

No fewer than 21 single Hoary Redpolls were reported with details in New York. Also in New York, two Hoaries were seen in Wainfleet Jan. 18 (R. Cunningham), three were carefully documented by Listman at Hamlin Beach Dec. 6, and six (five banded) were at the Peterson feeder in Elizabethtown Dec. 29–Feb. 8, in addition to a suspected "Greater" Redpoll (*Carduelis flammea rostrata*) Jan. 17. In New Jersey, confirmed Hoary records came from Bridgewater (R. Borzelli), Liberty S.P., Hudson (KK), and Rockaway, Morris (ph., banded, G. Nixon). The Haases photographed Pennsylvania's first fully documented Hoary, a bird thought to be *C. h. hornemanni*, the nominate Greenland form, in Caernarvon Twp., Mar. 1 (†B&FH). A potential state first Hoary for Delaware at Hockessin Feb. 26 (Y. Blades) is still under review.

Addendum

The first round of review by Scandinavian raptor experts suggests that a sub-ad. *Haliaeetus* eagle photographed at Derby Hill April 24, 1993, was a possible Steller's Sea Eagle, rather than a White-tailed Eagle, as reported in this column. The record continues to be circulated.

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Middle Atlantic Coast Region

EIRIK BLOM, MICHAEL O'BRIEN, BRIAN PATTESON, EUGENE J. SCARPULLA

Those who lived through it will remember this as the worst winter since 1978. Temperatures were well below normal, with almost all inland water frozen by mid-January and substantial portions of the Chesapeake Bay iced by February. More notable than the cold were the ice storms that seemed to hit at the end of every week from mid-January to mid-February. Around Baltimore ice on sidewalks remained as thick as four inches for nearly a month, and west of the Chesapeake Bay snow covered most of the ground through the end of the period. Semi-hardy species were hit hard, waterfowl fled farther south, and birding was substantially curtailed. The weather brought northern rarities in astounding numbers, including at least five first state records. The wealth of information and the shortage of space means that much valuable information has been omitted. Eventually it will appear, we hope, in local journals. Although many records are not cited, the contribution of all the observers in the region are critical, and we wish to express our gratitude for those that took the time to write.

Abbreviations: C.B.B.T. (*Chesapeake Bay Bridge Tunnel*); C.N.W.R. (*Chincoteague National Wildlife Refuge*); E.S.N.W.R. (*Eastern Shore National Wildlife Refuge*)

Grebes to Waterfowl

SA In any other year the event of the season would have been the invasion of Red-necked Grebes, presumably the result of the Great Lakes freezing. In most winters only one–two are reported, and counts over three are exceptional. Reports began trickling in early February and by midmonth groups of 10–20 birds were being found throughout coastal and Chesapeake Bay waters. There were far too many reports to detail even most local highs. Red-necks were reported from virtually all open water. The best of the best included 25 at Seneca, Montgomery, MD Feb. 16 (MO), 28 at Chincoteague Feb. 20 (PGD), 39 at Ocean City, MD Feb. 22

(MLH), 102 in D.C., Feb. 20 (RH), and 174 in the Bay off Anne Arundel, MD Feb. 28 (HLW). The last count may represent more Red-necked Grebes than have been reported in Maryland in the past 50 years. A complete account will be published elsewhere.

Eared Grebes were slightly more numerous than usual, with singles at Ocean City Jan. 16 (SHD); C.N.W.R., Jan. 18–19 (SHD); the C.B.B.T., Jan. 30 (DS) and Feb. 28 (BL); and two at Norfolk, VA Feb. 12 (BA). *Thirty-one* N. Fulmars at Norfolk Canyon off Virginia Beach Feb. 13 was a high Regional count. Northern Gannets were notably scarce, both from shore and at sea. Two Am. White Pelicans were at C.N.W.R. most of the winter and two were at various locations around Virginia Beach in February (m.ob.). Typical of recent years, a few Brown Pelicans wintered around Virginia Beach (v.o.). Cormorants were down slightly (Double-crested) and up slightly (Greats). The weather kept heron numbers low. Notable was a Great Egret on the Nokesville, VA CBC Dec. 19 (KB), three Tricoloreds at Deal I., MD (EMW), and a Glossy Ibis on the Cape Charles, VA CBC Dec. 30 (GA). During January's hard freeze, many waterfowl moved S, while others concentrated in coastal areas, resulting in locally high counts: 1500 Brant, 700 Am. Black Ducks, and 300 Bufflehead at Ocean City, MD Jan. 22 (MO, MLH); a record 477 Gadwall at the Cape Charles, VA CBC Dec. 30 (BP, GP); 7707 Lesser Scaup, 527 Com. Goldeneyes, and 1858 Ruddy Ducks at the Washington's Birthplace, VA

CBC (BPo); a record 1345 Hooded Mergansers at the Little Creek, VA CBC Dec. 31 (PWS); and 750 Am. Black Ducks, 2500 Mallards, 600 Com. Goldeneye, 5000 Canvasback, and 11,000 scaup sp. in Kent, MD Jan. 29 (Grubers).

In Maryland, single Greater White-fronted Geese were in Worcester near Snow Hill Feb. 12 (MO), Pocomoke City Feb. 26 (MLH), Kent Dec. 19 (DH), and Montgomery at Little Seneca L., Feb. 19 (POs). Although still rare in the region, the single Ross' Goose, in Accomac, VA (NB), provided a slightly below-average number. Unusual inland was a Brant that wintered in D.C. (v.o.). Single ♂ Eur. Wigeon were at Little Seneca L., Montgomery, MD Jan. 1–29 (CD, et al.), Norfolk, VA Jan. 29 (BP, GP), and Deal I., MD Feb. 26 (MLH). Jetty ducks were found in unremarkable numbers, although five Harlequins at Ocean City, MD in the middle of February was high, and one inland on the L. Anna, VA CBC was exceptional (MB).

Raptors to Shorebirds

Many common raptors were commoner than usual, especially Red-tailed Hawks and N. Harriers (v.o.). Despite the cold, Ospreys lingered, with six at the Little Creek, VA CBC (PWS), and one on the D.C. CBC Dec. 18 (JBj). They also returned exceptionally early, with one at Merkle W.M.A., Prince George's, MD Feb. 20 (LMD). Northern Goshawks put in an excellent showing, with a Regionally unprecedented >10 reports (v.o.). *Thirteen* Bald Eagles on the Kerr Res. CBC Dec. 19 (BP) was a record count for the Virginia Piedmont. Rough-legged Hawks were

slightly above average in Maryland, including at least three inland in s. Frederick, but Virginia observers thought it was a poor year (v.o.). Golden Eagles, Merlins, and Peregrine Falcons were perhaps slightly more numerous than usual (v.o.).

Northern Bobwhite have been declining precipitously for at least 15 years, a trend confirmed by this year's CBCs, including the first miss on the Bowie, MD CBC in 22 years (FF). By the end of the winter, the bitter weather may have finished the species at most inland and upland locations. The only Sandhill Crane was near Centerville, Queen Anne's, MD in January (GT).

SA The hawk of the year was Maryland's first, and long overdue, Gyrfalcon—an imm. gray-morph discovered and banded by Fritz along New Design Road in Frederick Feb. 9. Small roads and persistent ice storms frustrated many observers, but the diligent and lucky continued to find the bird through the end of the period, frequently perched on silos and telephone poles. On at least 2 occasions it was seen going to roost on the cliff face at Sugarloaf Mt.

As if one extraordinary falcon was not enough, Swarth provided compelling documentation of Maryland's and the Region's first Prairie Falcon, seen at Jug Bay, Anne Arundel Feb. 14, but not thereafter. Although reports from the Midwest have increased in the past decade and some observers predicted the occurrence (and despite several records from the Carolinas), there will always be speculation about the origin of out-of-range raptors, especially those popular with falconers.

A count of 564 Killdeer at the Cape Charles, VA CBC Dec. 30 was a new high (HTA). The same count yielded 394 Greater Yellowlegs, also a new high (HTA). A Black-bellied Plover was late inland at Lily Pons, Frederick, MD Dec. 8 (BD). Rare in winter, a Pectoral Sandpiper was at E.S.N.W.R., Jan. 2 (PB). A Dunlin at the Kerr Res. CBC Dec. 19 (BP) was new to the count. Marbled Godwits are scarce in the Maryland portion of the Delmarva Pen., so four at Ocean City Dec. 5 (BPe) and one Jan. 29 (MLH, MO) were notable. Rare in the Bay, a Purple Sandpiper was at Pt. Lookout, St. Mary's, MD from November–Jan. 20 (PC et al.). Snow and ice concentrated an amazing 570 Am. Woodcock on the Cape Charles, VA CBC Dec. 30 (BP).



Gulls to Alcids

The pattern of Laughing Gulls increasing as lingerers, especially inland, continues. One on the Nokesville, VA CBC Dec. 19 was unexpected (KB), but 114 on the D.C. CBC Dec. 18 (JBj) defies explanation. Three Little and two Com. Black-headed gull reports, all coastal, were about average (v.o.), but a Black-headed at Conowingo Dam, Harford, MD Jan. 20–Feb. 12 (EB, EJS, *et al.*) was unusual inland. Bonaparte's Gulls were described as scarce everywhere except on the Kerr Res. CBC, where a minimum of 290 set a count record (BP).

SA A first-winter Common Gull (*Larus canus canus*) at Conowingo Dam on the Susquehanna R. represents Maryland's and the Region's first. Found and studied for an hour by Gustafson and Peterjohn at midday Jan. 22, it was relocated that evening (EB), although only seen briefly in flight. Even though large numbers of people searched, and some reported seeing the bird but not recognizing it until going home and searching European guides, it was only reliably reported again Feb. 6 (EJS). This species, which has been reported twice in recent winters in Pennsylvania and is annual in coastal New England, has long been sought by regional gull-o-philes. Many had assumed that the North American subspecies Mew Gull (*L. c. brachyrhynchus*) would be the one found.

The larger gulls were reported in larger-than-usual numbers (v.o.), certainly an artifact of frozen water to the north. Among the "rarer" large gulls were at least 20 Icelanders from a dozen sites, Lesser Black-backs (>55) from nearly every concentration point, and up to 10 Glaucous, including a Virginia Piedmont record of four at the Henrico landfill from mid-January+ (v.ob.). Despite growing evidence that Thayer's is no more than a dark Iceland, and not even a subspecies, the darkest small white-wings are still referred to as that "species." This year there were 2 reports, one on the Howard, MD Triadelphia CBC Dec. 18 (HLW, DC), and a first-winter at the Virginia Beach landfill Feb. 12 (BP, NB, photo).

SA GullDay 94 was held Jan 29. In its 3rd year, the event is an effort to monitor gull populations in Maryland, D.C., and parts of Virginia and Delaware each winter, with same-day coverage at as many landfills, dams, and other concentration points as possible. This year there

was coverage at about 55 sites. The preliminary results included >90,000 gulls of 9 species: >33,000 Herring, >55,000 Ring-billed, 1273 Great Black-back, 262 Bonaparte's, 36 Lesser Black-backed, five Iceland, three Glaucous, two "Thayer's," and one Com. Black-headed. This indicates a shift from the 2 previous milder winters, with a higher percentage of Herrings in relation to Ring-billeds. Details of the first 3 years are being prepared for publication; for more information on the project write Scarpulla.

Even in the worst winters a few Forster's Terns linger through the end of the year. Along the coast, 49 on the Back Bay CBC had trickled to a few by mid-January (PWS) and the last two were at Ocean City Jan. 1 (MLH).

SA Winter pelagic trips in the Region are haphazard, with weather forcing cancellations and few observers willing to sign up for cold and frequently rough and unproductive ventures. This year there were only 3 regional trips, all out of Virginia Beach. The results hint at one of the largest alcid movements in decades. Dovekies were seen on all 3 trips, with a high of 212 Feb. 13 (BP, GP, MO, *et al.*). Razorbills were also seen on all trips, with a Virginia record of 70 Feb. 5 (BP). Atlantic Puffins, not reported most years, were another three-fer, with a high of 17 Feb. 5 (KB). The alcid of the year, however, was Virginia's first Common Murre, spotted by M. O'Brien Feb. 13. The bird, found about 50 mi offshore, was in mostly basic plumage and remained in place long enough for Patteson to get photos. Rumors of extraordinary alcid concentrations to the south make us wish that economics, logistics, and weather permitted far more comprehensive coverage of offshore waters in winter.

Parakeets to Shrikes

Four Monk Parakeets, an exotic, were found on the Little Creek, VA CBC, and Hughes reports that they nested at nearby Ft. Story. Owls were unremarkable: The only Snowy was at Waldorf, Charles, MD Dec. 3–6 (L. Douer, *et al.*). The ♀ Rufous Hummingbird at Elkton in the fall remained until Dec. 28 (G. McDaniel *et al.*). Eastern Phoebe were scarce after the CBCs, but 59 at the Kerr Res. CBC shattered the old record of 26 (BP). Snow and ice concentrated large numbers of Horned Larks throughout the Region; the

high count was several thousand in s. Frederick, MD (v.ob.). Two Tree Swallows Feb. 19 at Nanticoke, on the Maryland E. Shore, may have been early migrants (CV), but 20 at Deal I., Jan. 29 (SHD) were apparently bucking the odds. CBC results indicate the best flight of Red-breasted Nuthatches in recent years. The *parid* star of the winter was the Brown-headed Nuthatch at the Back R. Wastewater Treatment Plant in Baltimore Jan. 23+ (Rc, EJS *et al.*). This is a first county record, and about 100 mi n. of their only outpost w. of the Bay. A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher was on the Elkton CBC Dec. 18 and two were on the Seneca CBC Dec. 19 (*fide* RFR). Carolina Wrens were in near-record numbers on many CBCs, but by the end of the period were extremely hard to find at inland and upland locations, and late season Winter Bird Counts suggest a crash away from the Coastal Plain (v.o.). Almost all marginal wintering and semi-hardy species, including Marsh, House, and Winter wrens, Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Gray Catbirds, and Brown Thrashers were nearly absent after the CBCs (v.o.).

SA Rivalling the other first state and Regional records for highlight of the season was Maryland's first Bohemian Waxwing, found and photographed by Hoffman near the Assateague Island Visitor's Center Feb. 13. It was defending a small line of fruit trees from the incursive raids of a local N. Mockingbird, and managed to resist eviction until Feb. 15.

Northern Shrikes stayed north. The one at Lucketts during the fall remained most of the winter (v.o.), and one was at Piney Run, Carroll, MD Jan. 22 (*fide* H. Mudd). Loggerhead Shrikes continue to disappear, but one near Ocean City Dec. 30–Feb. 14 (PO, SHD, *et al.*) was the first coastal Maryland record in a decade.

Vireos to Blackbirds

Solitary Vireos lingered long enough to be counted on 3 coastal CBCs, a fairly typical year, but 5 in Virginia's Dismal Swamp Jan. 8 (LW) was unexpected. Now nearly annual, two Prairie Warblers also hung around: one on Assateague I., Dec. 20 (MLH) and one in the Maryland portion of the C.N.W.R. CBC Dec. 29 (MO). A Nashville Warbler was found on the Salisbury, MD CBC Dec. 19 (CV). Palm Warblers disappeared after December (v.o.). Most observers felt Pine Warblers were scarce, but 113 on the Kerr Res. CBC provided a record (BP). Single Black-and-white Warblers were on the Jug Bay, MD CBC Dec. 18 and the Seneca CBC Dec. 19 (*fide* RFR). Painted Buntings wintering at feeders is another trend in the mak-

ing. For at least the 3rd consecutive year a minimum of three were found: Males near Elkton, Cecil, MD Dec. 13–Jan. 18 (B&G Snyder *et al.*) and at Norfolk Jan. 10–Feb. 6 (m.ob.), and for the 2nd consecutive year in Berlin, Worcester, MD Dec. 27+ (M. Humpreys *et al.*). A Dickcissel was at a feeder on the Crisfield CBC Dec. 27 (*vide CV*). The weather pushed Am. Tree Sparrows into the Region in good numbers, including scattered locations on the Coastal Plain, where they have been rare the past decade (v.o.). The only Lark Sparrow was at Ashburn, Loudon, VA Dec. 23–24 (JD). Single Clay-colored Sparrows were at Kiptopeke Dec. 9 (MO) and near Berlin, MD Jan. 29–Feb. 21 (MLH, MO *et al.*). LeConte's Sparrows, a Regional rarity, are either increasing or observers are getting better at finding them. Maryland's fourth was near Ocean City Dec. 28 (EB), and the fifth joined it Jan. 29, with one–two being seen through the end of the period (m.ob.). On the Back Bay CBC searchers found an unprecedented six (DFA, GA), with at least one present Feb. 6 (BP). Fox Sparrows were in exceptional numbers, especially in coastal areas—an unimaginable 236 were on the Cape Charles, VA CBC Dec. 30 (HTA†), and many counts set or approached records. White-crowned Sparrows were in better than average numbers, especially along the coast (v.o.). A Dark-eyed “Oregon” Junco at a feeder in D.C., Dec. 11 was persuasively described (*vide Voice of the Naturalist*). Lapland Longspurs and Snow Buntings were in high numbers (v.o.). Brewer's Blackbirds showed up at traditional sites: three wintered for the 3rd year at George's Island Landing, Worcester, MD (MLH), 24 were on the Nokesville, VA CBC Dec. 19 (KB), and seven were on the Cape Charles, VA CBC Dec. 30 (PWS). In addition, 26 were near Newark, Worcester, MD Dec. 28–January (MLH), and a single was at Ellicott City, Howard, MD Jan. 17 (BO). Five reports of Yellow-headed Blackbirds was average (v.o.), as were seven N. Orioles, almost all from feeders (v.o.).

Finches

The promise of the fall became the torrent of winter, at least in redpolls. The good fall flights of Purple Finches, Pine Siskins, and Evening Grosbeaks were over by the CBC period, and all 3 species were scarce thereafter, with occasional small flocks reported (v.o.). There were 2 crossbill reports; a single Red at a feeder in Springfield, Fairfax, VA Feb. 13 (SW), and six White-winged at a feeder in Prince George's, MD Jan. 20 (*vide MLH*).

The redpoll flight was massive, easily the largest since 1978. The trickle began in late November, but numbers grew rapidly in late December and peaked toward the end

of the period. All the large flocks were in Maryland, w. of the Bay, and only small numbers penetrated Virginia e. of the Blue Ridge Mts. (v.o.). Dozens of people reported flocks of 30–100, and a half-dozen feeders hosted several hundred. The invasion continued well into March, and it is impossible to tell the story without poaching next season's information.

SA The best indication of how massive the redpoll flight may have been comes from the diligent work done by Czaplak at his feeder in Germantown, Montgomery, MD. As in any year with a big invasion, a few Hoary Redpolls were reported, with careful and persuasive reports from Baltimore, Howard, and Carroll in Maryland (v.o.). Until recently it was widely accepted that Com. and Hoary redpolls were indistinguishable in the field, that there were massive numbers of hybrids, and that the two were probably not separate species. The latest evidence undermines all 3 assumptions, but the details are buried in technical literature, much of it European. Czaplak mined almost all the current literature and examined skins at the National Museum in D.C. His results support the contention of the Region's most active birders that Hoary Redpolls are often overlooked during flight years, in part because identification information has not been disseminated and in part because local observers rarely get a chance to put redpoll identification skills to the test. By comparing photographs, Czaplak determined that at least 18 different Hoaries appeared at his feeder, with single day highs of four Feb. 8, 9, & 14. The previous Regional one-day high is two, and the seasonal high three. Fifteen of Czaplak's Hoaries were of the race *exillipes*, the expected form. The other three were identified as *hornemanni*, with single individuals present 3 days in March. The last Hoary was seen April 1, a record-late date for the Region, and the last Common was seen April 6. The highest one-day count of Commons was >350 Feb. 15. Based on the number of different Hoaries and the single-day high of four, Czaplak calculated that as many as 1575 different Commons may have passed through, supporting anecdotal evidence from others that numbers changed frequently at feeders and that the birds were highly nomadic. Czaplak noted in passing that

his seed bill was about \$8 per day, and that the redpolls shifted their preference from thistle to sunflower chips as spring approached.

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