



Maris Apse | Mark Cranford

**B**ird activity for the winter period was light. Winter finches did not materialize, nor did northern owls following last winter's Great Gray Owl invasion. An early start to winter in December set the tone for the period. A cold snap in the second week moved many birds out of the province. Weather for the remainder of the season was milder than usual, with less precipitation, and consisted of a brief series of freezes and thaws. Notable rarities included Ivory Gull and Slaty-backed Gull from the Point Pelee Birding Area, a Sage Thrasher at Port Weller, and a Purple Gallinule rescued from beneath a Christmas tree near Peterborough. We thank Margaret Bain and Alan Wormington for extensive assistance in assembling this report.

**Abbreviations:** K.F.N. (Kingston Field Naturalists); N.W.A. (National Wildlife Area); P.E. Pt. (Prince Edward Pt.); P.P.B.A. (Point Pelee Birding Area); P.P.N.P. (Point Pelee N.P.); T.O.C. (Toronto Ornithological Club); O.B.R.C. (Ontario B.R.C.); O.F.O. (Ontario Field Ornithologists); ROM (Royal Ontario Museum).

## WATERFOWL THROUGH HERONS

Notable Greater White-fronted Geese included 5 in Cobourg 11-13 Jan, probably exceptionally early spring migrants (MJCB, m.ob.), and 3 at P.P.B.A. 23 Jan, building to 10 by the end of season (AW et al.). Our knowledge of the status of Cackling Goose continues to be refined in the Region; small flocks were at Markham, with 8 on 1 Dec (SL), and at P.P.B.A., where 3 were found 28 Jan (DJW, AP); singles were noted in Ottawa through 4 Dec (m.ob.), at P.P.B.A. 5 Dec (AW), at Whitby, Durham 7 Dec (DJL), on Wolfe I. 18 Dec (GFV, RDW), at Sarnia 23 Feb (AHR), and in Brant 11-24 Feb (DMA,

m.ob.). Ten Ross's Geese visited P.P.B.A., starting with the first 21 Feb (DJW et al.). Mute Swans continue to winter at Presqu'île P.P., with a record 350 there 19 Jan (BMD). Most southbound Tundra Swans left the province with cold weather in mid-Dec; 8 on L. Erie at Nanticoke 28 Jan were an exception (JBM, South Peel Naturalists' Club). Early northbound migrants (or wintering birds?) were 24 at Port Weller 25 Feb (ALA, *fide* Ontbirds). A Blue-winged Teal on Manitoulin I. 17 Dec (DC) was late.

Lingering diving ducks occasionally winter in numbers off Manitoulin I., but this year the last White-winged Scoter was seen 3 Dec, and a maximum of just 12 Long-tailed Ducks was found over the winter period (*fide* CBe). A good count of 350 Red-breasted Mergansers came from Cobourg 11 Feb (LWe). The 8 Jan Lake Ontario Mid-Winter Waterfowl Inventory produced near-record numbers of many species, thanks in part to congregations at Hamilton and Kingston. Of these, 843 Tundra Swans at Kingston and 925 Ruddy Ducks at Windermere Basin in Hamilton stood out. Three Barrow's Goldeneyes lingered through the period at the Remic Rapids in Ottawa (m.ob.), along with a Barrow's Goldeneye ×



The second recorded in Ontario's Niagara Frontier, this Sage Thrasher hung on despite very cold weather at Port Weller 24-27 (here 26) February 2006. Photograph by Karl Egressy.

Common Goldeneye hybrid through 1 Jan; 2 Barrow's Goldeneyes were in the Kingston region, one wintered at Stoney Creek (m.ob.), and another was at Burlington 8 Jan (DBr et al.). Far rarer was a female Barrow's on L. Erie off Hillman Marsh 20-21 Dec (AW et al.), only the 3rd record ever for the P.P.B.A. Hamilton had a Common Goldeneye × Barrow's Goldeneye hybrid present throughout the period (KAM), as well as an apparent Common Goldeneye × Hooded Merganser hybrid 3 Feb (RZD).

Gray Partridge is still found in small covies along the Québec border from Ottawa to the St. Lawrence. The only other report of Gray Partridge was from a traditional site at the

Brantford Airport (*fide* CE). Wild Turkey continues to increase across s. Ontario, with record numbers tallied on many Christmas Bird Counts. Common Loons remained in Algonquin P.P. until freeze-up 6 Dec (BPa, RSh, JSc); the Toronto area had a higher-than-usual 14 reported over the period. A Red-necked Grebe was seen on the Mid-Winter Waterfowl Survey on the St. Clair R. 7 Jan (BAM), and another was in L. Erie off Hillman Marsh 11 Dec (AW). Two Pacific Loons were reported: from Wolfe I. 18 Dec (RDW) and from Duffins Creek 1-4 Dec (ph. JI, RJP, m.ob.). It was a big year for wandering imm. Northern Gannets on L. Ontario and L. Erie, with singles reported at Port Credit, Hamilton, St. Catharines, Long Pt., and Pt. Pelee (m.ob.); it is likely that some of these reports involved the same individual. Three Double-crested Cormorants at Cornwall Power Dam 5 Feb were noteworthy (BMD); up to 35 wintered in Windermere Basin, Hamilton (BMA). Up to 8 Black-crowned Night-Herons wintered at two sites in Toronto and Hamilton. More Turkey Vultures are lingering well into Dec, and more may be wintering, e.g., 3 reported from Northumberland through the season (m.ob.); apparent returning birds were seen in Smithville as early as 20 Jan (LT, JT).

## HAWKS THROUGH OWLS

Reports of Gyrfalcon included an imm. gray morph at the Central Experimental Farm, Ottawa 21 Feb (CT), a white morph at Wolfe I. 18 Dec (MWPR), an ad. white morph at Holiday Beach 4 Dec (Carl A. Pascoe, Rachel Pascoe) and another at Wheatley Harbour 24 Dec (TRP), and a gray morph at Duffins Creek 4 Dec (KO, AW et al.). A late Osprey was reported 4 Dec in Oakville (BM). An imm. Golden Eagle wintered at Port Bruce near L. Erie (RK). A Red-tailed Hawk showing characters consistent with subspecies *calurus* was seen at Waterloo 8 Dec (MVAB, KB), and at Woodstock a Red-tailed similar to "Kriders" (pale morph of *borealis*) was noted 31 Jan (JHo). Two Peregrines wintered in London (m.ob., *fide* PAR).

A juv. Purple Gallinule was found 6 Feb n. of Peterborough beneath a discarded Christmas tree (*fide* Kate Siena). A Virginia Rail was noted on the C.B.C. 2 Jan at St. Clair N.W.A. (BAM), 2 were seen at Pelee Marsh Boardwalk 14 Dec (HRW), and fresh rail tracks (presumably made by a Virginia) were seen at Wheatley P.P. 13 Dec (AW). A group of 25 Sandhill Cranes over Burlington 2 Dec were very late migrants (MG), as were 5 over Hamilton 6 Dec (DL, GL). Among the few shorebirds reported was a Purple Sandpiper at Humber Bay 20 Dec (IS), a late Ruddy Turnstone at Hamil-

ton Harbour 27 Dec (TS), and a late Dunlin at Wheatley Harbour 13 Dec (AW). The gull migration through the Niagara R. was average this year, with relatively few reports of extralimital larids; the regular California Gull at Adam Beck Generating Station 28 Dec (AG, RG) was an exception. Away from the river, a Black-legged Kittiwake at Toronto 10 Dec (DJM) was noteworthy. A late-Dec thaw in L. Erie generated a large movement of gulls (34,000 Ring-billed and 7000 Herring, plus a Pomarine Jaeger) past the Tip of Point Pelee over a 4.5-hour period 31 Dec (AW). The P.P.B.A. hosted two rarities new to that area: an imm. Ivory Gull at Hillman Marsh 8-13 Jan (AJH, RAH, m.ob.) and a third-winter Slaty-backed Gull at Wheatley Harbour 22-26 Jan (DJW, m.ob.). An apparent Herring Gull × Great Black-backed Gull hybrid was noted 23 Jan at Wheatley Harbour (PSB).

Northern owls appeared to remain in n. Ontario this winter, with a report of 14 Great Gray Owls, 2 Northern Hawk Owls, and 2 Snowy Owls from Hearst, Cochrane 11 Feb (MJ). Farther s., there were relatively few reports of Great Gray Owls, mostly singles from Thunder Bay and Kenora, s. to Shelburne, Dufferin (KL). A Northern Hawk Owl at Orleans through 22 Jan (m.ob.) furnished one of few reports from s. Ontario; another was at North Bay in Feb (DT). A Barred Owl wintered at the Leslie Street Spit in Toronto. Two Boreal Owls were in Thunder Bay in early Feb (BN, AG, BH).

## HUMMINGBIRDS THROUGH WAXWINGS

A Rufous Hummingbird attended the feeder of Alice Kenzie in London 18 Nov–9 Dec (*vide* PAR); it was identified biochemically from a molted feather. Two pairs of Red-headed Woodpeckers wintered in Pinery P.P. (AHR, MA), as did the pair at Constance Bay for a 2nd year (BMD); an ad. wintered at Holiday Harbour through at least 23 Feb (JMG, JNF et al.); and 4 were counted 31 Dec on the Fisherville C.B.C. Red-bellied Woodpeckers, now regularly seen in s. Ontario, still deserve mention in n. Ontario: a male frequented a feeder in Thunder Bay until at least 10 Jan (JSt, SSt), and another was at Jackfish L., e. of Terrace Bay, 6 Feb (AF). Single Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were seen at Arkona, Lambton 17 Dec (PC), at P.P.N.P. 19 Dec (HHB, PJB, DR et al.), at Trenton 14 Dec (*vide* RTS), at Napanee 12 Jan (EB, OW), and in Walsingham, Norfolk Dec–13 Feb (DiS), the last attending a feeder.

A Northern Flicker on Manitoulin I. 13 Jan (NS) was unusual; 10 at P.P.N.P. 27 Dec (AW) made a high winter count for s. Ontario.

As expected in a mild season, single Eastern Phoebe's lingered at P.P.N.P. 19 Dec (PDP

with both birds feeding on the bumper Mountain Ash berry crop 27 Dec and 13 Feb (BMo), another was seen at Reevecraig late Dec+ (RN, SuL, m.ob.). Single Hermit Thrushes were widely reported from Gravenhurst to



A first for Point Pelee and the third for Ontario, this third-winter Slaty-backed Gull was photographed at Wheatley Harbour 22 January 2006. Photograph by Brett Groves.

et al.), at Spring C.A., Elgin 28 Dec (JM) and 1 Jan (DMa, LWI, RSn), at Long Pt. 14 Dec (AEMA) and 26 Jan (SAM, FN), and at Ajax 1-2 Dec (MJCB), the latter furnishing a record-late date for Durham. A Black-billed Magpie at McGregor, Essex 19 (JiH) & 20 Dec (RoH) may have been an escapee. A Gray Jay at Madoc, Hastings 25 Dec (*vide* RTS) was out of range. Common Ravens continue to drift southward, with several reports from locations mostly n. of Toronto. Up to 3 hardy Barn Swallows were at Kingston 9 Dec (VPM). Some feeders in and around North Bay hosted Boreal Chickadees, with up to 6 at Powassan 26 Jan (JK); in the Ottawa area, there was one at Constance Bay 6-11 Dec (JSk, SA) and one at Forest Park, e. of Embrun, 9 Jan–28 Feb (TFMB, m.ob.). A White-breasted Nuthatch in Pickle Lake, Kenora 6 Jan (LCo) was very far north.

Carolina Wrens were reported n. to Deep River and North Bay. Single Winter Wrens were reported from Bracebridge and Ottawa; Wheatley P.P. had a total of 6 and also a Marsh Wren 30 Dec (AW). Single Ruby-crowned Kinglets were in Toronto 22 Dec (JeB, AEM) and 23 Feb (SMF), at Wheatley P.P. 13-19 Dec (AW et al.), and at the Visitor Centre in P.P.N.P. 10 Feb (SER). Two sightings of Townsend's Solitaire came from Thunder Bay,

P.P.N.P. There were at least eight widely scattered reports of single Varied Thrushes, and single Gray Catbirds lingered at several locations in the s., with one n. to Thunder Bay in early Feb (CS, JLi). In n. Ontario, reports of Northern Mockingbirds included 2 in Ottawa and singles in Powassan and Thunder Bay. A Sage Thrasher 24-27 Feb at Port Weller (BA et al.) caused much excitement, and many local birders braved the brutally cold and windy location to search for the bird, just the 2nd recorded in Niagara Region (the first was in Oct 1966). Single Brown Thrashers were n. to Bracebridge 18 Nov–mid-Jan and again late Feb (BT); Providence Bay (EG et al.) and Tehkummah (JBe), both on Manitoulin I., 17 Dec–3 Jan; Chalk River all season (m.ob.), and at Manitouwadge, Algoma 10 Jan (TaH, *vide* MT).

Reports of American Pipits were unusually numerous, owing to the mild weather and many snow-free fields. One on the Gore Bay C.B.C. 18 Dec provided the first Manitoulin winter record; other singles were at Presqu'île P.P. 18 Dec (DPS), at Niagara Falls 22 Dec (RP), at Wheatley Harbour 19-30 Dec (GTH, HAC et al.), and the Tip of Point Pelee 5 Jan (AW); in Toronto, 13 were seen 3 Dec (NMu) with singles there 4 Dec (SMF) and 18 Feb (NMu); Port Rowan had 2 on 3 Dec (DiS),

and 6 were in P.P.N.P. 10 Dec and 2 there the next day (AW). A locally rare Bohemian Waxwing was at P.P.N.P. 3-21 Feb (JB et al.); flocks as large as 300 birds were reported from across the province n. of Toronto.

**WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES**

A Yellow-throated Warbler was photographed at a Grafton feeder 17 Nov-14 Dec (J. & E. Brunton, m.ob.), a 5th *Northumberland* record. Single Pine Warblers were at Whitby 3 Dec (DJM), at P.P.N.P. 19 Dec (PJB, CR), at Niagara Falls 22 Jan (WCD et al.) and again 28 Feb (MA), at Bronte 13 Dec-28 Feb (D&KO, m.ob.), and at a Scarborough feeder 11 Dec (JFa, *fide* GC), where up to 3 were seen on different dates through the end of the period. A Palm Warbler at Cobourg 4 Dec (MJCB) provided a 2nd county winter record; others were at Niagara Falls 18-19 Dec (Bpo, VR), at P.P.N.P. 4 Dec (HRW), and at Sturgeon Creek 23 Dec (SER). An Ovenbird was seen 9-13 Dec in Burlington (CE, m.ob.).

Single Eastern Towhees were reported from Nipigon 10 Jan (KMa), Huntsville 13 Dec+ (BCa et al.), Oshawa 24 Jan-6 Feb (D. Pazaratz), and P.P.B.A. 7 Dec+ (HTO et al.). Chipping Sparrows were also reported in above-average numbers, with singles in Richmond 21-22 Jan (PW), Toronto 6 (SMF) & 10 Dec (JFa), Brantford 31 Dec (BLa), P.P.N.P. 1 Dec (AW), and Camlachie through the season (AHR); 2 were at Wheatley Harbour 14-20 Dec (AW et al.). Field Sparrows were widely reported, with 23 reported during the period in the P.P.B.A. Single Vesper Sparrows were at Brighton 18-19 Dec (RDM, FH), at Milton 21 Dec (DRD), at Port Stanley 8 Jan (MA), at Shrewsbury 18 Dec (AW), and at Hillman Marsh 11 Dec (AJH, RAH). There were at least 10 reports of single Savannah Sparrows in s. Ontario; a flock of 17 at Wheatley Harbour 14-19 Dec (AW et al.) was comprised of multiple taxa. A Le Conte's Sparrow at the Pelee tip 3 Dec (AJH) and another on Wolfe I. 18 Dec (ph. MWPR et al.) were record late. In s. Ontario, several Fox Sparrows were reported from Long Point, P.P.B.A., Hamilton, Toronto, and *Northumberland*, but singles at Levigne 3 Dec (AM), Gloucester 18 Dec-5 Feb (KZb), and Deep River 20 Nov+ (JU) deserve specific mention. Single Lincoln's Sparrows were reported from Toronto I. 1 Dec (DBe), Binbrook 13 Dec (BH), Dundas 1 Jan (RZD, BC), Turkey Pt. 9 Dec (MA), and the

London C.B.C. 17 Dec (PR). Harris's Sparrow was reported in Manitouwadge 10 Jan (TaH, *fide* MT), London 29 Dec (DW, *fide* AW), and Holiday Harbour 18 Dec+ (JMG, JNF et al.). An unusually large flock of 250 Lapland Longspurs was at Ste-Rose-de-Prescott 20 Dec (m.ob.); there were 20 on 31 Dec on the Fisherville C.B.C., 30 at the Pelee Onion Fields 5 Dec (AW), 20 through the period near Forest (PC, AR), plus scattered singles and smaller

sumed to be the bird first seen 18 Dec on the Presqu'île C.B.C.) was seen 11-31 Jan (RDM, m.ob.). Rusty Blackbirds were reported in better-than-average numbers, at least for recent seasons. At the Tip of Point Pelee, 60 were seen 16 Dec (AW); 120 were at Sturgeon Creek 27 Dec (AW); and 27 were at Port Hope 11 Dec (ERM). Two Brewer's Blackbirds were found at Shrewsbury 9 Dec (JTB), 2 at Erie Beach 18 Dec (KTb, SC), 2 w. of Wheatley



This first-winter Ivory Gull spent 8-13 (here 13) January 2006 at Hillman Marsh, Ontario, a first record for Point Pelee. Photograph by Timothy C. Lenz.

groups. There were patchy reports of large flocks of Snow Buntings from the sw. portions of province, with a high count of 5000 during most of Jan between Arkona and Forest (PC, AHR).

Two male Northern Cardinals were seen in Thunder Bay 28 (MCo) & 29 Jan (JCl). A female Rose-breasted Grosbeak at a Mindemoya feeder 24 Jan (CBe) was likewise far north. A first-basic male Indigo Bunting spent 11-13 Feb at Brent Clutterbuck's feeder near Fingal, Elgin (*fide* DMa). Substantial numbers of Red-winged Blackbirds lingered, especially in Dec close to L. Erie and the Niagara pen., but n. reports came from Manitouwadge, with one 10 Jan (THa, *fide* MT); Manitoulin I., where 3 on 17 Dec (CBe) constituted their first winter record; and Algonquin P.P., which had one 25 Jan (BFi, CG, JaH, KL), only the 2nd recorded there in winter. Single Eastern Meadowlarks tarried at Port Rowan 3 Dec (DiS) and in the P.P.B.A. 15 (AW) & 19 Dec (STP, MB); 3 were tallied 27 Dec on the West Elgin C.B.C. (HC). A male Yellow-headed Blackbird at a feeder in Embury 9 Jan (LHe, m.ob.) delighted Ottawa area birders; a female e. of Brighton (pre-

Harbour 13 Dec (AW), and singles were at Sturgeon Creek 19 Dec (STP, MB) and Fisherville 15 Dec (*fide* CE). In early winter, Common Grackles were seen all along L. Erie and L. St. Clair, usually in mixed flocks with Red-winged Blackbirds and Brown-headed Cowbirds; exceptions were one at Gravenhurst 18 Dec (*fide* BT) and 2 in Callandar 12 Feb (LHi). A female Baltimore Oriole, surviving on suet, was at South Bay, Prince Edward 4-14 Dec (*fide* RTS).

Pine Grosbeaks were regular in Thunder Bay, becoming scarcer as winter wore on, with a leucistic individual found in mid-Jan (ph. BRa); Algonquin P.P. feeders hosted a flock of 20-30, with a few being seen along Hwy. 60. Ottawa had small numbers irregularly; the Toronto area had 12 at Palgrave C.A. 19 Jan (PG, *fide* TH), with 2 nearby 22 Jan (DEP); in London, 3 were seen 8-10 Jan at Fanshawe C.A. (WGL); and the most sw. report was of 3 at Pinery P.P. 29 Jan (PR). Purple Finches were seen in small numbers on Manitoulin I. all winter, Kingston reported 8 at feeders 6-26 Dec (K.F.N.), 25 were at Camden East 8 Feb (PJG), and P.P.N.P. had 14 on 1 Dec (AW), 2 on 19 Dec, and 7 on 24 Dec (DJW, AW). Red

Crossbills were in very low numbers across the province. In Algonquin P.P., all reports were from Barron Canyon Rd., where small numbers were seen 6 Dec and 28 Jan at five locations (MWPR), with 6, including singing males, noted 26 Feb (JSk). White-winged Crossbills were reported as occasional transients in small numbers throughout winter in Ottawa; just two flocks were reported along Barron Canyon Rd. 6 Dec (MWPR); 7 were in Bracebridge 8 Dec (*vide* BT); and one was at Wheatley P.P. 13 Dec (AW). Common Redpolls were noted in good numbers in more n. areas, but only 4 singles were reported in the s., at Arkona 17 Dec (PC et al.), on the Fisherville C.B.C. 31 Dec (2 birds), and at St. Marys 17 Dec (D. & E. Brown). There were scattered reports of Hoary Redpolls. Pine Siskins were in good numbers in late fall, increasing during Dec, and abundant in Jan-Feb, e.g., on Manitoulin I. (CBe). Likewise, American Goldfinches abounded all winter on Manitoulin I. and in Muskoka, and flocks of 12-280 were observed flying southward off the Tip of Pelee 1-24 Dec (AW, AJH, DJW). On Manitoulin I., Evening Grosbeak numbers bult from early Dec and were still increasing in late Feb (CB); similarly in Muskoka, Evening Grosbeaks began to arrive in Nov, and there were 135 at Six Mile L. 19 Feb (BT). By contrast, Ottawa reported having good numbers early, decreasing in Feb, and there were just 7 at Kingston 14-21 Dec (EB, K.F.N.) and 12 at Bedford Mills 11 Jan (North Leeds Birdwatchers).

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