'ahu: four or five were seen on Woodlawn Trail Dec. 4 (PC) and one was heard and

sighted Dec. 17 in N. Halawa Valley (RSa). A N. Mockingbird at the South Pond on Waipi'o Pen. Dec. 16 (RLP, MO) was unusual at that locality.

Sixteen Yellow-faced Grassquits counted on Manana Trail, O., Dec. 16 for the Christmas Count (PD) made a notably high number. Red-crested Cardinals are now beginning to increase and spread on Maui. An observation of two Jan. 17 in Kapalua at the n.w. tip of the island (TC) was significant. Also significant was the sighting of three Saffron Finches, including a juvenile begging from an adult, at Salt Lake, O., Dec. 3 (PD). This species, never numerous or widespread on O'ahu, has been rarely reported on this island in the past decade. The male Great-tailed Grackle reported sporadically over the past 2 years along the Honolulu waterfront was seen again at Sand Island Park Feb. 6 (RSa) & 18 (PD).

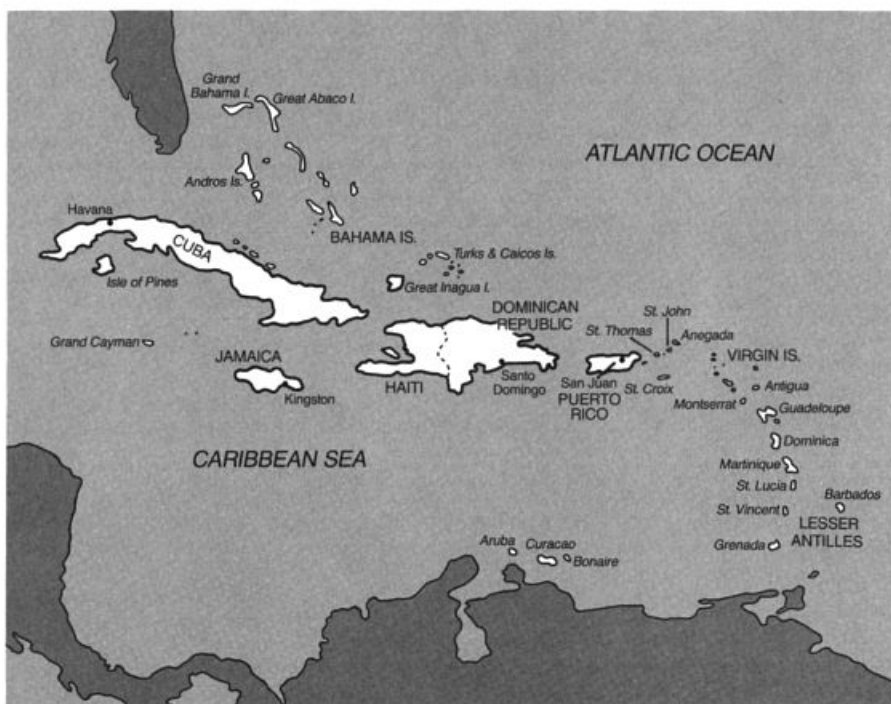
Common 'Amakihi continue to appear in upland portions of Honolulu well below their traditional habitats in the Koolau Mtns. This winter a male came to a yard in St. Louis Heights regularly from Jan. 26 to at least Feb. 14 (EH), and up to six at once were seen several times in February in a yard in Nuuanu Valley (ph. DY). Java Sparrows, increasing and spreading rapidly on O'ahu, have now reached the far n. tip of the island. One appeared in a yard at Kawela Bay for the first time in the third week of February, and by month's end a small group was coming regularly (AA).

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# WEST INDIES REGION

Robert L. Norton



In the Virgin Islands and perhaps elsewhere in the northeastern Caribbean, routine matters are measured still in post-*Hurricane Hugo* terms. Two serious hurricanes have dominated the climate of the West Indies in the last two seasons: *Gilbert* in 1988 and *Hugo* in 1989. Hurricanes *David* and *Frederick* in 1979 and *Klaus* in 1985 likewise commanded our attention during the last decade. There is, perhaps, a larger frame of reference—the El Niño/Southern Oscillation (ENSO).

A telling characteristic of an ENSO event is a winter that is extremely wet or dry. The pantropic ENSO event reported in 1982 and 1983 was characterised in the Virgin Islands by a very wet 1982 winter (precipitation 108% above normal) and spring (42% above), followed by a slightly dry 1983 winter (20% below normal), but another very wet (107% above) spring. A mild ENSO apparently occurred in 1986, characterised in the Virgin Islands by a very dry winter (precipitation 45% below normal) and a very wet spring (156% above). In the last decade, major hurricanes threatening the Virgin Islands have occurred during non-ENSO cycles or, more precisely, in the years just prior to an event.

Rainfall for the current winter season measured at Cruz Bay, St. John, was 128% above average; December 11% below; January 230% above; February 99% above. The last previous winter season to be nearly as wet on St. John was in 1982. Yet at Eleuthera, Bahamas, Joseph Siphron reported that water levels in ponds during February was the lowest seen in 12 years.

A post-*Hurricane Hugo* report on birds of Montserrat and Guadeloupe (JCH) was sobering. So was the report (JS) on development in the Kirtland's Warbler wintering territory in the Bahamas. A similar report from Mustique in the Grenadines (RW) suggests that a marina development threatens a fresh-water pond that proved productive for a visiting observer. And a report on a visit to Cuba (LF, XF), with its high diversity of species, was most tantalizing for observers in the remainder of the West Indies.

**ABBREVIATIONS** — B.V.I. = British Virgin Islands; P.R. = Puerto Rico; U.S.V.I. = United States Virgin Islands.

**GREBES TO TERNS** — Joseph Siphron noted that Least Grebes were absent this February from a regular site at Eleuthera, Bahamas, apparently owing to dry conditions. Double-crested Cormorants on Eleuthera appeared to be concentrated at Great Pond, with 50+ Feb. 12 (JS). One Double-crested Cormorant in the vicinity of Tortola, B.V.I., Dec. 26–Feb. 18 (RLN, BH), represented only the 2nd occurrence in that area in the last 10 years; another was seen in the U.S.V.I. Dec. 16 (*vide* GW). One Least Bittern was noted in the rice fields of Arrozeros, Cuba, Jan. 1 (LF). Counts of Greater Flamingos in Cuba were of 600 at La Boca and over 1000 at Las Salinas (LF). **Roseate Spoonbill** is rare in the Lesser Antilles, and one seen at Martinique Jan. 24 (JCH) may have been a first for that island.

A pair of N. Shovelers was at the airport pond, Beef Island, Tortola, B.V.I., Dec. 26 (RLN). Two Am. Wigeons at Eleuthera Feb. 13 (JS) furnished the observer's 2nd record in 12 years of annual censuses. At Mustique, in the Grenadines, four Am. Wigeons were noted Jan. 8–17 (RW). A female **Canvasback** at Presa Zaza, Cuba, Dec. 28 (LF, XF) furnished one of the few recent reports for the West Indies. Also at Presa Zaza were four Ruddy Ducks and one Masked Duck, and another 32 Masked Ducks were at Arrozeros, Cuba, Jan. 1 (LF, XF).

A Peregrine Falcon was seen Dec. 17 at St. Thomas (JD, GW, RLN), and at least one Peregrine and one Merlin were noted at Mustique Jan. 8–17 (RW). Single Merlins were noted Dec. 16 at St. John (RLN), Dec. 22 at Anagada, B.V.I. (RLN, GT), Jan. 21 at Guadeloupe (JCH), and Jan. 24 at Martinique (JCH).

A single Dunlin photographed at Las Salinas Jan. 2 (LF) apparently furnished the 2nd record for Cuba in 2 years. Widrig found a variety of shorebirds at Mustique Jan. 8–17 including 12 Whimbrels, two Willets, 10 Least Sandpipers, two Sanderlings, eight Stilt Sandpipers, and one Com. Snipe. Twelve Red Knots were noted at Las Salinas,

Cuba, Jan. 2 (LF).

Gulls noted in Cuba (LF, XF) were two Herring Gulls at La Boca Dec. 26 and one at Las Salinas Jan. 2, and one Ring-billed at Playa Santa Lucia Dec. 27. Fifteen Ring-billeds at Tarpum Bay, Eleuthera, Feb. 15 (JS) made a notable number there. Uncommon in the West Indies, several Caspian Terns were seen during late December at La Boca, Cuba (LF). One Caspian in s.w. Puerto Rico Jan. 26 (JCH) was noteworthy.

**PARROTS TO SPARROWS** — Dominica's two endemic parrots, Red-necked and Imperial, appear to be holding on as evidenced by sightings of both—12 and 15 Red-neckeds and one and five Imperials—Jan. 21 & 22 (JCH *et al.*). On Eleuthera, a Great Lizard Cuckoo was noted Feb. 16 (JS) in the same area where a Kirtland's Warbler had been seen in February 1989. The area is now subdivided as one of the Bahamas' new developments. Only four Guadeloupe Woodpeckers were found Jan. 21 in areas where JCH and CF had censused 13 in May 1989, prior to Hurricane Hugo. Two Giant Kingbirds were seen Dec. 27 at Playa Santa Lucia, Cuba (LF, XF); the species was known from the pinelands of the Caicos Islands and Great Inagua in the s. Bahamas a century ago, but now occurs only in Cuba and the Isle of Pines.

Zapata Wren, a critically endangered Cuban endemic, was not found during intensive searches Dec. 23–Jan. 6 at the Santo Tomas swamp in w. Cuba (LF). The house wrens of the Lesser Antilles, Guadeloupe south to Grenada, are considered by some to constitute a distinct species—*Troglodytes martinicensis*, Antillean House Wren. Yet even within the Lesser Antilles, these wrens show remarkable differences in plumage and habitat choice, e.g. on Dominica (dark-breasted, montane inhabitants) and St. Lucia (white-breasted, coastal scrub inhabitants).

Haney was fortunate on Jan. 24 at Martinique to see six White-breasted Thrashers, one of the most seriously threatened endemics of the West Indies. One E. Bluebird, a scarce migrant, was photographed Jan. 3 at Santo Tomas in w. Cuba (*fide* LF). Yellow-rumped Warblers invaded Eleuthera, with "dozens seen" in February (JS). A lagoon forest at Mustique, Grenadines, yielded a surprising variety of migrant warblers during mid-January, including Am. Redstart, Prothonotary Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, N. Waterthrush, and N. Parula (RW). Single Ovenbirds were noted Jan. 22 at Dominica and Jan. 24 at Martinique (JCH). A Kentucky Warbler carefully studied at Sage Mt., Tortola, Dec. 26 furnished a first record for the B.V.I. (RLN). Plumbeous Warblers were noted as common at Guadeloupe and Dominica Jan. 21–23 (JCH). Summer Tanager is known in Cuba mainly as a migrant, but one was seen there at La Guira Jan. 5 (LF).

Four Red-winged Blackbirds appeared with 21 roosting Yellow-shouldered Blackbirds at Bahia Sucia, P.R., Jan. 26 (JCH) for apparently the first Antillean record east of Cuba. Haney saw only a single Montserrat Oriole after 2 days of intensive searching on that island Dec. 30–Jan. 1, but he found three Martinique Orioles Jan. 24. A Northern Oriole was seen Dec. 17 (RLN) at St. Thomas, where it appears to be a regular winter resident, east of its formerly considered limits in the Greater Antilles. Four Zapata Sparrows were seen and heard at Santo Tomas swamp Jan. 3 (LF).

**ADDENDA** — Luc Fazio sent these notable records from previous trips to Cuba: 12 West Indian Whistling-Ducks Mar. 12, 1989, at Los Canales; one Gundlach's Hawk Mar. 17, 1988, at Los Sabalos; one Long-billed Dowitcher seen and heard (LF, AK) Mar. 22, 1989, at Santo Tomas swamp;

and two Zapata Wrens Mar. 16, 1988, and three Mar. 22, 1989, at Santo Tomas swamp.

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