

Quebec Region

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December was mild, but more wintry conditions prevailed during the next two months. The Quebec City and the Saguenay regions experienced the heaviest snowfall in years, while the Gaspé Peninsula had less snow than usual. Montréal had above-normal snowfall but, just south of Montréal, there was very little snow on the ground for most of the winter, encouraging some migrants to stay.

Grebes to Waterfowl

A Pied-billed Grebe lingered at Québec City until Jan. 4 (F. Shaffer, S. Lessard). As occurs every now and then, there was a late movement of N. Gannets into the upper St. Lawrence valley, with approximately ten birds in the Montréal area Dec. 7–29. A Double-crested Cormorant at Port-Daniel, *Gaspé*, Feb. 8 provided one of few mid-winter records for the Region (M. Castilloux). Great Blue Herons were in evidence in the province, the latest occurring at Bécancour, *Nicolet*, Feb. 3 (R. Barbeau) and at Havre-aux-Maisons, *Magdalen Is.*, Feb. 10 (C. Poirier).

Rarely encountered in mid-winter away from the southwest, a flock of 37 Canada

Geese visited Amqui, *Matapédia*, in February (R. Lang). Two were at Squatec, *Témiscouata*, Feb. 4 (R. Deschênes), three at nearby Saint-Godard-de-Lejeune the same day, and six at Saint-Côme, *Berthier*, Feb. 2 (J.-P. Joly, C. Ducharme). Single Wood Ducks at Lachenaie (J.-P. Hameury) and at L'Assomption, near Montréal (M. Bertrand, D. Daigneault), in early February, in addition to two males at Saint-Bernard-de-Lacolle Feb. 9+ (PB), were noteworthy. A Green-winged Teal at Carleton, *Bonaventure*, Jan. 1 was exceptionally late (RC), while a N. Pintail at Aylmer, *Outaouais*, Feb. 15 represented a rare winter occurrence for this locality (J. Dubois). Other wintering ducks included two Mallards and four Black Ducks at L. Blouin, *Abitibi*, until late February (AL); two ♂ Am. Wigeons at Léry, *Châteauguay*, throughout the season (A. Leduc) and a pair at Sainte-Catherine, *Montréal*, Jan. 25–26 (PB); a Greater Scaup at Chandler, *Gaspé*, Feb. 8 (PP, F. Thibault); a Lesser Scaup at Alma, *L. Saint-Jean*, Jan. 31–Feb. 28 (J. Boivin *et al.*); and a ♀ Harlequin Duck at Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu throughout the season (m.ob.). A ♂ goldeneye at Sainte-Catherine Feb. 1+ was apparently a Common x Barrow's hybrid (PB). A ♀ Com. Scoter at Saint-Elphège, *Yamaska*, Feb. 2, was a rare occurrence (D. Jauvin).

Raptors to Alcids

There were too many Bald Eagles to enumerate. Two N. Harriers at Saint-Stanislas, *Valleyfield*, Jan. 25–Feb. 4 (LG) and one at Saint-Luc, *upper Richelieu*, Feb. 18 (L. Simard, J. Guay) provided the only mid-

winter records. Wintering Cooper's Hawks are prospering in s. Québec; one observer recorded 11 individuals in as many different localities throughout the season, but only three Sharp-shinned Hawks (PB). Although this is probably not representative of the winter ratio between these two accipiters, this certainly illustrates a radical change in the winter status of the Cooper's Hawk. Mid-winter records of the Golden Eagle included two individuals near the top of Mt. Albert, *Gaspé*, Feb. 15 (L. Fradette), and one at L. Boyd, *Outaouais*, Feb. 27 (M. Hatin). Merlins and Gyrfalcons made a better showing than last winter, with a respective total of 15 and 20 sightings.

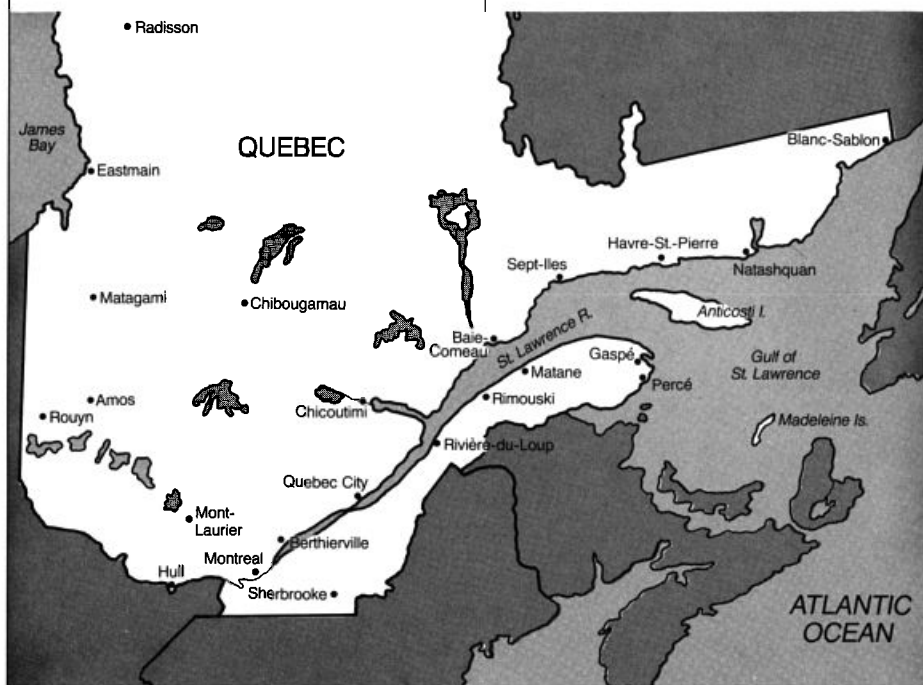
A few Willow Ptarmigans were encountered near Mingan, Lower North Shore (CK), and along LG-4 road, *James Bay* (A. Cayer, H. Brunoni) in February, while four Rock Ptarmigans at Kuujuaq, *Ungava*, Feb. 22 were expected (Y. Gauthier). Purple Sandpipers at Les Escoumins Jan. 3 and Feb. 15 (C. Auchu, C. Girard) provided further indication that the species does winter in the St. Lawrence estuary.

Jaegers were remarkably late, with a single Pomarine at Portneuf Dec. 4 (F. Dion, R. Dion) and two Parasitics at Québec City Dec. 14 (S. Richard), both sightings establishing new record late dates. Bonaparte's Gulls also occurred later than usual, as evidenced by four individuals at Sainte-Foy Dec. 22 (F. Bédard *et al.*) and 25 at Chambly Dec. 28 (R. Guillet). Six Thayer's Gulls were discovered among flocks of wintering gulls throughout the season. The interval separating southbound from northbound Ring-billed Gulls was very narrow, as the species remained unreported only from Jan. 26–Feb. 15. For the 2nd consecutive winter, a Lesser Black-backed Gull, this time an adult, joined the 2000 wintering Great Black-backed Gulls on Rivière des Prairies, *Montréal*, from Feb. 11+ (GL, m.ob.). An imm. Black-legged Kittiwake present at Sainte-Catherine until Jan. 4 was not unprecedented for the Montréal area (PB, m.ob.).

A Black Guillemot at LaBaie Dec. 23 provided a 5th record for the Saguenay-L. Saint-Jean (*vide* GS, CC). Another bird, found alive during a snow removal operation at Saint-Eugène-de-Chazel Jan. 6, represented a first record for the Abitibi region (*vide* SG); despite attentive care, it died within 24 hours.

Pigeons to Waxwings

The Band-tailed Pigeon that showed up at a Saint-André-Avellin feeder Nov. 20 was last seen Apr. 1. (M. Meloche). Wintering Mourning Doves at Havre Saint-Pierre (CK) exemplified the hardiness of



the species. All northern owls (Snowy, N. Hawk Owl, Great Gray, and Boreal) were encountered in the s. half of the Region, although Snowy Owl numbers were rather low. On the other hand, both the N. Hawk Owl and the Great Gray Owl were fairly numerous, with >60 reports for each species. As for the Boreal Owl, the >20 sightings in the s.w. lowlands were perhaps unprecedented, either a true incursion or a result of increased coverage.

Most wintering Belted Kingfishers and N. Flickers were restricted to the s.w. lowlands; the season's tally also included a ♀ kingfisher, at Bassin, *Magdalen Islands*, Feb. 11 (D. G. Gaudet), as well as a wintering N. Flicker at Rimouski (R. Saint-Laurent *et al.*), and another at Maria Feb. 25 (RC) for a rare winter record in the Gaspé Peninsula.

The **Mountain Bluebird** that was reported from Saint-Anaclet, *Rimouski*, Dec. 3 (C. Normandeau) furnished a 10th Regional record. Single Townsend's Solitaires showed up at Val-d'Or Jan. 3–Feb. 3 (AL) and at Val-Jalbert, *L. Saint-Jean*, Feb. 6–28 (L. Chiricota). A Swainson's Thrush found at Saint-Rémi-du-Lac-aux-Sables, *Trois-Rivières*, Dec. 28 (M. Savard) established a Regional record-late date. The Hermit Thrush that was seen at Grande-Rivière Jan. 3–15 (D. Mercier) provided a first winter record for the Gaspé Peninsula. It appears that N. Mockingbirds overwinter more commonly in outlying areas than in the milder s.w. parts of the Region, perhaps because of the greater abundance of wild fruits; the season's reports included single birds at L'Annonciation Jan. 19 (M. Blais) and Laterrière (*vide* GS, CC), as well as two wintering birds plus 4 other sightings in the Rimouska area (*vide* PF). Single Brown Thrashers overwintered in Montreal (P. Wery *et al.*) and in Ascot Corner (L. Ouellet); in addition, the individual found at Ferland, *Chicoutimi*, Jan. 6–14 (J. Gagné *et al.*) represented a northernmost winter record and one of the very few outside the s.w. lowlands. A very noticeable eastward influx of Bohemian Waxwings began mid-January and brought flocks of several hundred birds.

Warblers to Orioles

Record-late warblers included an Orange-crowned at I. de la Visitation, *Montreal*, Dec. 17 (GL), a Nashville at Dorval Dec. 21–Jan. 4 (B. Barnhurst, M. McIntosh), and a Black-throated Blue at Saint-Jean-Port-Joli Dec. 21 (L. Corbeil, M. Deschênes). Several Yellow-rumped Warblers were noted in the Montreal area (*vide* PB); in addition, one individual overwintered at Notre-Dame-du-Portage, *Rivière-*

du-Loup, and a 2nd bird was at the same site Dec. 28–Jan. 18 (J. Després, D. Bérubé). The **Black-throated Gray Warbler** that showed up in the Montreal Botanical Gardens Nov. 15 was last seen Dec. 27 (*vide* PB).

SA A ♀ oriole seen by many birders at Charlesbourg during the last 10 days of December brought into light the complex identification problems of Baltimore and Bullock's orioles, formerly united in a single species. Observers should be aware that current field guides do not cover the complete range of variations of female plumages, and thus are not adequate to resolve their identification in late fall. They must take note that some ♀ Baltimore Orioles (including hybrids?) can have extensive grayish-white bellies, yellowish undertail coverts, and grayish backs, thus being very similar to Bullock's Oriole. All such birds should be examined with extreme care in order to provide a fully detailed description, especially of the head. Whereas ♀ Bullock's have yellow eyebrows and cheeks, highlighting a dark eyeline, ♀ Baltimores are usually duller, with an orange tinge to the face, and no eyeline or a only a faint one behind the eye. Regarding the Charlesbourg sighting, available descriptions (JFR, J. Lachance, F. Grenon, J.-P. Ouellet) contain some features of Bullock's Oriole; however, considering the lack of a modern and thorough review on field identification of these female orioles, and the great difficulty of providing an accurate description of very fine variations, we feel it is not possible at the present time to put a name on this bird unequivocally. This episode has the merit of forcing everyone to further their knowledge, allowing descriptions to be revisited at any time. All 6 previous reports of Bullock's Oriole for the Region (two in spring, four in fall) involve females, with no or inadequate substantiating descriptions.

A N. Cardinal at Villemontel at the end of January (H. Fradette, N. Dallaire), and another at Chicoutimi Dec. 6–Jan. 2 (H. Boily), were the northernmost reports of the season. The more common sparrows (American Tree, Song, and White-throated) overwintered in good numbers. Other noteworthy records included single Chipping Sparrows at Aylmer (M.-C. Cronier) and Waltham (L. Harvey), both Feb. 25; a

Field Sparrow at Saint-Stanislas, *Valleyfield*, Feb. 14+ (LG); a wintering Fox Sparrow in Montreal (m.ob.) and another at Grande-Entrée, *Magdalen Is.* (J.-C. Richard); and a White-crowned Sparrow at Saint-Bernard-de-Lacolle Jan. 3+ (E. Samson, A. Lacasse).

An E. Meadowlark at Anse-à-Beaufils Jan. 6–26 (P. Poulin *et al.*), distinguished from the W. Meadowlark, represented a first winter record for the Gaspé Peninsula. A Yellow-headed Blackbird showed up at Sorel Jan. 8 (J. Fontaine) and was seen by many during the following weeks. The season's eight Rusty Blackbirds included a wintering bird at Beauport (R. Gingras, JFR). The ♂ Baltimore Oriole that remained at Laval until Jan. 2 (R. Lavoie) furnished the Region's 4th January record; on that date, the bird was found almost frozen on the ground, and brought indoors, where it awaited release in spring.

Exotics

A ♂ Mandarin Duck was at Saint-Bernard-de-Lacolle Feb. 9–March 8 (PB). The Collared Finchbill that spent the first 6 months of 1996 at Cap-Rouge (or another one?) was relocated at Sillery, some 12 km away, where it remained until the end of the season (*vide* LM). A Eur. Goldfinch wintered in the Montreal Botanical Gardens (m.ob.).

Addendum

The following should be added to the fall 1996 report. A total of approximately 34 Red-throated Loons were found lying in the snow and unable to take flight Nov. 21–22, in an area comprising the municipalities of Beaucanton, Villebois, and Joutel, in n. Abitibi (*vide* SG). All the birds found were released locally into open water.

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