

Southern Atlantic Coast Region

RICKY DAVIS

The winter of 1993–1994 will be remembered by the Region's birders for a long time! The weather in the Northeast and Midwest was so severe that large numbers of birds left those areas and descended on the Southeastern coast. Some species' totals were astounding and probably unprecedented in the Region. The birds most obviously affected were loons, grebes, waterfowl, gulls, and alcids. Winter finches also made a good showing, but their appearance was probably not caused by the same factors as the waterbirds. The weather was quite cold in December and January, but snow was not a significant factor. It should be noted that many of the interesting reports came just after the extreme cold spell in the east during January and early February.

Abbreviations: B.R.C. (*Bird Records Committee*); C. Hatt. (*Cape Hatteras*); G.W.T.P. (*Goldsboro Wastewater Treatment Plant*); Y.W.C. (*Yawkey Wildlife Center*).

Loons to Stork

Loons numbers were up in all 3 states, with Red-throated especially numerous. There was an amazing number of **Pacific/Arctic Loons** from North Carolina: singles at Figure Eight I., Jan. 9 (DC); Wrightsville Beach Feb. 19 (SC, KM) & 22 (DC, RM, TH, JW); Ft. Fisher Feb. 22 (DC, RM, TH, JW); Rodanthe Feb. 5 (SD *et al.*); and C. Hatt. Pt., March 1 (DW). Most were considered to be Pacifics, but one photographed at Figure Eight I., Feb. 5 showed a definite flank patch above the waterline, indicating a possible Arctic (DC).

In North Carolina Red-necked Grebes are normally infrequent during the season, so February was extraordinary. Red-neckeds were found inland near Winston-Salem, Greensboro, Charlotte, and Raleigh (RS, ED, HH, HLi, RD). They were all along the coast, at Wrightsville Beach, Cape Lookout, and the Outer Banks, which had amazing counts of

>24 Feb. 5 & 6 (SD) and 87 Feb. 25 (SC, TD). Eared Grebes were also numerous, with four–six along North Carolina's Outer Banks throughout the period. Inland individuals were wintering at Raleigh's L. Wheeler and Jordan L., and three were at the G.W.T.P. South Carolina reported two birds at Sumter during the period (LG). And, finally, **Western Grebes** were found twice! Last fall's bird at C. Hatt. Pt. reappeared Dec. 29–31 (SD, HL, AB, BL, RD) and two made a brief stop at Ft. Fisher, NC Dec. 6 (GM).

Northern Fulmars were recorded twice in North Carolina, with 13 off Currituck Banks Feb. 13 (NB *et al.*) and three off Hatteras Feb. 15 (BP *et al.*). Also on the Hatteras trip were three Manx and two Audubon's shearwaters (BP *et al.*). A probable Manx was seen on the Bodie-Pea Is. CBC Dec. 28 (AB) for a very rare sighting from shore. American White Pelicans were found in all 3 states, with seven at Pea I., NC Jan. 10–11 (SD). Three were at Falls L., NC Feb. 8–13 (WC, JP *et al.*) for a rare inland report. Anhingas are uncommon lingerers in winter, thus one on the New Bern, NC CBC Dec. 20 (JW) provided a good record. The count of 16 on the Augusta, GA CBC Dec. 26 was exceptional (A&VW). In the weird department was the white-morph Great Blue Heron on the Marietta, GA CBC Dec 18 (GS), a rare inland and winter occurrence. Wood Storks were in good numbers in Georgia, with the best count being 20 at St. Catherine's I., Dec. 18 (A&VW).

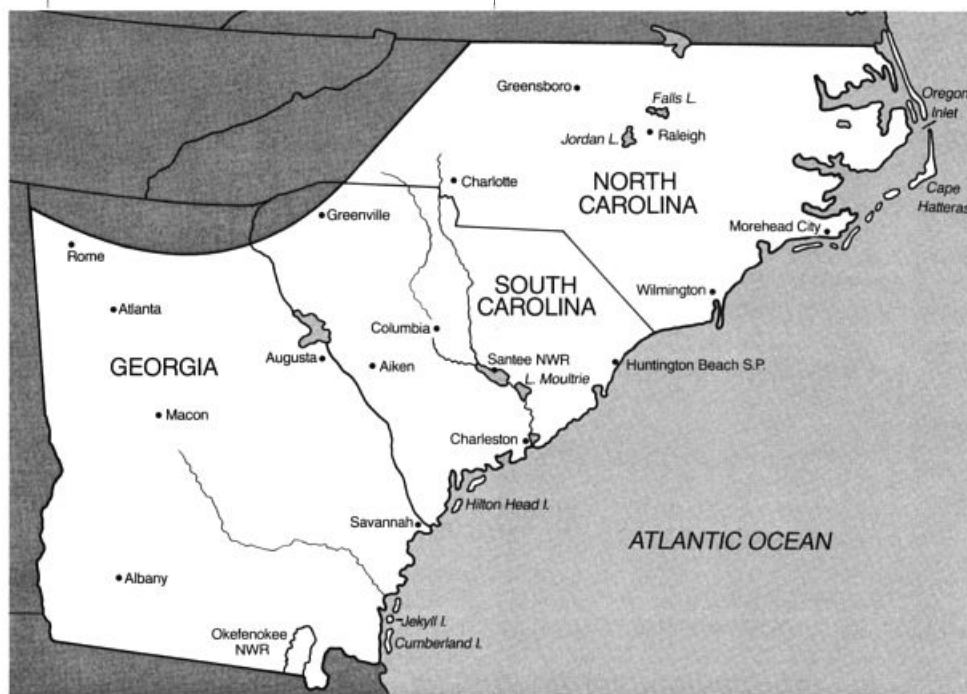
Waterfowl to Cranes

Fulvous Whistling-Ducks were on North

Carolina's Outer Banks with one–two birds at C. Hatt. through December (m.ob.) and one on the Bodie-Pea Is. CBC Dec. 28 (HA). Mute Swans continue to turn up at unexpected locales. This winter saw an explosion of reports from North Carolina: one on the Yadkin R., *Forsyth* Jan. 1 (KB, *fide* RS); 11 at Salem L., Winston-Salem Jan. 9 (D&AD, *fide* RS); seven–ten on Cane Cr. Res., *Durham* Feb. 4–14 (m.ob.); two at G.W.T.P., Feb. 19 (GH, SC); and two at L. Townsend, *Guilford* Feb. 20 (HH, HLi). South Carolina had a report of one at L. Busbee, Conway Feb. 25 (JPe). Did these birds come from the Great Lakes or the Chesapeake populations?

Another bird of unknown origin was the ad. **Whooper Swan** which spent January and February at L. Mattamuskeet, NC (KD, v.o.). The bird was paired with a Tundra Swan and, as can be expected, created debate. Ross' Geese normally occur only at the Outer Banks of North Carolina during any winter, thus up to three at Pungo N.W.R, NC during January (DC, RD), provided a noteworthy record for the Region. Two were present in *Mecklenburg*, NC January–February (m.ob.), providing the first Piedmont record. Not to be outdone, Georgia had its 2nd record with one at Metter, *Candler* during January–February (JPa, m.ob.). The only report of Greater White-fronted Goose was of five at the Y.W.C., *Georgetown*, SC Feb. 15 (LG). A count of 320 Brant on the Litchfield-Pawley's I. CBC Dec. 30 (MH *et al.*) was impressive for South Carolina.

Dabbling ducks were reported in better-than-average numbers throughout the Re-



gion, with Eur. Wigeons showing up away from the usual North Carolina Outer Banks locations. Individuals were found near Raleigh at L. Johnson Dec. 4 (VJ, v.o.) and Harris L., Dec. 27 (NP, *fide*SD). One was at Greenville Jan. 20 (JW) and another at Portsmouth I., Dec. 2–3 (S&JD). Diving ducks also caused excitement inland, with reports of Redheads and Greater Scaup being the most prevalent. King Eider was seen at C. Hatt., NC in January and February (JW, SC), while Com. Eiders were reported



Ross's Goose (with Canada Goose) near Metter, Georgia, February 21, 1994. Although the species winters regularly in very small numbers at a few sites on the Atlantic coast, this bird furnished only the 2nd record for Georgia. Photograph/Giff Beaton.

erted along the Outer Banks (m.ob.). Harlequin Ducks in North Carolina included two immatures at the Oregon Inlet bridge Dec. 13 (GD)–Jan 23 (SD); a female at C. Hatt., Jan. 20 (ML); two imm. males at Rodanthe Jan. 30 (H&ELi); and five at Wrightsville Beach Feb. 12 (SC). Oldsquaws were found inland in North Carolina at Jordan L., G.W.T.P. and a best count of seven at L. Townsend Dec. 12 (HH, HLi, D&LB). Lake Townsend, NC also had six Black Scoters Dec. 11 (HH, HLi) and one Surf Scoter Feb. 13 (HH, ET). A White-winged Scoter showed up at Salem L., Winston-Salem, NC during late January–mid-February. (RS). The best count of White-wingeds was an amazing 150 off Rodanthe, NC in early February (SD). The Com. Goldeneye staged a near invasion in North Carolina, with birds throughout the Piedmont and along the Coast. The best inland totals were 28 at Jordan L., Feb. 13 (WC, JSh) and at least eight in the *Guilford* area mid-January–mid-February (HH, H&ELi). South Carolina also had reports of four from L. Greenwood Jan. 20 (SP) and >15 at Georgetown, SC Jan. 29 (ST). Common Mergansers were reported from all 3 states, with the best record of 20 at Roanoke Rapids L., NC Jan. 21 (FE), two at Dreher Island S.P., SC Feb. 3 (IP), and three near Atlanta, GA Dec. 12 (JS) for a very rare local record.

The N. Goshawk provided excitement in North Carolina, with an adult well observed

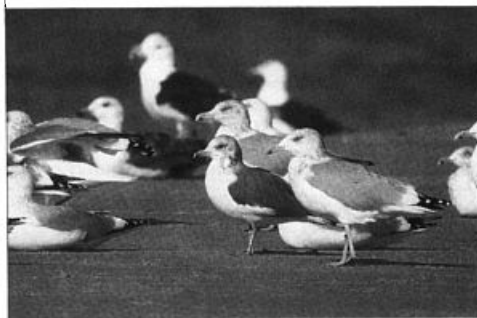
at C. Hatt. Pt., Dec. 30 (BL). An adult was seen being chased by a Cooper's Hawk near Pungo N.W.R., Jan. 23 (RD); probably the same bird was seen at Pungo Feb. 3 (FE). An immature was reported from Chapel Hill in January (BS), but proved hard to relocate. Rough-legged Hawks were found 3 times in North Carolina, with singles at L. Mattamuskeet Dec. 30 (AB), near Roper Jan. 14 (DC), and near Salisbury in February (*fide* TP). The only Golden Eagle report came from South Carolina's Y.W.C., *Georgetown* December–February (LG, v.o.). Also of note was a Peregrine Falcon which took up residence in Winston-Salem, NC Dec. 31+ (RH, *fide* RS). Yellow Rails winter at many coastal sites throughout the Region every year, but almost always go unnoticed. This season three were seen: singles at N. River, Morehead City, NC Dec. 19 (JF *et al.*); N. Topsail Beach, NC Jan. 8 (NM); and on the *Glynn*, GA CBC Jan. 1 (DG, *fide* MC) for a very rare state record. The Sandhill Crane returned to the fields near L. Mattamuskeet, NC, where it has been found in past winters, and remained through the period (m.ob.) More unexpected was a flyover Sandhill near Charlotte, NC in January (*fide* TP).

Plovers to Gulls

The best Piping Plover count came from Portsmouth I., NC Dec. 4, where the Dinsmores tallied 34. Another good total was 432 Am. Avocets at the Y.W.C., *Georgetown*, SC Jan. 16 (LG, BF). Long-billed Curlews were found at their usual wintering sites, with singles at Ft. Fisher (RD) and Portsmouth I. (SD) in North Carolina and two at C. Romain N.W.R., SC (RC, CE, m.ob.). On the Durham, NC CBC Dec. 19, Falls L. was exceptionally low and provided an unusual report of 55 W. Sandpipers feeding with pipits (*fide* MS)! Another rare winter report was of a White-rumped Sandpiper at Pamlico Pt., NC Jan. 13 (PC). The only onshore sighting of Red Phalarope occurred at the Rodanthe, NC pier Jan. 29 (H&ELi).

The Raleigh-Durham-Chapel Hill, NC area was invaded by no less than 9 gull species! Along with the usual (Herring, Ring-billed, and Bonaparte's), highlights were a Laughing Gull at the Raleigh Landfill Dec. 7 (RD); a first-winter Thayer's at the landfill Feb. 4–6 (DC, BH, JMu); a first-winter Iceland at the landfill Feb. 15 (BH, WC, JP); at least three imm. and one ad. Lesser Black-backed at the landfill and Falls L. throughout the period (BH, HL, RD, DC, WC, JP); up to two first-winter Glaucous at the landfill and Falls L. in early February (RD, BH); and at least eight imm. and one ad. Great Black-backed at Jordan L., Falls L., and the landfill in January and

February (HLi, RM, JMu, BH, DC, RD, WC, JP). The Thayer's and Iceland gulls were the first inland records for the Region. Gulls were also in good numbers along the coast of North Carolina. Among huge numbers of Bonaparte's Gulls (>45,000) off the Outer Banks, 91 Little Gulls were tallied Feb. 5–6 (SD, SG), a record total for this species in the Region. South Carolina had a rare report of a first-winter Little Gull at Murrell's Inlet, SC Jan. 30 (HL, DC, LP, LG, m.ob.). There are only a few previous records for the state. The rare Black-headed Gull was found twice in North Carolina. An adult spent the winter at Southport (SC) and another adult was at Oregon Inlet Jan. 15 (SD). North Carolina got its 2nd documented California Gull when an adult was photographed at C. Hatt. Pt., Dec. 27 (BL, MT, JW, AB). This bird was also present Jan. 15 (DC, HL) and possibly the same bird was seen at nearby Avon Feb. 5–6 (SD, SG). The C. Hatt. CBC Dec. 27 also produced an ad. Thayer's (RD) and an ad. Glaucous (BL *et al.*). Iceland Gulls were found at C. Hatt. with an ad. "Kumlien's" Dec. 29 and Jan. 15 (SD, RD) and a first-winter bird during February (SD, RD, HL *et al.*). First-winter Icelanders were at Avon Feb. 6 (SD), off C. Hatt., Feb. 15 (BP *et al.*), and off Currituck Banks Feb. 13 (NB *et al.*). Lesser Black-backed Gulls were widespread, with a best count of 24 along North Carolina's Outer Banks Feb. 5–6 (SD, SG). Georgia had a rare winter report with an ad. Lesser which spent the entire season at Tybee I. (m.ob.). In North Carolina Black-



Gull-watching in North Carolina continues to be very productive. This adult California Gull (center, with Herring and Great Black-backed gulls) at Cape Hatteras Point December 27, 1993, provided a 2nd documented record for the state. Photograph/Bob Lewis.

legged Kittiwakes were found off the Outer Banks on both trips (Feb. 13 & 15) and also onshore with single imm. birds at Ft. Macon Dec. 10 (JF), Nags Head Jan. 29 (H&ELi), and Rodanthe Feb. 6 (SD, SG).

SA This season saw an unprecedented influx of alcids. Although Georgia did not have any reports, South Carolina produced

several. A Dovekie watched offshore at Litchfield Beach Feb. 27 (RC, CE) was the first record in 40+ years! A flock of up to 12 Thick-billed Murres was present off Litchfield Beach Feb. 28 & 29 (RC, CE, SP, RY, JW, v.o.), a record Regional total, and only the 2nd or 3rd state record. Also present with the murres was a Black Guillemot Feb. 29 (RC, CE, SP, RY), providing the 2nd consecutive year for this species in the state! The real action was in North Carolina, with 4 species recorded. Dovekie reports included the state's record total of 257 off Currituck Banks Feb. 13 (NB *et al.*), one from Bald Head I., Jan. 2 (DC), two at Rodanthe Feb. 6 (SD), three off Hatteras Feb. 15 (BP *et al.*), one from Ocracoke Feb. 25 (RD), and two from C. Hatt., Mar. 1 (DW). Thick-billed Murres were at Rodanthe Feb. 6 (SD); C. Hatt., Feb. 25 (RD); and near C. Hatt., Feb. 27 (BPe, PM). Also Feb. 27, Pearce and McQuarry observed a Common Murre in the surf off C. Hatt. for the first sight record of this species in the Region! A "large alcid sp." at Pea I., Dec. 28 (HL) and two Razorbills at Ft. Fisher (RD *et al.*) could not foretell what would happen with Razorbills in February off the Outer Banks. Dinsmore and Grove counted 47+ near Rodanthe Feb. 5-6 and the numbers kept building. There were counts of 1184 along the Banks Feb. 14 (BP, NB, BPe), 516 off of C. Hatt., Feb. 15 (BP *et al.*), 600+ along the Banks Feb. 25 (RD, SC, TD), and a count of 750+ from C. Hatt., Mar. 1 (DW). Local fishermen in the C. Hatt. area estimated the flock in mid-February at 2000-3000 birds! Some observers commented that it was hard not to see Razorbills, since they were constantly flying or sitting close by in the surf. Birders in the Region may never experience anything quite like it again.

Pigeons to Pipits

North Carolina's 2nd Band-tailed Pigeon came to a water source in Charlotte in February (m.ob.). The bird seemed quite wild and photographs should place this species on the state's list. In the Brunswick area of coastal Georgia, Eur. Collared-Doves seem to be established, with at least four birds present throughout the period (m.ob.). The Com. Ground-Dove continues to decline in the Region, thus a report of 16 in *Laurens*, GA Feb. 6 (JS, BD) was encouraging. The only winter goatsucker was a Whip-Poor-Will heard near Beaufort, NC Dec. 19 (JF). The discovery of two Vaux's Swifts in Columbia,

SC Jan. 24 (CE) was exciting! East coast winter records of swifts often turn out to be this species, and if accepted by the South Carolina B.R.C., it would provide the first Regional record. There were >10 *Archilochus* hummingbirds in North Carolina. Definite Ruby-throateds were in Oriental (two males, DF) and *Carteret* (two ad. males, JF). The Black-chinned Hummingbird made news with Georgia's 6th and 7th records (*vide* PS), and North Carolina had an imm. male showing a "solid black bib on the throat" at a Wilmington feeder Jan. 9 (SC, GM). The bird could not be relocated later that day, but was the state's first record (p.a., NC B.R.C.). South Carolina also had its first record of Black-chinned when a female died at a Charleston feeder (GB). This specimen, along with photos of a 2nd probable Black-chinned at the same feeder, should add the species to the state official list. *Selasphorus* hummingbirds were found in North Carolina twice, while in Georgia at least seven Rufous were banded (BSa, *vide* PS). Another Allen's was found in early January in Cartersville, GA (*vide* PS). This bird, banded earlier in Tennessee by Sargent, provided Georgia's 2nd record. Rare flycatchers included an *Empidonax* sp. on the Aiken, SC CBC Dec. 24 (CEL, *vide* A&VW) and a very tardy E. Kingbird on the Jordan L., NC CBC Jan. 2 (FH *et al.*). Lingering swallows included a Barn on the Southport, NC CBC Jan. 2 (SD, SG), a very rare-in-winter Bank on the New Bern, NC CBC Dec. 20 (JF), and six Cliffs flying past Huntington Beach S.P., SC Dec. 15 (JC).

In North Carolina Com. Ravens continue to spread from their mountain range. Seven were in downtown Winston-Salem with an active nest reported (RS)! Two more were farther east at the Greensboro Landfill Feb. 26 (HLi, *vide* HH). Red-breasted Nuthatches were widespread. Numbers were not high, but there was agreement that this season was better than the last several. A Sprague's Pipit spent late January-February at the Super Sod Farm in Orangeburg, SC (RC, CE, m.ob.), furnishing about the 8th record for the state.

Warblers to Tanagers

In spite of the winter's harsh weather, several warblers were reported. A ♂ Blue-winged Warbler showed up in Oriental, NC Jan. 30 and stayed until the end of the period! The bird was photographed and is the first Regional winter record of the species. A lingering Tennessee Warbler was found at Huntington Beach S.P., SC Dec. 7 (JPe), providing a very late record. A Yellow Warbler at L. Mattamuskeet, NC Dec. 24 (JD, SU) constituted one of the few winter reports in that state. An ad. ♂ Cape May was found on

the Chapel Hill, NC CBC Dec. 26 (GD) and another or the same one was at a feeder in Chapel Hill Jan. 22, staying several weeks (FH). Prairie Warblers are rare but regular in winter at coastal areas in the Region, but four different birds counted on the Bodie-Pea Is., NC CBC Dec. 28 was better than average (PS). North Carolina's first winter record of American Redstart was of a female at Ft. Fisher Jan. 2 (RD). Georgia had its share of rare warblers with a N. Waterthrush near Midway, *Tattnall* Jan. 28 (TM *et al.*) and a ♂ Wilson's at College Park Dec 22-Jan. 1 (AS). Western Tanagers occur in the Region almost every year, but the presence of two in one area is exceptional. Wilmington, NC hosted a male at one feeder Dec 13-Feb. 19 (KK, m.ob.) and a female at another feeder all winter (*vide* GM).

Buntings to Finches

A ♀ Blue Grosbeak was at a Wilmington, NC feeder Jan. 6-8 (GM) for a rare winter record. One at Merchant's Millpond S.P., *Gates*, NC Feb. 14 (FW) was possibly an early migrant. *Carteret*, NC had a monopoly on wintering Painted Buntings, with ad males at Morehead City (RT, PE), Straits (CHo, *vide* JF), and C. *Carteret* (*vide* JF).

The Lynchburg Savannah Preserve, *Lee*, SC was a haven for wintering sparrows. Some of the rarer species included a Bachman's Jan. 22 and Feb. 2 (RC, LG, TK), a Grasshopper Feb. 2 (RC *et al.*), two Henslow's Jan. 22 & 23 (RC, CE, LG), and a LeConte's Jan. 22 & 23 (RC, CE, LG). A rarity was the Am. Tree Sparrow found in *n Greene*, GA Feb. 19 (PS) for about the 6th state record. Surprisingly, this was the only report for the Region. Also of note was a Henslow's at Townville, SC Jan. 6 (PW) and single LeConte's near Wilmington, NC Dec. 14 & 15 (SC) and Huntington Beach S.P., SC Jan. 29 (CE). Lincoln's Sparrows were reported frequently and in better-than-average numbers. The Super Sod Farms in Orangeburg, SC hosted a large flock of Lapland Longspurs (m.ob.). The birds were first noted in late December and were present through the period, with the peak count being an impressive 52 Jan. 22 (TK, *vide* RC). Snow Buntings were reported only from North Carolina, with one at Southport Jan. 2 (SD, SG), two at Oriental Jan. 1-3 (DF), one in Pamlico until February (*vide* BHo), and three at C. Hatt. Pt., Dec. 27 (RD) and again at Avon Jan. 11 (SD, SG).

Rare in winter, a ♀ Yellow-headed Blackbird was seen briefly at Pea I., NC Feb. 8 (JP, RD). Brewer's Blackbirds were reported from L. Mattamuskeet, NC with three Jan 9 (ED); Goat I., *Georgetown*, SC had 27 birds Jan. 2 (LG, BF, LT). The species was considered more numerous than usual in

Georgia (*vide* TM). The Shiny Cowbird continues to be found each year somewhere in the Region. One—two were present at Wilmington, NC in January and February (KK, m.ob.). The rare N. “Bullock’s” Oriole was found twice in North Carolina. A female was in Richlands Dec. 21–27 (J&NM) and another of the same bird was at a Wilmington feeder Jan. 4 (GM).

The winter of 1993–1994 saw good numbers of winter finches. After several years of low totals and complete absences in some areas, Purple Finches, Pine Siskins, and Evening Grosbeaks were widely reported. The best total for Purple Finch was >200 in Blythewood, SC all winter (BW). One of the rarer birds, a ♀ White-winged Crossbill frequented a Chapel Hill, NC feeder Feb. 10–13 (CH, m.ob.). Surprisingly, no Red Crossbills were reported. Common Redpolls made news with one banded at Southern Shores, NC Jan. 14–16 (DL, *vide* SD), and singles at Hatteras, NC Dec. 27 (HA *et al.*); near Spartanburg, SC Jan. 7 (JWr, ST); near Columbia, SC Jan. 17 & 23 (*vide* PW); near Hopkins, Richland, SC Jan. 22 (GSo, *vide* RC), and at Simpsonville, SC Feb. 11 (PW). This amazing number of reports was to be expected since redpolls had a major flight in states to the north. Finally, many observers happily reported the reappearance of Evening Grosbeaks. They were found in all 3 states, with flocks of >50 birds in some areas.

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Florida Region

RICHARD WEST, NOEL WAMER, BILL PRANTY

The severe winter of 1993–1994 on the Eastern seaboard did not push extraordinary numbers of wintering birds into Florida. For example, Cedar Waxwings were notably absent from Jacksonville and the rest of the state; large flocks of American Robins were not reported, and few penetrated to southern Florida. Annette Stedman reported that the last robin was seen on Casey Key (Sarasota County) November 8—none was banded there the entire season for the first time in 17 years. Instead of a finch winter, it was a warbler winter, with unusual reports submitted for 15 warbler species lingering or being out-of-place. The report of a western vagrant, Townsend Warbler, fits in with reports of Western Tanager, Lark Sparrow, and a number of western fly-catcher species, adding up to a better-than-average winter for western strays.

Abbreviations: A.P.A.F.R. (*Avon Park Air Force Range, Highlands*); C.P. (*County Park*); E.N.P. (*Everglades National Park*); P.C.P.P

