

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

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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

two Lesser Scaup were in Brandon, MB Feb. 12 (BR). A Harlequin Duck and an Oldsquaw enhanced the icy scene at Pine Falls Dec. 2–3 (PT, RKO, DF *et al.*), and a White-winged Scoter was exceptionally late on the South Saskatchewan R. near Pike L., SK Dec. 30 (MW). Other lingerers included 12 Buffleheads and four Hooded Mergansers in Calgary Jan. 8 (BG), a Hooded Merganser at Katepwa L., SK to Jan. 27 (RKR *et al.*), and a Ruddy Duck at Lebret, SK Dec. 6 (RH, JP).

A Turkey Vulture was apparently seen well near Crooked L., SK Dec. 27 (BM). Eight Sharp-shinned Hawk sightings in Alberta (m.ob.) may have included a few repeats in Calgary. Three Cooper's Hawks were seen in Saskatchewan: at Regina Dec. 2 (BL) & 26 (DBE), and in the Qu'Appelle valley Jan. 2 (BM). Northern Goshawks were very thinly spread; one was in open prairie at Irricana, AB Feb. 17 (TK, BW). Rough-legged Hawks were understandably scarce. Six migrating Golden Eagles were record-early at Mt. Lorette Feb. 17 (PS). The epitome of winter adaptation, a Gyrfalcon was at Churchill Feb. 21 (BC); there were 14 Alberta sightings of this species, 10 at 4 locations in Saskatchewan and 3 in s. Manitoba. Above-average numbers of Prairie Falcons in s. Alberta were probably linked to large numbers of Horned Larks and Snow Buntings; one in Edmonton from Dec. 26–February would have been rare at any season (RD, JL).

Partridges to Woodpeckers

Gray Partridge numbers have increased from the 1992–1993 low levels in the Cal-

gary area and s. Manitoba. A Ruffed Grouse was somewhat out-of-range at Fort McLeod, AB Dec. 29 (LS, AH). Some good concentrations of Sharp-tailed Grouse were reported in s. Alberta, but few elsewhere. Truly extraordinary was the Region's first winter **Virginia Rail** at Cave & Basin Marsh, Banff N.P., Jan. 6 and Feb. 6 (MM, HF). A Killdeer and a Com. Snipe were at the same oasis of warmth Jan. 6 (MM *et al.*). The only late concentration of gulls was at Cold L., AB Dec. 2: >15 Ring-billed, and single California, Thayer's, and Glaucous gulls (SH, JasR, SB, RKL).

At least one Mourning Dove outlasted the season in Winnipeg (RT), and others made it to mid-January at least in Calgary, Lethbridge, and Medicine Hat, AB (m.ob.). In January, the Saskatchewan Museum received a **Barn Owl** found dead near Punnichy Feb. 2, 1995 (*vide* RKR). Snowy Owls were generally scarce, except near Calgary where 11 were seen Jan. 21 and nine Feb. 26 (TK). There was a sparse movement of N. Hawk Owls through s.e. Manitoba in December. Farther north, a pocket of eight N. Hawk Owls was near Ponton in December (JC); >30 were reported in Saskatchewan, mainly near the s. edge of the mixed forest (WHs). Six Alberta N. Hawk Owl reports included one in Edmonton spoiled rotten with store-bought mice, fattening up from 200 to 300 grams in the space of a few days (GC, RD).

It was an excellent winter for Great Gray Owls in s.e. Manitoba. All but two of 44 birds banded were ad. females (RN, HC). The highest one-day count was 23 between Powerview and Manigotagan

Dec. 31 (*vide* RN). Two even visited Winnipeg, where one killed a Gray Squirrel after a prolonged chase Feb. 29; it took a day to eat it (VL)! Great Gray Owls were widely reported in Alberta, but with no large concentrations; >20 were found in Saskatchewan (WHs). Sixteen Boreal Owls were reported Regionwide, including six found dead. As usual in winter, few N. Saw-whet Owls were found outside Alberta. A Belted Kingfisher at Mt. Lorette, AB Feb. 29 was an early migrant (PS). A Lewis' Woodpecker at Fort Qu'Appelle Dec. 16 (PB) represented Saskatchewan's 7th since 1966.

Passerines

Horned Lark numbers in s. Alberta were the highest in several years; >2000 were seen in 25 mi between Milk R. and Writing-on-Stone P.P., Jan. 6 (LS). Blue Jays continued to increase in s. Alberta, as did Com. Ravens across the prairies. At least three Chestnut-backed Chickadees were at Waterton Lakes N.P., Feb. 22 (LB, BB). A tantalizing, late report of a **Tufted Titmouse** in Winnipeg Nov. 11 could not be substantiated. Red-breasted Nuthatch numbers ranged from excellent in w. Alberta to moderate in s. Manitoba. Single Brown Creepers spent much of the period at Moose Jaw and near Hodgeville, SK (EK, DK), and individuals were still in Winnipeg and Holland, MB in late January (RN, AW).

Reduced numbers of Am. Dippers in the s. Rockies were attributed to poor breeding success following high stream levels last summer, which decimated caddisfly larvae (PS). Hardy Townsend's Solitaires were noted at Brandon Feb. 18 (BR), Saskatoon Feb. 22 (RKR), and Calgary Feb. 22 (BW). One of two Varied Thrushes in Saskatoon survived the period (MW). Good numbers of Am. Robins attempted to winter in s. Alberta, with at least some success, but few lingered in Saskatchewan or Manitoba. Far out-of-range was a Brown Thrasher at Grand Prairie, AB Nov. 3–Dec. 16+ (AR). Northern Shrike numbers were generally low; one at Good Spirit Lake P.P., SK killed \geq three Pine Grosbeaks, taking several hours to butcher the carcasses (BA). Bohemian Waxwings were abundant in many Alberta towns and cities, but relatively scarce elsewhere.

A Yellow-rumped Warbler was in Calgary Dec. 3–6 (WHz). At least five N. Cardinals wintered in Manitoba, including a pair spending their 2nd winter at Grand Beach (m.ob.). There was the usual scattering of hardier sparrow and blackbird species, and above-average



numbers of Dark-eyed Juncos, mainly recorded on CBCs. Red-winged Blackbird numbers were well above average in Alberta. Thirty-five Lapland Longspurs provided a good winter flock at Taber Jan. 13 (LB). The largest Snow Bunting concentrations were 5000 on a grain pile near Beiseker, AB Feb. 5 (JS, PS), 3000 at Frank L., AB Jan. 20 (WS), and >1500 near McArthur Falls, MB Dec. 29 (PT, RZ). Snow Buntings concentrated along railway tracks near Medicine Hat suffered heavy mortality from train collisions (DBo).

An unconfirmed **Brambling**, Saskatchewan's 2nd ever, visited a Saskatoon feeder just twice Feb. 6 (MC). Six-hundred Gray-crowned Rosy Finches graced Exshaw, AB Feb. 21 (JanR), and one wandered E to Swan R., MB Jan. 1 (*vide* HH). Pine Grosbeaks were common in w. Alberta and parts of s. Manitoba, especially in December. Red Crossbills occurred in small numbers in Alberta and w. Manitoba, but were overshadowed by an outstanding invasion of White-winged Crossbills, with especially high numbers in Saskatchewan and Alberta. Common Redpolls also made an excellent showing in the 2 w. provinces (m.ob.), as well as Thompson, MB (ZI). Winter site fidelity is not normally associated with nomadic finches, but a Com. Redpoll captured at Water Valley, AB Feb. 17 had been banded there Feb. 2, 1993 (RD). Hoary Redpolls were well represented in the redpoll flocks, the proportions probably varying with the expertise or confidence of the observers, but rarely exceeding 5%. Pine Siskin numbers were also high across the south, except in easternmost Manitoba. Several Am. Goldfinches wintered in Calgary, and a few in Medicine Hat (m.ob.). Evening Grosbeaks were abundant in Alberta, scarce in Saskatchewan, and found mainly in traditional areas in Manitoba.

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Northern Great Plains

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It was a relatively severe winter, particularly in the eastern half of North Dakota. The 60 inches of snow that fell there was combined with several bouts of severe cold, with lows near -40° F. South Dakota, western North Dakota, and eastern Montana endured the same cold temperatures and above average snowfall, but the cold spells were punctuated by a few warm periods that helped keep the snow accumulation at a manageable level. Some warmer temperatures were experienced in mid-February, but by period's end below-zero readings had returned in many areas. Fortunately for birders, the CBC period was fairly mild and good species totals were achieved on some counts.

Pelicans to Cranes

The **American White Pelican** last seen Jan. 9 at Arrowwood N.W.R. furnished the first-ever records for December and January in North Dakota (PRS). In South Dakota, Greater White-fronted Geese were early Feb. 24 in *Kingsbury* (JSP) and *Minnehaha* (RS). The thousands of Canada Geese in the Garrison Dam area in December had diminished to zero by early February due to the harsh weather (GBB). The species arrived on schedule in mid-late February at refuges in the n. part of the Region, but the return of cold weather

