

Vireos to Sparrows

A remarkable three Solitary Vireos were at Las Cruces Dec. 19 (BZ *et al.*), where recently the species has occurred almost regularly in early winter; these were described as two *cassinii* (ph. BZ) and one *plumbeus*. Single Hutton's Vireos were at Aguirre Springs, *Doña Ana* Jan. 15 (BZ) and Feb. 4 (CR). An Oranged-crowned Warbler was at Percha Jan. 2 (BZ *et al.*) & 7 (GS) and two were at Loving Dec. 28 (CR); the 49 at Las Cruces Dec. 19 (BZ *et al.*), however, provided a record winter high. A ♀ **Black-and-White Warbler** at Mesilla Dec. 18–Jan. 15 (BZ *et al.*) furnished the state's 2nd well-documented winter record. Two Com. Yellowthroats were heard at Las Palomas Feb. 3 (CR), while five at Loving Dec. 28 (TH, CR) were apparently the first winter records for *Eddy*. Entirely unexpected was an **Olive Warbler** at Mesilla Dec. 19 (J. Patton, B. Vaughn, ph. BZ). Far n. of the usual range were single N. Cardinals at Zuni Dec. 19 (CR) and Tucumcari Dec. 10 (CR); another was at a Roswell feeder Dec. 20–Feb. 28 (SMB). The few Am. Tree Sparrows reported were restricted to Maxwell N.W.R. (SB) and the Las Vegas area (GS, SB, CR), suggesting fewer wintered s. to New Mexico this winter. A Field Sparrow at Roswell Dec. 18 (SMB) had been regular at a feeder all fall; the only additional reports were one–three in the Rattlesnake Springs area Dec. 20 (SW *et al.*) and Jan. 22 (CR, PRS). The 49 Black-chinned Sparrows counted in and near the Peloncillo Mts., Jan. 1 (RS *et al.*) was high. Sage Sparrows, widespread in the south from Lordsburg, Albuquerque, and the lower Pecos areas southward (v.o.), were unusually abundant in *Doña Ana* all winter (CS); a Sage at Navajo Dam Feb. 26 (DC) was early. Seven Fox Sparrows were reported, all from the south at 6 locales in *Sierra, Doña Ana*, and *Eddy* (v.o.). Late for the north was a Lincoln's at Española Dec. 18 (CR). White-throated Sparrows were relatively scarce, with small numbers noted at only 7 locales (v.o.). Well-detailed Golden-crowned Sparrows included one in Santa Fe Feb. 12 (SB), plus an immature in Albuquerque Dec. 19 (HS), and an adult there Jan. 23+ (JP); undetailed were reports of singles in San Juan Jan 8–9 (*fide* PRS) and the Sandia Mts., Feb. 9 (*fide* PRS). The four Harris' Sparrows were singles at Kirtland Dec. 30 (GS), Cochiti Feb. 21 (CR), Corrales Jan. 28 (*fide* PRS), and at Bosque on various dates Dec. 11–Feb. 19 (JP). Noteworthy were five Lapland Longspurs at Eagle Nest Feb. 19 (CR) & 17, plus two n. of range Chestnut-collareds at Las Vegas Jan. 2 (CR).

Blackbirds to Finches

A Yellow-headed Blackbird was late at Albuquerque Dec. 19 (HS *et al.*). Rusty Blackbirds are rare in New Mexico in winter, but this year six were at Percha Jan 2 (BZ *et al.*) and three–nine at Rattlesnake Springs Dec. 20 (JP), Jan. 22 (CR, PRS), and Feb. 5 (CR, CS). A good find in the west, and a local first, was a Com. Grackle at Mangas Dec. 8 (ph. RF). A Scott's Oriole at Pancho Villa S.P., Jan. 4 (SB) provided the 4th recent winter record there. There was one report of rosy-finches, a flock of about 150 w. of Bobcat Pass, *Taos* Feb. 26 that contained mostly Brown-cappeds but also ≥five Blacks and two Gray-crowned (BN, DE, CR). Southerly, and unusual for the Manzano Mts., were three–four Pine Grosbeaks at Tajiique Canyon Dec. 21 and Jan. 26 (J. de Forest, *fide* HS). Both Cassin's Finches and Red Crossbills were relatively numerous in the Jemez, Sangre de Cristo, and Sandia mountains (v.o.) but were scarce elsewhere; small numbers of both were in the Magdalena Mts., (HS) while one–two Cassin's were in the Caballo (BZ) and Silver City (RF) areas and four Red Crossbills were near Cloudcroft (GE).

The finch of the season was a probable **White-winged Crossbill** near the top of Timber Mt. e. of Caballo L., Jan. 2 (EW *et al.*). Consistent with the mild weather were two Lesser Goldfinches near Santa Fe Jan. 1 (BF) and an unusually high 55 at Albuquerque Dec. 19 (HS *et al.*). Evening Grosbeaks were relatively plentiful in and near the Jemez and Sangre de Cristo ranges, including a remarkable 400 at Bandelier Feb. 11 (CR), but were scarce elsewhere, with only small numbers at Farmington (TR) and singles in the Sandia Mts. (TB) and at Silver City (RF).

Initialed Observers: Sy Baldwin, Sherry M. Bixler, Tamie Bulow, David Cleary, Wes Cook, Steven Cox, Doug Emkalns, Gordon Ewing, Ralph Fisher, Bernard Foy, Sheila Gershen, Larry Gorbet, Lois Herrmann, Tommy Hines, Dick & Jean Hoffman, Stephen Ingraham, Pat Inley, Eugene Lewis, Bruce Neville, John Parmeter, Mary Peckinpaugh, Christopher Rustay, Catherine Sandell, Gregory Schmitt, Robert Scholes, Lorraine Schulte, Hart Schwarz, Patricia R. Snider, Ross Teuber, John Trochet, Steve West, S. O. Williams, Joyce Wolff, Eleanor Wootten, Barry Zimmer.
—*Sartor O. Williams III, New Mexico Department of Game and Fish, P.O. Box 25112, Santa Fe, NM 87504.*

Alaska Region

T. G. TOBISH, JR.

Unusually mild temperatures prevailed over the entire Region for most of winter 1993–1994. Except for February, which ended the period with a nearly month-long, late-season, high-pressure cold siege, this winter was almost warm, mostly dry and, birdwise, locally exciting. Snowcover was only locally heavy, and then confined to areas where winter bird movements are independent of weather, such as the Brooks Range and the north Chugach and west Wrangell Mountains. Elsewhere, the winter's snowpack was well-below average and failed to concentrate semi-hardy overwintering passerines. The late fall's mild weather, predominant at least over the southern half of the state, continued well into January, when a full freeze-up finally scattered lingering waterbirds to the immediate coastal hot spots at Cordova, Seward, Kodiak, and Petersburg. February was brutally cold in comparison, and northern Southeast had its third coldest February ever. Most notable in this year's winter bird highlights were late records of semi-hardy species that only occasionally overwinter. As usual, most of the season's significant reports were concentrated around the Christmas Bird Count period and especially at coastal sites. For the second consecutive year, an Asiatic component was missing from reports. Unfortunately, especially in a mild winter, many regular observers failed to report.

Loons to Waterfowl

Perhaps as a result of mild conditions, no Pied-billed Grebes were found. The season's peak W. Grebe counts were below-average from the standard spots: near Petersburg only 85 Dec. 4 (PJW) and around Ketchikan an area total of about 230 for the season (SCH). Four Great Blue Herons near Kodiak throughout the season (RAM), a single present all season at Seldovia (LT), another near Seward into "mid-December" (WS), and one n. to the Palmer flats until "late-December" (JL) were typical numbers of post breeders w. of nesting areas. The Palmer bird is the only one that rated as an extralimital, representing about the 3rd local record.

Trumpeter Swans were notably common and widespread in Southeast, especially after December. Three at Sitka Dec. 5–19 (MLW) were very late on the outer coast,

and the Petersburg-Blind Slough winter group peaked at 65 Feb. 27 (PJW). A single Trumpeter at Seward Dec. 26 (BA, SA) was a 2nd local winter report. Southeast's second or third winter **Greater White-fronted Goose** lingered Nov. 9–Dec. 31 near Ketchikan (*vide* SCH). Winter waterfowl populations in the Izembek-Nelson Lagoon systems included a probable still-staging peak count of 15,781 Emperor Geese Dec. 2 and 13,221 Brant Jan. 26 (CPD, RPS). Significant dabbling duck reports included: single Green-winged Teal at Anchorage Dec. 1–Jan. 2 (m.obs.), at Palmer (first local winter record) December–Feb. 24+ (DC), and at Seward Dec. 26 (WS); a ♀ N. Pintail in Anchorage through the period (m.obs.); a local record >13 N. Shovelers at Petersburg Jan. 22, with 11 until Feb. 27 (PJW), and a single at Kodiak to Dec. 5 (RAM); three Eur. Wigeon at Kodiak Dec. 1–January (RAM); and one Am. Wigeon at Anchorage Dec. 15 (m.obs.), and a local record 140 at Petersburg Jan. 15 (PJW). Notable reports of the rarer diving ducks came from the usual coastal sites: an imm. ♂ Canvasback at Kodiak Dec. 5+ (RAM), a ♂ Redhead at Sitka's Swan L., Feb. 4–6 (MLW), a strong showing of up to six Ring-necked Ducks around Kodiak Dec. 5–January (RAM, ph.), a nice count of seven Lesser Scaup at Petersburg Jan. 8 (PJW); and a pair of Hooded Mergansers, for the 2nd consecutive year, at Seward Dec. 1–January (WS, RLS, TGT).

Raptors to Alcids

Still considered an irregular winter visitor in the s. coastal sections of the Region, N. Harrier was reported at Cordova, where one was present all December (REF), and at Kodiak, where two were seen Jan. 8 (HP). Given the dearth of wintering finches, Sharp-shinned Hawks were surprisingly widespread, with

≤four around Kodiak all season (RAM), one along Turnagain Arm at Indian Dec. 11 (TGT), another in nearby Anchorage Dec. 19 (MRD), one at Seward Dec. 26+ (DWS, RLS, TGT), and at least one around Homer Jan. 13–Feb. 10 (GCW, GL). The single Rough-legged Hawks reported from Anchorage Dec. 19 (*vide* RLS) and Cold Bay Feb. 22 (CFZ) constituted 2nd and first local winter records respectively. An apparently healthy **Sandhill Crane** braved storms and exposure on Japonski I. near Sitka Nov. 29–Jan. 9 (MLW) for a first "winter" report for the Region.

Winter season shorebird highlights were above average and included several surprises. A Killdeer at Kodiak Dec. 26 (†RAM) was that archipelago's 2nd ever and first in winter and Southcoastal's 2nd winter report. One of the Region's latest-ever **Bar-tailed Godwits** was well studied at Kodiak Dec. 19–20 (†RAM). Most of these trans-Pacific migrants leave coastal staging sites in Southwest Alaska by late October. The Izembek Lagoon Sanderling winter population peaked at an average 868 Feb. 21 (DHW, CPD), but the species was unreported otherwise. Likely because of early mild conditions, Dunlin had a strong presence, including peaks of 225 at Petersburg Feb. 27 (PJW), 34 around e. Kodiak Dec. 11 (RAM) and 43 on the w. side of the island Jan. 2+ (DWS, RAM), and five at Homer Jan. 30–Feb. 15+ (MG, GCW). The Petersburg peak remains only 15–20% of 1980s winter counts. Anchorage reported another Com. Snipe through late December (MRD), where it has been annual since 1980.

The 13 Bonaparte's Gulls at Petersburg Jan. 15 (PJW) were both the latest and the highest winter local report. These were overshadowed, however, by record numbers from the Ketchikan area, where small groups could

be found into early January, with an incredible >110 congregated at food-rich tide rips in Clover Pass Jan. 3 (SCH). These were only the 2nd-ever winter Ketchikan reports. Bonaparte's Gull typically departs even s. Southeast by mid-November. Also quite rare in the Region after November, a single California Gull lingered near Petersburg to Dec. 24 (PJW), for a first local winter report. Three ad. Slaty-backed Gulls wintered through February at the gull stronghold in Ketchikan (SCH ph.†) and single adults were reported from Cordova Dec. 26 (REF, minimal†) and Homer Feb. 8+ (SA, BA, no details). Interesting acid reports were few but included a single Com. Murre way up Cook Inlet at Anchorage Dec. 19 (RA) and in-shore Kittlitz's Murrelets, with two at Cordova all season (REF) and a single at the Seward Harbor Dec. 26 (RLS). The Ketchikan area passes again produced significant feeding concentrations of Marbled Murrelets (see AB 46:2). Heintz made a conservative count along the Tongass Hwy. waterfront of >4000 birds Jan. 3 (SCH). The previous local winter peak was 2295 in the same areas in February 1992. Given certain tide and weather conditions, winter food sources must be concentrated in these Ketchikan area passes, attracting Marbled Murrelets, Com. Murres, loons, and gulls in significant numbers and probably from significant distances. Additional surveys and data are necessary to determine the extent and significance of these areas for future protection.

Owls to Waxwings

A few more than normal Snowy Owls were reported from beyond typical sites. Singles lingered to Dec. 2 at Northway (*vide* TJD, = one of few Tanana V. records), to at least Jan. 3 at Homer (m.obs.), to Dec. 6+ at Kodiak (TL), and near Anchorage to Dec. 19 (HHS). More typical were at least three all season around Cold Bay (CFZ, MGZ). Three scattered Short-eared Owl reports were about average and included singles from Cold Bay Dec. 23 (CFZ, MGZ), where casual in winter; at Cordova Feb. 24 (REF); and at Ketchikan Feb. 2 (*vide* SCH). Most Short-eared Owl winter reports are from December. The fall season Anna's Hummingbird (*q.v.*), from Ketchikan in September, lingered at the same feeder to Jan. 23 (SCH), for the winter's only report. Belted Kingfishers staged a strong winter showing, at least in Southcoastal, with high counts of seven at Cordova all December (REF) and at Seward Dec. 26 (m.obs.), at least 11 around Kodiak Jan. 1–3 (RAM, DWS), one w. to Dutch Harbor through December (*vide* GCW), and another n. to An-



chorage all season (TGT, RLS). These are about double the expected numbers. A Northwestern Crow, first located in Anchorage Oct. 4 (LJO), was seen sporadically to Feb. 21 (TGT, RLS, GJT). There are now 11 Upper Cook Inlet records for this Sitka Spruce-W. Hemlock forest species; this was the first overwintering bird.

Casual in fall in Southeast, **Mountain Bluebirds** were noted into December: Three at Juneau to Dec. 17+ (RLS) and one near Petersburg Dec. 18–21 (WHP, PJW) was a first Mitkof I. winter report. The Region's 2nd-latest **Hermit Thrush** skulked about Ketchikan berry thickets to Dec. 18 (SCH). Although Hermit Thrushes regularly linger to early November, we have only one previous December record. Up to two Townsend's Solitaires took advantage of the exotic berry trees around Anchorage, at least through the first half of the season, when one each was found Dec. 19 (*vide* RLS) and Jan. 14 (LS). Totally unexpected were two Cedar Waxwings flycatching in mild conditions in downtown Seward Dec. 26 (TGT, RLS, DWS). These were certainly Seward's first ever and Southcoastal's first winter records. Essentially all of Southcoastal's handful of previous records had been in mid-autumn. Other noteworthy Cedar Waxwing sightings included a group of ten around Ketchikan Dec. 18–Feb. 14 (SCH) and up to two in Petersburg Dec.30–Jan. 2 (WHP, PJW).

Warblers to Fringillids

Kodiak weather was apparently mild enough to harbor two warblers well into mid-season. The Region's 3rd winter **Orange-crowned Warbler** appeared in a chickadee flock near Narrow Cape Jan. 23 (†RAM); two previous reports were also near Kodiak. A ♂ **Wilson's Warbler**, the Region's first in winter, survived at a suet feeder in town Jan. 22+ (CH vid., †RAM). Only slightly more expected were single late Yellow-rumped Warblers around Ketchikan Dec. 5 (DB) & 18 (TG).

The only Am. Tree Sparrows noted were from Southcoastal in December and included near-average numbers: 12 at Seward Dec. 26 (*vide* WS), one at Kodiak Jan. 1 (RAM), and up to six at Homer all season (EPB). One of the Region's very few **Savannah Sparrow** winter reports was a single at a Ketchikan feeder mid-December+ (JK, SCH). This abundant Alaska breeder typically departs by late-November. About the average number of Lincoln's Sparrows attempted to overwinter, with a single at Ketchikan to at least Dec. 31 (SCH), two around Kodiak to Jan. 30 (RAM), and another at a Homer feeder Jan. 12 (GCW). The Ketchikan **Swamp Sparrow**, originally

located in early November (q.v.), remained in the area to Feb. 12+ (SCH). Another appeared at Blind Slough on Mitkof I., Jan. 15 for a 2nd local winter record (PJW). There are now about 8 Alaska Swamp Sparrow records, all but 2 from Southeast from late-fall into mid-winter. Three White-throated Sparrows was average for winter, with singles noted at Seward Dec. 26+ (RLS, DWS, TGT), at Homer all season (BM, PM), and at Ketchikan late-December+ (TG, SCH). It was noteworthy that *Zonotrichia* reports were below-average or missing from traditional overwintering coastal sites; maximum was seven at Anchorage Dec. 18 (DFD). The season's only McKay's Buntings were reported from Cold Bay, where annual in winter, with at least five scattered around the area Dec. 26–Feb. 27 (CFZ, MGZ, RPS, SDS).

Although Rusty Blackbird numbers were below average, other icterids made news. At Homer, the ♀ Red-winged Blackbird that appeared at a feeder Jan. 1–mid-month+ (ph. EE, GCW) provided a first local winter report, and at Ketchikan, Heinl caught up with a shy **Western Meadowlark**, which was present Jan. 26–Feb. 18+ (ph. †SCH). There are now about 3 true winter W. Meadowlark records, all from Southeast. Two **Brewer's Blackbirds** remained from Dec. 1 to at least Feb. 2 (SCH, *) in a Ketchikan parking lot for the season's only report of this casual winter visitor to Southeast. The Region's lone Brambling was a female around Petersburg Jan. 1+ (PJW). Of the irruptive winter finches, none was widespread, and only Pine Siskin was locally common in the s. half of Southeast and in central Southcoastal. Only scattered pairs or small groups of White-winged Crossbills were encountered in the e. Interior and from Anchorage s. to the Kenai Pen.

Contributors and observers: B. Alger, B. Andres, S. Andres, R. Austin, E. P. Bailey, D. Bowers, D. Chaffin, M. R. Dalton, C. P. Dau, D. F. Delap, T. J. Doyle, E. Eggleston, R. E. Fairall, T. Goucher, M. Gracz, S. C. Heinl, C. Heitman, J. Koerner, J. Lawton, T. Longrich, G. Lyon, R. A. MacIntosh, D. McBride, M. McBride, L. J. Oakley, W. H. Pawk, H. Pennington, R. L. Scher, L. Schneider, R. P. Schulmeister, S. D. Schulmeister, H. H. Scott, W. Shuster, D. W. Sonneborn, G. J. Tans, L. Thompson, P. J. Walsh, D. H. Ward, M. L. Ward, G. C. West, C. F. Zeillemaker, M. G. Zeillemaker. —*T. G. Tobish, Jr., 2510 Foraker Drive, Anchorage, AK 99517.*

British Columbia/ Yukon Region

CHRIS SIDDLE

British Columbia, west of the Rockies, enjoyed an exceptionally mild winter. Prince George, for example, had little snow until the New Year. Flocks of Purple Finches and several Cedar Waxwings stayed north to Prince George, providing new winter records. Eurasian Skylarks were singing around Victoria by the middle of January. American Dippers enjoyed ice-free streams in the highlands and generally avoided valleys. Very few Red-breasted Sapsuckers were forced out of the coastal woods. Unusual numbers of shorebirds that normally migrate south from the province wintered along the Fraser fore-shore and in Boundary Bay.

The Queen Charlotte Islands reported excellent wild food crops, the result of the warmest, driest summer in 20 years. The very few winter storms in the Queen Charlotte Islands accounted for the successful wintering of many passerines, including tiny numbers of Cedar Waxwings, Hermit Thrushes, five warbler species, and Lincoln's, White-crowned, and Golden-crowned sparrows. Wild food crops were also excellent in the Kamloops and Okanagan areas, with many forest birds—such as Pine Grosbeaks and Northern Pygmy-Owls—staying in mountain forests rather than descending to valley bottoms.

Special thanks to all subregional editors for their extra efforts this season.

Abbreviations: P.G. (*Prince George*); PP (*provincial park*); Q.C.Is. (*Queen Charlotte Islands*); Van. (*Vancouver*); Van. I. (*Vancouver Island*); Vic. (*Victoria*); YT (*Yukon Territory*)

Loons to Ducks

The 446 Pacific Loons on the Vic. CBC provided an all-time high count. A scattering of individual Yellow-billed Loon reports was received: Masset Dec. 18 (MH, GD, PH) and possibly the same bird Feb. 10 (JT); Vernon Jan. 16 (MC); Ten Mile Pt., Saanich Jan. 18–23 (GAN, J&GA) Cates Park, N. Van., Dec. 19 (PY); and Blackie Spit Jan. 1–9 (B&PSp). An imm. Black-crowned Night-Heron at Cowichan R. estuary Jan. 1 provided one of very few