

With only a few exceptions, the winter 2002-2003 season was relatively unremarkable. An especially mild December gave way to the coldest January in several years, with an above-average amount of snowfall for the Region during the month. Precipitation ended up above average for most of the Region, due in large part to an unusually wet month of February. Following an extended bitter cold spell in the latter half of January, below-average temperatures lingered into late February. The season was noteworthy for the lack of Red-breasted Nuthatches and northern finches, and only modest occurrences of rarities outside of two exceptional finds in west Tennessee—a Long-billed Murrelet and an Ash-throated Flycatcher—and an Allen's Hummingbird in middle Tennessee.

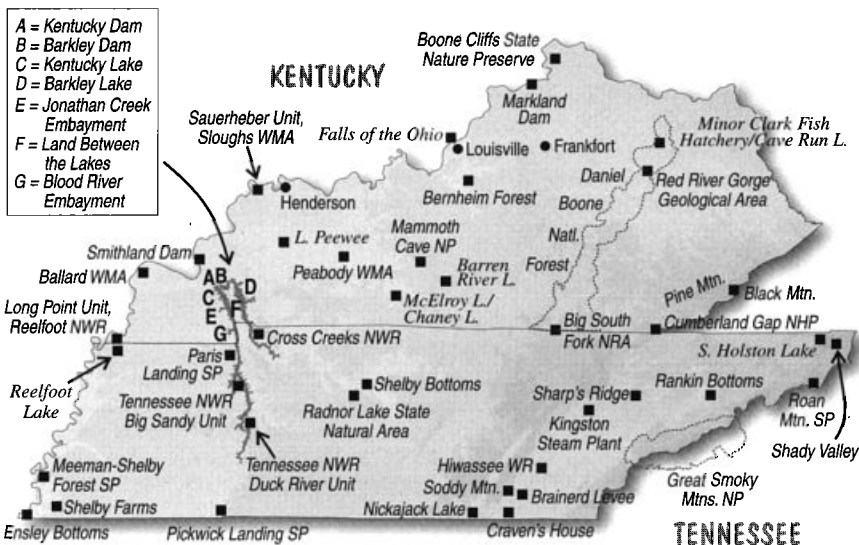
Abbreviations: Big Sandy (Big Sandy Unit Tennessee N.W.R., Henry, TN), Black Bayou (Black Bayou W.M.A., Lake, TN), Britton Ford (Britton Ford, Tennessee N.W.R., Henry, TN), Pickwick (Pickwick Landing S.P., Hardin, TN), Sauerheber (Sauerheber Unit Sloughs W.M.A., Henderson, KY).

LOONS THROUGH EGRETS

The only Red-throated Loon was an ad. at Pickwick 23 Feb (ph. JRW, SD). Pacific Loons, which are becoming increasingly regular on the Region's larger lakes, were represented by single birds at L. Peewee, Hopkins, KY 17 Dec (vt. DR) and at Pickwick 23 Feb (JRW, SD). A count of 852+ Horned Grebes at Big Sandy 22 Dec matched the number recorded there during the peak of fall migration, indicating much carryover into the winter (JRW). Three Red-necked Grebes were reported, one on L. Barkley, Lyon, KY 14 Dec (†MB), one at Boone L., TN 18-24 Feb (RK et al.), and one—which must be considered the luckiest bird in recent memory—that was retrieved from a roadside in rural Martin, KY 27 Feb after the observer's car apparently frightened a hawk (which had just captured the grebe) into dropping it (ph. PE)! Eared Grebes were reported only from Tennessee, with up to 7 at the now-traditional wintering location on S. Holston L. through the period (RK, WC et al.) and singles at Old Hickory L., Davidson 1 Jan to month's end (vt. CS, m. ob.) and Britton Ford 22 Dec (ph. JRW). A Western Grebe, approximately the 4th for Tennessee and the first in se. Tennessee since the species was split from Clark's Grebe, was at Nickajack L. 21 Dec-19 Jan (JH, m. ob.).

Quite unusual was an American White Pelican on the Ohio R. at the mouth of the

Tennessee & Kentucky



Licking R., Campbell/Kenton, KY 24 Jan (JHy, ph. FR); at least in part due to mild early-winter weather, impressive numbers remained on L. Barkley, KY into mid-Jan; by 20 Feb, ca. 350 had returned to n. L. Barkley, Lyon (DR, DL). Two Great Egrets were late lingerers in Muhlenberg, KY 4 Jan (MB, SR), and singles were reported at three locations in Tennessee during the period.

WATERFOWL

Mute Swans put in a strong showing in Tennessee: a flock of 8 was in Jackson 29 Dec (T&VC), and what was likely the same flock was found at Dale Hollow L. 17 Feb (TC); also, a single bird was found on the Memphis C.B.C. 15 Dec (fide WRP), and 3 were found in Dyersburg 15-28 Jan (KL). The apparently now-regular wintering flock of Tundra Swans at Sauerheber returned in late Nov and remained through the period, with a peak count of 23 birds during late Dec and early Jan (MM). Tennessee experienced an unusually high number of reports of the species, with from one to 2 Tundras reported from three locations in e. Tennessee and 4 reported from one location in w. Tennessee.

The winter flock of Greater White-

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SA Again this winter, both states reported small groups of Trumpeter Swans that had originated from reintroduction programs in the Great Lakes states. Single birds or small flocks of these swans have been reported in Kentucky on at least six occasions since 1990 and on one previous occasion in Tennessee. Records committees in several midwestern states have acted to move these reintroduced populations of swans back into an "accepted" status for listing purposes. However, such action has not yet been considered by either the Tennessee or Kentucky committees.

fronted Geese in w. *Fulton*, KY peaked at a new record high for the state with about 5000 birds reported 31 Dec (DR) and about 3000 counted on the official U.S.F.W.S. waterfowl survey on 8 Jan (*fide* CD); likewise, a count of 3500 at Sauerheber 1–15 Jan represented a new high count for that area (MM). Single Greater White-fronteds in *Hawkins* (RC, WC) and *Warren* (DM et al.), TN represented unusual occurrences for ne. Tennessee. It was not an exceptional winter for Ross's Geese, with only singles reported from five Kentucky and three Tennessee localities during the period.

Three Blue-winged Teal at Black Bayou 1 Feb (NM) were likely early migrants. The Nickajack, TN C.B.C. reported 94 Greater Scaup, its highest count ever (*fide* JP). The above-average fall flight of Surf Scoters continued into mid-Dec, with 4 on the Ohio R., *Bracken*, KY 3 Dec (DR), 2 at the same location 18 Dec (FR), one at S. Holston L. 11 Dec (HL, BrS), and 8 at Britton Ford 22 Dec (ph. JRW). Single White-winged Scoters were observed twice on the Ohio R. in n. Kentucky late Jan—early Feb (BPB et al.; JS) and at S. Holston L. 28 Jan (WC, BrS); in addition, 3 were found on Cherokee L., TN 8–18 Feb (KDE et al.). Single Black Scoters were observed at S. Holston L. 5 Dec (RK, FA), on the Ohio R., *Gallatin*, KY 14 Dec (BPB et al.), on L. Barkley, *Lyon*, KY 22 Dec and 20 Feb (DR), and at Pickwick 23 Feb (JRW). One to 5 Long-tailed Ducks were reported from two Kentucky and seven Tennessee localities during the season, constituting an above-average showing. A single female Common Merganser at Boone L., TN 20 Dec was an unusual occurrence for upper e. Tennessee (RK).

OSPREY THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

Single Ospreys, rare in winter in the Region, were found at S. Holston L., TN 26 Dec—5 Jan (DH, RC, RK) and at Eagle Bend in *Anderson*, TN 6 Dec and 24 Feb (NeM). The Region's only Northern Goshawk was a well-described juv. in *Lauderdale*, TN 19 Jan (†JRW). Golden Eagles were observed at four Kentucky locations, including an impressive 6 on 15 Jan at Bernheim Forest, *Bullitt/Nelson* (RM) and a single bird in *Martin* in far e.

Kentucky 17 Jan (CL); reports in Tennessee were limited to traditional areas at Big Sandy and Britton Ford (JRW, MT). Winter reports of Merlins have been increasing in the Region, and more than a dozen observations of one to 2 birds were reported at seven Kentucky locations, and six observations of one to 2 birds were reported at four Tennessee locations.

Out-of-season rails included from one to 5 Virginias in *Hamilton*, TN 14 Dec—19 Feb (DP) and a Sora in *Roane*, TN 28 Dec (DJ). Small numbers of southbound Sandhill Cranes continued to pass through the Region into late Dec. An impressive total of 12,817 was tallied on the Hiwassee C.B.C. 1 Jan (*fide* KC). The first northbound birds were noted in *Muhlenberg*, KY 11 Jan (MV), and an excellent late winter/early spring northward flight developed in Feb; flocks began being regularly reported by the first week of the month, and by mid-Feb the flight was in full swing. However, a period of about two weeks of nasty weather put down perhaps the largest number of cranes ever to be "on the ground" in Kentucky in spring. Most birds were seen in the traditional migratory corridor, but at least a few were seen as far e. as *Morgan* (MEm) and *Montgomery*, KY (GR), and *Green, Johnson, and Washington*, TN (m. ob.). Out-of-season Spotted Sandpipers were seen in *Clay*, TN 18 Dec (TC), *Shelby*, TN 26–27 Jan (JRW, AW), and *Sullivan*, TN 30 Jan (FA). Quite unusual for Kentucky in winter was a flock of 15 presumed early migrant Pectoral Sandpipers in s. *Warren* 22 Feb (DR); the earliest report for Tennessee was one bird at *Shelby Farms, Shelby* 26 Feb (JRW).

GULLS THROUGH OWLS

Despite a relatively prolonged period of cold weather, it was not a notable winter for gulls. One to 2 first-year Laughing Gulls were observed in w. Kentucky 8 Dec (HC) to 15 Jan (DR); another was observed in *Shelby*, TN 17 Dec (JRW). Only 2 Thayer's Gulls, an ad. at Barkley Dam on 22 Dec (ph. DR) and an ad. and a first-year bird at Barkley Dam on 20 Feb (vt. DR) were reported from Kentucky. In Tennessee, a first-year bird was reported from Big Sandy 8 & 21 Dec (†JRW), and one to 2 first-year birds were at Pickwick

25 Dec and 23 Feb (†JRW, SD). As is becoming usual in the w. part of both states, small numbers of Lesser Black-backed Gulls lingered through the season, mostly along Kentucky L. from Kentucky Dam south to Pickwick (MB, HC, ph. DR, ph. JRW, MG). The only Glaucous Gulls reported were first-year birds on Kentucky L., *Marshall*, KY 18 Dec (DR) and at Pickwick 23 Feb (ph. JRW). Not to be outdone by Kentucky's Long-billed Murrelet during the fall 2002 season, Tennessee birders observed the state's first record at Reelfoot L. 14 Dec (†JRW, †MG, †BF).

Peak winter counts of Short-eared Owls in w. Kentucky were 18 birds in *Muhlenberg* in early Dec (P&SF) and 15–20 there in early Jan (MV); one at Cades Cove, Great Smoky Mountains N.P., TN 25 Dec (JA) was an unusual find there. A Northern Saw-whet Owl responded to a tape in *Pulaski*, KY 12 Jan (RD, JD).

HUMMINGBIRDS THROUGH MIMIDS

Two of 3 Rufous Hummingbirds banded in Kentucky in Nov lingered well into winter, but both disappeared during the late Jan cold spell; one in *Boyle* was found dead at a perch 24 Jan (G&NE), as was a bird in middle Tennessee that had been banded earlier in the season. Tennessee's 5th Allen's Hummingbird, confirmed by banding 26 Jan, was present at a feeder in *Smith* late Dec—5 Mar (ph. K. Harville, vt. CS, PM). A previously unreported hummer that was first observed in Oct and lingered to 5 Dec in *Jessamine*, KY was photographed well enough to be identified as a Rufous/Allen's Hummingbird (ph. SDN, BPB).

It was an excellent winter for Red-headed Woodpeckers in select areas, primarily in bottomland forest tracts where hickories and oaks produced significant mast. A total of 265 was counted on the *Ballard*, KY C.B.C. 23 Dec (BPB et al.). The species was also noted as present in above-average numbers in the Somerset, KY area (RD), *Calloway*, KY (HC), and Land Between the Lakes, KY-TN (ME, WL). An Ash-throated Flycatcher was observed in *Enslley Bottoms, Shelby*, TN 11 Dec (ph. JRW) for only the 2nd Tennessee record. Out-of-season vireos included a White-eyed on the Reelfoot L., TN C.B.C. 14 Dec (J. Drewry, S. Thompson, J. Stone) and a Blue-headed on the Memphis C.B.C. 15 Dec (*fide* WRP). An early Tree Swallow returned to Cherokee L., TN 8 Feb (FB). Perhaps the most interesting record of the winter for an out-of-season species was the presence of 2 Barn Swallows in *Muhlenberg*, KY 4–9 Jan (MB et al.; vt. DR). This is a 3rd win-

ter record for Kentucky and the first of more than one bird. Very small numbers of Red-breasted Nuthatches were observed this winter in the Region, with reports from only four Kentucky C.B.C.s and three locations in Tennessee; the peak count was of 8 birds in *Powell/Wolfe*, KY (where a resident nesting population is established) 4 Jan (ZW et al.). A Brown-headed Nuthatch in Knoxville, TN 15 Dec and 4 Jan (BS) made for a first county record, and represents a continuation of this species' northward expansion along the Tennessee R.

House Wrens, uncommon in winter in the Region, were reported from five Tennessee locations, including 3 on the Savannah C.B.C., and one Kentucky location. Quite unusual for Kentucky was a Sedge Wren in *Muhlenberg* 4 Jan (MB et al.); one to 6 were reported from five locations in Tennessee, mostly during the C.B.C. period (m. ob.). Single Marsh Wrens were reported on two Kentucky C.B.C.s in *Ballard* 23 Dec (HC, RDv) and *Breckinridge* 4 Jan (KCl) and on two Tennessee C.B.C.s at Reelfoot L. 14 Dec (*fide* MG) and at Shelby Bottoms, *Davidson* 1 Jan (PC, J. Drewry). A Gray Catbird in Maryville, TN 2 Jan (JA) represented an unusual winter find.

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Orange-crowned Warblers, which are uncommon in winter, made a strong showing this season: there were 2 on the Chattanooga C.B.C. 14 Dec (DG, DA); 3 on the Memphis C.B.C. 15 Dec (*fide* WRP); one in *Pulaski*, KY 16 Dec (RD); one at Shelby Farms, TN 4 Jan (WRP); and one in Blount, TN 9 Jan (JA). A Prairie Warbler on the Nickajack L. C.B.C. 28 Dec may be a first winter record for se. Tennessee (LW, DG) and is one of only a handful of winter records for the Region. An Audubon's Warbler was reported on the Norris, TN C.B.C. (KDE). One to 2 Common Yellowthroats were reported from six localities in Tennessee, 14 Dec—18 Jan.

Wintering Le Conte's Sparrows were reported from one Kentucky and five Tennessee locations. Single Lincoln's Sparrows (always rare in the Region in winter) were reported on two Tennessee C.B.C.s: Nickajack L. 28 Dec (*fide* JP) and Hiwassee 1 Jan (*fide* KC). Peak counts of Lapland Longspurs included new record-high counts for Kentucky, including 1100+ in s. *Warren* 2 Dec (DR) and about 1000 in w. *Fulton* 30 Dec (DR). Numbers in w. Tennessee were even higher, with 5700+ estimated at four locations in *Lake* and *Dyer* 28 Dec (JRW) and 5000-6000 in

Lake 16 Feb (JRW). A flock of 7-8 Laplands in *Washington*, TN represented only the 6th record for ne. Tennessee (RK). Single Smith's Longspurs were observed in *Madison*, TN 28 Dec (MG) and *Lake*, TN 11 Jan (JRW, K. Allen). Single Snow Buntings were reported in s. *Warren*, KY 2 Dec (DR) and Peabody W.M.A., *Ohio*, KY 7 Dec (MW, DPd). Two Dickcissels were reported in Tennessee, one at Nashville 25 Jan—28 Feb+ (MZ), and one at Clarksville 26 Feb (DMO).

Northern finches were scarcely reported in the Region this winter. Purple Finches were reported from only a few C.B.C.s in each state. Pine Siskins were even rarer, with only four reports of one to 2 birds in Tennessee and three reports of single birds in Kentucky.

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ORIGINAL ART AUCTION



This auction is for an original painting of a Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris*) by renowned ornithologist and bird artist, John P. O'Neill. The painting is acrylic on Arche's watercolor paper, double-matted and attractively framed (19.5" wide x 18" high), ready for hanging.

John has maintained an interest in the birds of his native Texas and is conducting fieldwork in the little-known mountain ranges of western Texas. He has taken this opportunity to express his interest in bird conservation by donating this painting to support the Houston Audubon Society's Bolivar Fund. This fund is dedicated for the acquisition of new land, habitat restoration, and management of the sanctuary at the famous Bolivar Flats on the upper Texas coast.

All proceeds from this auction will be transferred to the Bolivar Fund of the Houston Audubon Society.

This painting was originally done for the Big Golden Book of Backyard Birds. John O'Neill will provide a signed and personalized copy of the book to the winning bidder.

LOGISTICS OF THE SALE:

The 10-day auction will be held on eBay (www.ebay.com), starting at 12 noon Mountain Time on Monday 27 October and will end at 12 noon M on Thursday 6 November 2003. The painting can be found on eBay during that period by searching on the key words Horned Lark. Bidders are required to register with eBay, which is both quick to do and free of charge.

A flat charge of \$25 will be added to the winning bid for shipment to any U.S. or Canada address from ABA at Colorado Springs. Payment is due within ten days of the close of the auction; details will be provided in the eBay listing.