

# Atlantic Provinces Region

## BRUCE MACTAVISH

Bird watching activity is escalating in the Region. Each year new information is added to a maturing foundation of knowledge. Fifteen years ago every Prairie Warbler and Yellow-breasted Chat was noteworthy. In 1996 it was difficult to keep track of the individuals seen. Only rough totals by province were attainable for this report. No longer are Prairies and chats chance encounters. They are more or less byproducts of birding for rarer southern warblers and other vagrants. Although some complained of slow periods during the season, the cumulative list of rarities was inspiring.

There was one new species for the Region—a Dusky Flycatcher in Nova Scotia! In the same league of *exotica* was a Groove-billed Ani. The same province also chalked up its third Le Conte's Sparrow, a

Swainson's Hawk, and Spotted Redshank. New Brunswick had its first Mountain Bluebird and second Sandwich Tern. Newfoundland had its first Connecticut Warbler and second Say's Phoebe. Good numbers of Dickcissels, Lark Sparrows, and Yellow-headed Blackbirds, plus a single Lark Bunting, added a western flavor across the Region. It was the best year for Black-headed Gulls in five years in Newfoundland, and a Yellow-legged Gull returned.

Abbreviations: GMI (*Grand Manan Island*); SPM (*St. Pierre et Miquelon*).

## Loons to Herons

A pair of Red-throated Loons with two small young was observed at Miquelon, SPM, where one-two pairs nest annually (PH). An early Horned Grebe was at Pocologan, NB Aug. 19 (MB, SM). Single Cory's Shearwaters off Nova Scotia were seen on a pelagic trip Aug. 9 (*vide* SF) and off *Ecum Secum* Aug. 15 (JT). Greater Shearwater migration is difficult to determine by landlubbing birders. Observers working on fishing boats off s. Nova Scotia noted decreases in Greater Shearwater numbers after August. On Banquereau Bank, 2500 Greater Shearwaters July 28–Aug. 23 decreased to 1000 by the end of September (DS), and on George's Bank hundreds Aug. 17 had decreased to 200 by Oct. 28 (RD). A late Greater Shearwater was seen from Brier I., NS Nov. 13

(IM, EM). The largest shearwater count was 3000 Greater and 5000 Sooty shearwaters off GMI, NB Sept. 21 (DC *et al.*). The largest concentration of Manx Shearwaters was near the suspected breeding colony on Columbiar I., SPM, with 50 Aug. 16 and 15 as late as Oct. 22 (RE *et al.*). A report of a Band-rumped Storm-Petrel on George's Bank, NS, in late August was apparently well seen, but unfortunately lacked details. Storm-driven Leach's Storm-Petrels were noted at Cap Bimet, NB, with 300 Sept. 15 (ST) and at Holyrood, NF, with 500 Oct. 30 (BMT). A late Leach's Storm-Petrel flew past Cape St. Francis, NF, during a storm Nov. 16 (BMT).

Vagrant herons numbers were about average. New Brunswick had

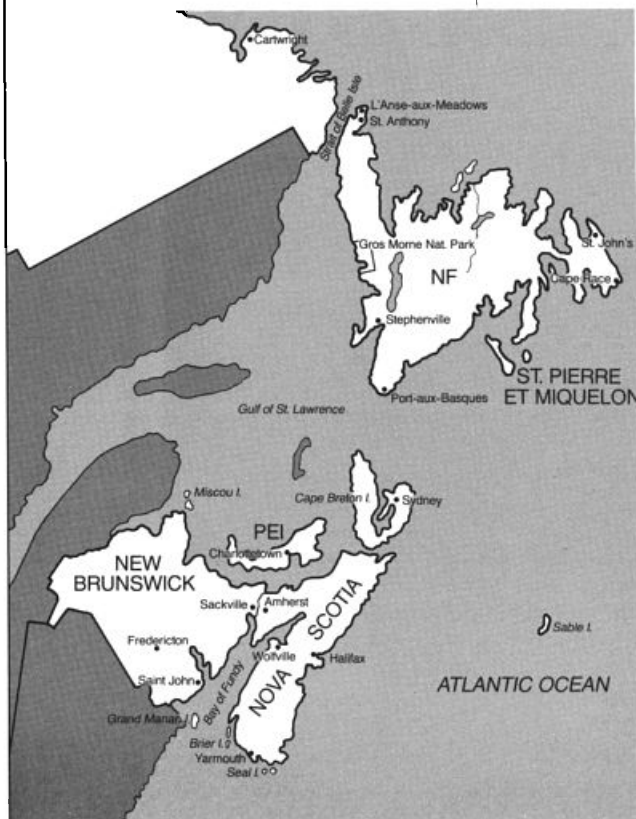
four Great Egrets and three Yellow-crowned Night-Herons. Nova Scotia had two Great, one Cattle, and two Snowy egrets, and three Little Blue Herons and one Yellow-crowned Night-Heron. Newfoundland reported one Great Egret, while Saint Pierre et Miquelon had a flock of three Cattle Egrets.

## Waterfowl

Out-of-range geese in e. Newfoundland included a Brant at Arnold's Cove Nov. 9–30+ (BMT *et al.*), and an elusive if confused Snow Goose with Herring Gulls at the St. John's dump Aug. 25–Nov. 30+ (JS *et al.*). A stray Wood Duck frequented St. John's, NF Nov. 8–30+ (BMT *et al.*). The first "Eur." Green-winged Teals of the fall were single males detected as molt revealed racial identities at Ferryland and Cape Broyle, NF Nov. 2 (RF, BMT, JWe). Perhaps a record-high Regional count of 200 Gadwall was tallied in the lower Tantrammar R., NB Sept. 1 (AB). The good numbers of Eur. Wigeon in recent autumns continued with one Oct. 5 & 24 at Long Pond, PEI (DM *et al.*); two at Mason Pond and two at Dartmouth, NS, in late November (*vide* BMy); and a total of nine at various locations on the Avalon Pen., NF, during November (BMT, KK *et al.*). Very rare in the Region, a ♀ Canvasback was at New Minas, NS Nov. 26–29 (*vide* BMy). The only Tufted Ducks seen were individuals at Brier I., NS Nov. 12 (*vide* BMy) and a returning bird at Dartmouth, NS Nov. 24–30+ (m.ob.). The suggestion by some observers that Lesser Scaup may be increasing in the Region is backed by large flocks of 20 Nov. 2 at Long Pond, PEI (RP), and 23 in late November at Bisset L., Dartmouth, NS (*vide* BMy). An unseasonable Harlequin Duck lingered at Southwest Head, GMI, NB Aug. 7–Sept. 3 (BD *et al.*). For the first time in a decade there was a significant flight of Ruddy Ducks into the Region. New Brunswick had 4 reports totaling 35 birds Oct. 20–Nov. 1 (m.ob.); Nova Scotia's high count was 26 Nov. 23 at Bisset L., Dartmouth (m.ob.); Prince Edward Island had 3 reports totaling five birds Oct. 24–Nov. 2 (m.ob.), and St. Pierre et Miquelon recorded its first three since 1980 (BB).

## Raptors to Cranes

Nova Scotia's 7th Black Vulture was at Beaver Dam, *Shelbourne*, Aug. 16–18 (*vide* MN). Turkey Vultures were widely reported in New Brunswick. Numerous reports from w. Nova Scotia were eclipsed by daily counts of  $\leq 20$  on Brier I., Oct. 12–Nov. 14 (MH *et al.*). Stragglers ranged to Crowbush, PEI Aug. 13 (RC) and Cape Breton



I., NS Oct. 12 (*vide* BMy). An increase in the number of reports of Cooper's Hawk—6 from Nova Scotia and 5 from New Brunswick—suggest an actual increase in numbers. Red-shouldered Hawk sightings in Nova Scotia were one Sept. 5 at Harmony, *Queens* (SC *et al.*), and one adult and two immatures Oct. 21 at Brier I. (MH). Kettles of  $\leq 125$  Broad-winged Hawks were observed at Brier I., NS, in late September (MH *et al.*). An ad. light-morph Swainson's Hawk watched in a kettle of Broad-winged Hawks at Brier I., NS Oct. 1 was well described (MH). Immature Golden Eagles were at Langlade, SPM Sept. 28 (MB) and at Brier I., NS Oct. 21 (MH). Peregrine Falcons were widely reported, with the highest count, typically at Seal I., NS, being eight Oct. 3 (BMy *et al.*). Gyrfalcons reported during peak Peregrine migration were singles Sept. 29 at Seal I., NS (BMy *et al.*) and Oct. 11 at Cap de Cochene, NB (JE).

A Clapper Rail was carefully identified at Bear Cove, NF Oct. 19 (PL, RF, JWe); however, a large rail showing bright rusty epaulets flushed 3 times at Cape Race, NF Oct. 12 was quite possibly the much rarer King Rail (TB, KK, PL). An imm. Purple Gallinule was picked up in poor condition in Fundy N.P., NB Oct. 19 (*vide* DC). Sandhill Crane sightings were average, with two Sept. 11–13 at Flatlands, NB (T. Gray), one Oct. 18–Nov. 1 at Welch Cove, NB (CJ), and one Aug. 28 at North R., NS (*vide* BMy).

### Shorebirds

High counts of Am. Golden-Plover were 260 Sept. 23 at Miquelon, SPM (LJ), and 200 Oct. 20 Earnscliffe, PEI (DM). A staggering 2700 Semipalmated Plovers were counted at Cherry Hill Beach, NS Aug. 25 (SF). The American Avocet found at Saint Rest Marsh, Saint John, NB July 30 remained until Aug. 9 (AR *et al.*). A Spotted Redshank was well seen and described at Crescent Beach, NS Aug. 5 for a 6th provincial record (BF). Another probable Spotted Redshank was seen at Hillsborough, NB Aug. 23 (J. Tanner). Migrant Upland Sandpipers were singles Aug. 31–Sept. 1 Cape Sable I., NS, and Oct. 6 Hartland Pt., NS (*vide* BMy). The Cape Sable I., NS, Marbled Godwit, present since summer, was last seen Nov. 14 (MN *et al.*). Another was at well-watched Saint Rest Marsh, NB Aug. 3–30 (JWi *et al.*). Western Sandpiper reports included individuals at Mary's Pt., NB Aug. 15 & 17 (CD *et al.*); Brackley, PEI Oct. 5 (RC *et al.*); and Earnscliffe, PEI Oct. 20 (DM, BB). An unexpectedly-high

count of 1400 White-rumped Sandpipers at Paul I. near Nain, Labrador, Oct. 20 was possibly a grounding caused by an unseasonable snowstorm Oct. 17 (BMT). The well above-average total of 13 Baird's Sandpipers found in New Brunswick was not reflected in the rest of the Region; only four were reported in Nova Scotia. Very rare but annual in the Region, Curlew Sandpiper was seen at Dominion Beach, Cape Breton I., NS Sept. 20 (AL, CM). It was a very poor season for Stilt Sandpiper, with the only report being two at Cape Sable I., NS Sept. 21 (MN). Buff-breasted Sandpipers were in low numbers, with 5 of the 9 reports Regionwide coming from Nova Scotia. The only Ruff was at Eastern Shore, NS Sept. 15–22 (*vide* BMy). Long-billed Dowitcher reports were at par with two at Sackville, NB Aug. 20 (RM), one at Gray's Brook Marsh, NB Sept. 7–8 (AC, SN), and one at Crescent Beach, NS Sept. 9 (SC). Are Wilson's Phalaropes becoming rarer? The only report was one at Brier I., NS Sept. 1 (*vide* BMy). The Bay of Fundy is the "Phalarope Capital" of the Region. Whale-watching trips off Brier I., NS, produced 10,000 Red-necked and 2000 Red phalaropes July 26 (*vide* FS), and off Grand Manan I., NB, "many hundreds" of Red-necked Phalaropes Aug. 27 (ST *et al.*).

### Jaegers to Alcids

New Brunswick's first "really well-documented" Great Skua was photographed, video taped, and well seen by 20 observers on Proprietor Shoal, GMI, NB Sept. 21 (m.ob.). No details were received for any other skua sightings. Other Great Skua reports were three Aug. 20 and one Oct. 26 at George's Bank, NS (RD), and a probable from the Princess of Acadia ferry in the Bay of Fundy Aug. 31 (IC). South Polar Skua reports were one Aug. 9 Halifax, NS (*vide* SF) and nine probable late July–late September on Banquereau Bank, NS (DF).

The only Laughing Gulls beyond the summer season were one at Port Morien, NS Sept. 26–Oct. 6 (AM, CM), and one in Dartmouth, NS Oct. 4 (*vide* IM). Little Gulls were, as usual, found mostly in the w. portions of the Region: one at Beresford, NB Aug. 5 (PD); one near The Wolves, NB Aug. 15 (RT); one 2nd-winter at Cap Bimet, NB Sept. 19 (ST); one first-winter at Cap Bimet, NB Sept. 25 (JE); a "couple" in late September at GMI, NB (*vide* DC); and one at Glace Bay, NS Sept. 20 (*vide* BMy). The Black-headed Gull migration at St. John's, NF, peaked at 135 Nov. 6, well above recent fall totals but on par with the late 1980s (BMT). The

only Mew Gulls found were three adults in St. John's, NF, including a returning bird which was banded in Iceland in 1990 (BMT *et al.*).

**SA** An ad. Yellow-legged Gull frequented farm fields on the outskirts of St. John's, NF Oct. 24–Nov. 30+ (BMT, KK, RF, PL *et al.*). Identification was based on mantle color, slightly paler than Lesser Black-backed Gull *Larus f. graellsii*; legs, bright yellow; size, near that of Herring Gull, bulky body build; head, large with flat crown and steep forehead; orbital ring brilliant vermilion; and broad Herring Gull-like shaped wings in flight. The head streaking was confined to a cap of fine pale gray dashes on the crown forehead and ear coverts in October, which had almost completely disappeared by late November.

This is thought to be the same bird seen on the same farm fields in October 1995, and later identified as a Yellow-legged Gull when it appeared at a local city lake after freeze up in December 1995. Previous Yellow-legged Gulls in the Region, all from St. John's, NF, are: Jan. 16–April 15, 1985 and Dec. 26, 1994–Feb. 16, 1995.

Lesser Black-backed Gull totals by province were two in New Brunswick, one in Nova Scotia, and five in Newfoundland. A first-winter Sabine's Gull was a treat at Cap Bimet, NB Sept. 15 & 19 (ST). New Brunswick's 2nd Sandwich Tern was a late bird Sept. 29–Oct. 1 in the Cap Bimet, Northumberland Strait (CC *et al.*). There is a belated report of an important new nesting site for Roseate Tern found at County I., *Guysborough*, NS, with 45 pairs present July 5 (SB). A Forster's Tern was at Cole Harbor, NS Oct. 28 (IM). A Least Tern was identified at Caribou I., NS, causeway Aug. 8 (CH). East Point, PEI, had a provincially-rare Atlantic Puffin Sept. 4 (S. Ruer) and an early Dovekie Oct. 5 (L. Doan).

### Cuckoos to Starling

Provincial totals for Yellow-billed Cuckoo included one in New Brunswick, seven in Nova Scotia, and one in Newfoundland. Single Black-billed Cuckoos, the rarer cuckoo in Newfoundland, were seen at Bear Cove and Chance Cove Sept. 28 (BMT, JWe). An apparent Groove-billed Ani was identified after several fleeting views and being captured on video tape at White's L., NS Sept. 16–Oct. 1 (PM). There are 2 previous sight records of anis

in the Region, probably Groove-billed and both from Nova Scotia. A few Snowy Owls appeared at the end of November in New Brunswick, Newfoundland, and Saint Pierre et Miquelon. The only Red-headed Woodpecker was on Whitehead I., NB Oct. 27 (PP). The annual late-fall influx of Red-bellied Woodpeckers was only an echo of last year, with totals of two in New Brunswick and two in Nova Scotia. The identity of an exceptionally late *empidonax* flycatcher near Wolfville, NS Nov. 24–Dec. 27 was dutifully scrutinized, with the exciting result being the Region's first **Dusky Flycatcher** (m.ob.). Early **Say's Phoebes** were one at Blackhead, NF Sept. 2 for a 2nd provincial record (KK *et al.*) and one at Schooner Pond, Cape Breton I., NS Sept. 5 (*vide* BMy). Four single W. Kingbirds Region-wide was normal for recent years: singles at Edmunston, NB Aug. 5 (PD), Maces Bay, NB Sept. 6 (K. McIntosh), North Head, GMI, NB Sept. 16 (JWi), and Cape Sable I., NS Nov. 10 (*vide* BMy). A **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** was in n.e. New Brunswick at Lameque Oct. 25 (R-AC).

A late and rare Rough-winged Swallow was at Cape Sable I., NS Oct. 5 (*vide* BMy). The annual Cliff Swallow drift migration to Newfoundland was reduced to singles at Cape Spear Oct. 2 (BMt) and Cape Broyle Oct. 19 (IJ, JP). Vagrant House Wrens included three at Sable I., NS Sept. 23 (ZL) and one at St. John's, NF Oct. 11 (RF). Migrant Sedge Wrens found on island vagrant traps in Nova Scotia included one at Sable I., Sept. 23 (ZL), one at Seal I., Oct. 1 (*vide* BMy), and one at Brier I., Oct. 18 (*vide* BMy). Incomplete Blue-gray Gnatcatcher totals by province were four in New Brunswick, four in Nova Scotia, two in Prince Edward I., and one in Newfoundland. Northern Wheatears were present in high numbers similar to the last 5 years, with one at Castalia, GMI, NB Sept. 18 & 19 (KE); one at Summerville Beach PP, NS Sept. 18–20 (*vide* BMy); one at Wolfville, NS Oct. 21 (JB); one at Cape of Miquelon, SPM Sept. 9 (MD), and six individuals in September at various locations on the Avalon Pen., NF (m.ob.). New Brunswick's first **Mountain Bluebird** was an imm. male at Caraquet Nov. 15–25 (R&B Langteigne *et al.*). In contrast to last year, very few Bohemian Waxwings were reported in November in the Region. Average numbers of N. Shrike reached the Region.

### Vireos to Warblers

One of three White-eyed Vireos on Seal I., NS in early October was banded (*vide* IJ). Newfoundland's 3rd Yellow-throated Vireo was a late bird at St. John's Oct.

22–27 (JWe *et al.*). Comparatively routine were singles at Seal I., NS Sept. 17 (*vide* BMy) and GMI, NB Sept. 21 (BD). Warbling Vireos straying E to Newfoundland included one Sept. 21 & 28 at Bear Cove (PL, KK) and one Sept. 23 at Blackhead (BMt). A Philadelphia Vireo at Cappahayden, NF Nov. 2 provided the latest record for the province (RF, BMt).

Good numbers of Blue-winged Warblers were encountered, with two at GMI, NB Sept. 21 (AC, ST); one at Broad Cove, NS Sept. 28 (SF); one at Chebucto, NS late September (*vide* KNK); one at Seal I., NS Sept. 30–Oct. 2 (*vide* BMy); one at Hartlen Pt., NS Oct. 14–18 (*vide* BMy); one at Bear Cove, NF Sept. 7 & 14 (KK, CB), and one at Bear Cove Pt., NF Sept. 21 (TB, BMt). The only Golden-winged Warbler was a female at Green Bay, NS Sept. 17 (SC); however, a very rare ♀ "Lawrence's" Warbler was banded on Seal I., NS Sept. 19 (*vide* IJ). Three Yellow-throated Warblers were found with singles at Milford, NS Oct. 19 & 20 (*vide* BMy); at Cape Sable I., NS Oct. 18 & Nov. 3 (*vide* BMy), and at St. John's, NF Oct. 13 (TB). Prairie Warblers were especially numerous, with tallies of 18 in Nova Scotia, six in New Brunswick, and nine in Newfoundland. An imm. ♀ Cerulean Warbler was well studied Sept. 15 at White Head I., NB (JWi *et al.*) and a male was reported Aug. 12 at Hartlen Pt., NS (*vide* BMy). A Worm-eating Warbler was banded on Seal I., NS Sept. 23 (*vide* IJ), while Newfoundland had sightings at Cappahayden Sept. 22 (IJ *et al.*) and at Cape Spear Oct. 2 (BMt). A Louisiana Waterthrush was at Cape Sable I., NS (*vide* BMy). Kentucky Warblers' fondness for the s.e. Avalon Pen., NF is baffling, but there were three more this fall: Sept. 22 at Bear Cove (JW *et al.*), Oct. 2 at Blackhead (BMt), and a very late male Oct. 17 at St. John's (RF). Newfoundland's first **Connecticut Warbler** performed exceptionally well for 10 birders in the grass at the Cape Race lighthouse Sept. 28 (CB, JP *et al.*). Hooded Warblers found were: one Sept. 23 at Deep Cove, GMI, NB (DC); a male Aug. 8 at Cape Sable I., NS (*vide* BMy); and one Sept. 1 on Seal I., NS (*vide* BMy); a male at Cappahayden, NF Sept. 23 and Oct. 2 provided a 3rd provincial record (DF, TB, IJ). Yellow-breasted Chats are underreported and under observed in the Region, as illustrated by a dozen banded on Seal I., NS in late September. Total *reported* by province included nine in New Brunswick, >20 in Nova Scotia, and six in Newfoundland.

### Tanagers to Finches

Up to three different Summer Tanagers were on Seal I., NS between early September and early October. A Scarlet Tanager

was out of range and habitat at Cape Race, NF Oct. 12 (BMt, JWe). There was not an incursion of N. Cardinals to match the fall 1995; however, there was an unusual number of family groups coming to New Brunswick and Nova Scotia feeders in August, which no doubt were offspring from the 1995 immigration. The only Blue Grosbeaks were three on Seal I., NS Oct. 1–11. It was a banner year for Dickcissels, with minimum totals of ten in New Brunswick, 16 in Nova Scotia, and ten in Newfoundland. Careful monitoring of 2 feeders in Alma, NB, revealed that six different Dickcissels visited during the season (RW). Clay-colored Sparrow totals by province were one in New Brunswick, eight in Nova Scotia (including five on Seal I., Sept. 1), and one in Newfoundland. A Field Sparrow was rare at East Point, PEI Oct. 5 (RC *et al.*). Lark Sparrows were in slightly above-average numbers, with ten individuals spread over the Region. Much rarer was the Lark Bunting at Seal I., NS Sept. 1–5 (BMy *et al.*). The only two Grasshopper Sparrows were at Seal I., NS Oct. 1–4 (RS *et al.*) and Taylor Head P.P., NS Oct. 13 (BF). Nova Scotia's 3rd **Le Conte's Sparrow** was banded and photographed Sept. 30 at Bon Portage I. (*vide* BMy). There was a good showing of Yellow-headed Blackbirds with singles at GMI, NB Sept. 13–18 (ST); at St. Anselme, NB Oct. 3 (L. Gionet); at New Maryland, NB Nov. 11–13 (PP); at Ft. Augustus, PEI Nov. 8–30+ (A. Mckinnon); and at St. John's, NF Sept. 20–26 (N. Kettle). Much rarer was a Brewer's Blackbird at Seal I., NS Oct. 11 (*vide* BMy). Three Orchard Orioles were found in Nova Scotia: at White's L. in early September and on Seal I., Sept. 7 & 23 (*vide* BMy).

Increasing numbers of Am. Goldfinch in St. Pierre et Miquelon (and e. Newfoundland) led to the first breeding record at St. Pierre, SPM Aug. 11 (RE). The massive numbers of White-winged Crossbills present in Newfoundland up to midsummer were completely gone by September. In general, finches were in low numbers across the Region.

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# Quebec Region

## PIERRE BANNON AND NORMAND DAVID

Yves Aubry, co-author of this Regional report from 1983 to 1996, has decided to take a well-deserved respite. His constant enthusiasm over these thirteen years arouses admiration. Fortunately, before leaving, Aubry convinced Normand David, co-author of the report from 1975 to 1983, to get back in business. Normand's thorough knowledge of Québec's avifauna will undoubtedly be much appreciated.

This fall's weather in southern Québec involved a warm and sunny August, a pleasant September, a near normal October, and a cold and rainy November. At Montréal, the five inches of rain that fell November 8–9 rose the rivers to their spring levels. Overall, southern Québec experienced near normal temperature and precipitation for the whole period. In northern Québec, temperatures were slightly above normal, while precipitation was below normal.

The season was highlighted by a higher-than-usual number of vagrants from the west and impressive concentrations of Snow Geese and other waterfowl in southern counties of the province. On the negative side, the hawk flight was unremarkable and gull watching rather lackluster.

Abbreviations: C.T. (*Cap Tourmente, near Québec City*); M.B. (*Missisquoi Bay, Upper Richelieu*); R.B. (*Res. Beaudet, Victoriaville*); S.L.D.G. (*Saint-Louis-de-Gonzague, Valleyfield*).

## Grebes to Swans

Two grebes of the genus *Aechmophorus* were reported. The first, found at Pointe-au-Père, Rimouski, Oct. 22, was thought to be a Clark's Grebe on the basis of an area of white feathers that extended above the red eyes and a yellow bill, but the remainder of the description was sketchy at best (F. Proulx). In the 2nd case, a bird seen on Rivière des Prairies, n. of Montréal, Nov. 2–3, was readily identified as a W. Grebe, but the description did not include any references to the color of the lores (D. Tessier, G. Lachaine, P. Paillé). As crucial details are lacking (above all, the exact color of the bill and lores), we prefer to report these birds as *Aechmophorus* sp. The greatest care must be taken in separating the 2 species of this genus, especially in fall and winter. As yet, there is no substantiated record for either species in the Region.

Wilson's Storm-Petrels straying W on the St. Lawrence R. included two individuals at Québec City Sept. 14 (AD, LR) and singles at Rivière-Ouelle, Kamouraska, Sept. 22 (LM, AG) and Pointe au Platon, Lotbinière, Oct. 24 (JF. Bédard). For the 2nd consecutive year, Leach's Storm-Petrel appeared inland at R.B., where singles were detected Aug. 14 (A. Daigle) and Sept. 20 (MG, CR).

A N. Gannet was a rare fall visitor at M.B., Nov. 6 (JGP). An ad. Am. White

