

# Oregon/ Washington Region

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The winter of 1993–1994 picked up where 1991–1992 left off, part of a string of mild and dry winters, as if the cold and snowy winter of 1992–1993 never happened. Observers from all parts of the Region reported slight variations on the same theme. In Richland, Washington, there was no snow in January, a local record. December and January were among the warmest on record in central Oregon, with a total snowfall in Bend of 9 inches compared to 84 inches last year. January averaged almost 10° F warmer than average in eastern Washington, and December and February were also slightly warmer than average. At Seattle, December and January were warmer and drier than usual. In western Washington, February was cooler than average, and average precipitation levels brought needed snow to the mountains.

It was deemed a dull winter by most, and indeed there are few unusual birds listed. Conifer finches and Bohemian Waxwings were hard to find. On the bright side, the

westside of the Region was awash in Swamp Sparrows, and Snowy Owls made their best showing in a decade.

Abbreviations: O.S. (*Ocean Shores, Grays Harbor, WA*); Sauvie (*Sauvie I., Columbia, OR*).

## Loons to Waterfowl

Red-throated Loons are rarer than Pacific Loons on freshwater, except on the lower Columbia R. up to Portland. Even though Red-throats were absent from the Portland area this season (JJ), there were 2 inland records at Spring Cr Hatchery, *Skamania*, WA Dec. 27 (WC) and at Potholes S.P., *Grant*, WA Jan. 10 (KK). The only interior report of Pacific Loon was one s. of Vantage, *Kittitas*, WA Feb. 28 (KK). Eight Yellow-billed Loon reports were an increase over recent winters, with four in Puget Sound (VN, †D&SS, H. Fray, M. Street), three on the Washington coast (*vide* B. Morse, MP) and one on the Oregon coast at the Siuslaw R. estuary, *Lane*, to Dec. 20 (B&ZS). Western Grebe numbers were about half of last winter's in the Puget Sound waters of *Snohomish* and *Island* (SM), and were also below normal in e. Oregon (TC). The typical Clark's Grebe winter distribution seems to be single birds at widely scattered locations: singles at O.S., Feb. 26 (†G&WH) and Spring Creek Hatchery, *Skamania*, WA Dec. 27 (WC), three in *Curry*, OR (CD) and one at Ana Res., *Lake*, OR Dec. 6 (CM).

Two boat trips out of Westport, WA Jan. 15 & 16 (TW), and one off Newport, OR Jan. 29 (GG) found small numbers of both

Black-footed and Laysan albatross, 20–70 N. Fulmar, up to 14 Short-tailed and one Sooty shearwater, and one–two Fork-tailed Storm-Petrel. The fulmar numbers were an increase over the last 2 winters and the storm-petrels were unexpected. Great Egrets remained in larger numbers and later than usual throughout w. Oregon and Washington, particularly in the Willamette valley. One in early December on the Lummi flats, Whatcom, WA (JD) was the farthest north. Four were still on Sauvie at the end of February, 2 months later than normal (JJ). The last Cattle Egrets of the fall flight were singles at Eglon, Kitsap, WA Dec. 11 (VN), Melrose, Douglas, OR Dec. 27 (A. Parker)

and Harbor, *Curry*, OR Dec. 28 (D. Munson).

Again this winter Mute Swans were found in wintering swan flocks: singles at Monmouth, *Polk*, OR Jan. 30+ (m.ob., *fide* BB) and on Lummi flats, *Whatcom*, WA Jan. 15–Feb. 27 (RR, †JD). An Emperor Goose near Florence, *Lane*, OR Dec. 12+ (P. Sherrell) was the only report. A Brant at Swallows Park, *Asotin*, WA Jan. 26 (JA) was very unusual for the interior. One–two ♂ Tufted Ducks on the Columbia R. at Puger I., *Wahkiakum*, WA Feb. 10+ (A. Emlyn, G. Boyce) was the only report. Greater Scaup numbers on the Columbia R. upstream of Portland seemed to be considerably lower than previous winters (DL).

## Raptors to Alcids

White-tailed Kite numbers in Oregon seemed quite good this winter: 46 were reported along the length of the outer coast and n. to *Polk* in the interior. In Washington, they were at the usual *Wahkiakum* (KK), *Pacific*, and *Lewis* locations (B. Hughes, BT). Bald Eagles were very numerous in most parts of the Region, including the s. Washington coast (G&WH), n. Puget Sound (DP), n. Willamette valley (HN), and along the Columbia R. (TC). The usual few Red-shouldered Hawk reports n. of s. Oregon included: singles at Tillamook, OR Dec. 18 (JG), near Corvallis, OR for the winter (Rho, GG), near Finley N.W.R., OR Dec. 19 (*fide* Rho), two at Fern Ridge Res., *Lane*, OR for the winter (TM), and one at Ridgefield N.W.R., *Clark*, WA Jan. 1+ (WC). In Washington, Rough-legged Hawks were numerous on the s. coast (G&WH) and n. Olympic Pen. (D&SS), and it was a very good winter for the species on the eastside (JA, BT). However, Rough-leggeds were scarce throughout w. (JJ, HN) and e. Oregon (TC, DL). Three Gyrfalcon wintered in *Skagit* (m.ob.), one at O.S. (G&WH), and two were found in e. Washington (KK, VN, AS). These are typical winter numbers, although none was recorded in Oregon. The number of Peregrine Falcons wintering in Seattle may have reached 8 this winter (M. Muller); this would have been considered astounding a decade ago.

Snowy Plovers were found in 2 *Tillamook* locations at the n. end of their regular winter range: three on Bayocean Spit Dec. 18 (*fide* HN) and one at Nehalem R. mouth Jan. 30 (R. Owens). However, a count of seven at Bandon S.P., *Coos* Dec. 28 (GG), one of the species' wintering strongholds, was poor. Two hundred Greater Yellowlegs were counted on the n. side of Willapa Bay Jan. 28 (G&WH), probably the largest winter number ever in Washington. There were 2 unusual records of Long-billed



Curlew away from the outer coast: one at Swinomish Channel, *Skagit*, WA Dec. 26–Jan. 5 (D. Nunnallee, HA) and one near Albany, *Linn* OR Jan. 21 (J. Hardin). Both the Wandering Tattler at Tokeland, *Pacific*, WA Feb. 23 (B&GR) and the Red Knot at O.S., Dec. 17 (J. Buchanon) were surprising winter records, with the tattler the more unusual. A Rock Sandpiper at Tacoma, WA Feb. 5 (TB) was a *Pierce* first and the farthest south record in Puget Sound. The numbers of wintering Dunlin in the Willamette valley may be more significant than previously thought: 15,000 were in the Eugene area this winter (TM), and last winter 15,000 were found in *Linn*.

No Pomarine Jaegers were found on pelagic trips, but one was at O.S., Feb. 26 (G&WH). For the 6th year, Little Gulls wintered on American L., *Pierce*, WA. Two adults were present throughout the winter (PtS) and an immature was found there Feb. 12+ (†AS, EH); all previous Washington records have been adults. Heermann's Gulls occasionally winter on the outer coast, but an adult in Puget Sound at Tacoma, WA Feb. 18 (RS) was unprecedented. Three Thayer's Gull reports from e. Washington included a first-year at Ice Harbor Dam, *Franklin* Dec. 12 (AS), an adult at Banks L., *Grant* Jan. 9 (AS), and one at Wallula, *Walla Walla* Jan. 28 (MD); records after December are almost nonexistent. An ad. *Slaty-backed Gull* at Tacoma, WA Jan. 1+ (†RS, m.ob.) was well photographed for Washington's 2nd record.

The status of W. Gull in the interior needs clarification. Virtually all reports are from Columbia and Snake R. dams, including this winter's reports: a 3rd-year at Ice Harbor Dam, *Franklin*, WA Dec. 27 (†KK), one in January along the river in *Umatilla*, OR (CC), and one at McNary Dam, *Benton*, WA Jan. 29 (KK). Two Glaucous-winged Gulls at Haystack Res., Dec. 16–19 (CM) were a *Jefferson* first; they are very rare in e. Oregon away from the Columbia R. Glaucous Gull reports did not quite equal last winter's numbers, but nine in w. Washington, another nine in e. Washington, and seven in w. Oregon are still above-average numbers. Black-legged Kittiwake numbers offshore were mediocre: 100 off Westport Jan. 15 (TW) and only two off Newport Jan. 29 (GG). However 800 kittiwakes, largely adults, at O.S., Feb. 26 (G&WH) was the biggest flock seen there in many years. A Caspian Tern at Naselle, *Pacific*, WA Feb. 19 (A. Richards) was 3 weeks early.

Less than 1000 Com. Murres were found off Westport Jan. 15–16 (TW) and just over 100 were off Newport Jan. 29 (GG). Previous winter pelagic trip totals have been as high as 10,000 in 1990 and 30,000 in 1993.

Puget Sound counts of Com. Murre were better: 3500 at San Juan I., Jan. 18 (SM) and 800+ in late January off Point Defiance, *Pierce* (R. Thorn). The most abundant alcids offshore were Ancient Murrelets: 50–100 per day off Westport (TW) and 450+ off Newport (GG). Most of these were well offshore. Ancient Murrelets were very scarce in Puget Sound this winter; the maximum number at Point No Point, *Kitsap*, WA was 32 Dec. 14; usual peak counts there are 100–200 (VN), and only 52 were at San Juan I., Jan. 18 (SM). Cassin's Auklets were found in moderately low numbers offshore: over 100 per day off Westport (TW) and only 10 off Newport (GG).

### Owls to Troglodytes

The best Snowy Owl winter since 1984–1985 consisted of ≥17 in w. Washington: six in *Whatcom* (JD, TW), six in *Skagit* (SM), three in *Snobomish* (B&GR), one in *Clallam* (D&SS) and one on the outer coast at O.S. (RW). Seven were reported in e. Washington: three in *Lincoln* (JA), two in *Adams* (RH), one in *Whitman* (L. Bradley), and one in *Franklin* (KK). In w. Oregon, one remained at Ohling Rd., *Linn* Dec. 22–Jan. 30 (RHo, m.ob.), and singles were briefly seen at Meares Ridge, *Tillamook* Dec. 5 (*fide* C. Roberts) and Camp Rilea, *Clatsop* Dec. 15 (MP). Eastern Oregon also held good numbers, with two each in *Umatilla* and *Morrow* (CC). To nobody's surprise, Barred Owls continued to appear in new locations: two at Finley N.W.R., *Benton*, OR Dec. 5 (*fide* RHo) and one 13 mi up the Rogue R., *Curry*, OR Feb. 16 (CD) encroaching on an established Spotted Owl territory. A calling Great Gray Owl in *Okanogan*, WA Jan. 31 (RR) adds to a series of sightings in that area. A calling Boreal Owl near Toroda Ck., *Okanogan*, WA Jan. 29–30 (RR) was the only report.

Areas with good concentrations of Lewis' Woodpecker included *Klickitat*, WA with >20 Jan. 8 (MD) and the coastal mountains of *Curry*, OR (CD), but very low numbers were in the Rogue valley (MM), where they are usually regular. There were no Blue Jays reported in the Region. Scrub Jay reports from the edge of their ever-expanding range consisted of one in Bremerton, *Kitsap*, WA Feb. 10 (S. Ray), two in Tacoma, WA in December (S. Wagner), and four wintering in Bend, OR (TC). A Pygmy Nuthatch in Salem, OR Jan. 30 (†J&M Reuling) is a west-side rarity, although there have been several reports of the species from this area recently.

### Thrushes to Finches

A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher near Eagle Point, *Jackson*, OR Feb. 20 (D. Cronberg, *fide* MM) was almost 2 months early, if it was a

spring migrant. Many thousands of Am Robins were wintering in the c. Oregon juniper groves: 20,000 were around Prineville, *Crook* Jan. 4, 30,000 were in the Powell Butte, *Crook* area Feb. 20, and 50,000 were in Bend Feb. 20–24 (TC). The Wrentit at Brownsville, OR Jan. 2 (*fide* RHo) provided a first *Linn* record. Wrentits had been *slowly* expanding n. in the Willamette valley through the 1980's, but the expansion appeared to have stalled. Two N. Mockingbirds along the Oregon coast (MP, C. Smith) were the only reports this winter. One thousand Bohemian Waxwings at Winthrop, *Okanogan*, WA Feb. 20 (EH) was the biggest reported flock. They were virtually absent at Richland, WA (BW) and Spokane (JA), and were uncommon in e. Oregon (TC). Northern Shrike numbers in e. Oregon were lower than average (TC).

A Tennessee Warbler at Satsop, *Grays Harbor* Dec. 5–Jan. 5 (†BT, m.ob.) provided the first Washington winter record, as well as the first photographed record (J Skriletz). One at Brookings, *Curry* Dec. 6 (details, *fide* CD) was Oregon's 5th winter record. A Nashville Warbler at Seattle Dec. 19 (†J. Elder) was a late lingerer. The remnants of the huge fall Palm Warbler flight stayed until Jan. 16 at Seattle (KA, m.ob.) and Jan. 14 at Port Orford, OR (TM). There were 17 reported on the Oregon coast during the period (m.ob.) and at least two in Washington, very high winter numbers. Two Am. Tree Sparrow at Fern Ridge Res., *Lane* Feb. 10+ (C. Watson, m.ob.) were rare in the Willamette valley. Two Clay-colored Sparrows, annual rarities in Oregon, were found in the Willamette valley: at Independence, *Polk* Dec. 15+ (R. Gerig, †S. Dowlan, m.ob.) and at Fern Ridge Res., *Lane* Jan. 2–22 (†L. McQueen).

**SA** At least 36 Swamp Sparrows were reported in Washington this winter (*fide* EH). The statewide total from all previous years was approximately 65, so this season alone increased that by 50%. The reports came primarily from the Puget Sound area. Other localities included *Klickitat* (KK), *Clark* (WC), *Grays Harbor* and *Garfield* (KK). At least sixty were reported from w. Oregon (JJ), both from the outer coast and the Willamette valley. This number is also a good showing, but it equals the 58 reports in the winter of 1991–1992. Two at Enterprise, *Walla Walla* into January (CC) was the only e. Oregon report.

Western Washington observers commented on the generally low numbers of *Zonotrichia*

(D&SS, BT) and Fox Sparrows (JD). Snow Buntings were infrequent in e. Washington, except for the flock of 2500 near Davenport, *Lincoln* Dec. 19 (JA). Six Tricolored Blackbirds were at Prineville, *Crook* Jan. 2 (TC); they have become almost regular there in winter. Rusty Blackbirds were found at Lynnwood, *King*, WA Jan. 1–Feb. 9 (J. Flavin) and at Sauvie Dec. 31–Jan. 7 (†JG); they are rare but regular most winters. Up to three imm. ♂ Hooded Orioles were at Hunter Ck., *Curry* to at least Feb. 25 (D. Sevey, m.ob.); this is the only Oregon location where their occurrence is routine.

Virtually all of the “winter” finches breed in our region, so the name is a misnomer. All except White-winged Crossbill and Com. Redpoll are common residents and taken for granted by observers. However, Purple Finches, Pine Siskins, and Evening Grosbeaks disappeared from most of the region this winter. Purple Finches were sparse (TM, BT). Pine Siskins were common in n.e. Washington (AS), but scarce in all other regions (BT, SM, JD) until late February, when they became more conspicuous (HN, S. Pinnock). Evening Grosbeaks were almost absent everywhere (KK, BT, G&WH, JD, TW), except n.e. Washington (KK). Red Crossbills of several types were found in moderate numbers in some areas. Types 1, 2, 3, and 4 were found in mixed flocks on Whidbey I., WA Jan. 9 (DJ, T. Hahn). Small numbers of White-winged Crossbills on Mt. Spokane, *Spokane* WA in January (JA) were the only ones found. Common Redpolls were scarce in e. Washington (AS) and e. Oregon (TC). A count of 17 Lesser Goldfinch at Lyle, *Klickitat* Jan. 8 (MD) is about average for Washington’s only population.

**Initial observers, with subregional editors in boldface:** Kevin Aanerud, Jim Acton, Howard Armstrong, Range Bayer, Barb Bellin, **Thais Bock** (Tacoma area), Wilson Cady, Craig Corder, **Tom Crabtree** (e. Oregon), Mike Denny, Colin Dillingham, Jim Duemmel, Jeff Gilligan, Greg Gillson, Randy Hill, Glen & Wanda Hoge, Rich Hoyer, Jr. (RHo), Eugene Hunn, Ken Knittle, **Merlene Kolinier** (s.e. Washington), Bob Kuntz, Donna Lusthoff, Tom Mickel, Craig Miller, Steve Mlodinow, **Marjorie Moore** (Rogue valley), **Harry Nehls** (w. Oregon), Vic Nelson, Mike Patterson, Dennis Paulson, Bob & Georgia Ramsey, **Tom Rogers** (easternmost Washington), Richard Rowlett, **Dory & Stan Smith** (*Clallam*), Andy Stepnewski, Bill & Zannah Stotz, Patrick Sullivan (PtS), Ruth Sullivan, Terry Wahl, Bob Woodley.  
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# Middle Pacific Coast Region

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*Field Notes did not receive a complete report of the winter season by our deadline.*

## Loons to Storm-Petrels

Three Pacific Loons in Clifton Court Forebay, *Contra Costa* Dec. 5 (RJR) was a high count in the San Joaquin Delta. The only well-documented Yellow-billed Loon was off Pacific Grove, *Monterey* Dec. 7–28 (RT, †SFB, DLSh). Inland lakes attracted three Red-necked Grebes: Clifton Court Forebay Dec. 5 (returning for the 5th year? RJR), San Andreas L., *San Mateo* Dec. 18 (FrT), and Loch Lomon, *Santa Cruz* Dec. 18 (G. Meyer, RRA, BRa).

A Laysan Albatross that took an ill-advised inland tour in a winter storm was first seen circling S of Sonoma, *Sonoma* Feb. 19 (†H. Karr). The next day it was seen at the Napa R., *Napa* and *Solano* (†M.J. Berner); it later hit a power line at Martinez, *Contra Costa*,

and was rescued for rehab (*vide* M. Brezner). Four Laysans were seen offshore the Region.

A high winter count of 28 Pink-footed Shearwaters was seen off Monterey Jan. 22 (DLSh). Flesh-footed Shearwaters there Jan. 15, 18, & 22 (DSg, DLSh) may have been the same bird. A dark-morph **Wedge-tailed Shearwater** 2 mi s.w. of Table Rock, *Santa Cruz* Dec. 18 (†DLSh, †SA) provided the fifth record for California. A very late Buller’s Shearwater was 2 mi w. of Pt. Joe, *Monterey* Jan. 25 (RT). Many Black-vented Shearwaters lingered in Monterey Bay, such as the 283 off Santa Cruz Dec. 18 (DLSh, SA) and 100 off Monterey Jan 22 (DLSh), but few stayed through February.

At H.R.S., *Alameda* a **Leach’s Storm-Petrel** and an Ashy Storm-Petrel were seen Jan 9, with the latter present the next day (RJR), and two probably Ashies reported Feb. 5 (Cin-Ty Lee). Very rare in S.F. Bay even in the fall, these storm-petrels were unprecedented there in winter.

## Raptors

The **Black Vulture** remained at Arcata, *Humboldt* though Feb. 9 (†DFx). An ad. Broad-winged Hawk n. of Santa Cruz Dec. 20–22 (BSch, †DLSu) was the only one this season. A communal roost of Ferruginous Hawks s.e. of King City, *Monterey* Dec. 23+ built to an astounding count of 86 birds Feb. 5 (DLSh, JMD) A roost of this scale is unprecedented for this species.

With the continuing recovery of the Peregrine Falcon, the first modern record for *San Benito* was overdue. It was an adult at Panoche Valley Jan. 3 (DLSu, ELb). The imm. **Gyr Falcon** near Midway, *Alameda* apparently stayed to Dec. 14 (R. Lindeman, †GFi). Another Gyr Falcon resided near Ft. Dick, *Del Norte* Oct. 31–Feb. 20 (†RAE, †SEE, m.ob.).

## Larids

A jaeger off Palo Alto Jan 23 (†SCR) was unseasonal inside S.F. Bay whatever the species. An ad. **Common Black-headed Gull** at Sunnyvale, *Santa Clara* Jan. 23–Feb. 9 (JMa, †JM, SCR) was believed to be the same bird that was at Alviso Nov. 15 (SCR). Adult

