

ontario region

Winter Season: December 1998 to February 1999



The following report covers the December 1998–February 1999 winter season, followed by the June–July 1999 summer season.

CLIVE E. GOODWIN

The winter of 1998–1999 offered a variation on a now familiar theme: very mild and open in December and February and cold in January; but this year the season was punctuated by a severe storm in the south in early January, with heavy snow and gale-force winds.

The mild beginnings to the winter produced a host of record late departures for later migrants. Late departures have been features of recent winters, and they continued unabated; space precludes all but the most noteworthy. The balmy February yielded a similar catalogue of early arrivals, although most of these were confined to the extreme southwest—Ontario’s “banana belt.” Those of us residing elsewhere were less fortunate, and with the exception of movements of more hardy species, the later winter was rather quiet. We can only assume that the open conditions were sufficient to allow birds that survived the deep snows of January to disperse widely but were insufficient to encourage widespread new arrivals.

Abbreviations: Pelee (*Pt. Pelee N.P. and vicinity, Essex*); P.E.Pt. (*Prince Edward Point, Prince Edward*). Algonquin (*Nipissing*), Presqu’île (*Northumberland*) are Provincial Parks. Manitoulin is both a district and an island. Place names in *italics* refer to counties, districts, or regional municipalities. In general, CBC records are not repeated in this account.

LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

A total of six Red-throated Loons was an average count for the winter, but one in Algonquin 7 Dec (MR), was the first ever there. Algonquin also recorded three very late Com. Loons on 16 Dec (CJ et al.), while a bird 23 Jan was the first in winter at Pelee (AW). One–two Pied-billed Grebes are usually located somewhere in the course of a winter; there were three individuals E to Toronto, and 64 at Pelee 7 Dec (AW, FJU) was an exceptional count. A Horned Grebe set a record late date for Algonquin 16 Dec (CJ et al.). Five reports of Red-necked Grebe were a bit above normal, and there were still 190 off Manitoulin, where they stage, 16 Dec (CB). Far to the NW, one was picked up in an Atikokan, *Rainy River*, schoolyard 21 Dec (DHE). Eared Grebes are not annual in winter, but two were at Pelee 8 Dec (GTH), with one to 10 Dec, and another was seen at Burlington, *Hamilton–Wentworth*, 2–4 Dec (JD, SE). Young N. Gannets occasionally wander to the lower Great Lakes in late November and early December, but are always noteworthy; the bumper 1998 crop included two at Burlington 1 Dec, with one to 31 Dec, and one at Niagara-on-the-Lake, *Niagara*, 27 Dec (RD et al.). A Great Cormorant was seen at Port Credit, *Peel*, 10–11 Jan (DEP et al.); at one time the species was unknown in the province, but there have been about eight in the last decade, half of them in winter. A Great Blue Heron at Kingston, *Frontenac*, 18 Feb (KFN) was the latest ever there, and a rare winter Great Egret was seen at Pelee 1 Dec (GTH). Turkey Vultures continue to winter in growing numbers. This year there was a bird E to Wolfe I., *Frontenac*, 20 Dec (GFV, RDW), but the big concentration was in the Caledonia area, *Haldimand–Norfolk*, where there were 32 on 1 Dec (RD, BC) and 23 on 5 Feb (JC).

This year the annual mid-winter L. Ontario Waterfowl Inventory recorded its millionth bird and continued to set new records, both in total numbers and for individual species (Table 1). Its first total, in 1947, was of 3502 birds; but even in 1991, the first year with comparable modern coverage, the total was only 93,700. The province hosted exceptional numbers of Greater White-fronted Geese: a total of 19 were

seen, probably after-effects of a November storm (see NAB 53:17–18), as one or two a winter is more usual. There were only three previous winter Ross’s Goose sightings for the province, but this February alone there were birds at La Salle, *Essex*, 27 Feb (DCB) and at Dundas, *Hamilton–Wentworth*, from 16 Feb (RH, m.ob.). A *hutchinsii* Canada Goose seen at Pittock L., *Oxford*, Dec 6

SA The big storm of 3–5 Jan had its own story. It swept up from the Gulf of Mexico and brought with it a huge dump of snow that forced Toronto to declare a state of emergency. Although the event was regarded with some derision by those to the north and east who were more accustomed to heavy snow, the sheer size of the snowfall must have stressed birds enormously. Birds flocked to feeders for the first time, and Alan Wormington witnessed a huge exodus south from the tip of Point Pelee over the next few days. On 3 Jan this movement included an unprecedented 9500 Horned Larks, 1500 Snow Buntings, 60 Lapland Longspurs, 12 individual American Pipits, and a Common Snipe; on 4 Jan a *hutchinsii* Canada Goose was seen, with a Greater White-fronted Goose passing the next day. Movement was still occurring ten days later with flights of hawks westward along the Lake Erie shoreline—Red-tailed, Rough-legged, and Red-shouldered—and hundreds of crows on 13 Jan. Presumably these were birds that had been attempting to overwinter. It is very unusual to be able to witness bad-weather movements on this scale, but then the weather itself was exceptional.

Perhaps the storm winds deposited what may be the shorebird of the year on Lake Ontario. The storm hit Cobourg, half way along the Lake Ontario shoreline, during the night of 3 Jan. The next morning Lori Wensley, overlooking the lake, saw a “dark shorebird with a lot of white” flying west. She phoned Goodwin, two miles to the west, who in turn went to his window and watched incredulously as an **American Oystercatcher** slid and skidded onto the ice of Cobourg harbor. A handful of observers managed to see the bird over the next hour. It was the 7th for the Province, and of course the first in winter.

(JMh) was one of two reported this season, the other being that identified at Pelee 4 Jan (AW). Some high late counts included 15 Brant flying W at Toronto 12 Dec (NM, LAM), 2100 Am. Wigeon at Pelee 7 Dec, and 475 Green-winged Teal there 17 Dec (AW, FJU). February early arrivals reached Manitoulin with five Gadwall 27 Feb (CB) and three N. Pintail 23 Feb (TL). A high count of 8509 Redheads came from the Windsor area, *Essex*, 27 Jan (FJU). Two Greater Scaup in Algonquin 16 Dec (CJ et al) provided record late dates. A total of five King Eiders, all from L. Ontario, was rather low for recent years, as was the eight Harlequin Ducks and three Barrow's Goldeneyes reported; with the exception of a Harlequin at Pelee and three in *Lambton*, these were also from L. Ontario.

The Kingston area had some spectacular totals on the 10 Jan waterfowl inventory as the zebra mussel bonanza continued: 15,005 White-winged Scoters was a high count, but an incredible 105,614 Long-tailed Ducks at P.E.Pt. (RDW, JHE) was altogether without precedent and may explain why Long-tailed Duck numbers have declined on the East coast. Small flocks of Long-tailed Ducks were also seen off Pukaskwa N.P. on L. Superior 19 Feb (*vide* NE) A Red-breasted Merganser in Algonquin 16 Dec was record-late, and a Ruddy Duck 9 Dec (CJ et al.) was the first ever there.

RAPTORS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

Bald Eagle numbers were difficult to assess but seemed about normal; a concentration of 20 at Baie du Dore, *Bruce*, 24 Jan (M&KP) was in a noteworthy location. Five wintering Red-shouldered Hawks were reported, all from the southwest; a bird at P.E. Pt. 29 Feb (AB) may have been an early migrant. A *calurus* Red-tailed Hawk was at Pelee 23 Jan (AW). Only three Golden Eagles were reported: from Mud L., *Oxford*, 7 Dec (DB), Wolfe I. 20 Dec (GFV, RDW), and Amherst I., *Lennox & Addington*, 8 Jan (AS). Virginia Rails attempting to winter were detected at Pelee 21 Dec (DGC) and at Port Hope, *Northumberland*, 24 Dec; the latter bird survived until the blizzard (CAM, m.ob.). Two late Sandhill Cranes were at Bath, *Lennox & Addington*, 18 Dec (FB), and 17 were seen flying W at Blenheim, *Kent*, Dec 28 (DS, IW).

The shorebird story is mainly one of late departures, and space precludes a complete listing; in all, 13 species were recorded in the province in December. An Am. Golden-

Table 1
Results of the 53rd Lake Ontario Midwinter Waterfowl Inventory on 10 January 1999

Species	No.	Species	No.
Common Loon	2	Greater Scaup	*44,007
Pied-billed Grebe	2	Lesser Scaup	2248
Horned Grebe	10	scaup sp.	10
Great Cormorant	1	King Eider	2
Double-crested Cormorant	20	Harlequin Duck	1
Tundra Swan	164	Long-tailed Duck	*119,492
Trumpeter Swan	24	Black Scoter	5
Mute Swan	267	Surf Scoter	20
Snow Goose	2	White-winged Scoter	15,068*
Canada Goose	26,596	scoter sp.	300
Green-winged Teal	3	Com. Goldeneye	*28,927
Am. Black Duck	2256	Bufflehead	4173
Gadwall	987	Hooded Merganser	52
Am. Wigeon	55	Com. Merganser	5660
Mallard	*24,848	Red-breasted Merganser	647
N. Pintail	36	merganser sp.	1526
N. Shoveler	18	Ruddy Duck	24
Canvasback	90	Am. Coot	180
Redhead	2449		
Ring-necked Duck	67	TOTAL	*282,489

*Italics denote record high counts. Table compiled by Bill Edmunds.

Table 2
Selected Early Arrival Records in Southwestern Ontario, Winter 1999

Species	No.	Location	*Date	Observer
Snow Goose	8	Pelee	*11 Feb	AW et al.
Gadwall	4	Shrewsbury, <i>Kent</i>	*13 Feb	JTB
Am. Wigeon	2	Dorland, <i>Oxford</i>	7 Feb	JMH
N. Shoveler	3	Erieau, <i>Kent</i>	*13 Feb	JTB
N. Pintail	2	Dorland	11 Feb	JMH
Ring-necked Duck	1	Pelee	*15 Feb	AW
Surf Scoter	1	Pelee	*18 Feb	AW
Hooded Merganser	2	Erieau	*8 Feb	JTB
Ruddy Duck	1	Pelee	*15 Feb	AW
Am. Coot	1, 1	*Pelee; Erieau	*11 Feb	AW; JTB
Killdeer	2	Pelee	13 Feb	BAM
N. Flicker	1	Sturgeon Cr., <i>Essex</i>	*13 Feb	AW
Tree Swallow	1	Pelee	*13 Feb	DAM, LW
E. Meadowlark	1	Sturgeon Cr.	*18 Feb	AW
Rusty Blackbird	15	Leamington, <i>Essex</i>	*12 Feb	AW

*Italics denote record early dates for an area.

Plover was at Toronto 12 Dec (GC), and Killdeer seemed to be all over the place: at least 9 December records included 18 at Pittock L. 1 Dec (JMh) and single birds E to Wolfe I. 20 Dec (EB) and N to Wahnapitae, *Sudbury*, 1 Dec (JN) and Provincial Mill, *Thunder Bay*, to 28 Dec (*vide* NE). Rare at any time, and with only one previous winter record, two Am. Avocets at Hamilton to 5 Dec (m.ob.) and possibly two at Rondeau and Blenheim 3-12 Dec (SC et al.) and 20 Dec (PAW) were noteworthy. Wahnapitae had a Greater Yellowlegs 1 Dec (JN), while one at Presqu'île 20 Dec (MR) was probably the latest ever for Ontario. A Ruddy Turnstone on Amherst I. 3 Dec (AS) was the latest ever for the Kingston area. Purple Sandpipers are to be expected in December, but the flock at Presqu'île grew to an impressive 57 on 20

Dec (DSH), and six were seen elsewhere. Apart from an undocumented report of 134 in the fall of 1980, the previous high single count of Purple Sandpipers was 25. Another late Sudbury-area visitor was a Com. Snipe 26 Dec (*vide* JL).

Normally not present at all in winter, Franklin's Gulls provided another echo of the November storm (cf. Greater White-fronted Goose above): there was one at Turkey Pt., *Haldimand-Norfolk*, 5 Dec (AH); one-two at Niagara 5-13 Dec (m.ob.); two at Pittock L. 1-3 Dec (JMh, RS et al.), and one at Blenheim 1 Dec (PAW). Two late Little Gulls were E to P.E.Pt. 19 Dec, with one at Wolfe I. the next day (KFN). Black-headed Gulls are less than annual in winter, but there were two: at Toronto 28 Dec (DP) and at Queenston from 30 Jan (JI, m.ob.) The 247 Bonaparte's Gulls at P.E.Pt. 19 Dec

(KFN) was a high total for this easterly location. Ring-billed Gulls do not usually rate consideration in these accounts, but over 900 at Hanover, *Bruce*, 19 Dec (JWJ et al.) was an extraordinary total for the date and yet another reflection of the open conditions. Cobourg harbor hosted nine species of gulls on 26 Jan, including a rare ad. Mew Gull (RF); also present was an ambiguous bird that at first seemed to be a Slaty-backed. Niagara had its share of puzzling gulls as well, all challenging identification skills, if not sanity. However, Toronto did have a genuine **Slaty-Backed Gull** 2–9 Jan (BY, JV), only the 3rd for the province. Lesser Black-backed Gull numbers were about average, with 22 reported, as were Black-legged Kittiwakes with six, including one E to P.E.Pt. 1 Dec (KH et al.).

It was not an “owl winter,” and those birds that were present in the south may have experienced heavy mortality after the January storm. In *Northumberland* several Long-eared Owls were picked up after apparently having starved to death (*vide* AEW). Snowy Owls were absent from most of the province, with only three even in their usual strongholds of Wolfe and Amherst Is. Northern Hawk Owls were seen only on Manitoulin 27 Feb (TL) and in the Thunder Bay area, with two from 26 Dec (SS), and the only Great Gray Owl s. of breeding range was an injured bird at Streetsville, *Peel*, 14–18 Feb (HB, m.ob). Wintering records of Red-bellied Woodpeckers extended N to Sudbury and Thunder Bay (*vide* JL, NE). Among woodpeckers, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers are normally the least enthusiastic about wintering, but four reports extended E to Wolfe I. 20 Dec (KFN). The only Three-toed Woodpeckers reported were from Algonquin, a male and female on successive days 25–26 Feb (DSt). Southern birders will salivate at the thought of the 161 Black-backed Woodpeckers in burnt forest along 21 km of the Armstrong highway, *Thunder Bay*, 31 Jan (NGE, SP).

SHRIKES THROUGH FINCHES

Northern Shrikes were rather scarce and late to appear. There are only a handful of December records of White-eyed Vireos, so a bird at Long Pt., *Haldimand–Norfolk*, to 19 Dec (*vide* JW) is noteworthy, but it pales beside a record of Red-eyed Vireo at Toronto to 13–17 Dec (P. Stepien-Scanlon, m.ob.); although it may be one of our commonest summer birds, I know of no previous winter records of Red-eyed Vireo. Providing further evidence of the general mildness of the season, Horned Larks were in full song

in *Bruce* 27 Jan (DF, BF), and swallows lingered at McGregor, *Essex*, with a N. Rough-winged and two Barn to 21 Dec and a single Barn to 25 Dec (FJU et al.). Ontario's 2nd **Cave Swallow**, attributed to the s.w. *pelodoma* race, was at Pelee 7–9 Dec (AW, FJU). Carolina Wrens were at N. Bay to 6 Jan (RT) and at Meaford, *Grey*, 15 Dec on (JB), but records from Pelee suggest a more indicative picture of the species' status over winter: of 21 on the CBC, none were reported after the January storm to the end of the period (*vide* AW). Northerly reports included a rare Marsh Wren at Chelmsford, *Sudbury*, to 5 Dec (*vide* JL) and one–two Golden-crowned Kinglets overwintering at Chippewa, *Thunder Bay*, likely the first to do so there (*vide* NE). A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher at Cobourg 12 Dec (MB) was *Northumberland's* latest.

A Townsend's Solitaire at Kincardine, *Bruce*, 2 Jan (MP) and four (in one tree!) at Thunder Cape 13 Dec (JA) represented normal winter numbers overall for the province. Swainson's Thrushes are very rare in winter, so birds at Pelee 9 & 21 Dec (FJU, BMC) were noteworthy, and a single in Toronto 27 Dec (MG et al.) even more so; there appear to be only 2 prior records for the city. Across the south and throughout the period, Am. Robins were widespread in enormous numbers far in excess of those in any previous winter in my experience. Varied Thrushes included birds on 26 Dec and to 5 Jan in the Thunder Bay area (*vide* NE) and two near Portland, *Leeds–Grenville*, 6–28 Jan (KFN). An Am. Pipit at Beachville 28 Dec (JMH) provided a record-late date for *Oxford*. Bohemian Waxwings were numerous in the Sudbury area, as exemplified by the 2318 on the CBC (*vide* JL), but it was not until later in January that they appeared in numbers farther south, and then mainly in *Bruce*, where there were 200 at Tobermorye 26 Jan (*vide* DF).

Typically a few isolated warblers attempt to winter in scattered localities across the south; not surprisingly, there were a good number of such reports this year, with at least 10 species in December. Yellow-rumped Warblers are often quite widespread, but a measure of their abundance this year was the 30 recorded in the Kingston area in December (*vide* RDW). The more noteworthy late records of other species included an Orange-crowned Warbler at Wolfe I. 20 Dec (KH et al.), as most wintering records are from the southwest; a “yellow” Palm Warbler in Haldimand Conservation Area, *Haldimand–Nor-*

folk, 2 Jan (MJ, JM); an Am. Redstart at Long Pt. to about 15 Dec (*vide* JW), one of very few winter records for Ontario; and a Yellow-breasted Chat at Long Pt. about the same time (GG). Rare at any time—and so in a rather different class—were a Worm-eating Warbler at Pelee 1 Dec (GTH) and a Yellow-throated Warbler in Algonquin to 4 Dec (CJ et al.). Common Yellowthroats do try to overwinter quite regularly, but the prize for niche exploitation must go to the bird that spent the winter in the public greenhouses in Allan Gardens, Toronto (AA et al.). A Summer Tanager was at a Port Britain feeder, *Northumberland*, 14–23 Dec (AKS); the species has occurred almost annually in winter during the 1990s.

A Spotted Towhee was in Thunder Bay from late December (IM); definitive provincial records of this “new” species are understandably spotty, but most are in early winter. Eastern Towhees were E to Gananoque, *Leeds–Grenville*, with two to 20 Jan (WH), and N to Kearney, Parry Sound, through most of January–February (GP). Six Savannah Sparrows at Shrewsbury 20 Dec (AW, MJ, BJC) were a remarkable number for the date. Lincoln's Sparrows at Toronto 16 Feb (BY) and at Oxley, *Essex*, 4 Mar (RHo) and Harris's Sparrows at Hillman Marsh, *Essex*, 21 Dec (DD, RW), Blenheim 9–23 Dec (SC et al.), and Claremont, *Durham*, from mid-December (JE, m ob) were both present in average winter numbers. Lapland Longspurs are very rare in winter in the Thunder Bay area, so two to 30 Jan (DBa) were noteworthy, as were the 300 Snow Buntings at Rainy River 23 Jan (RSi, DHE). *Rainy River* also recorded a N. Cardinal, its 3rd, at Stratton 21 Jan (J van den Broeck, RSi); another N. Cardinal was in Thunder Bay in late February (NE), and three were in the Sudbury-Manitoulin area (*vide* JL). A Yellow-headed Blackbird was seen at Sturgeon Cr., *Essex*, 6 Jan (NR). Five Brewer's Blackbirds were reported, all in the southwest except for a bird in Toronto 18–28 Dec (DP). Winter Baltimore Orioles are less than annual, but this year there were birds at Tilbury East, *Kent*, 13 Dec (DM) and at McGregor 29 Dec (RHo).

Apart from a few Purple Finches and isolated reports of other species, mostly on CBCs, winter finches were absent over much of the south. Both species of crossbill appeared in small numbers in the Sudbury area, mainly from January on, and there was an influx of Pine Siskins there in the first week of February, the highest count being 300 at Lively 5 Feb (GH). The exception to the pattern of generally low num-

bers was Algonquin, where records were set 2 Jan with 1189 Purple Finches, 170 Red Crossbills (of two forms, one being the large-billed), and 4150 White-winged Crossbills, with Evening Grosbeaks also in good numbers. Both crossbill species were singing continuously, and females were seen carrying nesting material (*fide* RTo). Meanwhile, in *Rainy River* there were unprecedented high numbers of Am. Goldfinches at feeders (*fide* DHE).

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Place names that are frequently mentioned, but very long, may be abbreviated in a form such as "C.B.B.T." or "W.P.B.O." Such local abbreviations will be explained in a key at the beginning of the particular regional report in which they are used. In most regions, place names given in italic type are counties. Standard abbreviations that are used throughout *North American Birds* are keyed on page 358.

The Nesting Season: June to July 1999

DAVID H. ELDER

The weather across the province during June and July was characterized by contrast: hot and very dry in northeastern, central, and southern Ontario but very wet with expected temperatures in the northwest. Contributors generally felt the period was marked by a lack of excitement, with few rarities appearing to relieve the traditional summer doldrums. However, Brown Pelican, Curlew Sandpiper, Laughing Gull, Fish Crow, and Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch were of considerable interest. Summer is when shorebird migrations blend, with late northbound birds very nearly meeting early southbound individuals.

Abbreviations: Pelee (*Point Pelee Nat'l Park and vicinity*); K.F.N. (*Kingston Field Naturalists*); L.P.B.O. (*Long Point Bird Observatory*); S.L. (*Sewage Lagoons*); R.M. (*Regional Municipality*).

LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

Red-throated Loons are uncommon in the s. part of the province during the summer, so worth noting were two on the Indian R. n. of Warsaw 12–13 Jun (JW, AL), a very cooperative adult at Ft. Erie on the Niagara R. 17–21 Jul (m.ob.), and single adults on Frenchman's Bay, *Durham*, 1 Jun (DS) and on L. Ontario off Port Hope 14–16 Jul (M&ST, m.ob.). An out-of-place Horned Grebe in breeding plumage was at the Tip of Pelee 25 Jun (AW et al.). Red-necked Grebes again nested in w. L. Ontario at Bronte Harbour, with 3 nests active at the end of July despite considerable recreational boat traffic (m.ob.); a single adult was present during June on Kelley L. in Sudbury (m.ob.). A **Western Grebe** was seen on Windy Bay in s.e. Lake of the Woods, *Rainy River*, 20 Jun (DE, KM). American White Pelicans were well scattered across the province with four in early June at Fesserton, *Simcoe* (m.ob.), three near Kirkland L. 13–18 Jun (*fide* BK), eight at Ruby L. near Nipigon and 10 on Kama Bay of L. Superior 15 Jun (BR), one 5 Jun near Peterborough at Rice L. (JT), and four at Kettle Pt., *Lambton*, 6 Jun (*fide* AR). A **Brown Pelican** was at Nanticoke, *Haldimand-Norfolk*, 22 Jun (DO et al.).

An unusually high number of Least Bitterns were seen and heard at the St. Claire N.W.R., with 15 noted 12 Jun (JM); another was found in Murray Marsh, *Northumberland*, 5 Jun (MB, PH). Three

Great Egrets were present throughout the period at Presqu'île P.P., *Northumberland*, and may have been an indication of breeding, a first for the area (*fide* MR). Snowy Egrets were well represented with singles at Rondeau P.P. 8 Jun (JTB et al.), Holiday Harbour, *Essex*, Jun 1–6 (BP, DC, et al.), at the Causeway Marsh, Presqu'île P.P., 5 Jun (MW), at Tollgate Ponds in Hamilton 3–17 Jul (B&LC, m.ob.), and at Leslie St. Spit, Toronto, 18 Jul (m.ob.). Cattle Egrets showed up at extreme ends of the province, with one on the lawn of the Vermillion Bay Lodge, *Kenora*, 14 Jun (RD, GB) and another at Owen Pt., Presqu'île P.P., 22 Jul (KS, MTo). A Green Heron, rarely seen in Algonquin P.P., was found 10 Jul (KC, JD), and a Black-crowned Night-Heron was unusual for the Sudbury area on Kelley L. 23–27 Jun (FC, CB).

A healthy-appearing Tundra Swan found at the Tavistock S.L., *Oxford*, Jun 24 (JH) provided a first summer record for the area, and two were at Presqu'île P.P. 28 Jul (CEG). A female Canvasback with three young at Toronto's Leslie St. Spit in June furnished a first breeding record for the city (RBHS), and a female Redhead with young was noted for the 3rd consecutive year at Tollgate Ponds, Hamilton. White-winged Scoters are unexpected in summer, so one at the Tip of Pelee 6 Jun (AW, STP), a single at Cobourg Harbour 24 Jul (MB), and two at Darlington P.P., *Durham*, were of interest (TH).

VULTURES THROUGH TERNS

The **Black Vulture** invasion of the spring continued into the summer with one found 6 Jun at N. Wilson Tract, *Haldimand-Norfolk* (MT), another over L.P.B.O. 12 Jun (*fide* JW), and one n. of Oakville 23 Jun (CM). Plumage differences separated individual one-year-old **Mississippi Kites** over the Tip of Pelee 5 & 13 Jun (AW, RAL). An ad. Golden Eagle was well seen 9 Jul just s. of Petroglyphs P.P. (DCS), with possibly the same bird found 10 km to the south 15 Jul (TD). Urban-nesting Peregrine Falcons continued to persist, but several deaths of newly-fledged young in Toronto and London point out the perils of breeding in man-made habitats (*fide* Ontbirds). An abandoned open pit mine in Sudbury was used by Peregrines during June (CB). Virginia Rails bred successfully in Carling Township, *Parry Sound*, with two adults and two young 27 Jun (JNs). Sandhill Cranes

were confirmed breeding at Thunder Bay when two adults and one downy young were seen 26 Jun in the farmlands near the city (BMo, PR); a 2nd probable breeding pair was in a large fen on the Black Bay Pen. 9 Jun (S&MB). To the east, a single Sandhill Crane was noted 13 Jun during a BBS near Kingston (RW), while a pair with a small young bird was near Rice L., *Peterborough*, 4 & 17 Jul (DF).

A Black-bellied Plover 27 Jul near Holiday Beach was likely a southbound bird (RH, JM), as were two ad. Semipalmated Plovers seen at Wildwood L., *Oxford*, 12 Jul (JH). A count of 200 Killdeer at Thetford 11 Jul (AR) was unusually large. A Willet was at L.P.B.O. 9 Jul (SR, VH). The Sudbury area had a probable nesting record of Upland Sandpipers for the first time in many years with a pair present during June at Wahnapitae (m.ob.). An Upland Sandpiper at New Liskeard, *Timiskaming*, 3 Jul (BMu) was notable, and staging groups were present on Amherst I., *Lennox-Addington*, with 30 noted 25 Jul and 50 counted 31 Jul (K.F.N.). Bad weather caused the grounding of 22 Hudsonian Godwits at Rock Point P.P., *Haldimand-Norfolk*, 22 Jul (K&WH). Six Ruddy Turnstones turned up unexpectedly at Cobourg Harbour 21 Jun (MB). Two very early juv. Red Knots at Presqu'île P.P. 24 Jul (MB) suggested a good shorebird nesting season in the Arctic.

Record early dates were provided by a W. Sandpiper at Port Hope Harbour 23 Jul (RF, m.ob.) and two Least Sandpipers at Sturgeon Cr. 19 Jun (AW et al.). White-rumped Sandpipers were still moving N in early June, with three at Wahnapitae 1 Jun (JN) and five at Atikokan, *Rainy River*, 5 Jun (DE). Single ad. Baird's Sandpipers were at Bannister L., Waterloo, 24 Jul (BCH, RDo), Thetford 20 Jul (AR), and Jarvis S.L., *Haldimand-Norfolk*, 24 Jul (BC, RD), while Cobourg Harbour hosted yet another 30-31 Jul (MB, m.ob.). An early juv. Pectoral Sandpiper was at Willow Beach, *Northumberland*, 24 Jul (MB). Dunlins seemed to be going both N and S at the same time with a record late northbound adult at Tavistock 8 Jul (JH) and a record early southbound (alternate-plumaged) bird seen 30 Jun at Pelee (AW). Amherstview S. L., *Lennox-Addington*, hosted a basic plumaged **Curlew Sandpiper** 6 Jun, the 3rd record for the area (KE, RW). Post-breeding Stilt Sandpipers were at Presqu'île P.P. 2 Jul, a record early date (J&JT), and at Jarvis S.L. 10 Jul (BJ). Buff-breasted Sandpipers appeared near Thunder Bay 24 Jul, with two birds at local sod farms (CE, NE,

AH) and an amazing 18 on the golf course at Manitouwadge 28-29 Jul (NE). Short-billed Dowitchers were found in good numbers with 28 adults at Oshawa Second Marsh 20 Jul (MB) and 39 individuals at Thetford 14 Jul (AR). The only reported Long-billed Dowitcher visited Amherstview S.L. 19 Jul (VPM), and a single Wilson's Phalarope was at Darlington P.P. 4 Jul (GV).

Adult **Laughing Gulls** were at Sturgeon Cr. 13 Jul (EB, JI) and Presqu'île P.P. 28 Jun (BG, BB). A record early ad. Franklin's Gull was at Sturgeon Cr. 26 Jul (AW), and a first-alternate-plumaged bird visited Wildwood L. 31 Jul, the first summer record for the area (JH, MH). Little Gulls were present in high numbers with eight first-summer birds in the onion fields n. of Pelee 5 Jun (AW et al.), seven at Erieau 4 Jun (KJB, JTB), and four at Rondeau P.P. 11 Jul (BMA). The Pelee onion fields also produced a Black-Headed Gull 2-5 Jun (BC et al.). A first-summer imm. Lesser Black-backed Gull was at Wheatley Harbour 26 Jun (AW), with another at the Tip of Pelee 5 Jul (AW). Rounding out the summer gull list was a first-summer Glaucous Gull at Erieau 8 Jul (KJB). An ad. Forster's Tern at Cobourg Harbour 30 Jul was only the 2nd area record.

OWLS THROUGH FINCHES

Unusual for the season and location, a Great Gray Owl was seen near Stoke's Bay, *Bruce*, 19 Jul (JM, m.ob.). Long-eared Owls are anything but common in Algonquin P.P. during the summer, but this season 4 nests were added to the 2 previous records (RT). High populations of small mammal were likely responsible for the increase. Individual Short eared Owls were noted at Eric Beach 3 Jun (JTB) and at Charington, *Durham*, 6 Jun (HC). Southbound Com. Night-hawks were evident 29 Jul when a total of 114 were counted in scattered flocks over Hwy 11 between Ft. Frances and Atikokan (DE); another concentration occurred at Burleigh Falls when 25 were noted 28 Jul (DA). A calling Chuck-will's-widow was at Pelee 5 Jun (TL). On 30-31 Jul, a well-described male **Rufous Hummingbird** visited a feeder at Rebecca Falls, *Muskoka* (fide RT). A female Three-toed Woodpecker was a rare find in Algonquin P.P. 24 Jun (AK, HV). Since Red-headed Woodpeckers continue to decline, successful nestings were encouraging, with two juveniles near Camberford 30 Jun (JH), three adults and three juveniles near Cottesloe 17 Jul (AA), and two pairs near Cobourg (MB, CEG).

The Acadian Flycatcher Recovery Team

found 8 nests and seven unmated males by early July in *Elgin* and *Kent*. Elsewhere, singing male Acadian Flycatchers were located on Amherst I., *Addington*, 2 Jun (AS) and in Halton County Forest 6 Jun (GE). The **Fish Crow** pair found earlier at Pelee possibly nested at W. Cranberry Pond, both birds were present 13-20 Jun, and one lingered to 27 Jun (GG). Common Ravens nested far to the south, with a pair at Northumberland County Forest (RF), an unprecedented record. Two imm. Tufted Titmice 18 Jul at the Tip of Pelee were quite unexpected (AW). A Mt. Bluebird paired with a female E. Bluebird was feeding young 20 Jun n. of Rainy R. (DE, KM). Loggerhead Shrikes had a good breeding season: 125 young fledged in the known s Ontario breeding areas (fide CG). A singing Yellow-throated Vireo, rare in Algonquin P.P., was found 24 Jun (RT).

The Sudbury area had its first Blue-winged Warbler at Burwash Farm 30 May-18 Jun (JL). A male Kirtland's Warbler was seen by many during its stay at Forest, *Lambton*, 9-12 Jun and may have been accompanied by a female (AR). A Hooded Warbler near Baltimore 11 Jun was the latest area record for the month (CEG et al.) A very vocal Yellow-breasted Chat was at Oshawa Second Marsh 18 Jun (JK). The Grasshopper Sparrow seen at the Tip of Pelee 26 Jul was presumed to be an early southbound migrant (AW). The technique of consistently checking areas where birds have been seen previously paid off near Ottawa: a Henslow's Sparrow was found 9-11 Jun at a site last used in the 1970s. A late northbound White-crowned Sparrow was at Pelee 8 Jun (RH, RRe), and a W. Meadowlark in the "Sparrow Field" at Pelee 25 Jun (AW) was the first area record since 1990. A note of special concern is the fact that Brewer's Blackbirds have virtually been eliminated as breeding birds in the Thunder Bay and Atikokan areas as numerous colonies have all disappeared in the past 10 years (NE, DE). Incredulous birders watched a **Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch** that somehow ended up at the Tip of Long Point 8-10 Jul (MBR, m.ob.). If accepted by the Ontario Birds Records Committee, it will be the first record for s. Ontario. House Finches nested in the city of Thunder Bay in mid-June, a first for the area (fide NE)

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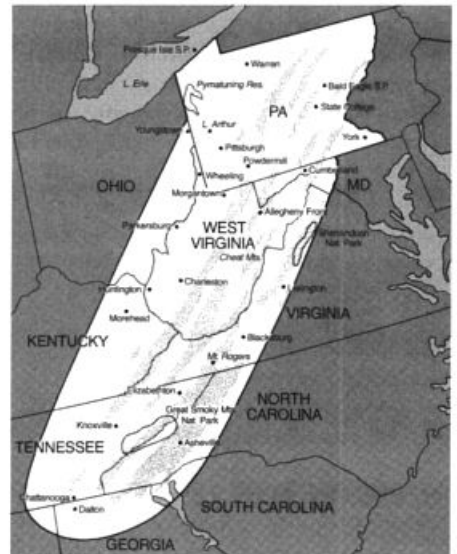
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appalachian region

ROBERT C. LEBERMAN

Moderate to severe drought conditions prevailed over most of the Appalachian Region this summer, and it was hotter than usual. For the most part, however, observers did not think that this negatively affected nesting success. In fact, an observer in *Venango*, Pennsylvania, believed that the combination of warm favorable weather in late spring coupled with a dry summer may have resulted in higher than usual breeding success for many species of birds. However, based on long-term population studies by J. Merritt at Powdermill Nature Reserve in the Laurel Highlands of southwestern Pennsylvania, small mammals also did very well, and in an ongoing study of Louisiana Waterthrushes in the same region, Mulvihill found small mammal and other predation on nests considerably higher this summer than last. In 1998 about 20 percent of 43 waterthrush nests under study were depredated, compared to 40 percent of 42 nests this season.

Several southern birds continued to expand their breeding ranges northward within the Appalachians. In Pennsylvania White-eyed Vireos, once confined to the extreme southeastern corner of the state, were found nesting as far north as *Crawford*, and one was seen at Presque Isle State Park, *Erie*, in June. Yellow-throated Warblers, unknown as breeding birds in western Pennsylvania before 1978, are now common along most rivers and are extending their range along smaller mountain streams as well. Conversely, many birds of the mountain uplands continue to be found farther south and at lower elevations each year. This summer the trend was especially evident for Blue-headed Vireo, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, and Chestnut-sided, Magnolia, and Black-throated Green warblers. Each of these was found at numerous sites well away from the mountain ridges, often in maturing spruce or pine plantations or in regenerating mixed forests that had been cut over earlier this century. A scattering of Red Crossbills and Pine Siskins added interest to summer



birding on several of the higher Appalachian peaks.

Abbreviations: G.R.W.A. (*Grand River Wildlife Area, Trumbull, OH*); G.S.M.N.P. (*Great Smoky Mountains N.P.*); M.L.W.A. (*Mosquito L. Wildlife Area, Trumbull Co., OH*); P.I.S.P. (*Presque Isle State Park, Erie, PA*); P.N.R. (*Powdermill Nature Reserve, Rector, Westmoreland Co., PA*); Y.C.S.P. (*Yellow Creek S.P., Indiana Co., PA*).

GREBES THROUGH HERONS

Despite the drought, water levels remained high, and breeding success was good for Pied-billed Grebes in the Conneaut Marsh and Pymatuning regions of n.w. Pennsylvania (RFL, RCL). In *Trumbull*, OH, nesting Pied-billeds were found at both Shenango and Grand R. state wildlife areas (DJH, CB). An imm. Com. Loon lingered at Chickamauga L., *Hamilton*, TN, 4–11 Jun (HS, JW), and in Pennsylvania singles were at Y.C.S.P. 6–8 Jun (GL), Prince Gallitzin S.P. 11 Jun (JSa), and Kahle L., *Venango*, 24 Jul (RS). Double-crested Cormorants were nesting near Kingsport, TN, where a few breeding pairs have been present since 1992 (RK); elsewhere, numbers were down from recent years, with a high count of 25 non-breeders summering at Meander Res., *Mahoning*, OH (NB). The Am. Bittern was reported only from Geneva Marsh, *Crawford*, PA, 27 Jun (RFL). Up to three Least Bitterns were at Roderick Wildlife Reserve, *Erie*, PA, 3 Jun–3 Jul (JM, LM), and one was at G.R.W.A. 26–27 Jun and 11 Jul (CB).