

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

An **Orange-crowned Warbler** at a bird feeder at Sewickley, *Allegheny*, PA 2 Jan (ph. CM) established the first winter record for the w. half of the state, and a late Cape May Warbler was at P.I.S.P. 2 Dec (PH, SSi). A **Yellow Warbler** divided its time between two neighborhood feeders in Warren, PA 18 Nov—26 Dec (DWa). Rarely found wintering in w. Pennsylvania, single Common Yellowthroats were at P.I.S.P. 15 Dec (DS), New Castle 15 Dec (BD), and at Upper St. Clair, *Allegheny* 9 Dec (DWI). A Chipping Sparrow at Patton, *Cambria*, PA 6 Dec (DG) was well n. of the usual wintering range in Appalachia, as was a Savannah Sparrow at Berlin, *Somerset*, PA 9 Dec (JPa). A record-high winter count of 71 Savannah Sparrows was established for *Augusta*, VA 20 Jan (*fide* YL). One of the highlights of the season was 2 **Harris's Sparrows** at the Blythe Ferry Unit, Hiwassee W.R., TN 5 Jan—23 Feb (JH, DJ, m. ob.); another good find was an Oregon Junco at Pipestem S.P., WV 24 Dec+ (JPh). Lapland Longspurs were largely confined to n. Pennsylvania, with scattered singles s. to State College 16 Dec (*fide* EZ) and Berlin 1 Jan (JPa); likewise, Snow Buntings were locally common in Pennsylvania, with singles reaching s. to *Ritchie*, WV 16 Dec (GF) and *Whitetop Mt.*, VA 1-3 Dec (GE, m. ob.). A Dickcissel was a rarity at a feeding station in Greene Twp., *Erie*, PA 1 Feb+ (*fide* JM), as was another at Boalsburg, *Centre*, PA 1-30 Dec (*fide* EZ). Infrequent in the Region, at least 10 Brewer's Blackbirds were at Cooley's Pond, *Wayne*, KY 30 Jan (*fide* SS), and one was in *Sequatchie*, TN 23 Feb (JH, DJ), at a site where the species has been found for three consecutive years (KC). The only Baltimore Oriole reported this season was at Warren, PA through the first half of Dec (*fide* TG).

In general, the n. finch invasion was lighter than expected considering the number and early appearance of a few species in the fall. A small flock of Pine Grosbeaks near Mansfield, *Tioga*, PA 30 Dec—6 Feb, however, attracted much birder attention (BI, m. ob.), and 2 were at Brush Valley, *Indiana*, PA 30 Dec (*fide* MH). Red Crossbills peaked at 26 in *Rabun*, GA 26 Jan (EB), 10 were at Rock Creek L., *Fannin*, GA 14 Jan (BB), and one was there on the 15th (DF). A few White-winged Crossbills were scattered across w. Pennsylvania (m. ob.), highlighted by 20+ at Lake City, *Erie* from early Dec+ (*fide* JM); up to 14 were at Grandfather Mt., NC 8-13 Dec (WF, D&LM, m. ob.). Common Redpolls were reported only from Pennsylvania, where better counts included 400+ in one flock at Hills Cr. L., *Tioga*, 9 Jan (BI) and up to 35 at P.I.S.P. 5 Dec—26 Feb (BC). By mid-winter, only scattered flocks of Pine Siskins remained in

most of n. Appalachia, while southward a few were scattered about in e. Tennessee (RKn, KC), and 82 were seen along Burrell's Ford Road, *Rabun*, GA 26 Jan (EB). Flocks of up to 60 Evening Grosbeaks frequented scattered sites in w. Pennsylvania; farther s. one was at Somerset, *Pulaski*, KY 21 Dec (CN), they were "sporadic" in *Transylvania*, NC (NS), and sightings in the Georgia mountains included 20 birds in *Rabun* 24 Dec (*fide* MB) and 2 at Cherry Log, *Gilmer*, in mid-Jan (CF). In Virginia, only a handful could be found in traditional sites in *Highland* (*fide* YL).

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Western Great Lakes



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All three states reported very mild conditions throughout most of the season. Temperatures were above average throughout the Region, while precipitation was either below

average or average. Most of the Region encountered little deep snow until very late in February, when some areas received up to 50 cm.

With the mild conditions, it is not surprising that much of the excitement this season involved late and lingering species. Some real rarities were seen, with Michigan getting more than its fair share. Highlights in Minnesota included Anna's Hummingbird and Brambling, while Wisconsin boasted a Ross's Gull, a first

state record, as was the Vermilion Flycatcher first found in the fall. Michigan's list of notables was long and included Northern Gannet, White-winged Dove, Sage Thrasher, Black-throated Gray Warbler, and Painted Bunting—for perhaps the state's most diverse and exciting winter in recent memory.

Abbreviations: M.B.R.C. (Michigan Bird Records Committee); W.A. (Wildlife Area).

LOONS THROUGH IBISES

In Michigan, reports of Red-throated Loon from five counties was above average. Exceptional in that state were multiple reports of Pacific Loon including 2 from 26-27 Dec and one on 1 & 7 Jan on Keweenaw Bay, *Baraga* (JK), as well as one on 2 Feb in Sault Ste. Marie, *Chippewa* (BM, ST), all are pending M.B.R.C. review. Common Loons were encountered in above-average numbers in Wisconsin, where they had triple their normal numbers on C.B.C.s and in record numbers in Minnesota for the winter season. In Minnesota, 12 Horned Grebes 20 Jan and 11 on 24 Feb on L. Superior, *Lake* (JL) were high mid-winter totals. A Red-necked Grebe on 24 Feb in *Ozaukee* (TW) was considered record early in Wisconsin, while the species was reported from three Michigan counties, including one to 7 Jan in the n. county of *Baraga*. They were also seen in three Minnesota counties on L. Superior. A Western Grebe was seen in *Milwaukee*, WI from 4-13 Dec (m. ob.), while one 16 Dec in *Berrien* (KM) was a first on Michigan C.B.C.s. Also a first for Michigan C.B.C.s, and only the 9th overall state record, a Northern Gannet was at Lake Erie Metropark, *Wayne* on 22 Dec (MM). Record late in Wisconsin was a Least Bittern 22 Dec in *Chippewa* (JP), while a Great Egret 7 Dec at the Horicon Marsh was only the 3rd winter record. At least 2 Black-crowned Night-Herons overwintered on the Fox R. at Green Bay, the first such occurrence since 1976 in Wisconsin. In Michigan the species often overwinters, but 11 through the period in Gibraltar, *Wayne* (WP) was an unusually high number, while in Minnesota, where the species is considered casual in winter, one was present 5-13 Jan at Black Dog L., *Dakota* (DK). A *Plegadis* ibis lingered to 2 Dec at Metro Beach, *Macomb* (SH) constituting Michigan's first winter record. Only the 2nd winter record in that state was a Black Vulture 18 Jan at Dodgeville, *Houghton* (OM), pending M.B.R.C. review.

WATERFOWL

A Greater White-fronted Goose 10-12 Jan (DC) provided Wisconsin its first Jan record, while first migrants in that state were noted in *Dane*

22 Feb (AS), a flock of 225 in *Columbus* (DT) being the high count of the early arrivals. In Minnesota, there were 669 White-fronteds reported from 13 s. counties 18-27 Feb, along with a record-early 7 on 14 Feb at Fergus Falls, *Otter Tail* (JH). Also early were 9 on 18 Feb at *Big Stone*, *Swift* (SM) and 6 on 21 Feb at S. Landfill Reservoir, *Olmsted* (CB). Michigan's only report was of 8 on 6 Dec in *Washtenaw* (HP). Ross's Geese lingered throughout the Region: in Minnesota, 5 were present 11-13 Dec at E. Landfill Reservoir, *Olmsted* (RE et al.), while Michigan had its first C.B.C. and only 2nd winter record of 2 from 8 Dec—9 Feb at the Todd Farm, *Allegan* (RS). Wisconsin had three reports, with 4 on the Madison C.B.C. 1 in *Outagamie* (*vide* BD) and 2 on 9 Jan in *Winnebago* (TZ); there were only two previous winter records in that state. Minnesota reported 658 Trumpeter Swans on 4 Jan at Monticello, *Sherborne/Wright* (KB) and another 300+ overwintered along the Otter Tail R. in Fergus Falls, *Otter Tail* (DM, SM). Michigan had reports of Trumpeter Swans from 14 counties. Tundra Swans were present in near-record numbers in Minnesota, where 12,100 were reported on 22 Dec on the Mississippi R. at Reno, *Houston* (KB); Tundras returned record early, with 10 on 18 Feb at Weaver Marshes *Wabasha* (PJ, DN) and 17 on 23 Feb at S. Landfill Reservoir, *Olmsted* (RE). Wisconsin had similar high numbers of Tundra Swans: an unprecedented 4102 were on the Trempealeau C.B.C. (*vide* BD). All three states had good numbers of Harlequin Ducks this season; the species seems to be increasing in the Great Lakes region during the winter. In Wisconsin, the Barrow's Goldeneye that wintered at Virmond Park for the past seven years did not return this season, but one was present 12-26 Jan in *Milwaukee* (DT, TW). Michigan and Wisconsin reported average numbers of scoters. In Minnesota, where scoters are considered casual in winter, a Surf Scoter 6 Dec at Winona, *Winona* (DB et al.) was record late in the south and only the 9th winter record. Three White-winged Scoters on L. Superior at Duluth, *St. Louis* (PS, m. ob.) were the first documented to overwinter in Minnesota, while a Black Scoter 16 Dec at Winona, *Winona* (DB et al.) was record late in the south; one on 4 Dec at Duluth, *St. Louis* (PS) was only the 4th winter record in the north. Also in Minnesota, 75,000 Common Mergansers present to 22 Dec on Lake Pepin, *Goodhue/Wabasha* (JM, KB) was an exceptional total, while 7 Red-breasted Mergansers on 18 Feb in Winona (PJ, DN) were record-early spring migrants.

RAPTORS THROUGH TERNS

In Minnesota, Northern Goshawk numbers



Representing a first winter record in Michigan, this White-winged Dove remained through the season in Dewitt Township, Clinton County. The increasing frequency of vagrant White-wingeds during the warmer months will almost certainly lead to more records of wintering birds, particularly in warm winters such as 2001-2002.

Photograph by Adam M. Byrne.

were unexpectedly low this season after last year's increases. Golden Eagle numbers were about average in that state but lower in both Michigan and Wisconsin. A late Osprey was observed in Wisconsin on 9 Dec at the Milwaukee Coast Guard Impoundment (CH). The number of winter Merlin reports continues to rise in Michigan: this season reports came from 10 counties. All three states had Gyrfalcons, including a gray morph in the Sault Ste Marie area of Michigan and reports of imm gray morphs on 3 Dec (FN) and 5 Jan (PS) in Duluth, Minnesota. Wisconsin hosted 4 Gyrs singles 4 Dec—Jan at Buena Vista Grasslands (KH, m. ob.), 21 Jan at Devil's Lake S.P. (MF), 5 Jan at *Superior* (PS), and finally a controversial bird considered by some to be a falconer's bird, and perhaps a Peregrine x Gyrfalcon hybrid, 3-8 Feb in *Racine* (EH, m. ob.). The latter is pending review by the Wisconsin Bird Records Committee. As is typical, the only Prairie Falcon report came from Minnesota, one on 1 Dec in *Polk* (TV, *vide* BB). In Michigan, 2 Virginia Rails stayed to 2 Dec in *Washtenaw* (HP), while Sandhill Cranes lingered in the s tier of counties in higher-than-normal numbers. Gray Partridge seems to be declining in Wisconsin; this season, the only report came from *Brown*, where 9 were reported on 31 Jan (DV). Killdeer lingered in Minnesota, with 1 on 4 Dec in Duluth, *St. Louis* (PS) being record late in the n. part of the state. Late in Michigan was a Greater Yellowlegs on 1 Dec in *Washtenaw* (SS). Perhaps the most unexpected shorebird in the Region was the Ruddy Turnstone that appeared 22 Jan near Alpena, *Alpena* (JSO), it remained through the period, providing a first



Michigan's third Sage Thrasher record was provided by this bird coming to a feeding station in Gladwin (here 26 December 2001). Photograph by Adam M. Byrne.

winter record for Michigan and likely the Region. The turnstone associated with Snow Buntings and took corn from a bird feeder, behavior typical on wintering grounds at beachside Caribbean bars (and even the Chesapeake Bay), but hardly in Alpena! A Purple Sandpiper 2 Feb in Racine (EH) was Wisconsin's 3rd winter record beyond 2 Jan, while in Michigan one 16 Dec at Muskegon (CF) was more typical. A Dunlin from 15-16 Dec at Duluth, St. Louis (MS) provided a first winter record for Minnesota. Exceptional in Michigan were reports of Red Phalarope on 1 Dec on Keweenaw Bay, Baraga (JK), 1- 2 Dec at South Haven, Van Buren (JG, RS), and 27-28 Jan at Holland, Ottawa (TW). An American Woodcock found dead on 17 Feb in Racine (fide EH) was only the 7th Wisconsin record in that month. The only Little Gull in the Region this season came from Wisconsin, where one was seen through 23 Dec in Milwaukee. A Black-headed Gull in Milwaukee 2-23 Dec (SL, m. ob.) was only the 2nd winter record in Wisconsin. Two tardy Bonaparte's Gulls on 15 Dec in Afton, Washington were the 3rd latest date in Minnesota. In Wisconsin, a Mew Gull was present 8-23 Dec in Milwaukee (RH, DG, m ob.). Herring Gulls overwintered for the first time in Minnesota away from L. Superior, 200 staying in the Twin Cities area, while above-average numbers wintered on the Great Lakes. All three states reported good numbers of Thayer's and Iceland Gulls this season. Minnesota also reported good numbers of Glaucous Gulls, including overwintering birds at Black Dog L., Dakota as well as above-average numbers of Great Black-backed Gulls. Wisconsin and Michigan reported average-

numbers of Lesser Black-backed Gulls. In Minnesota, a first-winter Black-legged Kittiwake was found along I-35 feeding on a road-killed deer near Sandstone, Pine on 2 Dec (TWi); less unusual were the 2 ads. and 2 tar-rocks observed in Michigan on 1 Dec at South Haven, Van Buren (JG, RS). Certainly the bird of the season in Wisconsin was the first state record Ross's Gull in Ashland 6-8 Dec (DVe, TM), which was enjoyed by many.

DOVES THROUGH VIREOS

The Eurasian Collared-Dove continues to move into Wisconsin at a slow pace. This season, one was at Holy Cross through 23 Feb, 3 were found in Grant on 9 Jan (JHe), and in Oconoto, where they have been present for the past three years (JS, KS). A White-winged Dove present through the period in DeWitt Twp., Clinton (EB, CK) provided Michigan its first winter record. All three states reported good numbers of Snowy Owls. In contrast, only Minnesota reported Northern Hawk Owl, with 23 during the winter season. Great Grays were similarly rare in Wisconsin, with only one report from Shawano (DT, JHe); Michigan had no reports, while Minnesota had 22 during the season. Michigan had increased numbers of Long-eared Owls, with reports from 5 counties. Amazingly, Minnesota had its 3rd record for Anna's Hummingbird, an ad. male present 1-26 Dec in Minneapolis, Hennepin (JLa, Jlu, m. ob.). In Michigan, the Rufous Hummingbird at Ortonville, Oakland remained to 31 Dec (AC). Minnesota had an average number of Three-toed Woodpecker reports—6 from four counties—but an individual on 15 Dec near Paradise, Chippewa (KMe) was exceptional in Michigan, the record pending M.B.R.C. review. Minnesota had an excellent showing for Black-backed Woodpeckers, with 41 reports including one on 2-9 Jan in Becker, Sherburne (DO), the first s. report since 1987. Michigan also had an unusual report of 3 present on Isle Royale, Keweenaw 23-28 Feb (fide JK).

Eastern Phoebe lingered into Dec in three Michigan counties, while a single bird 30 Dec—7 Jan at Little Sauk, Todd (JKr, m. ob.) provided Minnesota a new late date. The Vermilion Flycatcher reported in Wisconsin in the fall remained to 2 Dec at Jefferson (BR), the first documented record for that state. Also in Wisconsin, two brown-backed swallows were found on 24 Dec in Dane (MM) and were the source of some controversy in which identification ranged from imm. Tree Swallow to Bank Swallow to Northern Rough-winged Swallow, the latter gaining the consensus. A Marsh Wren 8-16 Dec at Mound Springs Park, Hennepin (SC) provided Minnesota its 8th winter record.



This Black-throated Gray Warbler remained at a feeder near Centreville from 15 December 2001 through the period's end, providing Michigan a first winter record. Photograph by Adam M. Byrne

THRUSHES THROUGH WARBLERS

Average for Minnesota were 7 Townsend's Solitaire reports from seven counties, while Wisconsin had several at Devil's Lake S.P. and one on 29 Jan in Waukesha (CS). Hermit Thrushes are not unusual in Michigan during the winter, but the one in late Feb in Houghton (DBo) was well n. of normal. Varied Thrush was less common in Wisconsin, with only two reports, while more typical were the 9 reported from seven Minnesota counties. Unexpected was a Gray Catbird at a Wisconsin feeder 31 Jan+ in Winnebago (BH). Only the 3rd Michigan record, and the 2nd in 4 months, a Sage Thrasher was present 25-30 Dec in Gladwin, Gladwin (m. ob.).

American Pipits lingered in Michigan, with 6 on the Alpena C.B.C. and 2 on 21 Jan and one on 3 Feb at Metro Beach, Macomb. Wisconsin also reported American Pipits in Dane 17 Feb (PA), Ozaukee 21 Feb (JF), a small flock on 25 Feb at Williams Bay (WR), and 2 in Dane 28 Feb (KBu). All three states reported low numbers of Bohemian Waxwings, the only significant flock being 1,000 on 6 Jan in Crow Wing in Minnesota (WN). Minnesota had its 4th winter record for Orange-crowned Warbler, an individual on 14 Dec in Washington (EBE, TB). A Cape May Warbler on the Houghton C.B.C., Houghton (BDe) was exceptional in Michigan both because of the late date and for the northerly location. An Audubon's Warbler was reported 8-10 Feb at Grey Cloud I., Washington (TT, AS), 14th record of this w. subspecies in Minnesota. Both Minnesota and Wisconsin reported excellent numbers of Yellow-rumped Warblers, the 19 reports in Minnesota being a record; conversely Michigan had a very poor season for this species. A Black-throated Gray Warbler appeared in Michigan at a feeder near Centreville, St. Joseph 15 Dec+ (JJ, VJ). A Palm

Warbler 14 Dec in Two Harbors, *Lake* (JL) was a first winter record for Minnesota, as was one on 15 Dec on the Beloit C.B.C. (SC) for Wisconsin. An Ovenbird lingered in Michigan to 5 Dec in Detroit, *Wayne* (KO), and one on the Oconomowoc C.B.C. (*fide* BD) was Wisconsin's 5th winter record.

TANAGERS THROUGH FINCHES

A Summer Tanager at a feeder in *Outagamie* 27 Dec—15 Jan (DT, m. ob.) was a 3rd winter record in Wisconsin, as was one on 2 Dec in Duluth, *St. Louis* (*fide* KE) in Minnesota. In Michigan, the female Scarlet Tanager from the fall stayed to 7 Dec in *Berrien* (JW). A Spotted Towhee 15 Dec in *Dane* (GS, PSc) was the 8th state record in Wisconsin. Casual in Minnesota during the winter, a Chipping Sparrow was present 1-28 Jan at Whitewater W.M.A., *Winona* (CB, WB, m. ob.). A Vesper Sparrow 22 Dec in *Cass* (JW) was late in Michigan, while a Savannah Sparrow near Lawndale, *Wilkin* (SM) was only the 5th winter record in Minnesota. Minnesota had its 8th winter record for Lincoln's Sparrow, with one on 6 Dec in Minneapolis, *Hennepin* (TT), while in Michigan, where the species is less uncommon in winter, a single bird was present from to 1 Feb in Detroit, *Wayne* (JFo, KO). Wisconsin had 2 Lincoln's Sparrow reports, including one on 23 Feb in *Dane* (KBu) and another on the Stockbridge C.B.C. (*fide* BD). Michigan had single Harris's Sparrows on 16 Dec and 28 Dec—8 Jan, both in *Berrien* (JW). A female Rose-breasted Grosbeak appeared at a Wisconsin feeder in *Portage* 11-12 Dec (AY, KH). Very unexpected was an imm. **Painted Bunting** that appeared on 2 Feb and remained through the month at a feeder in Rogers City, *Presque Isle* (AP, EP, WG, m. ob.). The bird appeared after a day of strong southerly winds and was so weak it was thought it would succumb overnight; but it made a miraculous recovery and was enjoyed by many Michigan birders. It is the 9th state record and the first in winter. Equally astounding in that state was a **Bobolink** on the Rockwood C.B.C., *Monroe* (KO). This Neotropical migrant is rare on any North American C.B.C., though this bird provided a 2nd record for a Michigan C.B.C.! Also in Michigan's *Monroe* was a large winter blackbird roost with counts of 90,000 Red-winged Blackbirds and 135,000 Common Grackles on 15 Dec (AC). Equally impressive on the Monroe C.B.C. were 4,038 Rusty Blackbirds. Wisconsin also had big concentrations of Rusty Blackbirds, with 1,700 at the Waterloo W.A. on 14 Dec (KK) and 4,000+ on the Hutisford C.B.C. (BD). The previous winter high in that state was 337. The Hutisford C.B.C. also reported 1,200+ Brewer's Blackbirds, rather remarkable when one considers that all the previous winter records of this species

in Wisconsin numbered only 474! In Michigan, this species is extremely rare in winter, making one found 15 Dec in *Genesee* (KO) notable. Even rarer in Michigan was a Western Meadowlark from 19-27 Jan in Eagle Harbor, *Keweenaw* (MA, JK). Baltimore Orioles were reported in Wisconsin in *Dane* 10 Dec (DF) and in *Outagamie* 21 Dec (BH), and in Minnesota, a tardy Baltimore was seen 21 Dec in Duluth, *St. Louis* (PS). A highlight in Minnesota was a **Brambling** at Battle L., *Otter Tail* 16-30 Dec (EE, JE, m. ob.), the 5th record for that state. Wisconsin had a good winter finch year, with an average number of Pine Grosbeaks, good numbers of Common Redpolls, and a few reports of Hoary Redpoll. Michigan had a disappointing year for winter finches, despite the promising fall, but by winter, the numbers of all species were average to below average. Minnesota reported good numbers of White-winged Crossbills scattered throughout the state, including some in the s. portions of the state, whereas the rest of the winter finches were seen in unremarkable numbers.

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Middlewestern Prairie



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From his perspective in Iowa, a state that enjoyed its fourth warmest winter on record, Bob Cecil aptly characterized the season's weather: "Heavy coats remained in the closet, long johns in the drawer, and winter