

# American Birds

# WINTER GUIDE

January-March 1993

It is cold and wintry over much of the continent. But blasts of icy air and snow flurries do not daunt the dedicated, who know that this time of year can produce superb birding. Visitors from the north—such as Snowy Owls—are a good start for year lists.

In other parts of North America, the “winter” still means mild weather. Birders can watch for wintering songbirds, as well as other regional specialties. And just as the north may yield Arctic delights, the southern tier can claim tropical species, like the Thick-billed Kingbird seen in California last March. There is four-star birding out there, so have a field day!

**Recommended location guides and further references are included at the end of each site.**

## 1. HALIFAX HARBOUR

### Nova Scotia

In the midst of the busy Halifax/Dartmouth area, the harbor provides excellent gull-watching all winter. Iceland and Common Black-headed gulls are present in numbers. Many sea ducks and other birds can be found along nearby sections of the coast. Also see: *Birding Nova Scotia*, Charles R.K. Allen & Phyllis Dobson, rev. 1984; *Birding in Atlantic Canada*, Nova Scotia, Roger Burrows, publ. 1988

## 2. CAPE ANN

### Massachusetts

A winter trip around the scenic rocky headlands here

may produce good views of cold-weather birds such as eiders, gulls, and Purple Sandpipers. Patient watchers at Halibut Point may see flybys of Razorbills and other alcids (an Ancient Murrelet was seen in November), especially in stormy weather. Also see: *Bird Finding in New England*, Richard K. Walton, publ. 1988, *Birds of Essex County*, Massachusetts, Essex Ornithological Club, rev. 1988.

## 3. SHINNECOCK INLET AND BAY

### Long Island, New York

Inside the bay or from the outer beach next to the inlet, winter birding is often excellent. Loons, grebes, sea

ducks, and others are likely to be on the water, and odd gulls sometimes turn up. In an invasion year, the outer coast here is a good place to look for Snowy Owls. Also see: *Where to Find Birds in New York State: Top 500 Sites*, Susan Roney Drennan, publ. 1981.

## 4. MUDDY RUN PARK

### Pennsylvania

One of the best birding areas in southeastern Pennsylvania, Muddy Run hosts a wide variety of wintering birds in woodland and old-field habitats. The most exciting winter birding comes in very cold weather, when the river below the power plant may be the only open water available, and waterbirds concentrate in great numbers. Several Bald Eagles are usually present. Also see: *A Guide to the Birds of Lancaster County*, 2nd Edition, Lancaster County Bird Club, publ. 1991

## 5. OCEAN CITY

### Maryland

Maryland birders make the most of their outer coastline. From November to April, wintering raptors, unusual seabirds, and ducks and gulls can be found. Regulars off the jetty include loons, grebes, and all three scoters. Watch for Harlequin Ducks, eiders, and Black-legged Kittiwakes. Bring a spotting scope! Also see: *Finding Birds in the National Capital Area*, Claudia Wilds, rev. 1992.

## 6. MATTAMUSKEET NATIONAL

### WILDLIFE REFUGE

### North Carolina

Wintering Tundra Swan can often be found at this refuge. Last winter, up to seven American White Pelicans were on Lake Mattamuskeet, and Cattle Egrets traditionally winter northeast of the Lake. Two Brant were spot-

ted here last year. Also see: *Birds of the Carolinas*, E. F. Potter, J. F. Parnell & R. F. Teulings, publ. 1980.

## 7. CORKSCREW SWAMP SANCTUARY

### Florida

This Audubon sanctuary offers great boardwalk birding through a magnificent old cypress swamp. Pileated Woodpeckers, Barred Owls, and flocks of wintering songbirds can be seen. But the big attraction is the presence of large wading birds, especially Wood Storks. Also see: *Birder's Guide to Florida* (Lane Series), James A. Lane, rev. by Harold R. Holt, 1989; *Florida Birds: A Handbook and Reference*, Herbert W. Kale II & David S. Maehr, publ. 1990; *Birds of South Florida*, Connie Toops and Willard E. Dilley, publ. 1986.

## 8. LORAIN HARBOR

### Ohio

On the Lake Erie waterfront west of Cleveland, Lorain usually has lots of open water even in the coldest weather, and the open water usually has lots of gulls. Little, Common Black-headed, Thayer's and Great Black-backed gulls are fairly frequent, outlandish rarities like Heermann's Gull have turned up, and a Sabine's Gull once spent several months here. Also see: *The Birds of Ohio*, Bruce G. Peterjohn, publ. 1989., *A Field Book of Birds of the Cleveland Region*, Larry Rosche, publ. 1988.

## 9. CHATTAHOOCHEE RIVER

### NATIONAL RECREATION AREA

### Georgia

On the northern outskirts of Atlanta, this area offers some of the best birding close to the city. It has lots of wintering sparrows, and Red-headed Woodpeckers are common. In late winter, listen at dusk for the flight



songs of American Woodcock. Also see: *A Birder's Guide to Georgia*, 3rd edition, Terry Chesser, ed., rev. 1988.

**10. CRAB ORCHARD NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**  
Illinois

A traditional birding area in southern Illinois, Crab Orchard has good concentrations of wintering ducks in most years. It also has a variety of upland habitats for excellent landbirding. Also see: *The Birds of Illinois*, H. David Bohlen, publ. 1989.; *Birding-finding in Illinois*, Elton Fawks & Paul H. Lobik, publ. 1975.

**11. NOXUBEE NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**  
Mississippi

Like all the National Wildlife Refuges, Noxubee has waterfowl — often including impressive num-

bers of Wood Ducks and Hooded Mergansers in winter. Visitors may be interested in the woodlands, with Red-cockaded Woodpeckers and other pineland birds like Pine Warbler and Brown-headed Nuthatch. Also see: *Birds & Birding on the Mississippi Coast*, Judith A. Toups & Jerome A. Jackson, publ. 1987.

**12. DULUTH**  
Minnesota

A good spot to see Snowy Owls. The western tip of Lake Superior boasts other specialties, including the Great Gray Owl, Spruce Grouse and Gyrfalcon. Visit nearby Superior, Wisconsin, where interesting gulls include Thayer's and Glaucous. Also see: *Minnesota Birds: Where, When and How Many*, Janet C. Green & Robert B. Janssen, publ. 1975, *A*

*Birder's Guide to Minnesota*, Kim R. Eckert, rev. 1983.

**13. MAGAZINE MOUNTAIN**  
Arkansas

The highest point in Arkansas, Magazine Mountain is under 3000 feet, but a good variety of landbirds can be found here and in surrounding areas of the Ozark National Forest. A special feature is the resident population of Rufous-crowned Sparrows, here at their northeastern limit. Also see: *Arkansas Audubon Society Field List*, Arkansas Audubon Society, rev. 1990.

**14. ANAHUAC NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE**  
Texas

Superb marshlands characterize Anahuac. Rails winter here in great numbers—even Yellow and Black rails, although they can be very difficult to see. Other choice

winterers include bitterns, Sedge Wrens, and Sharp-tailed, Seaside, and Le Conte's sparrows. Also see: *Birder's Guide to Texas*, Edward Kutac, rev. 1989; *Birder's Guide to Texas Coast* (Lane Series), James A. Lane & Harry R. Holt, rev. 1988.

**15. BROWNSVILLE CITY DUMP**  
Texas

Famous for more than two decades as *the* place to find Mexican Crows in the United States, the dump also attracts Chihuahuan Ravens and large numbers of gulls. Birders find that winter and early spring are the best seasons to visit. Several rare gulls have been found at the dump over the years. For references, see above.

**16. RED ROCKS STATE PARK**  
Colorado

Just west of Denver, Red Rocks offers good foothills

birding at any season. A special feature in winter is the presence of flocks of Rosy Finches, which can be seen coming in to roost in the evenings. Also see: *Birder's Guide to Colorado* (Lane Series), Harold R. Holt & James A. Lane, rev. 1987, *Birding Guide to the Denver-Boulder Region*, Robert Folzenlogen, publ. 1986.

**17. CONCHAS LAKE**  
New Mexico

A large reservoir in dry country can act as a magnet for birds and birders. Conchas is often a great place to see wintering ducks, grebes, gulls, loons, and other waterbirds. The surrounding arid grasslands have lots of Scaled Quail. Also see: *New Mexico Bird Finding Guide*, Dale A. Zimmerman & Marian Zimmerman, publ. 1992.

**18. CALGARY**  
Alberta

For those hardy enough to brave the wintry climate, the city of Calgary itself provides very good birding in the colder months. Bohemian Waxwings are routinely present by the thousands, and "winter finches" like redpolls, crossbills, and Pine Grosbeaks can be numerous. In recent years, Merlins have been wintering regularly in the city. Also see: *Bird-finding Guide to Canada*, J. Cam Finlay, publ. 1984.

**19. CITY CREEK CANYON**  
Utah

Within easy reach of downtown Salt Lake City, this hike can be productive at any time of the year. American Dippers, Townsend's Solitaires, and Golden-crowned Kinglets are all permanent residents. During flight winters, Bohemian Waxwings are often numerous in the Memory Grove area of the lower canyon

Also see: *Utah Birds*, William H. Behle & Michael L. Perry, publ. 1975.

**20. LAKE HAVASU**  
Arizona/California

Havasu is big enough to attract birds more expected on the coast. It is Arizona's best site for loons, and for Clark's and Western grebes. Gulls, ducks, geese, and other waterbirds are numerous in winter, especially around the Bill Williams Arm and Lake Havasu City. Also see: *Birds of the Lower Colorado River Valley*, K.V. Rosenberg et al., publ. 1991; *Birder's Guide to Southern California* (Lane Series), Harold R. Holt, rev. 1990.

**21. NANAIMO**  
British Columbia


Like other areas on the coast of Vancouver Island, Nanaimo is a good area for observing wintering gulls (especially Glaucous-winged and Thayer's) and other waterbirds. A particular attraction is the concentration of Bald Eagles during the herring run in February. See also: *A Birder's Guide to Vancouver Island*, Keith Taylor, publ. 1990.

**22. FERN RIDGE RESERVOIR**  
Oregon

Just west of Eugene, this area has enough varied habitats for a full day of good birding. Waterbirds wintering on the lake include Tundra Swans, plus many ducks and gulls. Extensive wooded areas, especially west of the lake, produce many land birds, while the nearby farmland is good for birds of prey. Also see: *The Birder's Guide to Oregon*, Joseph E. Evanich, Jr., publ. 1990; *Birding Oregon*, Fred. L. Ramsey, publ. 1981.

**23. LAKE MERCED**  
San Francisco

Despite its urban setting,



**INVALUABLE TELEPHONE NUMBERS**

Although coverage and information varies from place to place, rare bird alert telephone services that use taped messages are a real boon for peregrinating birders. These detail current rare or unusual birds sighted and how to get to the place where last reported. Use this listing when visiting the places on our Winter birding map.

<b>Alberta</b> Calgary (403) 237-8821	<b>Florida</b> Statewide (813) 984-4444	<b>New York</b> NYC/Long Island (212) 979-3070
<b>Arizona</b> Phoenix (602) 832-8745 Tucson (602) 798-1005	<b>Georgia</b> (404) 509-0204 <b>Illinois</b> Central (217) 785-1083	<b>North Carolina</b> (704) 332-2473 <b>Nova Scotia</b> (902) 852-2428 <b>Ohio</b> Cleveland (216) 321-7245
<b>Arkansas</b> (501) 753-5853 <b>British Columbia</b> Victoria (604) 592-3381	<b>Maryland</b> (301) 652-1088 <b>Massachusetts</b> (617) 259-8805 <b>Minnesota</b> Duluth (218) 525-5952	<b>Oregon</b> Statewide (503) 292-0661 <b>Pennsylvania</b> (215) 567-2473 <b>Texas</b> Statewide (713) 992-2757
<b>California</b> San Diego (619) 435-6761 updates (619) 479-3400 <b>Colorado</b> (303) 423-5582	<b>Mississippi</b> (601) 467-9500 <b>New Mexico</b> (505) 662-2101	<b>Utah</b> (801) 538-4630

this lake complex attracts big numbers of wintering ducks and other waterbirds. The parks and exotic plantings in the surrounding area always have lots of landbirds, sometimes with unexpected species staying for the winter. Also see: *Birding Northern California*, Jean Richmond, publ. 1985; *Birder's Guide to Northern California*, Lolo Westrich & Jim Westrich, publ. 1991.

**24. PALOMAR MOUNTAIN**  
California

There is more here than a telescope (though it is also

worth a visit). The vegetation changes from oak groves to pine, fir, oak, and alder as you climb. Look for Mountain Quail, White-headed Woodpeckers, and White-breasted and Pygmy nuthatches. At night, hard work could yield Great Horned, Spotted, and Northern Saw-whet owls, Western Screech-Owl, and possibly a Northern Pygmy-Owl. Also see: *A Birder's Guide to Southern California*, Harold Holt, publ. 1990, *Where Birders Go in Southern California*, Henry E. Childs, Jr., publ. 1990