

British Columbia/ Yukon Region

JACK BOWLING

Changeable weather was the rule, with alternating incursions of Pacific and Arctic air masses. This translated into lashings of rain and wind interspersed with tranquil cold and dry spells on the coast. Farther inland, the effects were rather benign, especially in Yukon. No extreme cold spells occurred this winter, and temperatures averaged warmer than normal—as is typical for westernmost Canada during a strong El Niño episode. Accumulated precipitation was above normal only along portions of the coast and the mountain ranges. The undeniable conclusion of this seasonal summary is that many birds wintered farther north than usual—some way north—and distribution was abnormal in some cases. Rarities were few, a let up from the frenetic activity of the previous season. An Emperor Goose near Vancouver, always a special treat, was the first in the area since the 1970s.

Abbreviations: B.C. (*British Columbia*); Ok. L. (*Okanagan L.*); Ok. Villy (*Okanagan Valley*); P.G. (*Prince George*); Q.C.I. (*Queen Charlotte Islands*); Reifel (*George C. Reifel Waterfowl Sanctuary near Ladner, BC*); Van. (*Vancouver*); Van. I. (*Vancouver I.*); Vic. (*Victoria*); Whse. (*Whitehorse*).

Loons to Herons

The largest flock of Pacific Loons reported was 500 off the White Rock seawall Jan. 1 (JL). One could see all 4 B.C. loons from the same location at Port Alberni Feb. 17 (DCe) with the appearance of a Yellow-billed Loon, the first for the local area. This was also the only Yellow-billed reported for the period—poor observer coverage, or did they go somewhere else? Four Pied-billed Grebes at Masset Dec. 17 (PH, MH) was a new all-time high for the CBC. This species is also quite local along the s. coast in winter, thus three at a pond in Jericho Park, Van., Dec. 18 (RJC) was noteworthy. Six Eared Grebes off White Rock Jan. 1 (JL) was a good tally. Active Pass in the Gulf Islands is the place to see Brandt's Cormorants in winter. However, there are often several hanging out in Burrard Inlet with 12 off W. Van., Feb. 5 (DTy).

El Niño still raged through the period and may have had an effect on the distribution of our marine birds (reports of increased numbers of the ravenous mackerel along the coast may have led to reduced prey for some piscivorous bird species).

An Am. Bittern at Brunswick Pt. near Ladner Feb. 2 (JI) and another near Duncan in early February (DM) were the only reports of this elusive bird. A Great Blue Heron seen on the P.G. CBC along the Nechako R., Dec. 18 (P.G.-N.C.) was relocated there Jan. 1 & 3 (CA, SK, LL), looking suitably bedraggled and cold. A Great Egret in pre-alternate molt spent Jan. 13 (GRR) to Feb. 19 (SO) on the Sumas Prairie near Chilliwack, allowing many observers good views of this irregular visitor. A Green Heron at Cherry Cr. near Pt. Alberni Jan. 2 (RA) was a good find, as was the Black-crowned Night-Heron near Chase Nov. 30–Dec. 1 (*vide* FK), the first interior winter record. This last species is only reliably found at Reifel in winter.

Waterfowl

A flock of 37 Tundra Swans at Tsawwassen Feb. 23 (BGS) was up to 46 birds Feb. 26 (GAP), hinting at an early spring migration. On the nearby farmlands of Ladner, 600 Trumpeter Swans were tallied Feb. 25 (JI, m.ob.). Several of these big birds were garroted by telephone wires on Westham I. during the winter (*vide* KB). The swan count on the Thompson R. near Kamloops tallied an impressive 412 Trumpeters Jan. 14 (RRH *et al.*), 2nd only to last year's total. Several Greater White-fronted Geese stopped off in s. B.C. instead of continuing on to California. Casual in winter in the Ok. Villy, a young Greater White-fronted Goose was in with a flock of Canadas at Kelowna Dec. 17–Jan. 4 (CC, m.ob.). Equally uncommon, a flock of five White-fronteds was near Reifel Jan. 1+ (RF, MWy, m.ob.); another flock of four was near Trinity Western University, Langley, Feb. 9–13 (SO); and another single bird was in with four "Cackling" Canada Geese on Sea I. most of the winter (AJ *et al.*). Counts of 1500 Snow Geese at Roberts Bank (ACa) and another 2000 (JI) at the Van. International Airport were made Feb. 23, typical of land-based winter surveys for the Fraser Delta.



SA An ad. Emperor Goose had an eventful stay at Beach Grove along the w. shore of Boundary Bay. First spotted in with a flock of Brant and Canada Geese Dec. 4 (†GAP, m.ob.), the bird collided with telephone wires and was seen the next day on the nearby golf course suffering an apparent broken leg. It became weak enough to capture Dec. 11. The diagnosis: a dislocated hip with possible fracture of the femur. In one of the oddest coincidences, another Emperor Goose with an injured right leg was seen the next day at the Roberts Bank Jetty (ACa), never to be seen again! A quick check revealed the first bird still in hospital. The maimed goose did well in rehab and was released from the Tsawwassen Jetty Jan. 19. It reappeared at the Beach Grove location Jan. 23 and was last seen there Feb. 3 (BDa). The previous appearance of this Bering Sea gem in the Vancouver area was the winter of 1977–1978 at Reifel, where a bird became a hand-feeding regular. Let us hope the next visit is more hospitable.

Many ducks stayed far north this winter. At P.G. there were two ♂ Wood Ducks off Cottonwood I. through the period (m.ob.), 16 Green-winged Teal on the CBC Dec. 18 (P.G.N.C.), and 570 Mallards off Cottonwood I., Feb. 19 (HA, MPh). A ♂ Falcated Teal was at Tofino Jan. 20+ (RP *et al.*), providing the 2nd record for s. Van. Island.

Yukon's first documented winter **Barrow's Goldeneye** winter sighting was of three females on the Tagish R., Feb. 5, 11 & 12 (CE, HG, PS). A ♀ **Bufflehead**, casual in winter, survived the season on the Yukon R. near Whse. (JeB, HG *et al.*). Farther south, hybrid ducks were widespread. Crosses noted were: Mallard x N. Pintail at Kelowna Jan. 4–Feb. 28 (CC) and at Reifel Jan. 21 (M. MacDonald); Mallard x Am. Black Duck at Reifel Feb. 5 (AJ); at least five Am. Black Duck x Eur. Wigeon through January and February (m.ob.); a Com. x Barrow's Goldeneye at Lost Lagoon, Stanley Pk., Van., Jan. 20 (ph. AJ); and one *carolinensis* x *crecca* Green-winged Teal near the Westham I bridge Feb. 25 (MPr *et al.*). A Cinnamon Teal pair was spotted off the Richmond W. Dyke Feb. 26 (MA), a rare winter find anywhere in the Region. A flock of 51 Canvasbacks at Grice Bay, Tofino Jan. 23 (AD) was the first time in 5 years the species was seen there, a historical loafing area. Also rarely seen at Tofino was a Redhead at Grice Bay Jan. 26 (AD). A total of 666 Harlequin Ducks were tallied in Shingle Bay, Sandspit, Q C.I. on the CBC Dec. 18, the highest winter count for the islands and the 2nd-highest winter count for the coast. A raging storm packing 140 km/h SE winds drove the birds inshore. The now famous Ok. L. ♂ Tufted Duck made a one-day pit stop off Kelowna Jan. 2 (DB, m.ob.). An ad. ♀ Tufted Duck was, as expected, at Stanley Park's Lost Lagoon in downtown Van., Feb. 1–4 (RBu, JC, MPr, D'Ty). Red-breasted Mergansers used to be a very rare winter visitor to the Ok. Vly, preferring to winter on salt water. However, there has been a notable increase in sightings on s. interior lakes the past few years, with the 5 Ok. Vly counts tallying a total of 33 birds Dec. 18–31 (m.ob.).

Vultures to Rails

Two Turkey Vultures started the winter near Grauer Park in Beach Grove along w. Boundary Bay (m.ob.) but only one bird was seen after mid-January. At least another two vultures also spent the winter near Rocky Pt. near the s. tip of Van. I. (*fide* BRG). This species rarely lingers in the Region. Northern Goshawks are year-round denizens of the n. boreal forests with at least eight individuals spotted in n.w. B.C. and s. Yukon through the period (m.ob.). However, the species is rare in the lowlands farther south. This year there was a noticeable movement into the s. valleys, an irruption possibly driven by a crash in snowshoe hare populations farther north. Some noteworthy counts included a record-high four goshawks on the Kelowna CBC Dec. 18, four on the Penticton CBC Dec. 27, one on

the Vaseux L. CBC the next day, and three on the Oliver-Osoyoos CBC Dec. 31. On the coast, a single bird was seen at Pitt Meadows e. of Van., Jan. 11 (KTh). Many **buteos** remained inland, with 3 of the 5 Ok. Vly centers reporting new record-high numbers of Red-tailed Hawks on their CBCs—Vernon with 52, Kelowna with 49, and Oliver-Osoyoos with 26. The Kelowna CBC also tallied an impressive 15 Rough-legged Hawks at the airport (CC, DW, LW). A single Rough-legged Hawk managed to survive the winter in the P.G. area (P.G.N.C.).

Falcons joined the s. interior hawk party with a Peregrine, a Prairie, and two Gyrfalcons (!)—all at Kamloops Dec. 17 (IB, RRH). Another two Prairie Falcons were tallied on the Oliver-Osoyoos CBC Dec. 31, a new record high. A Prairie which wintered in the grasslands around Vernon was watched perch-hunting for voles from a utility pole in weedy grassland Jan. 7 (CS). A 5th Prairie Falcon was observed sitting on a ledge of the sheer 100-meter high cliff face of Dilworth Mt. near downtown Kelowna Feb. 23 (GW, m.ob.) and was seen fleetingly through the end of the period. It will be interesting to see if this species will try to nest at the site, which was a known eyrie site during the 1920s–1930s. The only coastal sighting of Prairie Falcon was of a single bird which frequented the Westham I. area near the mouth of the Fraser R., Jan. 6–Feb. 23 (ABr, ACa). A Gyrfalcon was spotted at the Haines Summit in the n.w. corner of B.C., the only known nesting area in the province, Dec. 19 (GK, LK), while a large gray-brown individual was seen at Vernon Feb. 4 (CS). Four individual Gyrs were reported from the Lower Mainland: a dark-morph bird at Beach Grove Dec. 8 (GAP); a gray-morph female frequenting the Surrey-Abbotsford corridor Jan. 23–Feb. 11 (CB, M. Toksdorf); another gray-morph bird at Pitt Meadows Jan. 27–Feb. 13 (JK, KTh *et al.*); and a pale gray male which hunted the delta farmland between the Roberts Bank Jetty and n. Boundary Bay Jan. 3–Feb. 11 (GBu, JAM, HNM, BSp, PSp, m.ob.). This last bird spent long periods atop a tall high-voltage transmission tower near the jetty and was seen by many birders. Another gray Gyr overwintered on the Martindale Flats, C. Saanich (m.ob.).

A **Chukar** at Revelstoke through the period (DP) was thought to have hopped a ride on a rail car farther west near Kamloops! A flock of 18 Willow Ptarmigan was at Fish L. near Whse., Feb. 25 (CE, PS), while a group of 10 Ruffed Grouse, a Yukon maximum for the winter, was observed along the Alaska Hwy by Marsh L., Dec. 18 (GK, LK).

SA Biologists Andrew Stewart and Wayne Campbell had their eyes opened when they did some helicopter wildlife surveys Feb. 21–25 in the headwaters of the Prophet and Muskwa Rivers in n.e. British Columbia. The e. foothills of the n. Rocky Mts. are poorly censused areas for birds, especially in the winter. Most records are from around Ft. Nelson, a town along the Alaska Hwy 80 km to the east. The town sits at the bottom of a lowland basin and is subject to strong temperature inversions. As such, winter temperatures in the foothills are often 10–15° C warmer than in the lowlands. This helps explain the rich bird and mammal life they encountered in the relatively warmer hills. Flocks of 20–30 White-tailed and Willow ptarmigan plunged into snowbanks for protection from both the cold nights and the Gyrfalcon and N. Goshawks which pursued them. One wingtip pattern encountered could only have been made by a Golden Eagle plunging after a ptarmigan! Common Ravens and Gray Jays scavenged on wolf-killed moose and elk carcasses alongside coyotes. Blue Grouse fed in the spruce tops, while Red Crossbills, Pine Grosbeaks, and Snow Buntings flushed from the hill-sides and Am. Dippers curtsied their way along the open streams. A surprise was a lone Am. Tree Sparrow eating birch buds, a summer resident of the sub-alpine zone in the area but never recorded there in the winter. Meanwhile in Ft. Nelson itself, four Eur. Starling and a Dark-eyed Junco at the dump had the distinction of being the most northerly of their species recorded in B.C. in the winter.

Notable inland Virginia Rails included a single bird at Westside, Ok. L., Dec. 17 (RM, m.ob.) and another across the lake at Rutland Feb. 26 (CC).

Shorebirds

There were 4 sightings of single Pacific Golden-Plovers from the n. shore of Boundary Bay and adjacent fields, involving either one–two birds: Jan. 29 (MBe), 2nd local winter record, Feb. 21 (ABr), Feb. 25 (GPe), and Feb. 27 (AJ). Such diligent searching will help determine the winter range of this species. A few Spotted Sandpipers regularly linger on the s. coast. This year a single bird was at the mouth of the Capilano R. in N. Van., Jan. 1 (DGu) and Jan. 7 (BDa, GS), while two birds were reported from around s.e. Van. I.: one at Ten Mile Pt., Saanich, Jan. 17 (JGa, TGi, T&N Embleton) and another which spent the winter on Saltspring I., a

long overdue local winter record (NR). Whimbrels in winter can be found reliably at the foot of Tudor Avenue in Saanich, s.e. Van. I., with a bird there Jan. 2 (LLe) and Jan. 15 (AzC). Another Whimbrel, possibly one of the Tudor Ave. birds, was seen in Saanich Feb. 4 (LLe). Making a triumphant return to Blackie Spit on Boundary Bay Feb. 4 (MWy) were the world-famous Three Amigos: the Whimbrel, Long-billed Curlew, and Marbled Godwit. The trio were seen there until at least Feb. 19 (AJ). A flock of 200 Surf-birds at Pilot Cove, W. Van., Jan. 22 (BIEAP) was on the high side of average for wintering flocks in the Gr. Van. area. Sanderling is the most frequently encountered *calidrid* along the s. coast in winter, with highest numbers along the w. coast of Van. I. Relatively few were reported from the Gr. Van. area, with 18 along the Iona Is. Jetty Jan. 19 (CH) and three at Blackie Spit Jan. 24 (JAM *et al.*). Western Sandpipers usually linger in small numbers on the s. coast. Sightings this winter included five at Reifel Jan. 1 (RF), one at the Tsawwassen Jetty Jan. 7 (JL), and two at n. Boundary Bay Feb. 26 (MPr). Least Sandpipers were seen at 3 locations: five at Reifel Jan. 1 (MWy); five at the Crofton log booms on s.e. Van. I., Jan. 2 (Dald); and four at Blackie Spit Jan. 24 (JAM *et al.*). The Crofton sighting was the 5th winter record for the Victoria Checklist area, all since 1989. A few Rock Sandpipers were noted around the Gr. Van. area: a single at Beach Grove Dec. 13 (GAP); two birds with Black Turnstones on the Tsawwassen Jetty Jan. 3–7 (JAM, HNM, BSp, PSp, *et al.*), and one at the Grebe Islets, W. Van., Feb. 5 (DTy). Another three Rocks were at Wickaninnish Beach at Pacific Rim N.P., s.w. coast Van. I., Jan. 29 (DCe). Dunlins are justly famous for surviving the chill of a boreal winter better than most shorebirds. This was driven home when a single bird was observed on the Fort St. James CBC Jan. 2 at 54.4N latitude, the farthest north on record for the Region (m.ob.), and another was seen at Cottonwood I. Park in P.G. the next day (SK, LL). However, not all Dunlin linger in the cold, as the flock of 40,000 on the mud flats of n. Boundary Bay Feb. 26 (AJ, SHo, MPr) illustrated. Such numbers underline the importance of Boundary Bay to wintering shorebirds. Only a couple of reports of lingering Long-billed Dowitchers: a single at Cowichan Bay, s.e. Van. I. in December (*fide* DM) and four at Reifel Jan. 28 (JI). Interesting Com. Snipe reports included 16 at S. Delta Feb. 22 (MuB) and one at Livingston Springs, Bear L., 80 km n. of P.G., Feb. 26 (ph. MPh, P.G.N.C.), providing the 2nd local winter record. Livingston Springs is a surfacing underground spring with sufficient flow to prevent freezing, thus

it was felt that this was an overwintering bird rather than a migrant. This furnished the farthest n. interior winter record ever. A Red Phalarope in basic plumage was in Skidegate Inlet, Q.C.I., Dec. 18 (C&T Husband). This provided at least the 2nd winter record for the Charlottes (*fide* PH).

Gulls to Woodpeckers

High counts of Thayer's Gull from the Gr. Vic area were 320 at Ogden Pt. and 50–60 at Clover Pt., Feb. 7 (RP). Farther inland, Kelowna observers recorded at least three Thayer's Dec. 17–Jan. 29 (JBU, DB, CC, LR, m.ob.). A basic-plumaged ad. Slaty-backed Gull loafed on fields near the Gr. Van. landfill in Delta Feb. 16+ (RD, AJ *et al.*), a more regular occurrence the past several years. Glaucous-winged Gulls continued their intrusion into the Ok. Villy with breeding confirmed in the summer of 1994 (*fide* RWC). This winter 15 Glaucous-wingeds were observed in a field in Rutland Jan. 29 (CC), a new high single flock count for the valley. At the n. end of the valley in Vernon, Siddie reports that one–two of these big gulls can now be reliably found around the area any winter day. Three imm. Glaucous Gulls at Goldstream Pk., Vic., Dec. 18 (JG) matched the all-time high for the park. Meanwhile two ad. Glaucous Gulls were at Tzuouhalem and Lakes Rds. in Duncan Jan. 6 (DM), the usual place to find this age class. Why this area is attractive to adults is worthy of investigation. Rare in Burrard Inlet in winter, a single Com. Murre was at Cypress Cr., W. Van., Feb. 5 (DTy). Rhinoceros Auklets are rare in the Gr. Vic. area after the first week of November. Notable, then, was one reported off the Ogden Pt. breakwater Dec. 31 (GB).

SA Campbell *et al.* in *The Birds of British Columbia* (1990) state: "Migration, dispersal and winter distribution of the Ancient Murrelet is poorly understood." An interesting data point was added when the team of Margo Hearne and Peter Hamel of Masset, Q.C.I. witnessed an offshore fly-past of this species Dec. 19. During a 30 minute period, about 4650 murrelets flew from W to E along the bars off Rose Spit, the n.e. point of the Islands, for an average of 155 birds per minute. Such movements are usual at this location, but the numbers involved are not. The fly-past was well underway when they arrived, so estimated numbers are very conservative.

The Whitehorse CBC tallied a record 412 Rock Doves Dec. 17 (HG). A single Band-tailed Pigeon at Revelstoke Feb. 15 (DP)

provided the first interior winter record Mourning Dove reports from the s. coast, where winter numbers are quite variable, included 17 in Cloverdale Jan. 2 (LCo, KMcE) and 12 at C. Saanich Feb. 16 (BB). A tantalizing report of a Barn Owl from McCoy L. Rd, Pt. Alberni on s.w. Van. I., Dec. 16 (SP) requires confirmation. There are no previous confirmed records from the area but the habitat is open farmland with several old abandoned barns, one of which had fresh pellets. Another Barn Owl was found dead at Salmon Arm Jan. 22 (*RJC), providing about the 8th interior winter record. Western Screech-Owls, decimated by encroaching suburbia over the past 30 years, now exist in small enclaves. Reports this season included one at University of B.C., Dec. 18 (RJC, NEB), one at Woodhaven Nature Conservancy in Kelowna Feb. 3 (JBU), two birds at Thetis L., w. of Vic., Feb. 11 (DA), and two at Abbotsford in separate swallow boxes Feb. 24 (CB). This was not an invasion year for Snowy Owls, with the few single-day reports suggesting birds were on the move. Sightings included two at Prince George Dec. 2 (PB); one in Vic., Dec. 12 (PP), another at Saanich Jan. 10 (*fide* Mrs. Moore); and one at Boundary Bay Reg Pk., Jan. 28 (MB).

SA The very same area along the n. shore of Boundary Bay which hosted the remarkably high numbers of Snowy Owls last winter was designated as a helicopter training area by the federal government. Every 20 minutes or so, a big 50-seat Sikorsky roared down the inner dyke. Needless to say, there were pitifully few birds anywhere to be seen in the area during these exercises. It is no wonder the government is dragging its heels on declaring Boundary Bay a RAMSAR site. Apparently it has little respect for the inhabitants of the area.

Northern Hawk Owls stayed north this winter, with one at Swan L., Yukon Dec. 11 & 30, and two noted there Feb. 12 (HG). Single birds were also at the Takhini R. ponds n.w. of Whse., Dec. 15 and at Blanchard R., Dec. 21 (GK, LK). The farthest south report was of a single bird near Hudson Hope in n.e. B.C. Feb. 13 (JB). One owl which *did* stage a big movement was N. Pygmy-Owl, with many communities reporting several birds during the period: two at P.G., "numerous" at Revelstoke, four at w. Kootenays, eight at Vernon, 10 at Kelowna, two at Vancouver, and three on s. Van. I. It is possible most of these were altitudinal rather than latitudinal migrants. Short-eared Owls showed a wide distribution around the Gr



Northern Saw-whet Owl at Reifel Waterfowl Sanctuary, Ladner, British Columbia, January 9, 1995. Up to six were present there during the season. Photograph/Jack Bowling.

Van. area with reports coming from 9 separate lowland locations. The largest one-day count was 13 at Brunswick Pt., Ladner, Feb. 2 (JI). Up to four Short-eareds wintered on the Vernon Commonage, with three being harrassed by ravens Dec. 11 (PG). Northern Saw-whet Owls have the capacity to charm the socks off the most jaded observer. Many people were thus knocked out by the relatively large number which moved into Reifel. The first owl was spotted Jan. 1 (RF), with \leq six there by Feb. 8 (JI). Although most birds kept well-hidden under thick branches, occasionally one would perch out in the open. The Oliver-Osoyoos CBC tallied eight saw-whets Dec. 31, a new record high for the count.

Anna's Hummingbird is another species which often elicits support from well-intentioned people during the cold season. A bird which survived the fall at Chase was in the care of a Salmon Arm resident through the period (*fide* FK). Another Anna's frequented a heated feeder with a strong 1/1 sugar solution at Winfield from October to at least Jan. 21 (The Stewner's).

Lewis' Woodpecker was at one time an uncommon breeder on s. Van. I., in the days when snags were more prevalent, but is now considered a vagrant. Of considerable interest, then, was the report of a bird at Duncan Jan. 2 (ACo), which was subsequently seen by many observers before the last sighting Jan. 10. A very unusual winter sighting of a Red-breasted Sapsucker came from P.G., Jan. 1 (BS), furnishing the 2nd local winter record. A count of three Three-toed Woodpeckers on the Vernon CBC Dec. 18 (m.ob.) was the highest on record. A Black-backed Woodpecker was at Fish L., s. Yukon Dec. 26 (DMo), while another at Swan L., Feb. 26 (HG) provided the first winter record for the Whse. area.

Skylark to Fringillids

Sixteen Eur. Skylarks were tallied at Martindale Flats, C. Saanich, Dec. 16 (JVS), while others were heard singing abbreviated songs before mid-January (BB). Jays of the fall invasion dispersed through the period although some areas reported a few lingerers. Two Steller's Jays remained in s. Yukon, in-

cluding one of the n.w. coast form at Whse. (†LC, DDa, THa). The Fort St. James CBC tallied 14 Steller's Jan. 2 (m.ob.), a high count for the area. The Kootenays reported the most wintering Blue Jays, with one each at Kimberley (MW) and Cranbrook, \leq four at Invermere (F. Kimpton), and two at Nakusp (JAL, GSD). Other Blue Jays remaining at feeders included three in Saanich (m.ob.), one—two around Kamloops (*fide* RRH), and a rumored bird at Armstrong in December (*fide* CS). A tally of 414 Black-billed Magpies on the Vernon CBC Dec. 18 (m.ob.) provided a new high count for the Region. Large congregations of Com. Ravens are rare on the s. coast, thus a count of 50 at the New Westminster landfill Jan. 6 (IK) was notable. Chestnut-backed Chickadees were observed at several sites away from their interior wet-belt breeding grounds: one on the Fort St. James CBC Jan. 2; another at e. Kelowna Feb. 4 (CC, m.ob.), with two relocated at the same site Feb. 10 (CC, GW, EF); one at Penticton Dec. 27 (m.ob.); and three on the Oliver-Osoyoos CBC Dec. 31 (m.ob.). Little is known of the interior B.C. population. Three White-breasted Nuthatches were irregular visitors to a feeder at Shelley, n. of P.G., all winter (BN), the most reliable place to find this species in winter n. of Kamloops over the past few years. Canyon Wrens winter in variable numbers in the s. Ok. Vly, with six on the Vaseux L. CBC Dec. 28 and a record 15 on the Oliver-Osoyoos CBC Dec. 31. Also, one at Needles in the w. Kootenays Dec. 31 (GSD) was a surprise. Completely unexpected was a House Wren at Kelowna Feb. 16 (†DB, EF *et al.*), likely the first interior winter record. American Dippers can usually be found at any flowing clear water stream in the winter. Two notable tallies were 30 on the Kelowna CBC Dec. 17 (m.ob.), and 13 at Klukshu Village, s.w. Yukon Dec. 21 (GK, LK), likely a record high for Yukon. Making a first winter appearance in Yukon were two Golden-crowned Kinglets at Kluane L., Dec. 21 (†The). Two Ruby-crowned Kinglets lingered in the Kelowna area: one at the Rutland Bench Dec. 12 & 17 (CC, D.&L. Wierenga); and another (same bird?) at a suet feeder near Oasis Marsh Dec. 26—Feb. 28 (DB). A returning Mt. Bluebird at Nakusp Feb. 13 (F. Miller) was locally very early, whereas a migrant flock of 12 at Kamloops Feb. 26 was on time (RR). A Hermit Thrush at a Kamloops feeder Nov. 14—Jan. 25 (ph. GM) provided one of very few interior winter records. A Varied Thrush was at a Teslin, s. Yukon feeder Dec. 5—22 (CAL), providing the territory's first winter record. Bohemian Waxwing numbers crashed this winter in the interior, but one of them made

it to Tofino Dec. 7 (AD) and another was at C. Saanich Dec. 10–11 (KT) providing rare winter records for Van. I. Three Crested Mynas were found at one of their remaining haunts in Kitsilano on the Van. CBC Dec. 18 (NEB, RJC).

Always a good winter find, three Hutton's Vireos were noted from the Gr. Van. area: one at Musqueam Pk., sw. Van., Jan. 16–21 (BGS *et al.*); one at Ladner Harbour Pk., Feb. 11 (JL, DTy); and another at Crescent Pk., Surrey Feb. 11–25 (JL, DTy). A few Hutton's Vireos were also noted from s. Van. I. during the period (m.ob.), with males in song by late February. An **Orange-crowned Warbler** in a field on the Rutland Bench, Kelowna Dec. 12 (†CC) represented the first winter record for the OK. Valley. Wintering warbler populations on the s. coast vary from year-to-year and this season was an off year for Yellow-rumpeds from all accounts. Only scattered reports came from s. Van. I. and the Gr. Van area, with the largest flock being six of both races at the Pitt L. dike Feb. 22 (RCr). However, other species lingered, with an ad. ♂ **Black-throated Gray Warbler** at Swan L., Saanich Dec. 18 (†DA), likely providing the first winter record for Gr. Victoria. Several Palm Warblers, one of the more cold-tolerant warblers but still rarely found in winter, were observed: A bird at McCoy L. near Pt. Alberni, s.w. Van. I., first found in late November successfully over-wintered (m.ob.), furnishing the first record for the Alberni Valley; a single bird was at the James Bay heliport, Vic., Dec. 10 (BD); and another remained near the dike at the s. end of 112 St., Delta Dec. 29–Feb. 22 (†AJ, †J&M McDonald *et al.*). This last bird barely escaped the claws of a Merlin (MPr). Lingering Com. Yellowthroats in the Gr. Van. area included one at 64th St., Delta Dec. 26 (GAP) and another at Iona I., Jan. 2 (RTo), while a female was at Chichester Bird Sanctuary, Kelowna Dec. 24 (†CC).

Imagine the observers' astonishment when a ♂ **Western Tanager** was seen at a sunflower seed feeder in Aldergrove Dec. 6–9 (†JD, SD *et al.*), providing the 2nd winter record for the Region. This species is usually never seen after September! The bird appeared healthy as it chummed around with Am. Robins. A small flock of Am. Tree Sparrows spent the winter at Woods Corner, w. Kootenays (B. Hills), while a sizeable 42 were tallied on the Vernon CBC Dec. 18 (m.ob.), numbers reminiscent of the early half of this century in the Ok. Valley. A Chipping Sparrow at a Kamloops feeder Dec. 15–Jan. 5 (C&R Ritcey) provided a very rare winter record for the Region. A **Vesper Sparrow** on the Martindale Flats Dec. 11+ (BD, m.ob.) provided the first

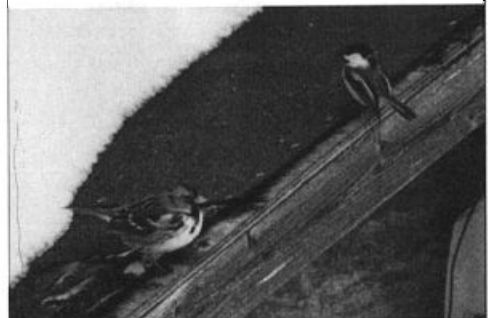
overwintering record not only for the Gr. Vic. area but for the whole Region. The Lark Sparrow that was found in Ucluelet Nov. 22 lingered until Dec. 2 (BSI). Yukon's first documented wintering **Fox Sparrow** was at a L. Laberge feeder at least into early January (ph. CE, THa), while Vernon's first documented winter Fox remained at the Lydia Bishop Sanctuary through the period (†MCo, m.ob.). Fox Sparrows of the more e. races showed up in Gr. Van., with two gray-headed types at Stanley Park Jan. 17 (S.P.I.N.R.) and one of the colorful rusty *zaboria* race at Reifel Feb. 1–5 (†AJ, EW, m.ob.). Two Lincoln's Sparrows on the Vernon CBC Dec. 18 (m.ob.) provided the first and 2nd winter records for the area.

SA Wintering Swamp and White-throated sparrows sightings have shown a steady increase across s. B.C. during the past decade, to the point where some compilers choose not to highlight sightings as noteworthy. Breeding Bird Surveys and casual summer sightings from central B.C. indicate that both species have shown a gradual southward and westward push over the same period. The question then becomes: Is the increase in winter sightings a result of the marked increase in observers, or is it linked to the expanding interior summer population? Reports of Swamp Sparrows this winter came from Pt. Alberni (two), Masset (one, second record for Q.C.I.), Kamloops (one), Gr. Vic (three), Duncan (one), and the lower Fraser Delta (four). White-throated Sparrows were noted from Gr. Vic (numerous), Kelowna (two), and Reifel (one). Some well-chosen banding stations in the interior and the coast would help determine origin and dispersal of both species. The reason for the increase of White-throateds in the interior may be linked to the increasing amount of their preferred 2nd-growth habitat due to cutting of forests.

A White-crowned Sparrow at a feeder in Teslin, S. Yukon throughout the period (†LU) provided the territory's first winter record, while another was at a Revelstoke feeder through December (DP). Harris' Sparrows turned up at a couple of Gr. Van sites: one at Reifel Jan. 5–Feb. 25 (BSp, PSp, NR, m.ob.) and another at a feeder in the Kitsilano district of Van., Jan. 5–19 (WF, JVDL, MPr). A basic-plumaged ad. Harris' spent the winter at a feeder in the Tatlayoko Vly on the Chilcotin plateau (HS, †RT). This species remains a rare and irregular winter visitor to the s. parts of the Region. While Ft. Nelson may have turned up a Dark-eyed

Junco, the n. limit of the species' winter range in the Region is in Yukon. Feeder watchers throughout the period reported three–four in Whse. (LC, BSt, RSt), up to five at Teslin (the Denison's, LU), and two at Watson L. (LE). **Rusty Blackbirds** are rare stragglers to the coast in winter. Providing first records for their respective areas were one at Port Clements, Q.C.I., Dec. 20–Jan. 6 (†PH, MH) and a male at Pt. Alberni, s.w. Van. I., Jan. 13+ (DCe, m.ob.). The Port Clements' bird was with a ♀ Brewer's Blackbird, itself a rare visitor to the Q.C.I. The Brewer's was last seen in the area Feb. 12 (OD, AH, PH, MH, BWi), the same day a male was seen near Masset (AH, PH, MH).

Four **Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches** of the *littoralis* race were at the Tsawwassen Jetty Dec. 27–Jan. 4, after which the flock dwindled to three (JL, m.ob.). The birds were most often seen scrambling around and under cars which were parked along the s.w. end of the jetty, until last seen Jan. 20; a rare long stay in the lowlands by this alpine species. Pine Grosbeaks remained in relatively high numbers throughout the Region, with the greatest concentration in Yukon where 180 at Whse. (WN *et al.*), 92 at Marsh L. (HG, *et al.*), 60 at Teslin (the Denisons), and 60 at Watson L. (LE) were tallied Dec. 18. An ad. ♂ **Purple Finch**, a rare species in the Q.C.I., was at a Masset feeder Feb. 21+ (CB, AH, PH, MH). More astounding was an ad. ♂ **Cassin's Finch** on the Port Clements CBC Dec. 20 (†PH, MH), which provided the first record for the Q.C.I. It must have been a big change for this bird from the dry ponderosa pine country of its summer haunts to the sitka spruce stands of the Misty Isles. Red Crossbills found the s. Ok. Vly to their liking this winter, with 59 on the Penticton CBC Dec. 27, 248 on the Vaseux L. CBC Dec. 28, and 157 on the Oliver-Osoyoos CBC Dec. 31 (m.ob.). Most s. and c. reporting areas bemoaned the lack of redpolls, siskins, and Evening Grosbeaks. However, Com. Redpolls were noted as common at Whse. throughout the period



Adult Harris Sparrow (with Black-capped Chickadee) in the Tatlayoko Valley, British Columbia, January 21, 1995.
Photograph/Ruth Travers.

(m.ob.), rare in Teslin after mid-February (the Denisons), and absent in Watson L. (LE).

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—*Jack Bowling, RR1-S14-C41, Prince George, BC V2N 2H8*

Oregon/ Washington Region

BILL TWEIT AND JIM JOHNSON

It was a generally unremarkable winter, both for birds and climate. Three of the six bold-faced birds were from southeastern Washington locations, an interesting mix of Garganey, "Kumlien's" Iceland Gull, and Common Grackle. There were few conifer finches, few northern raptors, and few vagrants.

The weather was generally mild and precipitation was either average or below average, except that severe flooding was associated with coastal storms in mid-December and early February. Snowpacks in the Washington Cascades approached long-term average levels, indicating a lessening if not an end to the drought conditions that have prevailed for almost a decade.

Abbreviations: McNary (*McNary N. W.R., Walla Walla, WA*); Sauvie (*Sauvie I., Columbia, OR*).

Loons to Waterfowl

The usual modest number of interior Red-throated Loon reports were from the Columbia R., one at Priest Rapids Dam, *Yakima, WA* Dec. 31 (AS) and two near Portland (*fide* HN), as were the 2 Pacific Loon reports from the interior: two at McNary Dam Dec. 3 (PB) and one at Richland, *WA* Dec. 15–Jan. 23 (BW). There were only 4 reports of Yellow-billed Loon, which has become a typical number in recent winters. They included one at Beckett Pt., *Jefferson, WA* Jan. 7 (D. Buckley), one at Fort Canby S.P., *Pacific, WA* Dec. 3–21 (MP, HN), one at Drayton Harbor, *Whatcom, WA* (*fide* TW), and one at Netarts Bay, *Tillam-*

ook, OR Jan 7–8 (CR, m.ob.). Two of the Clark's Grebe reports were from unusual areas: one far north at Bellingham, *WA* Dec. 18 (TW) and one in the Willamette valley at Henry Hagg L., *Washington, OR* Dec. 18–Jan. 2 (HN). The only report from usual areas was four in *Curry* on the s. Oregon coast (CD). The January 21 pelagic trip off Westport, *WA* found low numbers of N. Fulmar, one Pink-footed Shearwater and a few Short-tailed Shearwaters (TW); Pink-footeds are normally absent in winter. The only onshore record of Short-tailed was one seen at Point No Point, *Kitsap, WA* Dec. 4 & 15 (VN). American White Pelican continue to winter in small numbers in the Columbia basin, with a high count of 15 at Hanford, *Benton, WA* Jan. 21 (SR). There were 3 late Brown Pelican records in Oregon, the latest was at Hammond, *Clatsop, WA* Jan. 14 (*fide* HN). Unusual numbers of Great Egrets included one near Arlington, *Snobomish, WA* Dec. 27 (D. Brock), one in Puyallup, *Pierce, WA* Jan. 20 (M. Roening), six near Eugene, *Lane, OR* Feb. 26 (T&AM), and one near Auburn, *King, WA* Feb. 28 (TB). Black-crowned Night-Herons are regular winter visitors at a few locations on the westside; a new roost with 11 birds was discovered in Eugene, *Lane, OR* this winter (T&AM).

We will continue to track Mute Swan sightings as their numbers expand in our Region; one–two were with other swans on the Lummi Flats, *Whatcom, WA* from Dec. 29–Feb. 28 (JD) and one was at McNary Feb. 9–19 (M&MLD). Two Ross's Geese,

