

Western Great Lakes



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Owls were the highlight of the season, with western portions of the Region blessed with unprecedented numbers of northern owls. Other highlights included a Yellow-billed Loon and a Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch in Minnesota, an Ash-throated Flycatcher and a Hooded Oriole in Wisconsin, and a Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch and a California Gull in Michigan.

All three state compilers reported the weather as unremarkable. Snowfall was heavy, but not much above average, through much of the season, except in the northern portions of the Region, where snows were heaviest. Temperatures were rather cold throughout the Region with exception of periodic warm spells, particularly in early January in Michigan.

LOONS THROUGH RAPTORS

Red-throated Loon was reported in Michigan 1–3 Jan at New Buffalo, Berrien (KM, m.ob.) and 30 Jan in Manistee (BA); Wisconsin had the species 13 Dec in Racine (DT) and 2 Jan and 12 Feb in Ozaukee (TW, DS), the latter only the 3rd Feb record in the state. A Pacific Loon was reported 13 Dec (DT) in Racine, WI. A juv. Yellow-billed Loon 4–11 Jan at Two Harbors, Lake (TWA, KE et al.) provided Minnesota its 6th state record and first winter record. Late in Michigan were 4 Great Egrets 2–5 Dec at Lake Erie Metropark, Wayne (WP). Record late and a first C.B.C. record for Minnesota was a Green Heron 18 Dec in Shakopee, Scott (RA, AA, DKi).

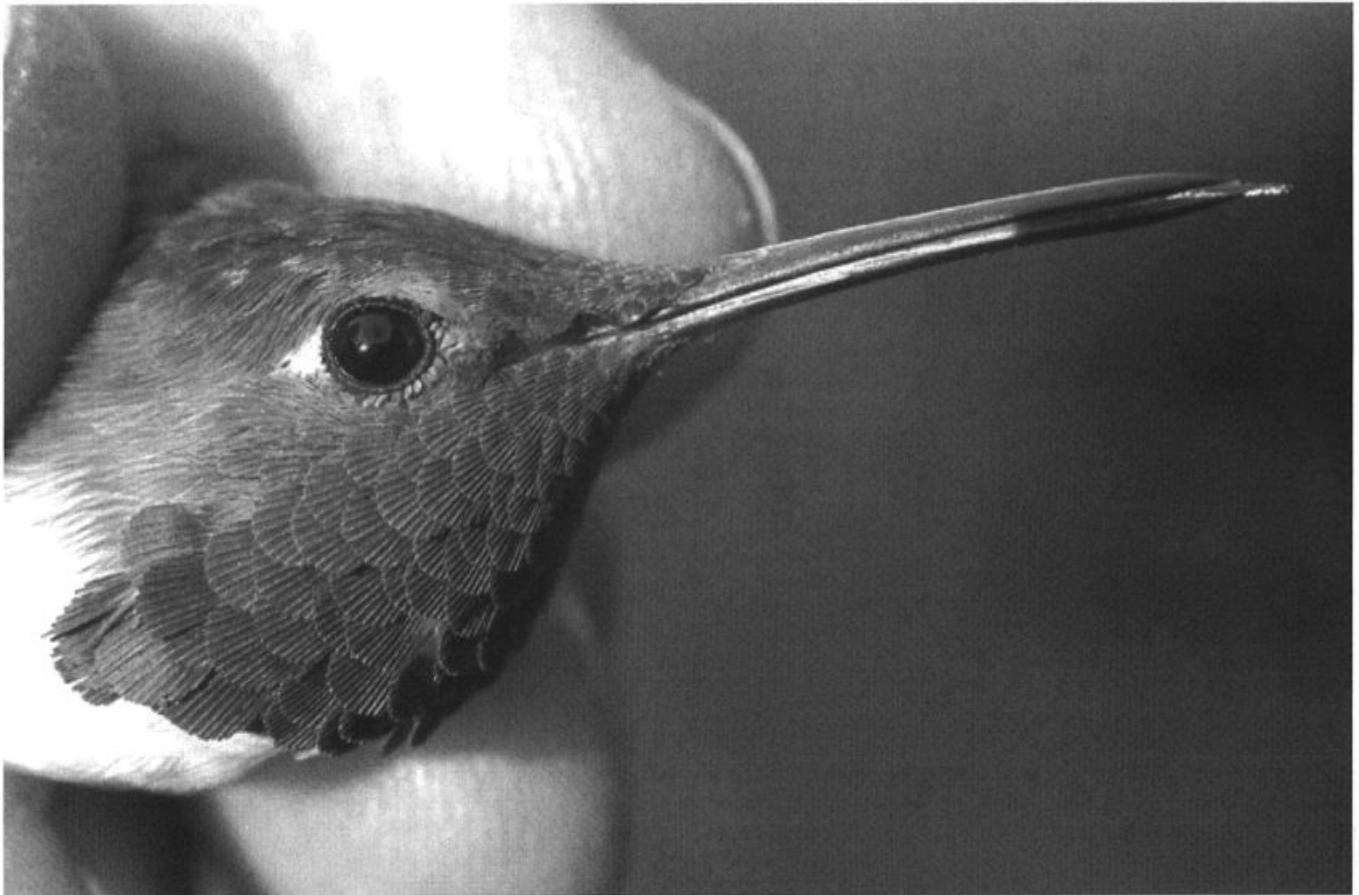
Ross's Goose was reported from all three states, with Michigan having records 19 Feb in Three Rivers, St. Joseph (p.a., RS) and the same date in Trenton, Wayne (2 birds; p.a., SS, WP). Wisconsin birders found one 4–5 Jan in Dane (TU) and one at Horicon Marsh 27 Feb (JB); Minnesota had a single 5–11 Dec at Sleepy Eye, Brown (ph. BS). Greater White-fronted Goose appeared in Wisconsin by late Feb; one 20 Jan in Dane (KB) was either very late or early. Michigan was the only state to report the recently split Cackling Goose, with reports from four counties, the

latest being 4 on 16 Jan at Paw Paw L., Berrien (SJ). Wisconsin reported a high of 268 Trumpeter Swans 1 Jan in St. Croix (LP). Minnesota had reports of Harlequin Duck 23 Dec at Duluth, St. Louis (AB, fide KE) and 2 wintering in Two Harbors, Lake (JL, m.ob.), while Michigan had one 10 Dec and 1 Jan in Marquette (ABY, SH, BM). In Wisconsin, this species was seen 17–31 Dec and 8–9 Jan in Sheboygan (DB, MB, DT, SCu, TW), and in Milwaukee on various dates 6 Dec–17 Feb (m.ob.). In Minnesota, where winter scoters are uncommon, Surf Scoter reports included 2 on 8–11 Dec on L. Pepin, Wabash (FL et al.) and one on 1–12 Dec at L. Ripley, Meeker (DF). Minnesota had a single White-winged Scoter 2 Dec at Pool #8, Reno, Houston (FL). Wisconsin and Minnesota reported several Long-tailed Ducks from inland sites, also in those states, Barrow's Goldeneye was reported 20 Jan in Pierce, WI (fide TS) and 27 Dec–11 Jan in Hastings, Dakota, MN (ad male; ph. JM, m.ob.).

North of their normal wintering range in Minnesota were Red-shouldered Hawks on 23 Jan in Aitken (SM) and 6 Feb in Otter Tail (SM). Golden Eagles were seen in good numbers this winter. Unusual were reports of Gyrfalcon from all three states. Wisconsin had one throughout the period in Ashland (TK). Michigan had one s. of normal in Dearborn, Wayne 1–5 Jan (ABY, AC, m.ob.), one at Pt. LaBarbe, Mackinac 20 Jan (TWe), and a white-morph bird in early Feb at Fayette S.P., Delta (fide SH). Minnesotans reported the species 9 Jan in Two Harbors, Lake (BF), 3 Feb+ in Nininger Twp., Dakota (CB, ph. JM, m.ob.), 6 Feb at the jct. of CR 5 and CR 18, Aitken (WM) and along CR 5, n. of Palisade, Aitken (RSc). As is typical, the only Prairie Falcon reports came from Minnesota, with individuals 27 Dec in Manannah Twp., Meeker (DF) and the same day in Ford Dam, Ramsey (JSe).

SHOREBIRDS THROUGH OWLS

Early in Wisconsin was a Killdeer 6 Feb in Rock (QY), while n. of normal in Minnesota was a Wilson's Snipe wintering in Duluth, St. Louis (JN). A first-winter Little Gull report 15–16 Feb from New Buffalo, Berrien (AB, AM) furnished an uncommon late winter record in Michigan. Wisconsin had a Mew Gull 2 Dec in Milwaukee (p.a., DG), while Michigan had a second-winter California Gull on the New Buffalo C.B.C. 27 Dec at the Forest Lawn Landfill, Berrien (p.a., PC, AB). All three states reported average numbers of Iceland and Thayers Gulls. Excellent finds were Black-legged Kittiwakes 18 Dec at Muskegon S.P., Muskegon (BJ) in Michigan and 11 Dec in Ozaukee (TU) in Wisconsin. Our understanding of the status of Eurasian Collared-Dove in the Region is still evolving. This winter, all three states reported individuals,



This adult male Rufous Hummingbird was in Berrien Springs, Berrien County, Michigan 7 November–19 December 2004 and was recorded on the local C.B.C. on the last date. It was banded by the photographer on 14 November 2004. Photograph by Allen Chartier.

with one report each from Michigan and Wisconsin and five reports in Minnesota. In Wisconsin, a Common Ground-Dove 31 Dec was reported in *Ozaukee* (p.a., JP, SL).

Wisconsin had single Barn Owls 1 Dec in *Shawano* (p.a., CD) and 9 Dec in *Dodge* (p.a., JBR). Snowy Owls were present in the Region in moderate numbers this season; Wisconsin had reports from nine counties, Minnesota 18, and Michigan a handful. Northern owls entered the w. portions of the Region in record numbers. Wisconsin reported 10 Northern Hawk Owls, including individuals as far s. as *Ozaukee*, where around 1000 people observed one over an

eight-week period. Michigan had only 3 hawk owls, the farthest s. being one in *Manistee* 23 Jan (*vide* BA). Great Gray Owls numbered about two dozen in Michigan, mostly from the e. Upper Peninsula, although a few made it to the n. Lower Peninsula. It is unclear how many Great Grays were seen in Wisconsin, although the number likely exceeded 50. The most southerly Great Gray in Wisconsin was one observed 23–28 Feb in *Dane* (UP). Both Michigan and Wisconsin reported average numbers of Long-eared Owls, while all three states had average numbers of Short-eared Owls. Wisconsin reported Boreal Owls in *Rusk* 27 Dec (AS), in

Douglas 9 Jan (RJ), and in *Ashland* 26 Feb (DSm). Michigan had only one report of Boreal Owl, a dead bird found in late Jan at *Oskar Bay, Keweenaw* (*vide* JK).

HUMMINGBIRDS THROUGH WARBLERS

The Rufous Hummingbird present in Michigan in the fall remained through 19 Dec in Berrien (PU et al.). The Rufous/Allen's Hummingbird present in Duluth, *St. Louis* during the fall remained until 3 Dec in Minnesota (ph. LE, m.ob.). Red-bellied Woodpeckers continue their northward expansion in the Region, with all three states reporting birds n. of their usual haunts. Unusual in

SA Continuing the massive influx first noted in late fall, record-high numbers of Northern Hawk Owls, Great Gray Owls, and Boreal Owls poured into Minnesota and attracted hundreds of observers. An astounding 42 Northern Hawk Owls and 70 Great Gray Owls were tallied on the Sax–Zim C.B.C. 20 Dec. Northern Hawk Owls were mostly confined to the coniferous forest zone, though singles strayed as far southwestward as *Chippewa* and as far southeastward as *Chisago* and *Wright*. Most were in good condition, and mortality was very low. In contrast, over 750 Great Grays died, many from collisions as they hunted along roadsides; others apparently starved, and several were found shot. (Boreal Owls also suffered high mortality, with 150 reported dead thus far; only a few were detected outside of ne. Minnesota, but small numbers strayed as far westward as *Pennington* and *Polk*.) Most of the Great Grays that were trapped and banded were of normal weight with good fat reserves, but others pursued Mourning Doves, rabbits, squirrels, small dogs, and cats. One Great Gray died when it flew through a picture window where a small dog could be seen from outside the house. Another Great Gray attacked and tried to eat a cross-country skier's fur hat. Near Duluth, a Great Gray Owl attacked and carried off a Northern Hawk Owl (ph. JWL), apparently the first such event to be documented. And although the victim may have been already dead, a Great Gray was found cannibalizing another of its kind (DS, *vide* LME).

The total number of Great Grays in Minnesota has not been determined, as birds continued to be found in new locations throughout Mar, but daily counts of >100 were routine in Dec and Jan, and several parties found 225 in a single day. Great Grays were reported as far s. as *Anoka*, *Carver*, *Chisago*, *Dakota*, *Hennepin*, *Ramsey*, *Scott*, and *Washington* in the Twin Cities area, *Benton*, *Kandiyohi*, *Meeker*, *Sherburne*, and *Stearns* in cen. Minnesota, and *Winona* in the far se. corner of the state. Several Great Grays showed partial albinism, and a ghostly leucistic (dilute-plumaged) bird and a melanistic individual were also noted, the latter in *St. Louis* (MCA, ph. JWL).

winter in Wisconsin were several Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, the latest being one 4–15 Jan in *Marquette* (DC). Constituting only a 2nd state record for Wisconsin, an **Ash-throated Flycatcher** was present 11–13 Dec in *Racine* (p.a., RH, m.ob.). Carolina Wrens were reported in good numbers in both Michigan and Wisconsin, while in Minnesota, where the species is rarer, it was seen at four locations. There were 8 Townsend's Solitaires reported in Wisconsin and 15 in Minnesota, while in Michigan, where the species is still very rare, there were reports 1 Jan in Copper Harbor, *Keweenaw* (AB, BM), 6 Feb at Eagle Harbor, *Keweenaw*, and 2 in early Jan+ in *Marquette*, *Marquette* (SH, SS). Varied Thrush is more common in Minnesota and Wisconsin, with 26 and 8 reported this season, respectively, while in Michigan, there were reports 5 Jan+ at Deerton, *Alger* (AB, m.ob.), 19 Dec at Jacobsville, *Houghton* (SH), 30 Jan in *Manistee* (BA), and 9–12 Jan at Prudentville, *Roscommon* (MP).

Gray Catbirds lingered in the Region this season. In Wisconsin, they were found on three C.B.C.s in the se. quadrant of the state. Minnesota reported individuals through 14 Dec at Mounds Springs Park, *Hennepin* (SC) and on 18 Dec during the Duluth C.B.C. (*fide* JW). Michigan had singles at Grand Mere S.P., *Berrien* 2–9 Jan (JW, m.ob.), at Grosse Isle, *Wayne* 15 Jan (WP), at Chippewa Nature Center, *Midland* throughout the period (*fide* JS), and on the Manistique C.B.C., well n. of normal, 18 Dec (RAn). Northern Mockingbird reports were about normal in Michigan, while in Wisconsin individuals were reported in *Columbia* 1 & 26 Jan (CM, RD), in *Sawyer* through 23 Dec (FV), and in *Dane* 3–28 Feb (EHo, WR et al.). There were five reports of Brown Thrasher in Wisconsin and three in Michigan. Two well-documented reports of American Pipit in Michigan were 27 Dec at the Galien Sewage Ponds (JW, DV) and 6–10 Jan at the Andrews University Sewage Lagoons (JW, WB, DV), both in *Berrien*. Bohemian Waxwings were found in good numbers throughout the Region, more commonly in the w. portions, with the largest

total reported of 910–1200 in Duluth, *St. Louis*, MN (JN, FN). An Orange-crowned Warbler 14 Dec in *Dodge* (BD) was only the 10th winter record for Wisconsin. Also in that state, a Yellow-rumped Warbler wintered at a feeder in *Sauk* (AH). Michigan reported Pine Warblers in Dec in the Brighton S.R.A., *Livingston* (*fide* JTW) and on 20 Dec at Lincoln Brick Park, *Clinton* (JBa).

TOWHEE THROUGH FINCHES

The **Spotted Towhee** that wintered in Wisconsin in *Waukesha* was seen through the period (DG); singles were also documented in *Winnebago* 15 Dec–1 Feb (DK, JSm, KS) and *Iowa* 12 Jan–17 Feb (KK, JR). North of normal in Michigan was an Eastern Towhee 5 Jan at Munising, *Alger* (SHi), a Chipping Sparrow 23 Dec on the Houghton C.B.C., *Houghton* (JK), and a Field Sparrow 4–5 Dec at Ahmeek, *Keweenaw*. A **Lark Sparrow** 19 Jan+ in *Waupaca* (p.a., PM, DM) would provide the only mid- to late winter record in Wisconsin if accepted. Also unusual in that state were Savannah Sparrow records from 11–13 Jan in *Ozaukee* (TU) and 3 Jan and 4 Feb in *Dane* (ST). Swamp Sparrow, uncommon in Minnesota in winter, was recorded at Bloomington, *Hennepin* (SC). Winter Harris's Sparrow records in Michigan, where the species is uncommon, included individuals through 25 Jan at Oscoda, *Iosco* (SMA), 30 Dec–5 Jan at Clarkston, *Oakland* (AB, m.ob.), and through 9 Jan in *Osceola* (SS).

Wisconsin reported Rose-breasted Grosbeaks on two C.B.C.s, both in the s. portion of the state, while an Indigo Bunting was very late 5 Dec in *Racine* (CMA). Also in that state, a Yellow-headed Blackbird was found 1 Feb in *Dane* (KB). Unusual in winter and n. of normal in Michigan was a Brewer's Blackbird 11 Dec near Seney, *Alger* (SHi). Most unexpected was a **Hooded Oriole** from 15–19 Dec in *LaCrosse* (p.a., ph. TC); if accepted, it would provide a first record for Wisconsin and the Region. Baltimore Orioles were reported 10 Dec at Prairieville Twp., *Barry* (RS) in Michigan and in *Chippewa* during the C.B.C.s in Wisconsin. An in-

jured Baltimore Oriole remained in Minnesota into Jan at St. Paul, *Ramsey* (NS).

Single **Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches** were present near Paradise, *Chippewa*, MI 13–17 Feb (AB, m.ob.) and near Hinkley, *Pine*, MN 30 Dec+ (LER et al.). Winter finches were present in average numbers in the Region with exception of crossbills, which were decidedly rare in Michigan. All three states reported Hoary Redpolls this year, with Minnesotans commenting that the numbers, at least 38 individuals, were above average for the 2nd consecutive season.

Observers: Brian Allen, Mark Alt, Abigail Anderson, Renner Anderson, Ron Annelin (RAn), Jeff Bahls, John Baumgartyner (JBa), Chris Benson, Aaron Brees, Walter Booth, David Brassler, Margaret Brassler, Joe Breaden (JBR), Paul Budde, Kay Burcar, Adam Byrne (ABY), Steve Carlson (SC), Allen Chartier, Daryl Christensen, Phil Chu, Seth Cutright (SCu), Carl DeBoard, Raymond Dischler, Bob Domagalski, Kim Eckert, Laura Erickson, Lowell Ericson (LEr), Dan Floren, Dennis Gustafson, Skye Haas, Ether Hale, Robert Hambley, Scott Hickman (SHi), Aaron Holschback, Eric Howe (EHo), Scott Jenex, Brian Johnson, Robby Johnson, Joe Kaplan, Fred Leshner, Joe Kaplan, Douglas Kieser (DKi), Tom Klubertanz, David Kuecherer, James Lind, Steve Lubahn, Sue Malski (SMA), Cathy Mann (CMA), William Marenco, Chester Martin, James Mattsson, Steven Millard, Kip Miller, Andres Monncriff, **Brad Murphy** (Michigan), Jeff Newman, Frank Nicolletti, Walter Pawloski, Jesse Petersen, Ursula Petersen, Michael Petruchia, **Wayne Rohde** (Wisconsin), John Romano, Steve Santner, Russ Schipper, Roger Schroeder (RSc), Thomas Schultz, Julian Sellers (JSe), Brian Smith, Jerry Smith, Karen Smith, Douglas Smith (DSm), Joe Soehnel (JSO), Linda Sparling, Aaron Stutz, **Peder Svingen** (Minnesota), Daryl Tessen, Steve Thiessen, Pat Underwood (PU), Tom Uttech, Frank Venecek, Dave Vinnedge, Tim Walsh (TWa), Thomas Wheeler (TWe), Thomas Wood, Jon Weupper, Quentin Yoerger. ☉

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