

Everyone complained that it was an exceptionally cold winter, but according to climatologists, it was merely a return to normal after a series of mild winters in the past decade. The winter did get more frigid as it went, with February nine degrees Fahrenheit colder than average and snowfall up by 30% in southern Ontario. Winter also arrived early, so that lingerers past November were relatively few. By winter's end, Lake Erie and Lake Huron were completely frozen over, and the same could almost be said for Lake Superior, with 98% ice cover.

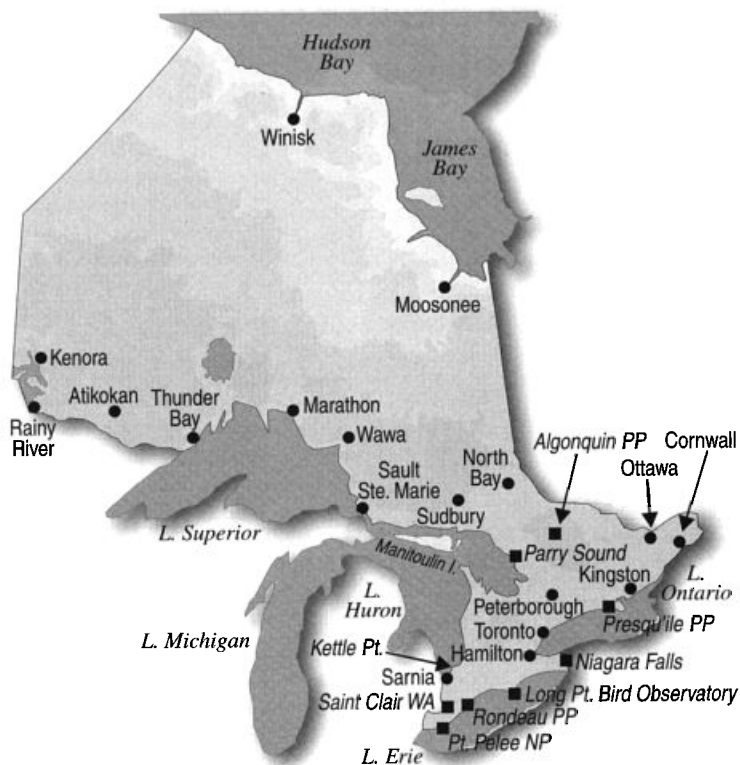
Abbreviations: L.O.W.I. (L. Ontario Waterfowl Inventory, 12 Jan 2003); P. E. Pt. (Prince Edward Pt.); Algonquin (Algonquin P. P.); N. W. A. (National Wildlife Area).

LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

A Red-throated Loon on the Cobourg—Port Hope C.B.C. was late, while another was on Toronto's Leslie Spit 26 Dec (CM). The total of 5 Horned Grebes on the Kincardine C.B.C. was exceptionally high. There were only 4 counted on the entire L.O.W.I. A Red-necked Grebe on the Niagara R. 27 Feb presaged the presence of 53 there two days later, refugees from the icebound Great Lakes. Others much farther n. turned up in a field near Pembroke 26 Feb (DC) and on the ice of Oudaze L., near Novar 27 Feb (B&JS). An imm. Northern Gannet ranged from Hamilton Harbour to nearby L. Ontario 1-16 Dec (m. ob.); another was on the Pickering shore 1 Dec. The same or another individual was believed to be a first for any L. Erie C.B.C. at the Nanticoke Power Plant 21 Dec (MS, DG). An American Bittern was exceptionally late at the Big Creek N.W.A. 14 Dec (Di, M&AT, RR). Ad. Great Blue Herons are very unusual in winter, so the discovery of 3 at Muddy Cr., Pt. Pelee area was surprising. Two of these remained until 28 Feb+. A Black Vulture at Presqu'île P. P. 1 Dec (DS) was only the 4th for Northumberland at any season.

Greater White-fronted Geese are overwintering more often in s. Ontario in recent years, as are Snow and Ross's Geese. There were 2 Greater White-fronteds at Cobourg Harbour 1-19 Jan (CG, m. ob.). An imm. was at the Jack Miner Sanctuary near Kingsville 29 Dec (DW, JM), and DW found an ad. there 28 Feb. Yet another was at the Claireville Conservation Area 1 Dec until their little lake froze over 29 Dec (m. ob.). An imm. Ross's Goose was discovered on the n. shore of Hamilton Harbour 12-14 Dec (RS et al.). Two Blue-winged Teal at Sturgeon Cr., Pelee area 22 Dec (AW) were record late for Pelee. Three male Eurasian Wigeons were at Eriean 1 Dec (JB). The six Harlequin Duck reports were about average. The counts of 24 Black and 294 White-winged

Ontario



Scoters on the Bruce Pen. were both record high and may suggest a shift of these species to L. Huron. Single male Barrow's Goldeneyes were at Hamilton Harbour between Christmas and New Year's Day (RD et al.), Wolfe I. 15 Dec (GFV, RDW), and Glenora 9 Feb (RTS), and there were also 2 at P. E. Pt. 15 Jan (RTS), as well as the usual 3 or more at Ottawa. The L.O.W.I. produced its 3rd highest waterfowl count ever—277,135. Record-high numbers were tallied for Red-necked Grebe, Double-crested Cormorant, Trumpeter Swan, Mute Swan, Greater White-fronted Goose (though only 2), Snow Goose, Canada Goose, American Black Duck, Mallard, Gadwall, Redhead, Black Scoter, and Ruddy Duck. White-winged Scoter numbers were down, and Long-tailed Ducks continued their five-year decline.

RAPTORS THROUGH OWLS

Red-shouldered Hawks were much more widespread than usual, with nine reports in s. Ontario. Two Gyrfalcon reports came from Kingston 8 Jan and 23 Feb on Wolfe I. A white-morph bird was seen near Grimsby 17 Jan (GM) and on two other occasions, and a different white morph was seen just n. of Hamilton 9 Jan (BD). The sight of 21 Ring-necked Pheasants just outside of Pt. Pelee

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N.P. suggests that the species is doing well there. Two flocks of Willow Ptarmigan seen at Armstrong are among the very few reports ever at a location sufficiently far s. to be accessible by both car and rail (*vide* GW). A White-rumped Sandpiper at Wheatley 1 Dec (DW, MC et al.) was a consolation prize for those winter listers who had come to Eriean to search for the Tropical Kingbird (last seen 30 Nov).

Wilson's Snipe were reported at six locations this winter, but none more surprising than the pair in the far n. at Marathon, found on their C.B.C. on Christmas Day and remaining there at least through 9 Feb. Little Gulls at Niagara dwindled to one or 2 by the end of Dec, but the lone ad. Black-headed Gull remained until at least 29 Dec (HC, RPo). Two California Gulls were present along the Niagara River throughout Dec, as

has been usual in recent years, but the single ads. at the Blenheim landfill 18 Dec (KB) and at Sunnyside in Toronto 1 Jan (KM, ph. JI) were more unusual at those locations. An imm. Black-legged Kittiwake remained in the Niagara gorge until 6 Dec. An ad. Ross's Gull circled all afternoon below Niagara Falls 1 Dec (RS, GE et al.) but was never seen again. Northern Hawk Owls mostly remained northern, but individuals were found at Algonquin 9 Dec (DT, RT), Campbellville 20-23 Jan (RJo, m. ob.), Perth Road Village (DF et al.), and Tamworth (*vide* RDW).

KINGFISHER THROUGH FINCHES

A Belted Kingfisher 11 Jan at Algonquin was record late (JA, CB). A Red-headed Woodpecker on the Kincardine C.B.C. 28 Dec was quite far n. and late. A White-eyed Vireo recorded on the P. E. Pt. C.B.C. 14 Dec was very late, as was the Blue-headed Vireo at Presqu'île P.P. 1 Dec (DS).

Blue Jays, American Crows, and Black-capped Chickadees all showed very sharp declines in the Oshawa—Burlington corridor. At Toronto, the 10-year C.B.C. average FOR American Crow is 949 (range 430-1467), but the 2002 count was 49 birds, a 95% decline. Chickadee counts at Toronto were down 75% and Blue Jays 90%. Nearby

counts gave similar results. The West Nile virus was the cause of the decline without a doubt. Away from the urban L. Ontario corridor, counts were normal, even high for these species. However, there were problems elsewhere. The Tufted Titmouse count was only one on the Cedar Creek C.B.C. vs. 21 the year before, and the Wallaceburg C.B.C. turned up only 19 vs. 69 in 2001. The 2 Carolina Wrens on the Ottawa C.B.C. 15 Dec were



This Black Vulture in the lighthouse area of Presqu'île Provincial Park, Ontario 1 December 2002 provided the fourth Northumberland record—ever. Photograph by Don Shanahan.

the farthest n. birds reported. A pair of Varied Thrushes remained 7 Jan—28 Feb+ at Prinyer's Cove, Prince Edward. There was the usual scattering of Brown Thrashers and Gray Catbirds in the s., but the single catbirds on the Ignace C.B.C. 14 Dec and the Marathon C.B.C. 25 Dec were exceptionally far n., as were the Brown Thrasher and the Northern Mockingbird on the Marathon C.B.C.

The 17 Yellow-rumped Warblers on the Napanee C.B.C. was an amazing count for the locale. An Ovenbird in a Toronto backyard remained 21 Dec into late Jan (SP). A Yellow-breasted Chat at LaSalle Park in Hamilton was refound 29 Dec and last reported 17 Jan (ph., m. ob.). An ad. male Summer Tanager visited a feeder in Thornhill 3-10 Dec (DJ). It, or another, visited a nearby feeder 18 Jan (ph. MG). A first-year

male Indigo Bunting was near Dorset 2 Dec (RPi). The winter's only Spotted Towhee was found on the Cambridge C.B.C. 15 Dec and remained until early Feb. A Field Sparrow endured the Ottawa winter 2-20 Jan at a feeder (m. ob.). A first-winter White-crowned Sparrow e. of Dwight Muskoka was perhaps the first to overwinter in the area (ph., m. ob.). There were 2060 White-winged Crossbills on the Algonquin C.B.C. Many were displaying and nest-building. Common Redpolls were notably absent, with none on the Algonquin C.B.C. or at Atikokan and very few at North Bay. Evening Grosbeaks were in very good numbers at Atikokan.

Cited observers (regional coordinators in boldface): Joanne Allen, Robert Andrie, Margaret Bain, Chris Boettger, Evelyn Brown, Keith Burk, Jim Burk, Mark Chojnacki, Darryl Coulson, Hugh Currie, Rob Dobos, Bruce Duncan, Gavin Edmonstone, Dave Elder, Nick Escott, Dave Farquar, Marilyn Ginsberg, Clive Goodwin, D. Graham, Jean Iron, D. Jonak, Richard Joos, Rick Johnson (RJo), Bob Knudsen, Chris Lewis, Craig McLaughlin, Kevin McLaughlin, George Meyers, John Miles, James Moynahan (JMo), Rob Pearce, Ron Pittaway (RPi), Richard Pope (RPo), Steve Price, Pete Reade, Alf Rider, Ron Ridout, Maureen Riggs, Ron Scovell, Don Shanahan, Roy Smith (RSm), R. Terry Sprague (RTS), Mike Street, Ben & Jay Sturgeon, Richard Tafel, Adam Timpf, D. Timpf (DTi), M. Timpf, Doug Tozer, Ron Tozer, G. F. Vance, Dean Ware, Ron D. Weir (RDW), George Williams, Alan Wormington. ☺

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