

British Columbia–Yukon



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Another winter without a winter for the West, by and large, as the East got the brunt of the cold and snow this year. The only significant series of Pacific storms made landfall in the first few days of December. After this, the flow turned northerly, and the only real cold snap of the winter held sway right out to the coast through the second week, although there did not seem to be much effect on the early C.B.C.s. It was a mixed bag of cold and warm until the Pineapple Express revved up again by early January, pushing the storms' tracks across the center of the province. Mild and dry weather prevailed over the south, whereas the north coast received copious rainfall. Several significant snowfalls occurred across the central Interior during the

month, but snowpacks remained below normal at the end of the month. February was a cool month overall, moreso for Interior regions, but definitely a dry one due to the virtual absence of any significant storms.

Abbreviations: Chichester (Chichester Bird Sanctuary, Kelowna), C.I.P. (Cottonwood Island Park, Prince George), F.F.T.W. (Forests for the World, Prince George), Whse. (Whitehorse, Yukon).

Cited C.B.C.s: Abbotsford 29 Dec, Comox 23 Dec, Duncan 30 Dec, Kelowna 16 Dec, Ladner 23 Dec, Nanaimo 30 Dec, Oliver-Osoyoos 30 Dec, Pitt Meadows 30 Dec, Prince George 19 Dec, Princeton 29 Dec, Revelstoke 16 Dec, Salmon Arm 19 Dec, Skidegate 16 Dec, Smithers 30 Dec, Sooke 23 Dec, Sunshine Coast 16 Dec, Vancouver 17 Dec, Victoria 16 Dec, and White Rock 30 Dec.

Loons Through Waterfowl

Potentially British Columbia's first documented **Arctic Loon** was seen 7 Feb (†GLM, CB) near Lantzville, Van. I. While the usual fall Interior trickle of Pacific Loons had occurred, there was only one winter report on the Osoyoos-Oliver C.B.C.. Although no Yellow-billed Loons were reported away from the coast, 4 on the Masset C.B.C., Q.C.I. was the highest single-day report this season. Pied-billed Grebes made a good showing on both interior and coastal C.B.C.s, Oliver-Osoyoos had 58, while Vancouver and Victoria had 44 and 64, respectively, with the most northerly seen 16 Dec at Williams L. (PR) A Northern Fulmar made a rare appearance on the Victoria C.B.C. (†DA). An imm. Double-crested Cormorant was on Swan L., Vernon 2 Dec (DGC), and another imm. remained near Nelson until 16 Dec (†BD), the only Interior reports this winter. Greater White-fronted Geese have become expected annually in winter in the cen. Okanagan, with 2 present in Kelowna 1-23 Dec (CC, RT). In the Cariboo-Chilcotin, 5 imm birds that had arrived two months earlier remained until 9 Dec and furnished the first winter record for Williams L. (PR). The 22,107 Snow Geese reported from the Ladner C.B.C. (all-time highest Canadian C.B.C. count total) included a single individual of the blue form, an unusual find (†RT0, DM). Winter 1985 was the last time numbers of this magnitude were recorded in midwinter. Trumpeter Swans were well represented at a few coastal locations: 1010 on the Abbotsford C.B.C., 1904 on the Comox C.B.C., 996 on the Duncan C.B.C., and 810 on the Ladner C.B.C., with most other counts in the single and double-digits. The relatively mild winter weather also provided the Yukon with a rare winter record, an adult Tundra Swan that lingered on the Yukon R. at Whse.-Pineridge until 15 Dec (HH, HG). A **Bewick's Swan**, a rare visitor to w. North America, was reported in Kilby P.P. along the Harrison River in sw. British Columbia from 1-12 Dec (MB, DTy).

During the mid-Dec freeze-up, as ducks were forced south, some of the rarer wintering ducks found refuge in creeks and rivers where there was moving water. A female Northern Pintail 16 Dec (DGC) was doing just that along the creek that feeds Swan L. in Vernon, and one to 3 males sought refuge at Chichester, Kelowna 1 Jan–early Feb (RT, CC). Eurasian Wigeons continue to increase, with no fewer than 260 individuals reported around the province, the highest count being **108** on the Ladner C.B.C. (by far the highest North American C.B.C. total this season and the Canadian all-time high count). There was only one Interior report of a male in Kelowna 1 Jan–28 Feb+ (RT et al.). Tofino's American Wigeon flock grew to a peak of 4000 on 1 Jan

(AD), a good count for the west coast of Van. I., although this pales in comparison to the 50,871 on the Ladner C.B.C. (Peace Valley CA was the only C.B.C. to have a higher tally). American Black Ducks totalled 12 on the Nanaimo C.B.C., and a male showed up at the Tsawwassen Ferry Jetty on 14 Dec (JI) and again on 23-28 Feb (m.ob.). The only report of Cinnamon Teal was a lingering male at Iona Island, Richmond until 17 Dec (RW). Fewer Tufted Ducks were reported than usual with one female at Vancouver's Lost Lagoon 1 Dec-16 Jan (RT0, RTy). Other rare wintering ducks seeking open water included an imm. male Common Goldeneye 10 Dec (PR) at Williams L., a female Barrow's Goldeneye at this same locale (PR), another female Barrow's on the Yukon R. at Whse. mid-Dec-28 Feb+ (HG et al.), and an unsexed bird on the Kathleen R. in sw. Yukon 27 Dec (GK, LK). Vancouver's 2816 Barrow's Goldeneyes was this year's highest C.B.C. tally in North America.

Raptors Through Doves

Two resident ad. Bald Eagles were at McIntyre Cr. wetlands on the Whse. C.B.C. 26 Dec (CE). This is the only known location where Bald Eagles regularly overwinter in the territory. A young Northern Harrier took an unsuccessful run at a Starling at a Quesnel feeder in cen. British Columbia 17 Dec (SCM), a sure sign of a hungry hawk, while a record total of 5 was tallied on the Prince George C.B.C.. A Cooper's Hawk 20 Dec (KO) at F.F.T.W. near Prince George was a good local find. There were four reports of the Harlan's race of Red-tailed Hawk in the south; Kelowna C.B.C., Pitt Meadows C.B.C., Vancouver C.B.C., and 24-28 Feb+ on the Vernon Commonage (ph. DGC). Rare in the Yukon was a late migrant ad. Golden Eagle at McIntyre Cr. wetlands on the Whse. C.B.C. 26 Dec (CE). Although only 9 Gyrfalcons were reported on C.B.C.s in British Columbia, it was clear that the cen. and n. Okanagan were their preferred sites, with 4-5 birds reported there. Gyrs that frequented bovine feedlots were the most sedentary and long-staying, such as the imm. gray-morph bird at Marshall's feedlot, Kelowna mid-Nov-7 Jan (TF et al.).

The mid-Dec cold snap, having occurred prior to the Interior C.B.C.s, sent Virginia Rails packing. In Kelowna, for example, 6 birds had been known to be huddled at Chichester. None were found on the C.B.C., and only one bird was found on 1 Jan (RT). Remarkable, then, was an individual that managed to winter from 30 Dec-12 Jan (LD) along the Chilcotin R. at Riske Creek and furnished a first winter record for the area. A lingering Sandhill Crane remained in the Victoria area to 25 Feb (JL, D'Ty), furnishing one of only a few winter records. The most norther-

ly Killdeer reported this season was a single bird 22 Dec (EL) at C.I.P. near Prince George where 2 had been present prior to the cold snap (AB). Greater Yellowlegs lingered in good numbers along the coast and lower mainland, with the highest tally of 75 birds found on the White Rock C.B.C.. A Ruddy Turnstone, casual in winter along the coast, overwintered at the White Rock pier to 28 Feb+ (*vide* HNM). Western Sandpipers, rare but apparently regular in winter, were recorded from three coastal locations: 6 were on the Ladner C.B.C., 17 on the Vancouver C.B.C., and 3 on the White Rock C.B.C.. Ladner's whopping 60,493 Dunlin was by far this winter's largest C.B.C. count for North America. The only Red Phalarope reported this season was on the Sooke C.B.C. (DS) and was a good find, inasmuch as only 164 were seen on all of the continent's C.B.C.s combined.

A **Black-headed Gull**, a vagrant to the s. coast, furnished Vancouver's 4th record and 2nd winter record 28 Dec-28 Feb+ (MT, m.ob.). This basic-plumaged ad. was first discovered in a field with Mew Gulls in Delta. It frustrated many birders by not staying in any one location for long. Reports of **Iceland Gulls** continue to increase, with four reports this season: a first-basic bird on the Victoria C.B.C. 16 Dec (†BW), an unaged bird in Delta 11 Feb (RT0), a third-basic bird at Iona 17 Feb (RT0), and a basic ad. in Vernon 28 Jan-28 Feb+ (†, ph. DGC, PG, m.ob.). An unaged **Lesser Black-backed Gull**, potentially Vancouver's first and the province's 3rd, was seen in Delta on 25 Jan (RT0). Just about every winter for the past 11 years, **Slaty-backed Gulls** have turned up in the Vancouver area. This year was no exception, with an ad. seen rather reliably from Burns Drive in Delta 24 Dec-18 Feb (RT0, m.ob.), and likely a different individual was seen from the Iona Jetty 17 Feb (RT0). A **White-winged Dove** frequented a feeder in Victoria 14 Jan-8 Feb (m.ob.) and moved to another feeder in the area upon apparent harrassment by a photographer. There appears to be a pattern of vagrancy to the sw. corner of British Columbia, although it is not always possible to rule out captive origins in these sightings.

Owls

Wintering Barn Owls away from the coast were reported as follows: a single bird on the Oliver-Osoyoos C.B.C., one on the Salmon Arm C.B.C., and a pair in Kelowna 16 Dec (BT), but unfortunately one of the birds was hit by a car in Feb. A Great Horned Owl of the *subarcticus* race moved s., presumably from n. British Columbia, to furnish one of very few winter records for the s. Interior. It remained at Chichester, Kelowna 13 Jan-24 Feb (RT, ph.DGC, CC, CoC), where it was easily found roosting during the daylight

SA This was a winter of owls. Most owls other than Snowy and Long-eared were well reported this season. The owl that stole the show, however, was the Northern Hawk Owl, whose unprecedented invasion of the Interior involved no fewer than 75 individuals. The first sign of a significant southward movement came in mid-Nov as individuals began appearing in the c. Interior. By mid-Dec, the irruption had spread to the s. Interior. The most southerly reported individual came from Anarchist Mountain near Osoyoos in the s. Okanagan, and the most easterly was in Creston. Very few individuals approached the coast: one was in Whistler on Blackcomb Mtn. Presumably, a successful reproductive year encouraged this movement, and the reduced snow cover may have assisted their success. Often when such invasions occur, there is also a high incidence of injured or starving birds, but this was not the case in 2000-2001. Not only was there a lack of such reports, but birds that were closely observed were noted to have been highly successful at capturing prey, even along busy streets. Considering how Great Gray Owls and Short-eared Owls were well represented in the north, this would seem to lend support to the notion that lack of prey was not the primary cause for the invasion. Due to the size and extent of this invasion, local nestings away from traditional breeding sites are a distinct possibility. See Table 1 on page 217 for locations of sightings.

hours. With all of the owl excitement this winter, one species that was notably absent was Snowy Owl. Only 7 birds were reported: one at Westham I., Richmond 17 Jan-28 Feb+ (MMc), one at Vancouver International Airport 17 Dec-28 Feb+ (m.ob.), 2 on the Skidegate, Q.C.I C.B.C., one from 12-28 Feb (MW) at Sunset Beach, Vancouver, and one from Rose Hill, se. of Kamloops, throughout the period. Not only was the small number of Snowys unusual, but many of these birds were wanderers as well: more often than not, once Snowy Owls choose their wintering site, they remain nearby. Northern Pygmy-Owls were well reported across the province, with a high of 12 on the Smithers C.B.C. Great Gray Owls staged their best showing in recent memory this winter. Sightings included singles at Mendenhall, sw. Yukon, through Dec (SK, m.ob.), near Haines Junction 27 Dec (GK, LK), on the 5 Mile Road near the Klondike Hwy. nw of Whse. 31 Dec-1 Jan (NJ), near Mayo from

Table 1. Regional Hawk Owl sightings for the winter of 2000–2001.
All sightings are single birds unless otherwise specified.

Location	Date(s)	Observer(s)			
Kootenays (11)			Coastal (1)		
Meadow Creek	14 Dec-4 Mar	G. Spider	Whistler Ski Village	19 Dec	<i>fide</i> CC
Castlegar Airport	26 Jan-4 Feb	R. Wege	Kamloops/Merritt/Shuswap (9)		
Anarchist Mtn. summit	31 Jan S.	Clow	Greenstone Mtn.	15 Oct	<i>fide</i> CC
Creston	8 Jan-23 Feb	M. Beaucher	Thynne Mtn (Merritt)	7 Nov	<i>fide</i> CC
Red Mountain Ski Area	12 Dec	G. Nicol	Knutsford	18 Dec	<i>fide</i> CC
Nelson	19 Jan	J. Arndt	Peterson Creek	26 Dec	<i>fide</i> CC
Brouse, near Nakusp	5-12 Jan	GSD, M. Allard	Peterson Creek	early Jan	<i>fide</i> CC
Trail	19 Jan	S. Bennett	Sugarloaf Hill	23 Jan	<i>fide</i> CC
Whitewater Ski area near Nelson	mid- to late Sep	U. Lowrey	Ussher Lake	3 Feb	<i>fide</i> CC
Cherryville	28 Jan-8 Mar	M. Collins	Rosehill Rd.	10 Dec	<i>fide</i> CC
Grizzly Creek, Slocan Valley	21 Jan	S. Bennett	Sicamous	4 Feb-12 Mar	J. Olfert
Okanagan Valley Area (5)			Central B.C. (25)		
Kelowna	12 Feb-26 Feb	R. Gee, I. Walker	Quesnel	4 Nov	M. Roschitz
Vernon	17 Dec	G. Stewart	Newlands	4 Nov	C. Antoniazzi
Falkland	15 Jan-Feb 16	M. Gebauer, DGC	Tyner Blvd.	21 Nov	<i>fide</i> K. Otter
Big White Ski Mountain	1 Mar	D. Wilson	Giscome	26 Nov	C. Antoniazzi
Okanagan Falls	27 Mar	<i>fide</i> A. Bezener	Upper Fraser R. (P.G.)	26 Nov	<i>fide</i> J. Bowling
Cariboo—Chilcotin (28)			Pineview (P.G.)	30 Nov	J. Fenneman
near Gang Ranch	19 Oct	P. Ranson	McBride (2)	8 Dec	E. Stanley
Wildwood	1 Nov	P. Ranson	Willow River Hill (P.G.)	9 Dec	C. Antoniazzi
Springhouse (2)	5 Nov	P. Ranson	Hixon	13 Dec	J. Fenneman
Westwick Lake	5 Nov	P. Ranson	15 km s. of Kersley	21 Dec	J. Bowling
Anahim Lake	8 Nov	P. Ranson	Fort St. James (2)	30 Dec	m. obs.
Dog Creek	1 Dec	P. Ranson	Jail in P.G.	1 Jan-23 Feb	C. Antoniazzi
Kersley	21 Dec	P. Ranson	Veekens Rd. (P.G.)	7 Jan	<i>fide</i> J. Bowling
Riske Creek	3 Jan	P. Ranson	Pinko Rd. (P.G.)	7 Jan	<i>fide</i> J. Bowling
Farwell Canyon Rd.	5 Jan	Roberts	Vanderhoof (3)	14 Jan	H. Antoniazzi
Hanceville	7 Jan	Koot	Sajmon Valley (3)	11 Feb	V. Bopp
McDonald's Ranch	14 Jan	P. Ranson	P.G. Secondary School	26 Dec-1 Feb	C. McGee
Fox Mountain	19 Jan	P. Ranson	Wells Gray (2)	7 Feb	V. Bopp
Horsefly Rd. (3)	21 Jan	P. Ranson	Peace River (2)		
Big Lake	27 Jan	Koot	Hwy 97 near Dawson Creek	1 Mar	P. Sherrington
Lone Butte	28 Jan	Koot	Dawson Creek CBC	30 Dec	<i>fide</i> M. Phinney
Rose Lake	3 Feb	<i>fide</i> CC			
128 Mile	4 Feb	Howard			
Wingdam	7 Feb	Bopp			
150 Mile	4 Mar	<i>fide</i> CC			

mid-Dec (*fide* MO'D), on the 27 Dec Watson Lake C.B.C. (*fide* TM-K), and at the lower Rancheria R. 20 Feb (MG). Considerably higher numbers were reported along the Alaska Hwy. in n. British Columbia, with 17 tallied from Dawson Cr. to the Fort Liard Hwy. 29 Jan (MC), and an additional 4 tallied from the Fort Liard Hwy w. to 18 km w. of Steamboat on the same day (HG), and one at Logjam Cr. w. of Swift River 18 Feb (MG). Short-eared Owls remained north, with more than 50% of this winter's sightings coming from the Prince George area where 30 individuals were found on their C.B.C., shattering previous high counts and being this season's highest w. North American C.B.C. count. An unusual number of Boreal Owls came out of the woods this winter, with sightings of singles in Whse. 16 Jan (NH), at Haines Junction

26 Jan (LF), at the McClintock R. 13 Feb (MG), in downtown Whse. 17-18 Feb (MS, PS; RC), and in Whse.-Porter Creek 17 Feb (CE, PS). One was heard at Whse.-Pilot Mountain 1 Feb (BD).

Hummingbirds Through Finches

Three noteworthy reports of Anna's Hummingbirds came from the Interior: a single male at a Prince George feeder 17 Nov–10 Dec (TG) furnished a 2nd winter record for the area, but it succumbed to overnight temperatures of -25 to -30 degrees C: a cooperative male in the Crawford Estates area of Kelowna from Nov–8 Dec (TFR, ph. DGC, m.ob.); and one at Carr's Landing on Okanagan lake between Kelowna and Vernon Nov–7 Feb (DS, m.ob.). One of British Columbia's most sought-after birds, **White-headed Woodpecker**, was reported from

Anarchist Mtn. near Osoyoos 26 Feb (DB) Extremely rare in the Yukon in winter was a Pileated Woodpecker at Upper Liard 18 Dec (MG). An early Say's Phoebe was along Black Road in Kelowna 28 Feb (TF). An **Ash-throated Flycatcher** was reported from Reifel I. 18-28 Dec (†J, m.ob.) furnishing the Region's first winter record. Few Blue Jays were reported from the Interior, with 2 birds in the Glenrosa area of Westbank 2 Dec–7 Feb (AF, et al.) and a single bird at Okanagan Landing area in Vernon 18 Nov–28 Feb+ (DGC, PG et al.). Blue Jays were also reported on Revelstoke (2), Sunshine Coast (1), and Penticton (1) C.B.C.s. The Victoria C.B.C. turned up 125 Sky Larks, a respectable total for this small but stable population. Barn Swallows are rare but regular in winter along the lower mainland; 2 such overwinterers were seen

over Canoe Pass, Westham I. 2-3 Feb (JI). Ruby-crowned Kinglet, rare in winter in the s. Interior, was reported along Mission Cr. in Kelowna 3 Dec (DGC) and 2 Jan (RT). Also rare in winter were 4 Mountain Bluebirds on the Oliver-Osoyoos C.B.C. American Robins were especially numerous in the Interior this winter, perhaps due to the combination of a milder winter, reduced snowfall, and an abundance of berries. Many Okanagan C.B.C. counts had numbers that rivaled coastal totals. The highest count in the Region came from the Penticton C.B.C., where 2893 were tallied. Also noteworthy was one bird reported from Whse.-Riverdale through the season, where rare but regular in winter (CE, HG et al.). The American Robin C.B.C. total for the province—19,448—easily outnumbered Bohemian Waxwings, of which a mere 16,661 were counted. Perhaps the first coastal winter record of **Gray Catbird** came from Cowichan Bay late Nov–28 Feb+ (DM), where it provided the first overwintering record for the Region. A Northern Mockingbird overwintered in Ucluelet 3 Dec–28 Feb (AA), and another individual was sighted in Victoria on 18 Jan (m.ob.). Cedar Waxwings appeared to fare as well as the robins, with the highest C.B.C. total of 73 from Kelowna, followed closely by Penticton's 68. Ladner, Nanaimo, and White Rock each reported an Orange-crowned Warbler on their C.B.C.s. A male **Black-throated Blue Warbler**, the Region's 7th, visited a Balfour feeder, West Kootenays 20 Nov–28 Feb+ (GDe, m.ob.). The only Interior winter report of Yellow-rumped Warbler came from Kelowna's Rotary Marshes 13 Jan (RT). The best location in the province to find Yellow-rumped Warblers in winter is assuredly Stubbs I. off Tofino, where 16 Myrtles were found on 6 Jan (AD), likely subsisting on Pacific Bayberry and associated insects. Single Palm Warblers, rare but regular winterers in the sw. corner of British Columbia, were reported from Granville Island, Vancouver 17 Dec (SO), Deering Island Park, Vancouver 3 Dec–28 Feb (RT, JAM), and another on the Victoria C.B.C. The region's 2nd winter record of **MacGillivray's Warbler** was an imm. at the foot of Roger St. Vancouver on 17 Dec (†VO). This bird had a broken leg, the likely cause of its failure to depart. A Wilson's Warbler, casual in winter, was at Deering Island Park, Vancouver on 1 Dec (DTy). A **Clay-colored Sparrow** 3 Dec (RW) in Ucluelet, on the west coast of Van. I. furnished one of very few winter records for the Region. A **Vesper Sparrow**, accidental in winter in sw. British Columbia, provided the region's 2nd winter record and first successful overwinterer 7 Dec–7 Feb (RT, et al.) at Kilby P.P. in Harrison Mills. A Savannah Sparrow furnished Tofino's 2nd winter record 5 Feb (AD). Following an exceptional autumn showing of

Harris's Sparrows in the Okanagan, it was little surprise that as many as 7 were in the Kelowna area this winter (*fide* CC). A rare winter report of **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** was received from Cedar, near Nanaimo 30-31 Dec (†SB et al.) where it had been visiting local feeders. A male Yellow-headed Blackbird was located on the Ladner C.B.C. (†TP et al.), where casual in winter, and another male was found on the Kamloops C.B.C. (*fide* RH). Kelowna's male **Great-tailed Grackle**, the Region's 3rd, that was first found in early May 2000, managed to subsist on leftovers from fast food outlets to 28 Feb+ (CC ph. DGC, m.ob.) Typical winter birds such as Snow Buntings, crossbills, redpolls, and other winter finches were scarce throughout the Region. Vancouver's 3rd **Hooded Oriole** and the Region's 7th, was an ad. male that frequented a hummingbird feeder in Richmond 9 Jan–28+ Feb (KL et al.). One of Tofino's 2 late Bullock's Orioles stayed on through the winter. While both birds had been feeding on local fuchsia flowers, the overwintering bird learned to husk sunflower seeds at a feeder 2 Dec–28 Feb (AD). This season's only reported Brambling stayed in N. Vancouver 20 Jan–28+ Feb (QB). A complete lack of Hoary Redpoll sightings in the Yukon and exceptionally low numbers of Common Redpolls everywhere was most unusual.

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