

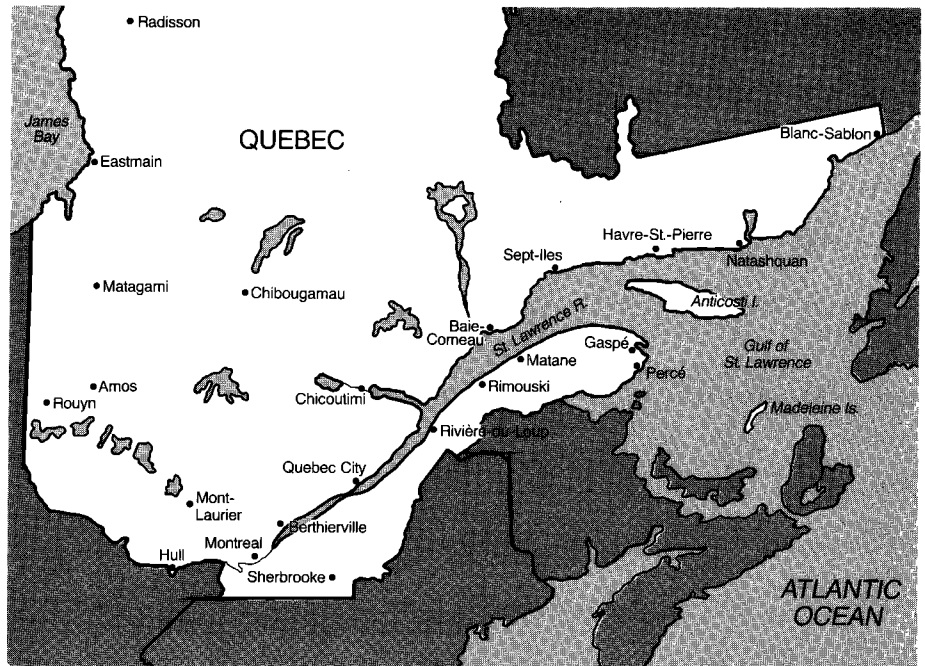
québec region

head, rarely coming down to earth. When they did come down, they fed on alder catkins, a food source shunned in times of cone abundance. In New Brunswick, White-winged Crossbills visited feeders. Eleven birds banded on GMI in October were all "lean" (BD). An early and large influx of Com. Redpolls in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia started in mid-October. Three-hundred redpolls per day flew over the GMI banding station in late October. Ninety percent of 250 banded were hatch-year birds (BD). Pine Siskins were also common everywhere.

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PIERRE BANNON and NORMAND DAVID

The weather was pleasant from August through most of October, with temperatures and precipitation close to normal. This pattern changed abruptly in late October with the early arrival of our first snowfalls. November continued cold, with snow covering the ground in most areas by the second half of the month. The season was uneventful, with few rarities. The passerine migration was disappointing, waterfowl counts were down in comparison to last year, and the shorebird flight was weak. An early and strong flight of winter finches was the only highlight.

GREBES THROUGH WATERFOWL

A grebe of the genus *Aechmophorus* was seen far from the shore at Lévis Nov. 28–30 (JL, A. Couture). Manx Shearwaters included singles from the Matane/Godbout ferry Aug. 4 (J.P. Ouellet, M. Lafleur), from the Trois-Pistoles/Les Escoumins ferry Aug. 14 (AR, D. Ruest, G. Gendron), off the Magdalens Is. Aug. 28 (A. Poirier), and four individuals from the Matane/Baie-Comeau ferry Aug. 11 (F. Bédard).

The Great Egret has never been so common in the Montreal area, as evidenced by

almost daily reports of single birds or flocks of two to six individuals throughout August and September. Southern herons were otherwise scarce, and included single Snowy Egrets at Cacouna Sept. 14 (D. Bérubé, J. Després) and at Carillon Sept. 7 (R. Leverett, *vide* B. McDuff) and single Cattle Egrets at Sainte-Marcelline-de-Kildare Nov 7 (G. Desrochers) and at Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue Nov. 13 (*vide* MM). An ad. Glossy Ibis in basic plumage, carefully identified at Saint-Laurent-de-Gallichan Nov. 1–4, was not only a first for the Abitibi region but also established a new record late date for the province (Y. Leclerc, v.o., ph.).

An imm. Tundra Swan was enjoyed by several observers at Sainte-Martine Nov 24–30 (B. Leboeuf, v.o.), while a Mute Swan visited Bonaventure Aug. 31–Sept. 1 (JM Pitre). For the 2nd consecutive year, an ad **Pink-footed Goose** stopped at Saint-Louis-de-Gonzague Nov. 8–11, providing our 4th Regional record (PB, JCS, LS). A Greater White-fronted Goose encountered at Carleton Sept. 7 represented the only record this fall (L. Desjardins, A. Grenier).

A remarkable nine Canada Geese of small size, apparently of the *hutchinsii* race, were found: two at Cap Tourmente Oct. 15 (ND), singles at Chambly Oct. 18 (SD, F. Gariépy) and Victoriaville Oct. 25 (MG et

SA Along with the remarkable increase in the number of "Greater" Snow Geese, the Region has hosted more and more Ross's Geese in recent years. First noted in 1974, approximately 10–15 individuals are now regularly reported each spring and fall among flocks of migrating Greater Snow Geese. More enigmatic is the rather frequent sightings of blue-morph Ross's Geese, an extremely rare morph first discovered about 20 years ago in w. North America. A brief review of records published in this magazine indicates that 19 blue Ross's Geese have been reported in the Region since 1986, almost two per year. This fall, a flock of 4000 Greater Snow Geese at Saint-Louis-de-Gonzague included two white and two blue Ross's Geese Oct. 26 (PB), while an apparent blue Ross's X Snow Goose hybrid was discovered there Nov. 8 (PB, JCS). Although our sampling is very small, there seems to be a disproportion compared to the population wintering in California, where counts have revealed a blue/white ratio of 1 to 12,500. It has been suggested that the gene for blue color, which is dominant, was only recently reintroduced in the Ross's Goose gene pool through interbreeding with the "Lesser" Snow Goose and through backcrossing of hybrids. The presence of an apparent blue hybrid at Saint-Louis-de-Gonzague also supports the hypothesis of interbreeding with the Greater Snow Goose in the eastern part of the Arctic, but why the blue/white ratio appears so high in Québec remains a mystery. Perhaps the environmental factors unfavorable to blue-morph Ross's Geese in the western population are not in operation within this small eastern sub-population living in close contact with the Greater Snow Goose.

al), two at Saint-Louis-de-Gonzague Nov. 1–11 (PB), and three at Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu Nov. 15–16 (PB, RG). Reports of eight Eur. Wigeons provided an exceptionally high total for the fall.

HAWKS THROUGH ALCIDS

Two hawk watch sites, Tadoussac and Montreal, were regularly monitored. Record high counts included 88 Bald Eagles and 1919 Broad-winged Hawks at Tadoussac (CA, CG), and 23 Golden Eagles at Montre-

al (MM, B. Barnhurst). On the negative side, both Tadoussac and Montreal had below-average totals for Red-tailed Hawk and Rough-legged Hawk. A pale Red-tailed Hawk, resembling the form "*krideri*," was recorded at Boischatel Oct. 30 (LM). Gyrfalcons numbered low, with only four individuals reported.

The Sandhill Crane was reported in increased number in the Témiscamingue region, where 25 were counted at Lorrainville Oct. 8 (D. Robert), and 210 and 110 at Roulier, respectively, Oct. 12 & 16 (J. Goulet). Encouraging numbers of Am. Golden-Plovers included 750–1000 at Saint-Barnabé Sept. 1 (N. Roy, JD) and 800 at Howick Sept. 7–8 (LS, L. D'Amours). A female Am. Avocet showed up at Rivière-du-Loup Aug. 6 and Sept. 26 (Y. Boulanger, D. Coté, PF). Other unusual shorebirds included a Willet at Kamouraska Aug. 24 (FD, RD), a Marbled Godwit at Sainte-Martine Sept. 19 (G. Zenaitis), a displaced Purple Sandpiper at Boucherville Nov. 21 (YG), and a female Ruff at Sainte-Martine through Aug. 5 (v.o.). A molting ad. Short-billed Dowitcher of the *hendersoni* race, present at Sainte-Martine Aug. 23–Sept. 3, represented one of very few documented records for the Region (PB, J. Luce, v.o.). A total of eight Long-billed Dowitchers furnished a record autumn total. In contrast to last fall, the southbound migration of the Red Phalarope was unremarkable at inland localities, as evidenced by 2 records only: singles at Pointe-aux-Trembles Oct 26 (YG, S. Moran) and Montmagny Nov. 2–4 (AC, JL et al.).

Observers at Victoriaville were astounded by the appearance of a juv. Pomarine Jaeger Aug. 30 (MG, JD). Uncommon small gulls included a first-winter Laughing Gull at Les Escoumins Nov. 9 (CA), an exceptional total of five Franklin's Gulls, a low eight Little Gulls, and two Black-headed Gulls. Other larids of note included an ad. Mew Gull, of undetermined race, at the Beauharnois dam Nov. 23 (PB), a first-winter California Gull at Victoriaville Nov. 2–11 (JD, MG, v.o.), and a Thayer's Gull at Pont-Rouge Nov. 12 (FD). Lesser Black-backed Gulls numbered 16 individuals of various ages, half of them in the Tadoussac-Les Escoumins area (CA, CG). A very dark adult at the Beauharnois dam Nov. 16 was probably of the race *intermedius* (PB). A total of 10 Sabine's Gulls, mostly juveniles as expected, included a flock of six from the Trois-Pistoles/Les Escoumins ferry Sept. 15 (FD, RD); the only adult was spotted at Metabetchouan Sept. 12 (S. Boivin). A peak

of 29 Caspian Terns in the Léry-Maple Grove area Sept. 2 represented the largest concentration ever reported in s.w. Québec (PB). A Black Tern at Longueuil Nov. 20 established a new record-late date by 21 days (A. Charest). An Atlantic Puffin at Québec City Oct. 14 was a good find (G. Lord)

PIGEONS THROUGH WHEATEAR

A Rock Dove that remained for about a month at a Sainte-Anne-des-Monts feeder Aug. 7 onwards (*vide* PP) was in fact a racing pigeon that had been released in France about July 11, and that was supposed to head back for Northumberland, England! Owl watching in the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean area produced 29 broods for the Long-eared Owl (*vide* GS), a figure that is comparable to the 1995 results. The Tadoussac banding station reported 223 N. Saw-whet Owls (compared to 70 in 1996), and the species was rather common in the greater Montreal area in the latter part of the season. On the other hand, only 10 Boreal Owls were banded at Tadoussac (125 in 1996) for what appeared to be a normal year, as they were virtually unnoticed elsewhere.

A Red-headed Woodpecker at Grand-Ruisseau, *Magdalen Is.*, Oct. 20–21 (U Décoste, S. Décoste, Z. Duchesneau) provided a 4th local occurrence. An E. Kingbird showed up at Kuujuaq Aug. 10 (YG) Both the Tufted Titmouse and the Carolina Wren maintained their patterns of showing up at feeders in late fall (5 records each), the former mainly in the w. parts of the Eastern Townships, and the latter in the Montreal suburbs. A Marsh Wren at Baie-Comeau Oct. 3 (GC) was a good find. A Bicknell's Thrush in Côte Saint-Luc, *Montreal*, Oct 23 (K. Thorpe) set a new record-late date. With only 2 reports, it was a modest year for the N. Wheatear: one bird was sighted in Chambord Aug. 23 (GC), and the other was seen by many at Cap Tourmente Oct 3–5 (M. Darveau et al.).

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

With only 2 records before 1990, the Yellow-throated Warbler has been recorded every year during this decade, mainly as a fall vagrant; this year a bird was found in Rimouski Nov. 10 (D. Côté, Y. Boulanger), and remained in the same woodlot to the end of the season. An Am. Redstart at Baie-Comeau Nov. 14 set a new record-late date (GC). After a snow storm, a **Prothonotary Warbler** strayed high up into the Laurentians, at L. Villiers Oct. 18 (C. Arbour, D Asselin). A Louisiana Waterthrush was

found at Cap Tourmente Oct. 15 (Y. Hamel) and was seen by many until Nov. 1. The Patagonia effect created by this bird produced a Kentucky Warbler Oct. 31 (FD), and a record late Mourning Warbler Oct 25 (JL et al.).

A first-year male W. Tanager was found in Rivière-des-Prairies, *Montreal*, Nov. 14 (P Wery, RG, ph.), and remained until Nov. 19, thus providing many observers with the opportunity to fully appreciate its not so well-known distinguishing features; apart from an old 1938 specimen record, most of the 11 other previous sight reports are far from being as convincing as this one. A Blue Grosbeak was found at Anse-à-Beaufils Oct. 18 (L. Lagueur, J. Wiseman). The annual fall Dickcissels were few but widely scattered, with single birds at Sept-Iles Aug. 1-4 (N. Vaillancourt, S. Landry); Cap-aux-Meules, *Magdalen Is.*, Nov. 18-25 (D. and A. Petitpas); Cap Tourmente Oct. 19 (R. Gingras, AC); and Pabos Mills Oct. 14 (JM. Smith).

Single Lark Sparrows were found at Cap-des-Rosiers Aug. 24-25 (AR), and Pointe-Lebel Oct. 5 (GC). A Le Conte's Sparrow at Boucherville Oct. 13 (SD, M. Bertrand, DD) represented a 4th occurrence in the Montreal area, as well as a record-late Regional record. A Harris's Sparrow was recorded at Macamic, Abitibi, Oct 23-25 (S. Châteauevert).

Many flocks of Pine Grosbeaks, Red

Crossbills, and Com. Redpolls were reported early, from late August into October, mainly e. and n. of Québec City, but by November the numbers were considerably reduced.

INTRODUCED

An Egyptian Goose was recorded at both Terrebonne and Laval in October, as it accompanied some 200 Canada Geese on R. des Mille Iles. A Rosy-faced Lovebird graced a Boucherville feeder Aug. 15-18 (F. Blouin). Two Eur. Goldfinches were back again Oct. 25 at their winter quarters in the Montreal Botanical Gardens. A Yellow-fronted Canary was singing on Mt. Royal Aug. 25 (E. Samson, A. Lacasse).

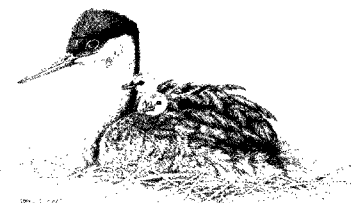
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1998 Directory of Birding Festivals

All across the continent, communities are organizing birding festivals that highlight ornithological wonders and promote bird and habitat conservation through economic activities. The 1998 Directory will be available by the end of 1997. For your copy call **Sharon DeCray (800/850-2473)** at ABA or check out our Web Site: www.americanbirding.org



SA Every fall or so, when numerous Dark-eyed Juncos visit feeders for several weeks, observers claim individuals of one of the western groups of subspecies (or types). Since current field guides do not show all the plumage variations of the mainly eastern "Slate-colored" Junco type, a good number can be confused with western birds.

First-winter Slate-colored, and especially females, have brownish-pink flanks and brownish suffusions to the back and hood; variations here are considerable, to a point that it is difficult to find 2 similar individuals at close inspection. It should be noted that the western *cismontanus* race (Yukon, British Columbia) is intermediate between the Oregon and the Slate-colored types, and has been recorded in Ontario. An odd-looking junco in the East can thus still be a Slate-colored Junco, not necessarily a bird of one of the western types!

Since some Slate-colored have white wing bars, the identification of the White-winged Junco type must be based on exclusive features: appreciably larger size and bigger bill, and four essentially white lateral tail feathers (in Slate-colored, the 4th is dark and the 3rd always has a dark mark). We know of only one White-winged record in the East, in Tennessee.

Adults of the Gray-headed type are easily distinguished by their pale gray hoods, rufous back, gray flanks and black lores. One has been recorded in Ontario.

Most individuals of the Oregon Junco type can often be told by their black or very dark slate hoods, contrasting with paler backs and flanks in varying shades of cinnamon brown. However, one should not underestimate the fact that some young females closely approach Pink-sided Junco females (and perhaps some Slate-colored). Many Oregon Juncos are correctly identified every year in the East. Is it because they are more dispersive than the other types, or simply because they are more easily separable from Slate-colored?

Male and female adults of the Pink-sided type are rather similar, and the pink sides are not an exclusive feature, since many Slate-colored do have pinkish brown flanks. They have slightly paler gray heads, contrasting with brownish backs and pinkish sides; most importantly, they show black lores that, together with the dark eyes, form a small dark mask. First-winter birds have brownish suffusions to the hood in varying degrees, that make them extremely similar to some Slate-colored. We are not aware of duly proven occurrences of a Pink-sided Junco in the East.

Positive field identification of every individual to subspecies is not possible with several difficult species, and the Dark-eyed Junco belongs to that group. This fall, two female Oregon Junco were seen in Saint-Zotique from Oct. 22 into early November (G. Huot, v.o.). The Pink-sided Junco was also reported this fall, but without adequate description. The same is also true for reports in past years.