

from Plum I., MA Dec. 11 (C. Ralph). A **Golden-crowned Sparrow**, reported from Natick, *Middlesex*, MA Feb. 6 (G. Long) is awaiting decision by the Massachusetts Avian Records Committee. A more cooperative vagrant sparrow was the **Harris' Sparrow**, first discovered at a feeder in Salisbury, MA Jan. 18, and seen regularly until Feb. 17 (†JB, m.ob.). "Pink-sided" Dark-eyed Juncos were reported from Rochester, *Strafford*, NH Dec. 15 (R. Bickford) and Medford, MA through February (D. Oliver, m.ob.). Lapland Longspurs seemed to be around in better-than-normal numbers, especially in the L. Champlain Valley of Vermont (*vide* JN). Two Yellow-headed Blackbirds appeared in Connecticut (*vide* GH). One traveled with a huge mixed-blackbird flock in E. Hartford and Manchester throughout the winter, while the 2nd frequented a feeder in Waterford, *New London* (S. Barnum). Again, presumably due to mild temperatures, Baltimore Orioles were reported in higher-than-usual numbers, including one each in New Hampshire, Maine, and Rhode Island, and 10 in Massachusetts. Some of these were reported as Bullock's Orioles, but at least one was later shown to be a Baltimore, and as a result most questionable birds are probably best identified as "Northern" Oriole until more reliable identification criteria are discovered.

It was a poor winter for northern finches. Pine Grosbeaks, crossbills, Pine Siskins, and Evening Grosbeaks were virtually non-existent s. of the northernmost parts of New England. Common Redpolls were absent almost entirely away from n. Maine, with a few in Vermont (*vide* JN), and one–two records each for the 3 southern states. The only exception appears to be Purple Finch, which was found in good numbers in the north, and staged a minor incursion into Connecticut and Rhode Island in February (*vide* GH, DE).

Corrigenda

The dates for the Sandhill Crane on Nantucket, MA in the winter of 1995–1996 should be Dec. 25–Jan 6.

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Hudson-Delaware Region

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In dramatic contrast to last winter—slightly colder than normal and the snowiest on record over most of the Region—the winter of 1996–1997 was exceptionally warm and nearly devoid of snowfall. Not that it was dry, however, it was just that the above-normal precipitation fell mainly as rain, except in the heart of the Adirondacks. December and February were the warmer months, averaging six and seven degrees above normal, respectively, at Ithaca, with similar comparisons for the southern parts of the Region. The temperature hit a record 73° F. at Rochester February 21, and Buffalo recorded its first 70° F. day in February on the same date. Buffalo also experienced the greatest one-day drop in temperature, as the thermometer fell to 25° F. February 22.

Ornithologically it was an unexciting season, with no significant influx of northern or irruptive species. The unseasonable weather, coming after an unusually warm autumn, did result in the presence of a number of species attempting to winter north of their normal range, not always successfully. The premier rarity of the season was unquestionably the Northern Lapwing in New Jersey, but other highlights included White-winged Dove, Bell's Vireo, and Le Conte's Sparrow in New Jersey and a variety of uncommon gulls—Franklin's, Laughing, Mew, and California—in upstate New York.

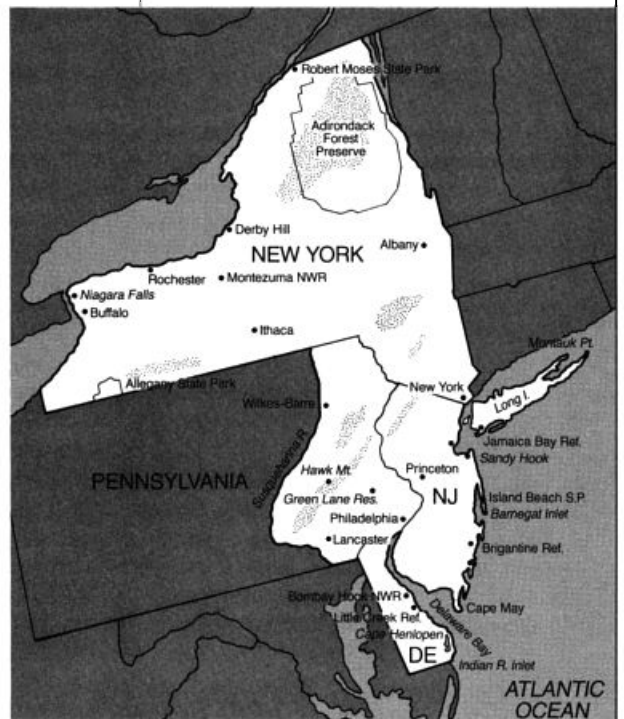
Abbreviations: Avalon (*see watch n. of Cape May, NJ*); Braddock Bay (*Braddock Bay S.P. and vicinity, Monroe, NY*); Bombay Hook (*Bombay Hook N.W.R., near Smyrna, DE*); Brig (*Brigantine Unit, Forsythe N.W.R., Atlantic, NJ*);

Cape Henlopen (*Cape Henlopen S.P., Sussex, DE*); Hamlin Beach (*Hamlin Beach S.P. and adjacent lakeshore, Monroe, NY*); Indian River (*Indian R. Inlet, Sussex, DE*); Jamaica Bay (*Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, Queens, NYC*); LI (*Long Island, NY*); Middle Creek (*Middle Creek W.M.A., Lebanon-Lancaster, PA*); Sandy Hook (*Sandy Hook Unit, Gateway National Recreation Area, Monmouth, NJ*); N.J.B.R.C. (*New Jersey Bird Records Committee*).

Loons to Storks

The indefatigable observers at the Avalon Sea Watch maintained their vigil through January, surpassing one-million birds for the fall-winter season Dec. 12. As in previous years, the Red-throated Loon flight continued strongly through mid-December. Four reports of Pacific Loon was unprecedented; most unusual was a bird seen sporadically from Dec. 31+ at Indian River (S. Fintel *et al.*). In New Jersey, a Pacific Loon was reported from Shark R. Inlet on the Long Branch CBC Jan. 4; it was seen there a few times thereafter (R. Dunlap, T. Proctor). Other sightings were at Barnegat Light Jan. 13 and Manasquan Inlet Jan. 23 (both B&NM); all of these reports must be reviewed by the respective state committees.

Modest numbers of Red-necked Grebes appeared along the coast and at Hamlin Beach; inland reports included five at Saratoga L., Dec. 7 (WGE, NLM), one at Riverton, *Burlington*, NJ Jan. 17 (E. Bruder), and another at Vischer Ferry, *Saratoga*, NY Feb. 16 (RPY). This season's Eared



Grebes were at Wildwood, Cape May, NJ Jan. 15 (BSu, J. Cameron *et al.*) and at Pt. Lookout, *Nassau*, LI, Feb. 15 (B. Rossetti).

The last Brown Pelican of the season was a very late bird at Indian River Dec. 14 (FR). While Double-crested Cormorant numbers continue to rise, Great Cormorant seems to be on the decline as a wintering species, except for the small outpost population along the Delaware R. Taking advantage of the mild weather, some Double-crested remained as far north as the L. Champlain area until early January (JMCP).

A Least Bittern attempted to winter at Cape May, and was present to at least Jan. 19 (TP); the fate of this individual is unknown, but previous attempts by this species have been disastrous. An exceedingly late Cattle Egret was in the Montauk area December into early January (RKu *et al.*).

Waterfowl

A Trumpeter Swan, presumably from one of the release programs, was at Octoraro L., *Lancaster*, PA Dec. 12 (RMS); 2 other reports from the Buffalo-L. Erie area in February included one bird known to have come from Ontario's reintroduction effort (*vide* RA). Increasing numbers of Greater White-fronted Geese are appearing in the Region, most of them apparently genuine wild vagrants. One at Hamlin Beach Feb. 15 was unusual for w. New York (RM), while others downstate included >20 on Long Island, with groups of four at Bridgehampton, five at Watermill, and seven at Mecox Bay. In New Jersey, numbers were more normal, although a family group of four at Assunpink for a week in February was noteworthy. Another was at Middle Creek, *Lancaster*, PA, in mid-February.

Ross' Geese were found in each of the 4 states, an event that would have been unthinkable 15–20 years ago. One was at Braddock Bay Dec. 15 (RM *et al.*) for a first local record, and another was a first for Jamaica Bay Feb. 24 (S. Komides). The Cumberland County, NJ CBC added a first for any CBC in the state, while CBCs in Delaware added birds at Clarksville Jan. 4 (PL) and Prime Hook Jan. 5 (B. Lantz, J. Janowsky). In Pennsylvania, a Ross' Goose was at Middle Creek in late February, and another blue-morph bird was at L. Ontelaunee, *Berks*, at the same time.

A Barnacle Goose of uncertain origin arrived at Green Lane Res., *Montgomery*, PA, in late November, and stayed through December (GLE, JH). Also in Pennsylvania, a Canada Goose of the Richardson's subspecies was well described at Springton Res., *Delaware*, Jan. 25–26 (NP). Drake Green-winged Teal of the Eurasian sub-

species, which may someday be split as a separate species, were at Wildwood Crest, *Cape May*, in January and February, Floyd Bennett Field, Brooklyn, Jan. 4, Massapequa Preserve, *Nassau*, LI, to Jan. 7, and on the S. Nassau County, LI, CBC.

Eurasian Wigeon were found in much of the Region in normal numbers, including an early arrival at Canoga Marsh, *Cayuga*, NY Feb. 23 (TN *et al.*). Scattered reports of Redhead, still an uncommon duck in the northeast, came from Stillwater, *Saratoga*, NY, with four birds Jan. 25 (WGE, NLM), L. Assunpink, *Monmouth*, NJ, where \leq dozen were present in late January, and a variety of other spots. A Tufted Duck was present at Sandy Hook Dec. 26–Jan. 12 in a huge flock of Greater Scaup (H. Tomlinson, m.ob.). On Long Island, where they have become annual, a drake was at Riverton, *Suffolk*, Jan. 13 and at nearby Calverton Feb. 21 (J. Clinton). Two females were on the Southampton Ponds Jan. 25–31 (JAh *et al.*).

Normal concentrations of Com. and King eiders were present at Montauk and along the New Jersey coast; more unusual were a ♀ King Eider at Greece, *Monroe*, NY December–January, and a male there Jan. 11 (D. Sherony, C. Cass *et al.*). A pair of Harlequin Ducks at Putneyville, *Wayne*, NY, on L. Ontario Jan. 11–12 were noteworthy (D.&D. Traver). Twenty-three wintered at Barnegat Light, while four were at the jetties at Lewes, DE Feb. 7.

An impressive concentration of 450 Com. Goldeneyes were at Saratoga L., Dec. 7 (WGE, NLM). On a sadder note, the male Barrow's Goldeneye that wintered along the Delaware R. n. of Philadelphia for the past couple of years was shot by a hunter Dec. 27, just 2 days prior to the Moorestown CBC, which had hoped to count the bird. Another Barrow's Goldeneye seen on the Sandy Hook CBC was relocated in February at nearby Monmouth Beach. In New York, \leq four Barrow's were at Ausable Pt., *Clinton*, in January, a single male was at Sheldrake on Cayuga L., Jan. 5–6 (TN *et al.*), and another was at Northwest Harbor, *Suffolk*, LI, Feb. 21 (JAh).

Raptors to Cranes

As has been the trend in recent years, a number of late-lingering Ospreys were found in December, and \geq one at L. Nummy, *Cape May*, NJ Jan. 6 was apparently trying to winter (D. Githens). Excellent numbers of Bald Eagles were found throughout the Region, with \geq 30 wintering along the Hudson R. in downstate New York (FB), and at total of 133 birds counted in s. New Jersey on the mid-win-

ter eagle survey Jan. 11–12. A rufous-morph Red-tailed Hawk was in the Ithaca, NY, area Feb. 16–21, for the 2nd consecutive year.

Rough-legged Hawks apparently stayed north, since very few were reported away from upstate New York. Falcons, too, were little noted, especially the drastically declining Am. Kestrel. An exception was the elusive pair of Gyrfalcons at Jamaica Bay; a dark female found Jan. 25 remained to Feb. 24 (J. Suggs *et al.*), while a gray male appeared only briefly from Feb. 6–10 (P. Osenbaugh *et al.*).

A fatally late Sora was picked up at Cayuga L., NY Dec. 15, but later died at a rehabilitators. Surprisingly, Sandhill Cranes were reported from all 4 states. One individual wandered around *Orange*, near Goshen, NY, all of December (J. Yrizzary, m.ob.), another was one day only at Bridgehampton, LI, Dec. 8 (JAK), and another was in the Cape May area from Jan. 1–12 (SFi *et al.*). A Sandhill Crane was at Middle Creek Feb. 2 (*vide* AH), and the last was a flyby at Bombay Hook Feb. 26 (B. Miles).

Shorebirds to Alcids

The premier rarity of the season was the Northern Lapwing observed flying past the new Cape May Bird Observatory building near Goshen, *Cape May*, NJ, on New Years Day. It was relocated a short time later about a mile farther south along Rt. 47, where it was observed sporadically until early on the morning of Jan. 4, when it took off and was never seen again (MO, CS, m.ob.); this provided the 2nd state record, and the first in >40 years. Otherwise shorebirds were not much in evidence, although Brigantine I. hosted a flock of \leq 21 Marbled Godwits in late December, continuing the pattern of recent years.

Florence wasn't the only place with good gulls. A Franklin's Gull flew by Hamlin Beach Dec. 14 (WS), and six Laughing Gulls appeared at Cayuga L. the same day, with three staying until Dec. 17 (B. Evans, A. Farnsworth). These sightings were probably related to the strong Nor'easter that blew through upstate New York Dec. 13–14. Up to five Little Gulls were off Cape May in mid-February, and a Black-headed Gull was a regular visitor to Peace Valley Nature Center, *Bucks*, PA, in January and early February; small numbers were along the coast, as usual. A Mew Gull was an outstanding find at Charlotte, *Monroe*, NY Jan. 28 (RM). California Gulls were found at Devil's Hole S.P. along the Niagara R., Dec. 7 (WDn), a different bird a few miles upstream at Goat I., Jan. 1 (DD, B. Potter), another at

Perinton, near Rochester, *Monroe*, NY Feb. 2–15 (MD *et al.*), and, most unusual, a 2nd-winter bird along the Chadakoin R. on the Jamestown CBC Dec. 22 (R. Sundell). A first-winter Thayer's Gull was reported from the Cherry I. Landfill, near Wilmington, DE Jan. 11 (MG *et al.*).

SA Although numbers of gulls are much reduced in areas where former landfills have been closed, a mid-winter spectacle along the Delaware R. opposite Florence, Burlington, NJ, proved that good food pulls them in every time. A massive garbage dump at Tullytown, Bucks, PA, attracted an estimated 30,000 gulls to the landfill and adjacent river in late January. Sullivan, alerted to this hometown spectacle by his parents, visited the site Jan. 23 and was amazed by the numbers of gulls, including the less common ones; a possible Thayer's Gull was among them. He returned the next day with Crossley and O'Brien, and the 3 provided the above estimate of birds present that day, including >30 Iceland, 30 Lesser Black-backed, six Glaucous, a Herring x Glaucous hybrid, and 1000 Great Black-backed gulls. At least 40 Iceland and 10 Glaucous gulls were seen Feb. 1. Birds believed to be a first-winter Mew Gull (Jan. 25, WDa, A. Driscoll) and 2nd-winter Com. Gull (K. Prytherch, C. Mayhood) were also seen and reported to the N.J.B.R.C.; neither of these subspecies of *Larus canus* has been confirmed in New Jersey.

It was a very poor year for alcids, though birders intrepid enough to venture offshore on pelagic trips did tally a good variety of alcids in small numbers. Noteworthy among them were two Dovekies and two Atlantic Puffins in Delaware waters from the *Miss Chris* out of Cape May Feb. 16 (m.ob.). Although there are few records for the state, this is more due to lack of opportunity than to lack of birds. A Black Guillemot was at Montauk Feb. 22 (AW).

Doves to Shrikes

A White-winged Dove located at Mantoloking on the Lakehurst CBC provided a first for a New Jersey CBC (F. Lesser). Although Short-eared, Long-eared, and Saw-whet owls were hard to come by, it was a pretty good winter for Snowy Owls. In addition to numerous birds in upstate New York, there were at least a dozen on Long Island, including four–five at Jones

Beach, and about six in coastal New Jersey. Among these was a cooperative young bird at Brig that posed prominently in the e. pool for about 2 months. In Pennsylvania, a bird at Lancaster was rescued from inside a building Dec. 9 (*fide* RMS), while another in nearby Reading, Berks, was captured in December and found to be emaciated; it died at a rehabilitator. Two birds were at Cape Henlopen in December, but not thereafter. A one-day bird at Prime Hook N.W.R. could have been one of these, as could another at Delaware Seashore S.P., Jan. 4.

A nearly incredible report, if correct, was of a Com. Nighthawk, heard and seen at the Rutgers University campus in Piscataway, Middlesex, NJ Feb. 12 (J. Feenstra, J. Mylecraine, † to N.J.B.R.C.). The ♂ Rufous Hummingbird at a MacUngie, Lehigh, feeder remained through December to Jan. 12 (R.&P. Derr, m.ob.). Late lingering W. Kingbirds included birds at Oakdale, Suffolk, LI, Dec. 3; on the Sagaponac, LI, CBC; and at W. Cape May Dec. 12 (PL); and a final at Marmora, Atlantic, NJ Dec. 21–30 (DSi, BSu).

The heat wave of late February brought record early Tree Swallows to the Finger Lakes, with two at Cayuga L., Feb. 22 (D. McDermit), and four at Ithaca the next day. Newspapers continue to highlight stories of the burgeoning numbers of increasingly aggressive Am. Crows that are invading suburban lawns and cities. No organized attacks on people reported yet, however. Meanwhile, a much smaller bird, the Brown-headed Nuthatch, is slowly increasing in numbers in s. Delaware, and can be found regularly at Cape Henlopen; maybe one will cross the bay to Cape May someday.

The only Bohemian Waxwings were two birds at Hamlin Beach Dec. 8 (WS); none appeared in the Adirondacks, where they are usually annual. Following last year's major invasion, N. Shrikes were scarce, with only w. New York reporting more than a handful. A Loggerhead Shrike was at Little Cr., DE Dec. 17 (*fide* AH) for the only report of the season.

Vireos to Blackbirds

A White-eyed Vireo on the Assunpink, NJ CBC Dec. 22 provided one of the few winter records for the state (B. Dodelson), as did another at Prime Hook N.W.R., DE Jan. 11 (*fide* AH). Even rarer was a Bell's Vireo at Cape May Dec. 4–Jan. 3, which managed to elude the counters on the local CBC (G. Gordon, m.ob.). The mild weather contributed to the presence of numerous late-lingering Solitary Vireos on CBCs—singles were reported at Read-

ing and Dingman's Ferry, PA, at Belleplain, Boonton, and Great Swamp, NJ, and at Cape Henlopen, DE. The last sighting was at L. Nummy, Cape May, Jan. 10 (JDo).

Orange-crowned Warblers were found in higher-than-normal numbers, especially along the coast; an unprecedented six were on the S. Nassau CBC. Several Nashville Warblers appeared, with one at Central Park, New York City, Dec. 22–29 (m.ob.), another found dead at Van Cortlandt Park, the Bronx, in late February (*fide* TWB), and one on the Boonton, NJ CBC. A sewage treatment discharge stream at Washington Boro on the Susquehanna R., Lancaster, PA, produced 5 species of warbler on the local CBC, including Nashville, numerous Yellow-rumped, Pine, Palm, and Black-and-white. All of these remained in this sheltered location throughout the winter, along with a couple of E. Phoebes.

A Black-throated Blue Warbler was at Cape Henlopen Dec. 1, and another visited a Rocky Hill, Somerset, NJ, feeder from Dec. 25–Jan. 9 (P. Rodewald). Yet another wintering warbler, and an exceedingly rare one, was the Black-throated Gray Warbler in Berks, PA, from late November–early January (m.ob.). An imm. Yellow-throated Warbler discovered on a Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club field trip at Mechanicsville, Saratoga, NY Dec. 7 lingered to at least Dec. 16 (WLE, NLM). In addition to the wintering Black-and-white Warbler at Washington Boro, other reports came from the Reading, PA CBC, and from Angola Neck, Sussex, DE Jan. 4 (*fide* APE). A Wilson's Warbler was on the S. Nassau CBC Jan. 5.

An immature ♂ Scarlet Tanager was found freshly dead in Cape May Dec. 5 (LZ), and another was reported with highly believable details from Central Park on the Lower Hudson CBC. A ♂ W. Tanager visited a Fair Haven, Monmouth, NJ, feeder from Dec. 19–Jan. 3, where the gracious homeowner allowed many observers to enjoy the bird (K. Gahn, m.ob.).

Dickcissels were surprisingly numerous in s. New Jersey, with one on the Moorestown CBC and three on the Cape May CBC; these and several others wintered.

Uncommon sparrows were well-represented this winter. Chipping Sparrows in particular have increasingly wintered in greater and greater numbers in the s. parts of the Region, and are now appearing in upstate New York, as well. Two Clay-colored Sparrows wintered at the same feeder in W. Cape May (m.ob.), and another was at a Medford, Burlington, NJ, feeder Jan. 17–18 (WDa *et al.*). A Grasshopper Spar-

row was reported at Little Cr., Jan. 11 (*vide* AH), but no details were forthcoming.

One of the highlights of the season was a Le Conte's Sparrow, discovered at Palmyra, *Burlington*, NJ, on the Moorestown CBC Dec. 29 (TBa); the bird remained in the area for about 2 weeks (m.ob.). A distraught Lincoln's Sparrow came aboard a pelagic trip out of Brielle, NJ Dec. 7, where it was fed and apparently made it back to land (m.ob.). Another Lincoln's Sparrow, likewise extremely late, was at Hartshorne Woods, *Monmouth*, NJ, the next day (S. Barnes). A ♀ Dark-eyed Junco of the Oregon variety was at the same W. Cape May feeder as the Clay-colored Sparrows until at least Jan. 16 (MO, m.ob.); two other apparent intergrades wintered at the same feeder.

It was not a big year for Snow Buntings, although a flock of about 300 were at Cape Henlopen Jan. 5. Lapland Longspurs were also hard to come by, although a flock of 18 at Bombay Hook Feb. 9 was exceptional (*vide* AH).

Only about four Yellow-headed Blackbirds were noted, well below normal, but a small flock of eight Brewer's Blackbirds on the *Bucks*, PA CBC, was unusual (SFa). The usual group at Leipsic, *Kent*, DE, numbered only about 30 in late January (CC).

Finches

As we have said year after year for more seasons than we care to count, it was once again not a winter finch year, except in the Adirondacks of upstate New York. Purple Finches continue to be almost non-existent, and the few reports of Red Crossbill came mostly from the Adirondacks, as expected. Three individuals made it to s. New Jersey in December and early January, but the only White-winged Crossbill concentrations were at Inlet, *Hamilton*, NY, and several other spots in the Adirondacks (GL *et al.*). The once abundant and often maligned Evening Grosbeak continues to be uncommon in the Adirondacks and virtually absent elsewhere. As compiler Peterson suggests, "after accepting winter as a seemingly endless series of 50 pound bags of sunflower seeds for several decades, we may be learning that our largess was only happenstance created by a spruce budworm outbreak in Canada."

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