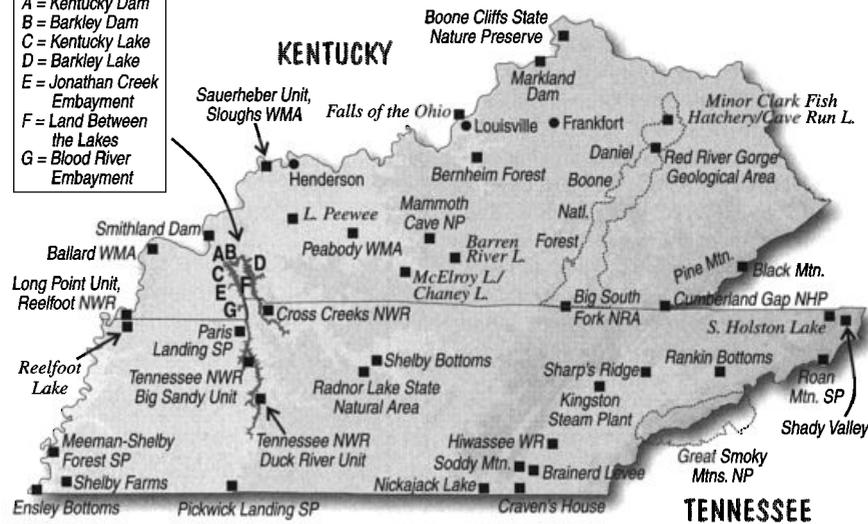


Tennessee & Kentucky

- A = Kentucky Dam
- B = Barkley Dam
- C = Kentucky Lake
- D = Barkley Lake
- E = Jonathan Creek Embayment
- F = Land Between the Lakes
- G = Blood River Embayment



Chris Sloan

224 Hicks Road
Nashville, Tennessee 37221
(chris.sloan@comcast.net)

Brainard Palmer-Ball, Jr.

Kentucky State Nature Preserves Commission
801 Schenkel Lane
Frankfort, Kentucky 40601
(brainard.palmer-ball@ky.gov)

The winter season of 2004–2005 was characterized by variable temperatures, with several abnormally warm periods interspersed with short bouts of below-average readings. The season's most severe outbreak of cold weather occurred during the last week of December. The minimum reading at Louisville for the winter was 2° F on Christmas morning, while 13° F was the season's minimum at Nashville, recorded both

25 December and 18 January. Overall, precipitation was near normal, but significant snowstorms were conspicuous by their absence. A brief period of above-average precipitation occurred in early January but did not last long enough to increase waterfowl habitat appreciably.

Rarity highlights of the season included a state-first Bullock's Oriole, a state-second Common Ground-Dove, and a likely returning Spotted Towhee in Kentucky, and a continuing Vermilion Flycatcher and two Northern Goshawks in Tennessee. The season's most notable concentration of gulls occurred off the Mississippi River in northwestern Tennessee and included no fewer than six species, including two California Gulls and up to five Iceland Gulls. A remarkable scarcity of hard and soft mast crops in some portions of the Region resulted in much-reduced numbers of some species during the winter.

LOONS THROUGH SWANS

The only rare loons reported were a juv. Pacific on L. Barkley, Lyon, KY 18 Dec (†BL), a Pacific and a Red-throated in Henry, TN 13 Feb (MT), and 2 Red-throateds in Henry, TN 26 Feb (MT). Counts of 125 Horned Grebes on L. Barkley, Lyon KY and 200+ on Kentucky L., Marshall, KY, both 10 Jan (DR), were relatively impressive mid-winter totals. Eight of the

annual wintering Eared Grebes at S. Holston L., Sullivan, TN remained through the period. A few American White Pelicans lingered through the season, but numbers began building again by mid-Feb, with 292 on Kentucky L., Calloway, KY 22 Feb (HC).

An injured Snowy Egret at Ensley Bottoms, sw. Shelby, TN 1 Dec (JRW) lingered through at least 22 Dec (JRW). Great Egrets are uncommon to rare in the Region in winter, so reports of 5 individuals in five Tennessee counties, including four in ne. Tennessee, represented an exceptional number. Again this year, a few Black-crowned Night-Herons, rare in Kentucky in winter, wintered in Jefferson (BWo).

Winter goose populations in the vicinity of Reelfoot L., TN/KY were again high, with maximum counts of 3500 Greater White-fronteds and 100,000 Snows 22 Jan (M.T.O.S.). Scattered reports of small numbers of Ross's Geese in middle and e. Tennessee have become the norm; this winter, one to 7 were reported at six locations. In the w. part of the Region, reports of Ross's Geese have become so routine as to merit little attention; however, three flocks totaling 147 birds in Lake, TN/Fulton, KY 6 Feb (JRW) represented an exceptional count. Blue-morph Ross's Geese are very rare, so a small blue-morph goose in Lake, TN 22 Jan (JRW) (the possibility of a Ross's Goose x Lesser Snow Goose hybrid could not be ruled out) was noteworthy as well. Also of note were a number of reports of Cackling Geese, recently split from Canada Goose. Because our knowledge of field identification and distribution of Cackling Geese is still developing, observers are requested to document carefully, and ideally to photograph, any possible Cackling Geese in the Region. In Kentucky, one to 35+ were reported from Ballard (SR), Daviess (DA), Trigg (BL), and Warren (ph. DR et al.) in the state's w. half, as well as in Bullitt (MMn, BP), Jefferson (vt. BY), and Oldham (MS, †BP) in n.-cen. Kentucky. In Tennessee, one was on the S. Holston R., Sullivan, TN 26–27 Dec (†RK, TM, WC), 2–4 in Washington, TN 8–23 Jan (LM, †RK et al.), one at Britton Ford 15 Jan (ph. MT), 2 at Lauderdale W.M.A., Lauderdale, TN 22 Jan (JRW), one at Bristol, Sullivan, TN 3–4 Feb (KE), 4 at Lauderdale W.M.A., Lauderdale, TN 5 Feb (JRW), and 2 in Dyer, TN 19–23 Feb (MT, †JRW, TW). For the 2nd consecutive year, there were a significant number of Mute Swan reports, with one to 21 birds reported at 11 locales in Kentucky and one to 8 reported in three w. Tennessee counties during the period. The Tundra Swan flock at Sauerheber Unit Sloughs W.M.A., Henderson, KY numbered up to 27 birds in early Jan (MMr); also reported were 2 imm. Tundras in Wayne, KY 27 Dec (ph. RDn et al.) and an imm. Tundra at London, Laurel, KY



Kentucky birders paid particular attention to small Canada Geese this winter, the first since the A.O.U. Check-list Committee elevated the smaller races to full species status. At Bowling Green, one to 9 Cackling Geese were seen off and on from mid-December (here 20 December) 2004 through 24 January 2005. Photograph by David Roemer

24–26 Jan (GC, ph. RDn). Similarly, 24 distant swans at Britton Ford, Big Sandy Unit, Tennessee N.W.R. 26 Dec. (JRW, MT) and one there 31 Dec (JRW) were likely Tundra, but Trumpeter could not be ruled out.

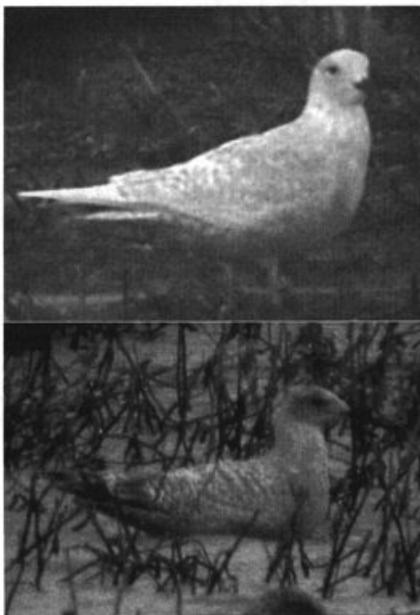
DUCKS THROUGH CRANES

Quite unusual were two mid-winter reports of Blue-winged Teal: a female that apparently wintered in s. Warren, KY (DR) and a pair at Long Point Unit, Reelfoot N.W.R., Fulton, KY 18 Dec (MG, ph. JRW). A male at Cane Creek Park, Cookeville, Putnam, TN 16 Feb (SJS, NL, BD) was an unusually early spring transient. Redheads put in a decent mid-winter showing, perhaps in part as a response to the late Dec cold snap. A drake duck thought to be a Redhead × Ring-necked Duck hybrid was present 2–23 Jan at S. Holston L. (†RK, m.ob.).

Surf Scoters were scattered around the Region: one to 2 at Ensley Bottoms 9 Dec+ (JRW); an ad. male on L. Cumberland, Pulaski, KY 12 Dec (RDn); 8 at S. Holston L. 12 Dec (RK et al.); one at Cane Creek Park, Putnam, TN 12 Dec (SJS); and a female or imm. on the Ohio R. at Louisville 5 Feb (MS, BY). The only reported White-winged Scoters were singles on S. Holston L. 22 Jan (TM) and in Henry, TN 13 Feb (MT). Single Black Scoters were reported from four locations: the Ohio R. at Louisville 19 Dec (BP et al.); Ensley Bottoms 9–12 Dec (ph. JRW); Robco L., Shelby, TN 11 Dec (JRW, MT); and Henry, TN 26 Feb (MT). The only Long-tailed Duck reported was an ad. male on L. Barkley, Lyon, KY 6 Jan (DR). The cold snap in late Dec brought with it a flurry of Common Merganser reports across the Region, with one to 7 reported from five Kentucky locales 31 Dec–3 Feb and one to 4 reported from five Tennessee sites 26 Dec–9 Jan.

Ospreys are rare in the Region in winter, so reports of single birds from five different e. Tennessee counties represent an unusually high number. Northern Goshawks are exceptionally rare in the Region at any time of year, so reports of imms. in Lake, TN 20 Feb (†JRW,

NM) and at Brainerd Levee, Hamilton, TN 26 Feb (DJ) were remarkable. There were at least a dozen reports of *calurus* Red-tailed Hawks in the Region, representing a fairly typical showing. Rough-legged Hawks were not numerous at Peabody W.M.A., Ohio/Muhlenberg, KY this winter, with peak counts of only 4 individuals on two occasions. One was in Gibson, TN 14–28 Feb (MG), and another was in Greene, TN 18 Feb (DMi). It was a very good year for Golden Eagles, with singles reported at Bernheim Forest, Bullitt/Nelson, KY 2 (BP) & 28 Dec (BP, MMn); Land Between the Lakes National Recreation Area, Lyon, KY 18 Dec (BL); Reelfoot L., Lake/Obion, TN 18 Dec+ (CGD, †CS, ph. JRW et al.); near Swifton, Wayne, KY



An incredible collection of vagrant gulls was present in Lake County, Tennessee between Reelfoot Lake and the Mississippi River from 16 January through the end of the winter period. Among the star attractions were at least five different Iceland Gulls (top image; 13 February 2005), an adult and a first-winter California Gull 19 February, three first-winter (here 13 February) and one second-winter Thayer's Gulls, and three first-winter Lesser Black-backed Gulls. Photographs by Jeff R. Wilson.

27 Dec (SJS); Johnson, TN 30 Jan (JS); and Jackson, TN 4 Feb (NL). Wintering Peregrine Falcons and Merlins were again prevalent, with 9 Peregrines reported from eight counties in the Region and 11 Merlins reported in nine counties in the Region.

Three Virginia Rails were heard at two locations in Muhlenberg, KY 2 Jan, suggesting wintering (BP, AC, RDn, HC). One at Shady Valley, Johnson, TN 19 Feb (LM, DH et al.) was also likely wintering. As many as 8 were present through the period at Standifer Gap Marsh, Hamilton, TN, where they are year-round residents (DPT). In what is now an annual occurrence, the Hiwassee C.B.C. once again established a new high count for Sandhill Cranes with 14,610 individuals 1 Jan (fide KC).

SHOREBIRDS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

Several shorebird species that are rare in the Region in winter were reported in Tennessee. Most notable among them were 3–15 Sanderlings and 2–3 Western Sandpipers at Ensley Bottoms 1 Dec–1 Jan (JRW). Also reported were a Greater Yellowlegs in Knox 11 Dec (HH et al.) and 3 Spotted Sandpipers—one at the Shelby Farms, Shelby 19 Dec (CB) and 2 at Nickajack L., Marion 8 Jan (JH, DJ, JCh). Single Long-billed Dowitchers in Lake and at Lauderdale W.M.A., Lauderdale 19 Feb (JRW) may have been early spring transients.

A second-year Laughing Gull likely continued from late fall at Kentucky Dam 15 Dec (HC, MR) and 10 Jan (DR, RDv, HC). The only unusual mid-winter concentration of Bonaparte's Gulls was 3500–4000 on L. Barkley, Lyon, KY 15 Feb (DR). An incredible collection of rare gulls was observed in Lake, TN 16 Jan+, including as many as 3 first-winter Lesser Black-backed Gulls, 3 first-winter and one second-winter Thayer's Gulls, a first-winter (16 Jan) and an ad. (19 Feb) California Gull, and as many as 5 first-winter Iceland Gulls (ph. JRW, m.ob.). Also reported in Tennessee were an ad. Lesser Black-backed Gull and a first-winter Great Black-backed Gull in Henry, TN 26 Dec (JRW, MT). In Kentucky, one first-winter and up to 2 ad. Thayer's Gulls were detected off and on during the season at Kentucky and Barkley Dams. Single ad. and first-winter Lesser Black-backed Gulls were also reported off and on during the season on Kentucky L. and L. Barkley; a first-winter bird just e. of the Long Point Unit, Reelfoot N.W.R. 21 Feb (ph. MT) provided a first record for Fulton, KY. Finally, a first-winter Great Black-backed Gull was present at Kentucky Dam 6–10 Jan (ph. DR, HC). As usual, a few Forster's Terns lingered well into winter and likely wintered on Kentucky L. in both states and in Shelby, TN.

A Common Ground-Dove feeding in a yard in e. Jessamine late Dec+ (EB, GB, ph. MMn) will provide Kentucky with its 2nd record after B.R.C. approval. Single Barn Owls were reported in three Kentucky counties: Jefferson (DPA), Calloway (HC), and Trigg (BL, PL). Short-eared Owl numbers were down this winter, with a peak count of only 4 at Peabody W.M.A., Ohio/Muhlenberg, KY. In Tennessee, single Short-eared Owls at Ft. Campbell, Montgomery 8 Dec (DMo), in Gibson 24 Dec (MG), and at Kingsport 13 Feb (JMo) were noteworthy. In Lake, TN and on the Obion/Dyer, TN line, up to 5 were reported regularly through the season. A Northern Saw-whet Owl was banded in Blount, TN 24 Jan (JG), and another responded to taped calls in Morgan, TN 5 Feb (BS). As has become the norm, 4 Common Nighthawks lingered through at least 7 Dec at Vanderbilt University's intramural fields, Nashville, TN (KO).

For wintering hummingbirds, the winter

SA It was a winter of much-reduced numbers for most species dependent on both hard and soft mast crops. With relatively wet conditions during the season, there was much debate about the reasons for the scarcity of acorns, hickory nuts, berries, and similar natural and ornamental foods. Perhaps the most plausible explanation involved a combination of natural low points in cyclic fruit production combined with an abundance of severe spring and early summer windstorms that may have stripped many trees of pollen, flowers, and young fruits. The results included much reduced numbers of berry-eaters such as Cedar Waxwings and Yellow-rumped Warblers, as well as (at least in Kentucky) hard-mast consumers such as Red-headed Woodpeckers and Blue Jays.

2004-2005 season was slightly down relative to last year, with at least 33 different birds reported. Of the 29 that were identified to some degree, there were 17 Rufous, 1 Allen's, 7 *Seiurus*, and 3 Rufous/Allen's. The highlight was Tennessee's (and the Region's) 5th Allen's **Hummingbird**, an ad. female banded in *Williamson* 5 Dec (BH, ph. CS). Red-headed Woodpeckers were scarce throughout most of the Region this winter, with only 33 individuals reported on 12 Kentucky C.B.C.s.

FLYCATCHERS THROUGH FINCHES

The ad. male **Vermilion Flycatcher** at Hatchie N.W.R. (ph. JRW) remained through at least 14 Dec (MR). An unlucky Blue-headed Vireo struck a window and died in *Madison*, KY 6 Dec (CO); others were at Memphis 19 Dec (DPr) and at Tigrett W.M.A., *Dyer*, TN 26 Jan (CB, VR, BWi). Away from the Mississippi R. floodplain in w. Tennessee, Loggerhead Shrikes have steadily declined, so one in *Williamson* 18 Dec (JMa, RL, JL) was noteworthy. Two Tree Swallows at Old Hickory L., *Sumner*, TN 15 Dec (JHi) were unusual early-winter lingerers; scattered reports of the species 11-26 Feb likely represented early spring migrants. Red-breasted Nuthatches ended up staging a small to moderate movement into the Region this winter.

The season again yielded a significant number of reports of passerines that are rare in the Region in winter. Twelve House Wrens reported in eight counties across Tennessee represented an exceptional total. Sedge Wrens, too, were widely reported, with 7 individuals reported from five Tennessee counties. Marsh Wrens are even rarer in winter (but seemingly on the increase in the Region), so singles in *White*, TN 8 (WB) & 21 Dec (DD, SJS, CM) and on the Reelfoot L. C.B.C. 18 Dec (*fide* MG), as well as 2 in *Fayette*, TN 2 Jan (SM, MW), were noteworthy. Two Blue-gray Gnatcatchers—one in *Knox*, TN 15 Dec-9 Jan (SH) and one at Shelby Bottoms, *Davidson*, TN 18 Dec (BH)—and a single Gray Catbird at Stones R. National Battlefield, *Rutherford*, TN 8 Dec (BS) were also reported.

Although Palm Warblers were not as numerous as during the previous winter, they were still fairly widely reported. Most reports were of single birds, although 6 were in *Hardin*, TN 3 Jan (MT et al.). Orange-crowned Warblers were reported in above-average numbers, with 12 reported from five counties across Tennessee. One of only a few lingering

summer residents reported in Kentucky during the season was a female Common Yellowthroat in *Ballard* 21 Dec (†BP). In Tennessee, single Common Yellowthroats were reported from Cookeville, *Putnam* 18 Dec (GE, MH), *Fayette* 2 Jan (DPr), and *Greene* 31 Jan and 26 Feb (DMi). For the 2nd consecutive winter, a female Summer Tanager visited a yard in *Munford*, *Tipton*, TN 8 Dec+ (DPr).

Presumably the same male **Spotted Towhee** that was found in w. *McCracken*, KY last winter was present at the same location 21 Dec (†BP, SR). In Tennessee, American Tree Spar-



This Common Ground-Dove (here 1 March 2005) was present in a Jessamine County, Kentucky yard from late December 2004 through the end of the period. It represents just the second record for Kentucky. Photograph by Mark Monroe.

rows are rare outside of a few locations in the w. part of the state, so reports of 7 individuals in four middle Tennessee counties indicated a modest invasion. Chipping Sparrows continue to increase as winter residents in Kentucky; one to 40 were reported on 15 C.B.C.s, and small flocks lingered at several locales. Lincoln's Sparrows are rare in the Region in winter, so reports of single birds in *Jackson*, TN 25 Dec (BS, SJS), in *Blount*, TN 9 Jan (CM), and in *Rutherford*, TN 28 Jan (BS) were noteworthy. A Lark Sparrow in *Sullivan*, TN 22 Jan (†TM, m.ob.) furnished the first confirmed record for ne. Tennessee. Lapland Longspurs were relatively widespread and were reported from no fewer than 11 Kentucky and seven Tennessee locales, including 2 in *Washington* 3 Dec (RK), a rarity for ne. Tennessee. The cold spell in late Dec brought a few Snow Buntings into n.-cen. Kentucky, where one to 9 were reported on three occasions 23-29 Dec (BP, KCm, Jcm); one was also reported in *Greenville*, *Greene*, TN 27 Dec (†RK). A tardy male Rose-breasted Grosbeak lingered at a yard in *Nelson*, KY through 1 Dec (ph. GH); a female in *Hamilton*, TN 7 Jan (JSL) appears to represent only the 2nd winter record for that county. Also quite tardy

in departing was an Indigo Bunting in w. *Fulton*, KY 4 Dec (HC, ME).

A Western Meadowlark in s. *Warren*, KY 14 Feb (ph. DR) provided the only Kentucky report; one in *Crockett*, TN 14 Feb (MG) was the only report in Tennessee away from traditional locations in nw. Tennessee. Brewer's Blackbirds are rare away from the w. part of the Region, so the following reports from e. and middle Tennessee were noteworthy: 10 in *White* 5 Dec (SJS, WW); one in *Cheatham* 18 Dec (FF, JF); up to 30 in *Greene* Jan+ (DMi, DH); and a male in *Blount* 9 Jan (CM). Kentucky's star rarity was an ad. male **Bullock's Oriole** that was present in a yard outside of Lawrenceburg, *Anderson* in early Jan+ (ph. A&BR et al.). Small numbers of Pine Siskins lingered throughout the season; 2-6 were reported on only four Kentucky C.B.C.s, and the peak count was for 40+ in e. *Calloway*, KY in early-mid-Jan (KCo). Purple Finches also lingered through winter in small but not surprising numbers; one to 16 were reported on 19 Kentucky C.B.C.s, with the peak count consisting of ca. 25 in se. *Jefferson* in mid-late Feb (E&JHu).

Cited contributors (subregional editors in boldface): David Ayer, Earl Boggs, Gary Boggs, Wally Brines, Carolyn Bullock, Kevin Calhoun (se. Tennessee), Joe Caminiti (Jcm), Kathy Caminiti (Kcm), Phillip Casteel (middle Tennessee), Janice Chadwell (JCh), Hap Chambers, Katherine Cohen (KCo), Wallace Coffey, Amy Covert, Granville Cox, Roseanna Denton (RDn), Robert Dever (RDv), Douglas Downs, Bettie Doyle, C. Gerald Drewry, Melissa Easley, Kevin Elam, Ginger Ensor, Frank Fekel, John Froeschauer, Jim Giocomo, Mark Greene, Gail Hart, Michael Hawkins, John Henderson, Jim Hielt (JHi), Don Holt, Bob Hood, Susan Hoyle, Harold Howell, Eddie & Jennifer Huber (E&JHu), Daniel Jacobson, Rick Knight (e. Tennessee), Rob Lane, Nancy Layzer, Bill Lisowsky, Paula Lisowsky, Judy Luna, Jonnie Sue Lyons, John Mann (JMa), Larry McDaniel, Tom McNeil, Susan McWhirter, Memphis Chapter of Tennessee Ornithological Society (M.T.O.S.), Don Miller (DMi), Mark Monroe (MMn), Nancy Moore, Mike Morton (MMr), Daniel Moss (DMo), John Moyle (JMo), Charlie Muise, Ken Oeser, Chelsey Olson, Brainard Palmer-Ball, Jr., Don Parker (DPa), David Patterson (DPt), Dick Preston (DPr), W. Robert Peebles (w. Tennessee), Scott Record, Mike Resch, Virginia Reynolds, Annette & Bobby Riddle, David Roemer, Chris Sloan, John Shumate, Barbara Stedman, Stephen J. Stedman, Matt Stickel, Michael Todd, Winston Walden, Martha Waldron, Barbara Wilson (BWi), Jeff R. Wilson, Terry Witt, Barbara Woerner (BWo), Ben Yandell, Linda Zempel. 🐦