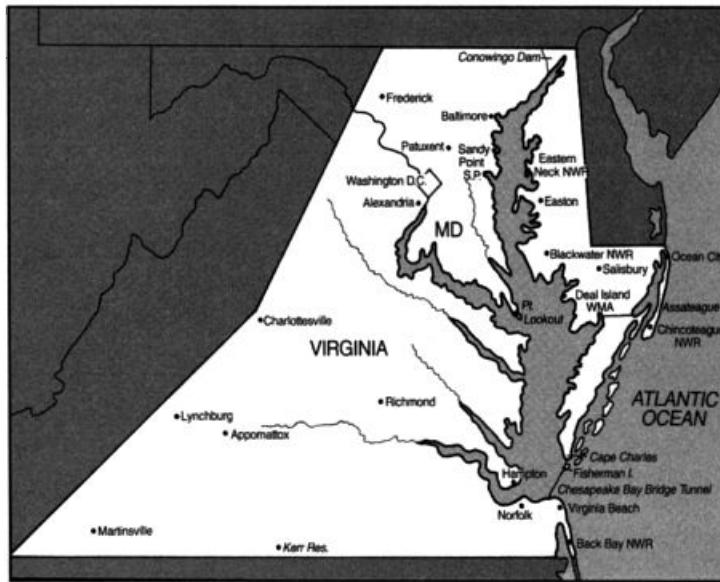


Middle Atlantic Coast



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This winter began fairly mild but took a turn for the colder around Christmas, with several snowstorms in quick succession. The rest of the winter alternated between brief warm spells and more winter storms, amounting to a "typical" winter rather than the prolonged warm ones that we've had recently.

As a result, winter lingerers were not quite as evident as in years past. Still, some unusual unseasonal birds were found along with a handful of real rarities. Highlights included a Western Grebe, an inland Harlequin Duck, good numbers of alcids on the one pelagic trip, a second Regional Eurasian Collared-Dove, a first Regional Calliope Hummingbird along with the two more regular hummingbird species, a Snowy Owl invasion and a few Northern Shrikes, a Western Tanager, and continued success finding Le Conte's Sparrows in Maryland. Winter finches were a complete dud.

Invaluable this winter, as with last winter, was the BirdSource website <<http://birdsource.cornell.edu/cbc/index.html>> which again provided the totals for all Regional C.B.C.s. The compiler for each can be gleaned from the website, so I do not reiterate them here. All locations can be assumed to be in Maryland except that each Virginia location is noted as such the *first time* it appears in the text.

Abbreviations: Assat. (Assateague I. National Seashore, Worcester, MD); Bay (Chesapeake Bay); C.B.B.T. (Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel, south of Northampton, VA); Chinc. (Chincoteague N.W.R., Accomack, VA); D.C. (District of Columbia); Deal (Deal Island W.M.A., Somerses, MD); E.S.V.N.W.R. (Eastern Shore of Virginia N.W.R., Northampton, VA); Hart (Hart-Miller Dredge Spoil Containment Facility, Baltimore, MD); Kipt. (Kiptopeke S.P., Northampton, VA); P.L.S.P. (Point Lookout S.P., Saint Mary's, MD); P.R.N.A.S. (Patuxent River Naval Air Station, Saint Mary's, MD); Vaughn (E.A. Vaughn W.M.A., Worcester, MD).

Grebes Through Waterfowl

An ad. **Pacific Loon** at the C.B.B.T. 5 Jan (†ESB et al.) was an excellent find, though at least one has been found in most recent years. Unusual inland, especially in winter, a Red-throated Loon was at Piney Run Res., Carroll 2–11 Dec (RFR, v.o.). A **Western Grebe** was seen from the road at the C.B.B.T. 1 (†D Schwab, T. Gwynn) & 17 Feb (RH, ESB) for a first record there. There were about six reports of Red-necked Grebes, mostly from the C.B.B.T. The 24 Feb (BP et al.) pelagic trip from Virginia Beach recorded 4 Northern Fulmar and one **Sooty Shearwater**, the latter extremely rare in winter.

For the first time in eight years, Brown Pelicans were missed on the Cape Charles, Northampton, VA C.B.C., which is usually a winter stronghold for them. They did turn up in a number of other unusual areas this winter, as might be expected given their continued expansion in the Region. One in the Salisbury harbor, Wicomico 18 Dec (C&DB) was very unusual so far inland, while 2 on the Ocean City, Worcester C.B.C. 28 Dec (v.o.) provided an overdue first for that C.B.C. Cribb spent the winter living at Smith I., Somerses, the first time a birder has done so. He reported 2 Brown Pelicans there 31 Jan and 4 there 8 Feb. An American White Pelican was not unexpected at Chinc. 1 Dec (R. Wall), but another provided a Wicomico first when a sickly imm. was rescued from a farm field 29 Dec (MD D.N.R. *fide* SHD) and transported to the Salisbury Zoo. The American White Pelican noted at Schoolhouse Pond, Prince George's 30 Nov was seen again at nearby Jug Bay, Anne Arundel, 1 Dec (D. Bystrak). Great Cormorants remain limited to small pockets in the Upper Bay, with good numbers occurring only at P.L.S.P. and around Baltimore Lighthouse, n. of Annapolis. The Annapolis C.B.C. recorded a record-high 27 on 31 Dec. Hart has been getting small numbers regularly recently, including 4 on 9 Dec (EJS et al.) and one 10 Feb (EJS et al.). Anhingas have been found in the past two winters at Virginia Beach, and this year one was found near Pungo for the Back Bay, VA C.B.C. 30 Dec (C. & S. Gambill). At traditional Stumpy L., Virginia Beach, VA, one was noted 2 Dec and a pair was there 26 Feb (SE). Since most birders check this site for Anhingas only in summer, can we be certain that they did not spend the whole winter, as they have attempted in the past?

Tricolored Herons are usually found at Deal through the winter, and 12 there 18 Feb (RFR et al.) was a good count. Single Snowy Egrets at Deal 1 (SHD), 18 (RFR et al.), & 28 Feb (E. Lawler), and 2 Glossy Ibis there 18 Feb

(RFR et al.), were considerably more unusual. A Green Heron on the Williamsburg, VA C.B.C. 17 Dec and another 20 Dec (M. Johnson) at Mill Creek L., Amherst, VA was unusual. White Ibis numbered 24 on the Cape Charles C.B.C. 30 Dec, and 4 were seen at E.S.V.N.W.R. 11 Feb (SA, JD). Rarely are these ibis checked on after C.B.C. season, but presumably a number of them winter successfully. Far more unusual was one at Bethel Beach, Mathews, VA 16 Jan (SE).

Ross's Geese were found with continued regularity at most areas where Snow Geese congregate, and at least 18 small-race Canada Geese were reported, most presumably *hutchinsii*. A first for D.C. was a Greater White-fronted Goose at Haines Pt. 6–20 Jan (CT, ph.DC, m.ob.) which moved to Constitution Gardens on the Mall 2–4 Feb (JFe, RH, LS). This bird reportedly had a pink bill typical of one of the western subspecies, and may have been the same bird seen earlier in the fall in Howard. The Tridelphia C.B.C. had one 16 Dec, and one was seen at Black Hills Res., Montgomery 1–2 Feb (M.A. Todd, B. Pomrenke). The bird at Airlie, Fauquier, VA remained through 6 Dec (SH), one was at Curles Neck Farm, VA 17 Dec (*fide* LL), and another was at Charlottesville, Albemarle, VA for that C.B.C. the same day. An enigmatic swan graced Schoolhouse Pond 9 Jan–26 Feb (FS, ph. vt. m.ob.). Appearing very similar to a Whooper Swan, it was noted by some observers to have too little yellow on the bill (the yellow barely reached as far out the bill as the nares) and improper forehead pattern for a Whooper. Since Whooper Swan is believed not to show much variation in these characters, it is suspected that this bird may be a hybrid with a Tundra (Whistling) Swan. Whether purebred Whooper or a hybrid, it was almost certainly of captive origin especially given its unwary behavior and the recent spate of feral Whoopers in New England and elsewhere. Escaped Black Swans were noted at Denton W.T.P., Caroline 16 Dec (S. Westre) and Smith I., where 2 were seen 7–14 Feb (MC). Up to 8 Trumpeter Swans, recently released in Virginia, wintered this season at The Wildfowl Trust, Queen Anne's.

Eurasian Wigeon this season included 2 at Assat. 28–29 Dec (P. Bystrak, JLS) and singles at Deal 1 Feb (SHD) and at Chinc. 27 Jan–10 Feb (V. Kitchens, BL, SA, JD). Male **Common Teal** appeared at Vaughn 21 Dec (†MJI, †MH), where at least one bird has been regular in recent years, and at E.S.V.N.W.R. 18 Feb (†RH et al.). Late Blue-winged Teal included a pair at Vaughn 2 & 21 Dec (MJI et al.) and 15 on the S. *Dorchester* C.B.C. 29 Dec, which may have



A Silver Gull, first noted in the autumn at Brown's Station Landfill, Maryland, has been presumed to be an escapee from a bird collection. This photograph was taken on 30 November 2000. Photograph by Marshall J. Liff.

wintered in the area. Redhead were widely reported and in better-than-average numbers, with the high count (by far) still in Pocomoke Sound on the Crisfield C.B.C., with 2261 counted 27 Dec. One of the surprises of the season was a female **Harlequin Duck** that strangely chose to winter at Black Hills Res., Montgomery. First noted 1 Dec (†B. Cooper, J. Cooper) and seen by many through 4 Feb (J. Alexander, ph. vt.; m.ob.), it provided a county first and one of few records for the Region away from the Bay or Susquehanna R. Harlequins wintering at Ocean City Inlet numbered as many as 10 in Feb (v.o.) but no more than 3 at the C.B.B.T. (v.o.). The only King Eider reported this year was out of place at P.L.S.P. 11–18 Jan (PC et al.), *Saint Mary's* 3rd. Common Eiders have been scarcer in recent years. One was at Ocean City Inlet 26 Dec–6 Jan (JBC, v.o.) and 2 at the C.B.B.T. 31 Dec–5 Jan (KK, v.o.). Two female Black Scoters off Haines Pt. 2 Dec (RH, LS, PP, CT) added to the small handful of prior D.C. records. Rare on the coast, there was a small influx of Common Mergansers after Christmas. One was at Ocean City Inlet 27 Dec (JLS), the Ocean City C.B.C. recorded 6 the next day, the Chinc. C.B.C. got 21 on 29 Dec, the Cape Charles C.B.C. had 2 on 30 Dec, and one hen was seen 5 Jan from the C.B.B.T. on the Chesapeake Bay C.B.C. (ESB et al.).

Hawks Through Alcids

After 18 Feb there were 13 reports of spring arrival Ospreys in the Region, far more than is

typical for Feb. The earliest ones appeared well ahead of schedule 29 Jan (E. Engle) at Tanyard, *Caroline*, followed by one 3 Feb (C&DB) at Vienna, *Wicomico*. The dark morph *calurus* **Red-tailed Hawk** returned for its 3rd straight winter 2 Dec+ (TMD et al.). A Golden Eagle at Vaughn was unusual for *Worcester* 17–18 Feb (ph.MJI, ph.MLH, vt.JLS et al.), while 4 at Blackwater N.W.R., *Dorchester* made for an excellent count 3 Dec (W. Clark et al.).

The only Sora of the winter was one on the Back Bay C.B.C. 29 Dec. A Sandhill Crane was enjoyed 2–15 Feb (L. Schindler, m.ob., ph.) at Kent Pt., *Queen Anne's*, while 2 were at Rte 649, *Isle of Wight*, VA 23–28 Dec (KK, m.ob.) The Ocean City C.B.C. recorded one Semipalmated Plover 28 Dec for its 2nd straight year, and others were recorded on Virginia C.B.C.s, including one each at Chinc and Back Bay and 14 at Cape Charles, where they are far more regular. A late record for Maryland and first record for *Charles*, Jett watched an American Avocet 17 Dec at Nanjemoy Cr. during the Port Tobacco C.B.C. Bosting that late date, another avocet was noted 29 Dec (JLS, MH) at central Vaughn for the Chinc. C.B.C.!

On the Maryland coast, Lesser Yellowlegs seem to be becoming more regular, with 6 last- ing at Deal as late as 1 Feb (SHD) and 4 near Snow Hill, *Worcester* 8 Feb (ph.MJI). Not last- ing until the Ocean City C.B.C., one Willet was at Eagle's Nest Campground, *Worcester* 13 Dec (GLA, MJI), while the Cape Charles C.B.C., which regularly gets large numbers of Willets,

had a record high 319 on 30 Dec. Other unusual shorebirds were 2 Whimbrel on the Cape Charles C.B.C. 30 Dec, a Marbled Godwit at Eagle's Nest Campground 2–3 Dec (MJI, GLA), at least 2 Red Knots at Ocean City Inlet through 22 Jan (J. Maloney, v.o.), and a shocking Spotted Sandpiper at Blockhouse Pt., *Montgomery* 6 Jan (B. Mumford). Long-billed Dowitchers in Maryland included singles for the Ocean City C.B.C. 28 Dec and at cen. Vaughn 29 Dec (MH, JLS, DP). On the Cape Charles C.B.C., where both species are regular, Short-billed numbered 113, while Long-billed came in with 43. Two dowitcher sp. at Pemberton Park, Salisbury, *Wicomico* were a good find inland 17 Dec (SHD). Nine Red Phalaropes were counted on the 24 Feb pelagic trip from Virginia Beach (BP et al.).

Laughing Gulls withdrew early this year, with only three reports after 17 Dec and none after 31 Dec, when 20 were on the *Mathews* C B C. A very out-of-place Laughing was noted 17 Dec (D. Mozurkewich) at New Design Rd., *Frederick*, roosting in a field with Ring-billed. Little Gulls were reported four times during the season, while the only Black-headed Gulls were found 23 Dec for the Pt. Lookout C.B.C. and 27 Jan (PC) at the C.B.B.T. The presumably escaped Silver Gull at Brown's Station Landfill was relocated 4 Dec (J. Halpin). An ad. **California Gull** at the *Prince William*, VA Landfill 27 Jan (†, ph.SR) was a great find. Six Thayer's Gulls were reported, though at least 2, first-winter birds at Haines Pt. 7 Jan (ph.DC) and at *Prince William* Landfill 27 Jan (ph.SR), were "hedged" as possible hybrids with *kumlieni*. We still know very little about how much individual and geographic variation *thayeri* shows, and to what extent hybridization occurs with *kumlieni*. The best policy is for observers to continue to photograph and describe candidate Thayer's so that we might be able to revisit each report if and when we better understand what Thayer's Gull actually is. The others were an ad. at Conowingo 31 Dec and 13 Jan (EJS, EB et al.), a first-winter 8 Jan (ph. MJI, K. Hutton) at Hampton, VA, and an ad. 30 Jan (BA) at Georgetown Res., D.C. About 13 Iceland Gulls were found but only 2 Glaucous: 8 Dec (ph.JLS) at Schoolhouse Pond and 14 Feb (D&CB) at Rte. 346, *Worcester*. Eight Lesser Black-backed Gulls at Haines Pt. was a fair count for the Region 7 Jan (BA): why don't we get two- or three-digit counts like *Bucks*, PA? The *Saint Mary's* **Kelp Gull** continued with uncanny consistency at its favorite Sandgates dock throughout the season. The 24 Feb (BP et al.) pelagic trip from Virginia Beach did well with alcids, including 2 Dovekies, 53 Razorbills, 8 alcid sp., and a high count of 52

Atlantic Puffins. Two Razorbills at Ocean City Inlet 16 Feb (MJI) remained to be widely seen through at least 28 Feb (m.ob., vt.T. Bell).

Doves Through Chickadees

A **Eurasian Collared-Dove** at Cape Charles, *Northampton*, VA 31 Jan–2 Feb (†ESB, SWH, D. Jarry) provided a 2nd record for Virginia, with the first record (not reported in *North American Birds*) being one at Sterling, *Loudoun*, VA 4 Jun 2000. The latter record has already been accepted by the Virginia Avian Records Committee. This was the best Snowy Owl winter in many years. In addition to those reports for the fall season, Snowy Owl reports included one 29 Nov–6 Dec at Hart (*fide* EJS), one perched on a building in downtown D.C. in early Dec (ph., *fide* G. Gough), one at Welltown Rd., *Winchester*, VA 4–5 Jan (*fide* W. Leigh, ph. by local newspaper), and one 19–30 Jan (LL, J. & B. Creamer) at the *Prince George*, VA Federal Prison. In addition to the above mentioned short-stayers, both Maryland and Virginia had their own cooperative and widely admired Snowies that put on a show for hundreds of birders. In Maryland an imm. at New Design Rd., *Frederick* was seen by hundreds 10 Dec–1 Feb (m.ob., ph., vt.), though it was first noted by local residents 7 Nov (*fide* MB). In Virginia one remained at Windmill Pt., *Lancaster*, VA 2 Dec–7 Jan (E. Squires, m.ob., ph.), perching obligingly on a particular sign at the entrance to a small marina each day. It was a decidedly poor year for Long-eared Owls, with the only report being of two roosts of 2–3 birds in *Prince William*, VA 2–23 Dec (TMD, L. Cartwright). Short-eared Owl numbers were average.

A state and Regional first **Calliope Hummingbird** visited Willis's Suffolk, VA yard 29–31 Dec (†, vt. LW). Birders in the Region are reminded not to assume that rusty hummingbirds will be Rufous, as Virginia now has records for both Allen's and Calliope, and as Delaware has a recent Broad-tailed Hummingbird record. The imm. male Rufous Hummingbird in Cambridge, *Dorchester* remained through 22 Dec (†I. McLaughlin, ph. v.o.), the ad. female in Bishopville, *Worcester* remained through 1 Jan (†AD, ph. m.ob.), and an imm. female that wintered at a Portsmouth, VA feeder 16 Dec+ (†D.L. Hughes) was banded and identified on 1 Jan (MG). Hughes also noted an *Archilochus* at his feeder that was not identified to species. A *Selasphorus* off Rte. 647 n. of Rte. 640, *Dinwiddie*, VA was not reported in the fall season but lasted 31 Oct–5 Jan (F. & B. Wilson, LL, et al.). Finally, the imm. male Ruby-throated Hummingbird at White Plains, *Charles* was banded 3 Dec (MG) and last seen 4 Dec (*fide* GMJ).

A Western Kingbird at Westover Plantation, *Charles City* 17 Dec (*fide* LL) was a great find for the Hopewell C.B.C., while one at Eastern Neck N.W.R., *Kent* 7 Jan (J.W. Slinkard) was amazingly at the exact location where one was seen in mid-Nov. Virginians are still finding Loggerhead Shrikes with regularity in the Piedmont, with more than seven reports this season. Although it was no comparison to last year's invasion, single ad. Northern Shrikes at Hughes Rd., *Montgomery* 1–7 Jan (ph.DC, m.ob.) and P.R.N.A.S. 29 Jan+ (KR, ph. m.ob.) made for a good season. The latter bird was even heard singing 13 Feb (PC, tape ph. MJI, A. Gilbert). In addition to Blue-headed Vireos on a smattering of Virginia C.B.C.s, a White-eyed Vireo was found 16 Dec for the Denton C.B.C. Sometimes invading the lowlands in winter, Common Ravens were noted at Bull Run Post Office Rd., *Fairfax*, VA on several dates in Jan and Feb. Returning Tree Swallows were noted as early as 17 Feb (FF, J. Fallon), when 2 were at Blackwater N.W.R., *Dorchester*. Craig's Dameron, *Saint Mary's* yard again played host to one or more Black-capped Chickadees. Why this species has consistently been found here in recent winters, but not elsewhere in the Region, is somewhat mysterious.

Warblers Through Finches

Orange-crowned Warblers are being found more effectively on coastal C.B.C.s in recent years, either a product of warmer winters or increased observer awareness. One at the Tidal Basin, D.C. 4 (MB) and 11 Dec (JFe) was unusual inland while one 4 & 13 Feb (PC et al.) at P.R.N.A.S. was notable. Two Nashville Warblers were strange to see together 30 Dec (EO) on the Cape Charles C.B.C., while another bird wintered at Hurlock, *Dorchester* 14 Jan+ (ph. C. Diedrich). Other unusual winter warblers were an American Redstart on the L. Anna C.B.C., VA 5 Jan and an Ovenbird seen well 8 Feb at Ft. Belvoir, *Fairfax*, VA (*fide* G. Fleming). A female or imm. male **Audubon's Warbler** found 30 Dec (EO, †GLA) at Cheapside Rd. for the Cape Charles C.B.C. was relocated the next day and 5 Jan (BL) but not thereafter. Wilson's Warblers staged an amazing presence in the Region this winter, with some 11 reports (one from D.C., 3 from Maryland), all of which came from the Western Shore or Coastal Plain. Two of the more interesting were a male at a *Howard* feeder 5 Dec–20 Jan (J. Lyndon) and one at Dyke Marsh, *Fairfax*, VA 3–11 Feb (M. Djouadi, J.E. Dent, KG et al.). Reports of 14 Yellow-breasted Chats was well above average, but most unusual were 4 found in a single day of birding scrubby edges at s. Vaughn 8 Dec (GLA, MJI)



This Snowy Owl at Windmill Point, Virginia attracted hundreds of admirers through its long stay. Photograph by Tim Barry.

A male **Western Tanager** 8–31 Jan (M. Pulley, ph. H. Brooks, m.ob.) in Redart, *Mathews*, VA was a great bird for the Region.

Clay-colored Sparrows are expected at the coast in winter, and this winter 2 were at n. Vaughn 9–18 Feb (ph.MJI, v.o.) with one still 24 Feb (JLS, MH, KF). Another was found at cen. Vaughn 17 Feb (JLS, MLH, MJI). Increased observer awareness and a few focused searches turned up several more Le Conte's Sparrows in Maryland (†) this winter. One at n. Vaughn in Nov continued through at least 18 Feb and was at the same exact location in which one wintered last year. Yet another individual was found in a different field here and was seen 9 Feb (†SR, †DM, †MJI) & 17 Feb (†MJI). Another individual was in the same s. Vaughn field that hosted one last year, and was seen at least 29 Dec (†MH, JLS, DP), 9 (†MJI, SR, DM), & 17 Feb (MJI, MLH, vt.JLS). Finally, and most surprisingly, Fallon found one at Beltsville Agricultural Research Station 15 Feb, which lingered at least into Mar and constituted not only a first for *Prince George's* but the first away from the immediate coast or Bay shoreline. All were found in fields with good low ground cover and a strong broomsedge (*Andropogon*) component. In Virginia only one was turned up at Back Bay N.W.R. (EO, PH), apparently due to degradation of the habitat in one of their preferred impoundments (*fide* GLA). Perhaps more unusual than Le Conte's,

a single Grasshopper Sparrow was at n. Vaughn 9 Feb (ph.MJI) and again 24 Feb (MH, JLS, KF), while another at Oyster, *Northampton*, VA was recorded on the Cape Charles C.B.C. 30 Dec (C. & G. Turner). Lapland Longspurs were consistently found at favorite Regional areas: New Design Rd., *Frederick*; Sparks Lane, *Caroline*, where 46 on the Denton C.B.C. 16 Dec represented the high there; and 50 at P.R.N.A.S. 2 Jan (KR), the best count. An outlier was one 13 Jan (ESB) at Kipt. Snow Buntings were fairly widespread.

The most unusual find in Maryland this C.B.C. season was a first winter record of **Blue Grosbeak**, described well from Weston Farm, off Elliott I. Rd., *Dorchester* 29 Dec (†W. Bell). Tidewater Virginia continues its streak of Painted Buntings with up to 2 visiting feeders at Holiday Trav-L-Park, Virginia Beach, VA and a male that graced a feeder off Windmill Pt. Rd. at White Stone, *Lancaster*, VA 27 Dec–4 Jan (E. Squires, v.o.). More unusual across the Bay, a female at Custis Tomb, *Northampton* 30 Dec (†W. Russell, PH) provided a Cape Charles C.B.C. first. Unusual winter Dickcissels were found on the Tridelphia C.B.C. 16 Dec and at a Sykesville, *Carroll* feeder 16 Jan (D. & M. Harvey).

Single Yellow-headed Blackbirds were a female near Kipt. 13 Jan (ESB) and an imm. male at Maddox Campground, Chinc. 20 Jan (M. Boatwright). Brewer's Blackbirds were

reported only on the Williamsburg C.B.C. 17 Dec and the Calmes Neck C.B.C., *Henrico*, VA, with 2 on 31 Dec. A total of 12 Baltimore Orioles was reported this season: hopefully all observers check winter orioles carefully for other species, as recent winter orioles in other Regions have turned out to be Bullock's, Hooded, Scott's, and even Streak-backed! This was an exceptionally poor finch year, with no reports of crossbills or redpolls, just four reports of Evening Grosbeak, a nearly complete absence of Pine Siskins, and low numbers of Purple Finches and American Goldfinches

Undocumented rarities: The following rarities were not reported with sufficient detail to be included here: Black Brant in *Worcester* 28 Dec; Harris's Sparrow in *Montgomery* 18 Dec, Brewer's Blackbird in *Montgomery* 18 Dec.

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