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# Central Southern Region

## STEPHEN J. STEDMAN

The Region experienced a cold winter, several blizzards blanketing its northern reaches with up to a foot of snow and many cold snaps penetrating to the Gulf Coast. An illuminating indication of the probable effect of these cold conditions on birdlife was provided by Morris Williams, who monitors breeding raptors in south-central Tennessee and northern Alabama. He found that Great Horned Owls nesting in *Lauderdale*, AL were about six weeks behind schedule in their nesting cycle this year. Certainly anyone who looked out the window could tell that leaf emergence was delayed several weeks in most parts of the Region.

Many rarities highlight this season's report, but perhaps the most notable avian event was the wintering of massive numbers of hummingbirds along the Gulf Coast. It sounds improbable, but hummingbird numbers and species once again exceeded those of any previous winter—by a substantial margin. Exactly what really is

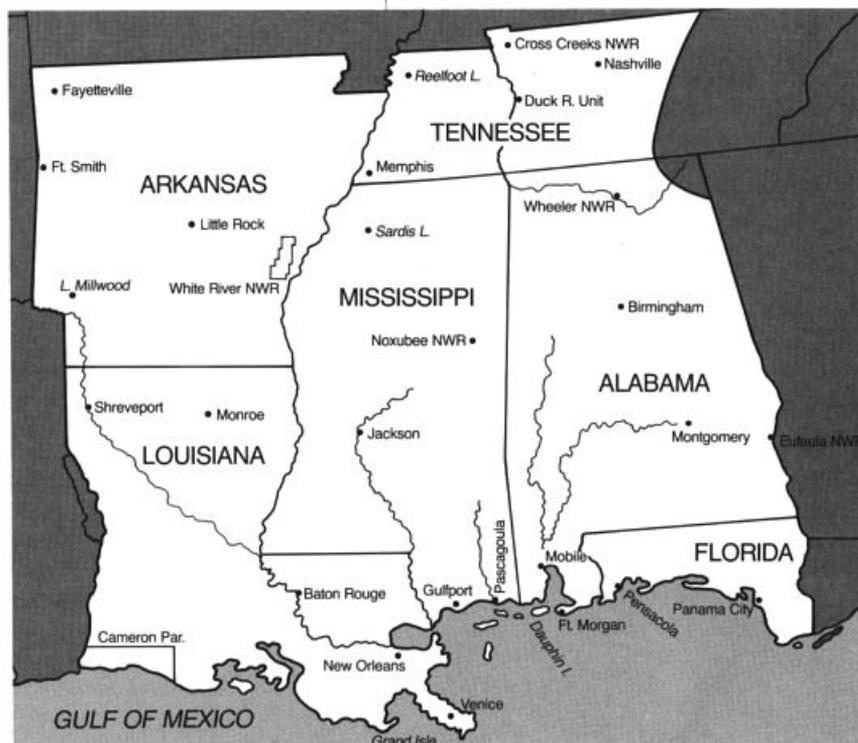
a "good" hummingbird winter may not yet be something we can comprehend, but thanks to the work of many dedicated hummingbird banders and watchers, we are now much closer to comprehension.

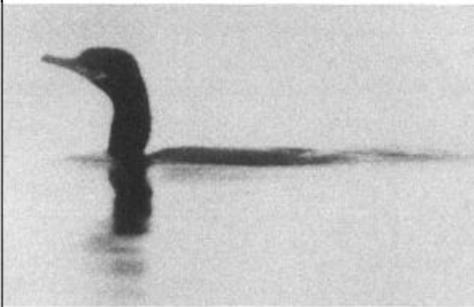
My thanks to the many observers who took the time to submit carefully-documented records of their season's sightings, and to the subregional editors for bringing some perspective to the wealth of data provided.

Abbreviations: A.B.R.C. (*Alabama Bird Records Committee*); F.B.R.C. (*Florida Bird Records Committee*); p.a. (*pending action*); T.B.R.C. (*Tennessee Bird Records Committee*).

## Loons to Frigatebirds

Rare inland, a Red-throated Loon was noted in *Chambers*, AL Jan. 11 (†AMB, GH). Formerly rare anywhere in the Region—but increasing in incidence—a Pacific Loon was in *Baldwin*, AL Feb. 1 (†ALM, ADM). A count of 260 Horned Grebes in *Panola*, MS Dec. 20 (WMD) was deemed exceptional, as was 500 in *Benton*, AR Dec. 2 (MM). In *Marshall*, AL Feb. 20–22 (†WS, †GDJ, DGJ) a Red-necked Grebe represented that state's 8th record, while an Eared Grebe, also in *Marshall*, AL Feb. 23 (†AMB, GH, MK) was noteworthy for its inland locale. Other Eared Grebe sightings included three in *Okaloosa*, FL Dec. 12 (RAD) and one each in *Orleans* and *St. Bernard*, LA Dec. 23 (DM) and Dec. 27 (DM), respectively. Alabama's first *Aechmophorus* identified to species was a *W. Grebe*, also in grebe-rich *Marshall* Dec.





**Adult Neotropic Cormorant in St. Francis County, Arkansas, December 21, 1995. First state record. Photograph/Jeff R. Wilson.**

13–14 (†WS, DC, †SRM); another was reported from *Hempstead*, AR Dec. 10–31 (CM, MD, LN, KN). Over 100 Brown Pelicans in *Cameron*, LA Dec. 2–3 (PW, CS, MM) were thought to represent evidence of successful recolonization of w. Louisiana by this species. Some 10,000 Double-crested Cormorants “churning” the Gulf waters and crowding the sky in *Baldwin*, AL Jan. 31 (ALM) provided a vivid visual experience of a species seldom encountered in such numbers there. A Neotropic Cormorant in *St. Francis*, AR Dec. 21 (†JRW, ph.) provided that state’s first report. Two Magnificent Frigatebirds in *Hancock*, MS during stormy weather with S winds Feb. 19 (AH) was undoubtedly a magnificent treat, as was an ad. male Dec. 8 in *Plaquemines*, LA (DLD, SWC, LCB, RPR).

### Waterfowl to Raptors

Three scarce Tundra Swans were found at Reelfoot L., TN Dec. 16 (MG); two more were in *Dyer*, TN Dec. 22 (*vide* MGW); an immature was in *St. Tammany*, LA Dec. 26 (†MW, JTS); and three stayed in *Chicot*, AR Feb. 15 (DRS). Two dozen Ross’ Geese in *Tunica*, MS Jan. 20 (JRW, m.ob.) represented a good number for that site; nine others were in *Lafayette*, MS Jan. 19 (GK, VT); an adult was noted in *Benton*, AR Feb. 18 (MM, DC); a single was present Feb. 18–24 (SWM, †GDJ, m.ob.) in *Colbert*, AL, where the species is increasing and now expected. Three reports occurred in Louisiana.

A “Eur.” Green-winged Teal in *Orleans* Feb. 4 (†PW) probably represented the first for this subspecies in Louisiana. Single ad. ♂ Cinnamon Teals were noted in *Cameron* and *Rapides*, LA Jan. 6 (MaP, GP) and Feb. 4 (DP), respectively. No large numbers of Greater Scaup were reported, but 100,000 Lessers were present in *Cameron*, LA Dec. 3 (PW, CS, MM). A single Oldsquaw was briefly noted Dec. 16 in *Washington*, AR (MM, DC), where it is rare.

Black, White-winged, and Surf scoters were in *Oktibbeha*, *Webster*, and *Oktibbeha*,

MS Feb. 28–29 (TLS), Jan. 25–27 (TLS, MS, GK, SK), and Dec. 19–20 (TLS), respectively. Two Black Scoters were in *Cameron*, LA Dec. 2 (PW, CS, MM), ≤14 Surfs were there during December (PW, CS, MM, RJB), and an imm. White-winged was also there Jan. 7 (†CEL).

White-tailed Kites were reported from *Cameron* and *Jefferson Davis*, LA only. At least eight Mississippi Kites ranged over downtown Memphis Feb. 8–10 (WOB, *vide* MGW), to establish a new early arrival date for Tennessee. Very rare in Louisiana, a Swainson’s Hawk appeared in *East Baton Rouge* Dec. 9 (SWC, DLD). The first well-documented White-tailed Hawk for Louisiana in this century was present in *Jefferson Davis* Dec. 15–Jan. 15 (†SWC, DLD, †PW, †MP). Second ever in Arkansas, an imm. Ferruginous Hawk was seen Feb. 18 in *Pope* (RKS, CC); another was in *Cameron*, LA Jan. 7–21 (†CEL, †RJB, m.ob.).

More Rough-legged Hawks were noted in Arkansas than during any previous winter (*vide* MP, HP). Three Golden Eagles were reported in Mississippi, two in Arkansas, and one each in Louisiana and Tennessee. A Crested Caracara in *Cameron*, LA Dec. 15 (MW, RS) was hard to mistake. A Peregrine Falcon in *Lauderdale*, AL Jan. 12 (PDK) was considered rare for the season and locale, as were others in *Shelby*, TN Dec. 13 and Jan. 20 (LCC, MH) and Jan. 7 (MGW).

### Cranes to Terns

A maximum number for Alabama was established when 42 Sandhill Cranes were noted Feb. 1 in *Barbour* (AMB), where the species is rare; many other sites throughout the Region hosted cranes for all or part of the winter. Third ever inland in Alabama during December was a lone Semipalmated Plover in *Morgan* Dec. 16 (†SWM, LM); no January or February inland records exist for this species in Alabama. A concentration of 345 Black-necked Stilts in *Orleans*, LA Jan. 19 (GG, RD) must have been impressive. Foraging in a drained fish pond Jan. 3 in *Prairie*, AR (RHD), 35 Greater and 15 Lesser yellowlegs were notable concentrations for the season.

More inland than usual, a Long-billed Curlew in *Acadia*, LA Dec. 21 (SWC, DLD) was noteworthy. Fifth for Alabama in winter, two Silt Sandpipers appeared in *Mobile* Feb. 7 (RAD, PCT); a single was present in *Prairie*, AR Dec. 16 (LN, KN), and two were fairly far from their usual s.w. Louisiana haunts Jan. 20 in *Pointe Coupee* (DLD, SWC). Of occasional occurrence inland, a Red Phalarope was present in *Marshall*, AL Nov. 26–Dec. 3 (†WS; p.a. A.B.R.C.).

Lake Millwood’s 5th Little Gull showed up Dec. 2 in *Howard*, AR (CM, WMS).

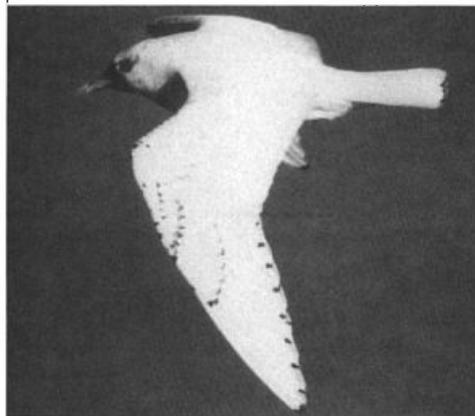
Two California Gulls were noted in *Hardin*, TN during January and February (†JRW, †SWM; p.a. T.B.R.C.). A 2nd for Alabama, a Thayer’s Gull in *Marshall* Feb. 23 (†AMB, GH, MK, p.a. A.B.R.C.) was studied and described at length; two others lingered in *Hardin*, TN Feb. 11–19 (†JRW, PWS, m.ob.; p.a. T.B.R.C.) and were equally well studied. Lesser Black-backed Gulls turned up in 4 Louisiana parishes, where the species is rare but probably increasing.

Not often encountered in n. Mississippi, a Glaucous Gull was noted in *Yalobusha* Feb. 18 (†GK, SK); another was in *Marshall*, AL Feb. 21 (†WS) and still another traveled through *Hempstead*, AR Dec. 26 (CM, WMS, m.ob.). First locally, a Black-legged Kittiwake stayed Dec. 11–12 in *Noxubee*, MS (†TLS, MS, †MaG), while the 9th for Alabama—and first for the Inland Coastal Plain—was provided by two in *Henry* Dec. 1 (†AMB, †GH). Yet another showed up at Pickwick Dam, TN Feb. 9 (DJS).

The “Eureka!” bird of the season was the Ivory Gull found at productive Pickwick Dam in *Hardin*, TN Feb. 10–21 (†JRW, ph.); seen by >450 observers from at least 26 states, it was a first for Tennessee and the Region, and may well have been the southernmost individual of this species ever recorded in the interior of the continent. Although I received superb photographs of this bird, I received not a single documentation form about it from any of its hundreds of observers, all of whom presumably were too giddy to write after seeing it. A Gull-billed Tern in *Catahoula*, LA Jan. 13 (RJB, BB) was considered very rare at that location.

### Doves to Owls

Eurasian Collared-Doves continue to increase in Alabama, where 57 were noted on the Gulf Shores CBC (*vide* GDJ), and in



**Providing a first state record, and one of the southernmost inland occurrences ever, was this immature Ivory Gull at Pickwick Dam, Tennessee, in February 1996. Photograph/Jeff R. Wilson.**

n.w. Florida, where 58 were counted on the Port St. Joe CBC (*fide* RLW); both represented record numbers for the respective CBCs. Collared-doves continue to expand westward in Louisiana, where they have been in *Cameron* at least 2 years. A rare Inca Dove was in *Miller*, AR Dec. 21 (DA); others were reported in 3 Louisiana parishes.

Greater Roadrunners are "becoming more abundant" in Arkansas, where singles were observed in *Pope* and *Johnson* Jan. 27 (DJ). Arkansas' 3rd Groove-billed Ani was detected Dec. 2 at L. Millwood (CM), site of the other 2 state records. Present Dec. 3–18 in *Shelby*, TN (LCC, MH) were two–three Com. Nighthawks. Calling briefly in Gulf Breeze, FL Dec. 1 (†LD, †RAD), a Com. Poorwill would represent Florida's 2nd ever (p.a. F.B.R.C.).

Many Short-eared Owls were reported, including the first locally in *Putnam*, TN Jan. 10 (SJS), following the deposition of 10 inches of snow there in early January. Single, rarely-encountered Long-eared Owls were noted in *Pope*, AR Dec. 23 (LA, SB, JC) and *Hardin*, TN Feb. 16 (JRW); seven in *Pope* Jan. 13 (RKS, DH, CWD) represented a large number there for this rare species.

## Hummingbirds

**SA** All the superb hummingbird numbers recorded in recent winters pale by comparison with this season's cornucopia of nectarivorous invaders. Newfield, the Sargents, and some of their sub-permittees set many personal records for numbers of banded hummers during the season. It was the best season ever for numbers in most coastal states, and by far the best for species in Mississippi and n.w. Florida. It's hard to believe, but still larger hummingbird numbers are likely to accrue in future winters as more attention is focused on the Region's hummer population by a growing cadre of hummer-addicted humans. Newfield and the Sargents emphasized that their banding accomplishments during the season, as superlative as they were, by no means give an accurate measure of the number of hummingbirds present, because these banders often simply could not get to all the places where hummers were reported, due to the flood of calls coming in. Who knows what was missed or how many wintering hummingbirds were really out there? .

The incredible White-eared Hummingbird first found in *Harrison*, MS last November

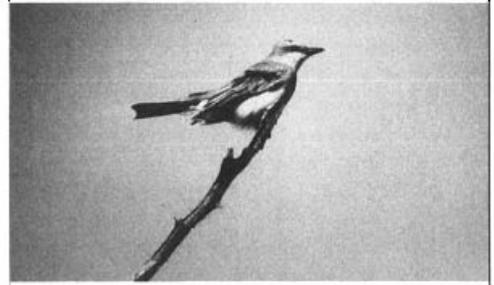
stayed until Jan. 4 (*fide* TLS) and was banded (BC). Alabama's 3rd Buff-bellied Hummingbird visited *Baldwin* Dec. 29+ (†RRS, †MBS, m.ob.). At least three were in Mississippi (*fide* TLS), ≥four were in n.w. Florida (*fide* RAD), and seven were banded in Louisiana (NN, DP) and many others were reported there. Florida's first Magnificent Hummingbird wowed a small crowd in *Santa Rosa* Dec. 22–24 (†EC, †EVB *et al.*). Carver banded four Ruby-throated and seven Black-chinned hummingbirds in coastal Mississippi; Newfield and Patton banded eight and 18, respectively, in Louisiana; one of the former and ≥four of the latter were also noted in n.w. Florida (*fide* RAD).

Mississippi's 2nd and 3rd Anna's Hummingbirds appeared in *Oktibbeha* and *Harrison* Nov. 27–Dec. 30 (banded †RRS, MBS) and Dec. 19 (banded BC), respectively; five were banded in Louisiana (NN, DP) and still others reported. The Calliope Hummingbird in *Hancock*, MS during November stayed until at least Jan. 6, was banded by the Sargents, and was later recaptured 3 mi away by Carver; at least four, and perhaps as many as six, were noted in n.w. Florida for the 2nd through 5th state records, minimally (†RAD, †JSF); Newfield and Patton banded nine in Louisiana during the season (by comparison, Newfield had banded nine in Louisiana during all previous years of her banding efforts), and others were reported there. A Broad-tailed Hummingbird, about Mississippi's 4th, was in *Harrison* Dec. 19 when banded (BC); another Broad-tailed Hummingbird, Florida's first, was present Jan. 8–Feb. 11 in Pensacola (†JP, †RAD, m.ob.). Six were banded in Louisiana (NN, DP) and several others were reported.

Forty-eight Rufous Hummingbirds were banded in *Hancock*, *Harrison*, and *Jackson*, MS (BC) during the season; 134 were banded in Louisiana (NN, DP), one of which, banded Nov. 18 (NN), was recaptured in Gulf Breeze, FL Dec. 5 (RRS, MBS). At least 30 *Selasphorus* sp., including 13 identified as Rufous and banded by the Sargents, were noted in n.w. Florida. Single individuals of *Archilochus* and *Selasphorus* spp. were in Tennessee during December (*fide* MGW). Very rare but increasing, two Allen's Hummingbirds were banded and photographed in Alabama (†RRS, †MBS) during the season; another was banded in Mississippi (BC), and three more were banded in Louisiana (NN, DP).

## Woodpeckers to Wrens

Six Red-cockaded Woodpeckers were observed near Mandeville in *St. Tammany*, LA Jan. 13 (CGB) at a site where development and an infestation of southern pine



**Well documented by tape recordings as well as by photographs, this Couch's Kingbird furnished a first Arkansas record. It was at the productive Lake Millwood December 5, 1995. Photograph/Max Parker.**

beetles slowly destroy the available habitat. The 3rd Pacific-slope Flycatcher for Louisiana was present Jan. 4 in *Lafayette* (PC, GB, SWC, DLD). An *Empidonax* sp. in Gulf Breeze, FL Dec. 28 (LD, RAD) established the first December empid record for that area. The only Vermilion Flycatcher reports came from *LaSalle* and *Pointe Coupee*, LA Dec. 16 (RJB) and Jan. 20 (DLD, SWC), respectively, while the only reports of *Myiarchus* sp. involved six Ash-throated and two Brown-crested flycatcher sightings from Louisiana.

Well photographed and its vocalizations recorded, a Couch's Kingbird at L. Millwood Dec. 5 (†HR, MP ph.) provided a first for Arkansas. While not as rarely encountered, three E. Kingbirds in *Pope* and *Yell*, AR Dec. 10 (LA) were still remarkable. January-arriving Purple Martins in Louisiana encountered some severe cold in February and may have suffered losses as a result. Earliest ever in Alabama was a Barn Swallow Feb. 29 in *Marshall* (GDJ, DGJ).

Red-breasted Nuthatches wintered throughout much of the Region in small to moderate numbers. Expected by Wilson to turn up at the site for a decade, two Brown-headed Nuthatches near Pickwick Dam, *Hardin*, TN Jan. 13+ (JRW, SWM) may have prospected N from areas in n. Mississippi, where extensive clear cutting of pine forests has taken place in recent years. The only Bewick's Wrens were singles reported from *Washington*, AR Dec. 31 and Jan. 21–Feb. 24 (MM) and from *Cameron*, LA Dec. 16 (SWC).

## Vireos to Grosbeaks

A state maximum count of Solitary Vireos was established Dec. 30 in *Baldwin*, AL (*fide* GDJ) on the Gulf Shores CBC, where 40 were tallied. A Nashville Warbler was present Dec. 16 in *Cameron*, LA (SWC; \*LSUMZ) where the species is very rare. A Tropical Parula in *Vermilion*, LA Jan. 13–21 (†PW, CS) was videotaped. Rare in *Acadia*, LA Dec. 21 (DM) was a Yellow Warbler.

Yellow-rumped "Audubon's" Warblers

were noted in *Lafayette*, MS Jan. 16 (GK) and *Washington*, AR Feb. 11 (MM). Another w. warbler regaled numerous observers Dec. 17 in *Cameron*, LA (†PW, †MaP, m.ob.), where a Black-throated Gray Warbler appeared. Despite the harsh weather, Pine Warblers tried to winter in *Washington*, AR (MM) and some apparently made it through the season; another survived January and February temperatures down into the minus-teens Fahrenheit in *Putnam*, TN (SJS, BHS) with the help of cornbread and peanut butter mix. Alabama's 5th inland winter Yellow-breasted Chat was sighted Dec. 8 in *Limestone* (AMB); chats also visited 4 Louisiana parishes during the winter.

A W. Tanager was seen in *Cameron* Feb. 24 (MaP), and Summer Tanagers were observed in *East Baton Rouge*, *Iberville*, and *Ascension* parishes, LA. Alabama's 2nd inland winter record of Rose-breasted Grosbeak was made Feb. 11–21 in *Lauderdale* (PDK, DEK); males of this species were also found in *East Baton Rouge* and *Livingston* parishes, LA. Different individual Black-headed Grosbeaks visited *Oktibbeha* and *Noxubee*, MS Jan. 22† (JB, †TLS, MS, †GK) and Feb. 27 (DR, †TLS), respectively.

Three Louisiana parishes hosted Blue Grosbeaks, and 4 parishes held Indigo Buntings. A Painted Bunting in *Grenada*, MS Feb. 5 (†TA) was a rarity; 6 Louisiana parishes listed this species during the winter, and 4 had Dickcissels. Rare in the East, a Spotted Towhee was present Dec. 16 in *Cameron*, LA (PY).

American Tree Sparrows were noted at their usual wintering areas in *Lake*, TN (JRW, MGW); another was in *Cleburne*, AR Jan. 9 (LN, KN). Three Henslow's in *Bradley*, AR (Jan. 27 (LN, KN) and another in *Cleveland*, AR Feb. 10 (WMS, LY) echoed last year's strong winter showing in Arkansas; very rare in Tennessee was a Henslow's in *Hardin* Dec. 30 (DJS). A Harris' Sparrow in *Quitman*, MS Jan. 25 (FB) and two immatures in *Evangeline*, LA Dec. 31 (JS, MW) were among few reported.

Over 2000 Lapland Longspurs in *Tunica*, MS Dec. 3 (JRW) represented the season's high count at a site where similar numbers have been reported in the past. Alabama's 8th Smith's Longspur (p.a. A.B.R.C.) showed up in *Limestone* Jan. 29 (†SRM); another was reported in *Chicot*, AR Feb. 5 (DRS). Western Meadowlarks were reported a bit more than usual this winter from Arkansas and Tennessee. A ♂ Yellow-headed Blackbird, mixed in with a million other blackbirds in *Acadia*, LA Dec. 21 (WF, PH, DM), was still unmistakable. A flock of 320 Great-tailed Grackles in *Washington*, AR Dec. 6 (MM) was considered a large number for n.w. Arkansas; one in *East Baton*

*Rouge*, LA Dec. 22 (SWC, DLD) provided the first definite record of the species in the Baton Rouge area. The 3rd winter Orchard Oriole for Alabama was in *Baldwin* Jan. 27 (†RRS, NM). Baltimore and Bullock's orioles were widely reported, especially in Louisiana. That state's 3rd Lesser Goldfinch showed up in *Caddo* Dec. 21 (†LMH). Pine Siskins were mostly absent from the Region, except in Louisiana where reports came from 3 parishes, but Evening Grosbeaks staged a small to moderate invasion of Tennessee (*vide* MDW, MGW), n. Alabama (*vide* GDJ), n. Mississippi (*vide* TLS, GK), and Arkansas (*vide* HP, MP).

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# Prairie Provinces Region

## RUDOLF F. KOES AND PETER TAYLOR

It was the mother of all prairie winters. Temperatures were generally well below normal across the Region (albeit somewhat milder, as expected, out west). Two mild spells interrupted the bitter cold, the first one fortunately coinciding with the Christmas Bird Count period and the second providing a respite in mid-February. Snowfall ranged from about normal in northern Manitoba to as much as 50 percent above average elsewhere. It was especially heavy early in the season, and most was still around at the end of the period.

Birding highlights included some good owl concentrations, high numbers of several winter finch species, and an assortment of weather-bound waterfowl and feeder birds. Observer effort was low after the Christmas count, so there is little information on survival of lingering species; the overall success rate was likely low, but there were a few surprising survivors.

## Grebes to Falcons

Few grebes were reported, the most unusual being an Eared Grebe at Waterton Lakes N.P., AB Dec. 16 († *vide* PS). A disabled Am. White Pelican and eight Double-crested Cormorants survived at Pine Falls, MB to Dec. 2 (RKO, PT *et al.*). A hardy Great Blue Heron was at Douglasdale, AB Jan. 23 (MP). Four Trumpeter Swans and one unidentified swan were present in s. Alberta during December and January (m.ob.) Rarely reported in winter, a Greater White-fronted Goose was at Fort Qu'Appelle, SK Dec. 2 (RH), and a Snow Goose was very early at Taber L., AB Feb. 18 (LB).

Lone Green-winged Teal were noted at Crooked L., SK Jan. 7 (BM) and in Calgary Feb. 16 (DBR). At least a dozen Mallards endured the winter to mid-February in Winnipeg (GW), and five were still at Minnedosa, MB Feb. 23 (CC). December concentrations of Mallards in Alberta included 7000 on the Oldman R. at Taber Dec. 4 (LB) and 5510 in the Lethbridge area Dec. 30 (m.ob.). Single Ring-necked Ducks were at Fort Qu'Appelle, SK Jan. 1 (RH) and Calgary Feb. 8 (*vide* PS), and