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# North American Birds

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF ORNITHOLOGICAL RECORD PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN BIRDING ASSOCIATION



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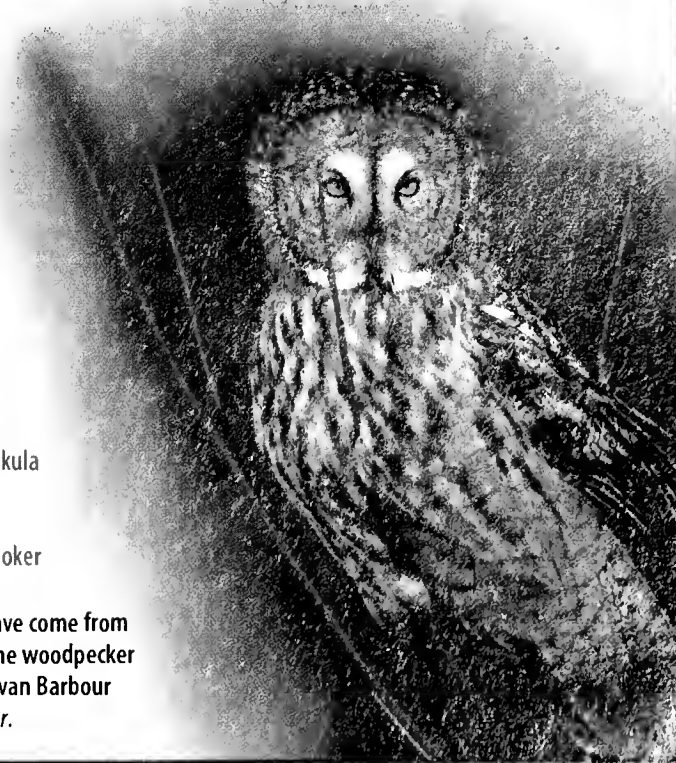
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ON THE COVER: Between February 2004 and February 2005, a half-dozen or more sight reports of Ivory-billed Woodpecker have come from Bayou de View, within the Cache River National Wildlife Refuge just outside of Brinkley, Arkansas. In all of these sightings, the woodpecker has managed to elude cameras and has been seen mostly in flight. Though the bird also refused to sit for a painting, artist Evan Barbour visited the Bayou de View in April 2005 and rendered this watercolor portrait of a male Ivory-billed. *Painting by © Evan Barbour.*



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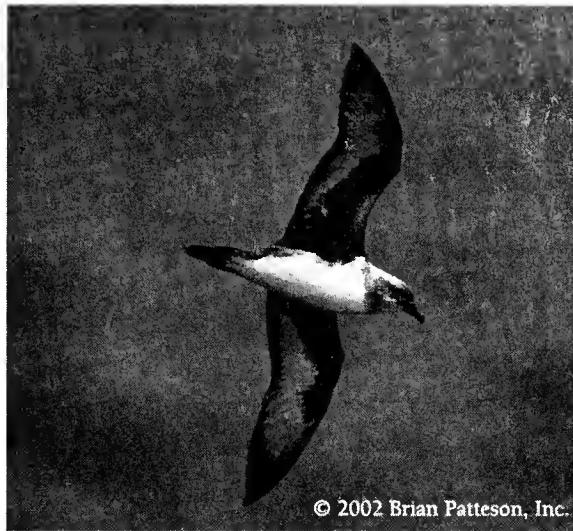
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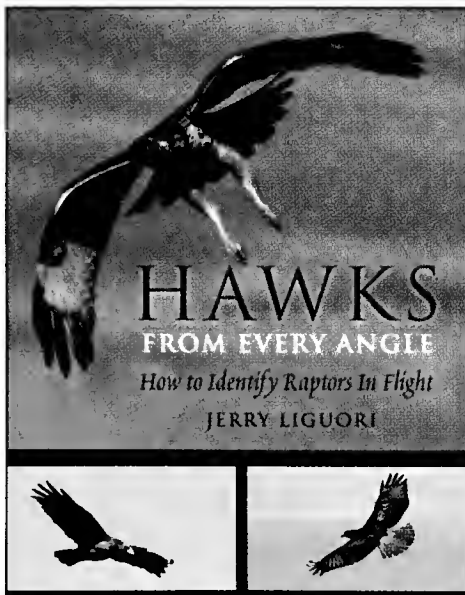
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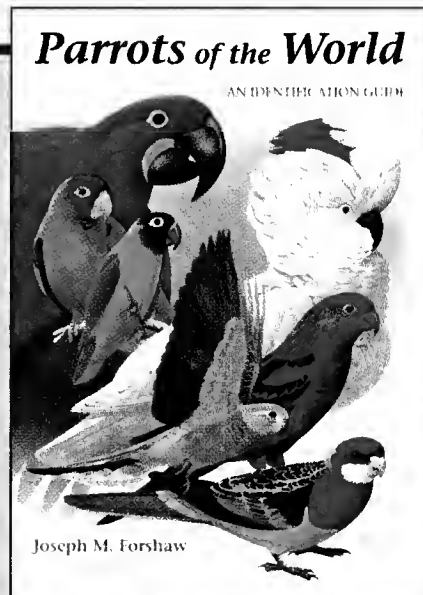
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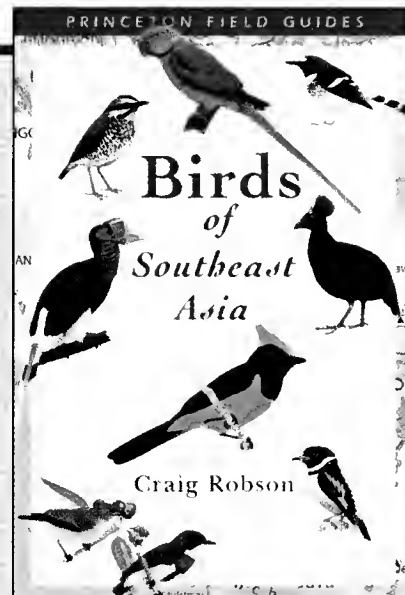
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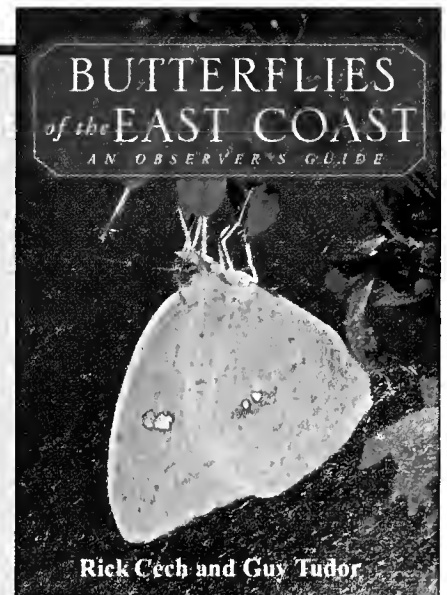
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# IVORY-BILLED WOODPECKER SPECIAL SECTION

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Illustration courtesy of Mark Bowers, United States Fish & Wildlife Service



# An overview of Ivory-billed Woodpecker (*Campephilus principalis*) sightings in eastern Arkansas in 2004–2005

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## ABSTRACT

This paper presents the field notes of observers who reported encounters with an Ivory-billed Woodpecker (*Campephilus principalis*) in the Bayou de View area of Monroe County, Arkansas in February 2004 through February 2005. These notes augment other publications on the subject by presenting sight reports and several audio contacts in greater depth.

## INTRODUCTION

A series of events that unfolded in late winter and early spring of 2004 suggested that at least one Ivory-billed Woodpecker (*Campephilus principalis*), a species not positively documented since 1948 and feared extinct, was alive in the vast bottomland hardwood forests of the White River drainage of eastern Arkansas. Initial sight records, followed by a brief video recording in April 2004, touched off an extensive

search effort in the region during the subsequent twelve months, which yielded several additional contacts with the species. A summary of the evidence supporting the presence and identification of the single Ivory-billed Woodpecker has been published (Fitzpatrick et al. 2005), and a book that treats several aspects of the search and sightings is also available (Gallagher 2005). In this article, we provide additional details on the sight reports of this species, including the initial encounters and additional sightings that took place during the subsequent organized search. We also briefly describe the search techniques employed during 2004 and 2005 in our attempt to locate additional individuals, to secure satisfactory documentation, and to determine the extent of potential habitat and feeding areas. Finally, we discuss the implications of these events for birders, including opportunities available to look for Ivory-billed Woodpeckers in eastern Arkansas and elsewhere, as well as guidelines and cautions for would-be searchers. Because these reports are likely to result in greatly increased visitation to the region by birders, with very real potential to disturb this highly endangered species, we urge all visitors to follow the highest standards of birding ethics.

## First field encounters: February 2004

On 11 February 2004, at about 1400 CST, Gene Sparling of Hot Springs, Arkansas observed a large woodpecker while kayaking along the Bayou de View within the Cache River National Wildlife Refuge in Monroe County, about 8 km west of Brinkley,

Arkansas (Figure 1). The bird landed on a tree about 20 m in front of his kayak. Though he lacked binoculars, he noticed that it looked different from Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*) and posted a description of the bird—which was observed perched on the side of a tree—to a website for kayak and canoe enthusiasts. His description included unusually large size, extensive white on the folded wing (with an “odd yellowish” color to the white at its edges), a light-colored bill, and a crest showing some red. He described the bird’s movements as jerky and animated, with a cartoonish quality. Shortly after the posting of this sighting, Mary Scott, who had been searching for Ivory-billed Woodpecker in the White River National Wildlife Refuge in southeastern Arkansas (and had privately reported a personal 10 March 2003 sighting of the species there to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology), passed word of Sparling’s sighting to Tim Gallagher, editor of *Living Bird* magazine and a long-time student of the literature on Ivory-billed Woodpecker who had been searching for the species in the Southeast for several years. Gallagher and colleague Bobby Harrison, an associate professor of art and photography at Oakwood College in Huntsville, Alabama, agreed to participate in a follow-up of Sparling’s report, as they had followed up on Scott’s earlier sight report in the White River area.

Two weeks later, on 27 February 2004, the second day of their reconnaissance, Gallagher and Harrison observed a bird they identified as an Ivory-billed Woodpecker as it flew across the main channel of the Bayou

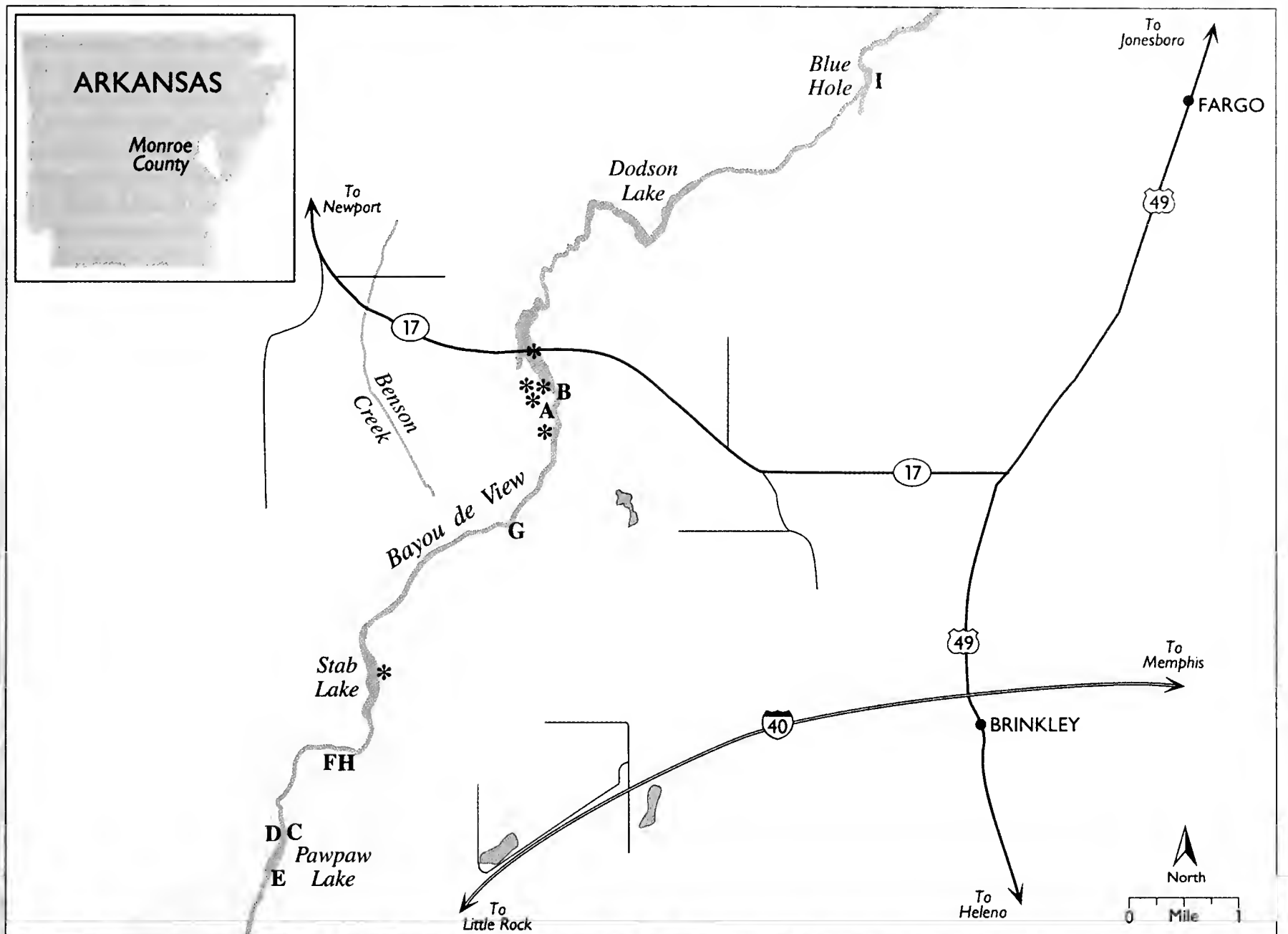


Figure 1. Locations of sight reports of Ivory-billed Woodpecker in the Bayou de View, Cache River National Wildlife Refuge, Monroe County, Arkansas. Sightings described in the present article are labeled with letters A through I. A = 11 February 2004; B = 27 February 2004; C = 5 April 2004, D = 6 April 2004, E = 10 April 2004, F = 11 April 2004, G = 25 April 2004, H = 14 February 2005. The letter "I" marks a probable audio encounter with the species 9 November 2004. Possible additional sightings are marked by an asterisk. Map by Virginia Maynard.

de View at about 1315 CST (Figure 1). Both observers carefully noted the diagnostic white trailing edge of the upper wing contrasting sharply with the glossy black plumage. The bird was within 0.5 km of the site of the 11 February sighting; it appeared to be wary and could not be relocated. A full narrative account of their sighting, along with many photographs of the search area, appears in *The Grail Bird* (Gallagher 2005), and their field notes and sketches are presented in Fitzpatrick et al. (2005).

#### Search efforts: March 2004–April 2005

These initial sight reports immediately sparked the formation of a research coalition between the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and the Arkansas Field Office of The Nature Conservancy, which over the ensuing three months (March through May 2004) deployed teams of field biologists and birders into the vicinity of these sight records. A flurry of additional sightings and a short

video obtained in April 2004 (see below) led to an expanded coalition (the Big Woods Conservation Partnership), which planned and directed a large, privately funded search effort along Bayou de View (in Cache River National Wildlife Refuge and adjacent Dagmar Wildlife Management Area), as well as farther south in the White River National Wildlife Refuge, from late autumn through the following spring (November 2004 through April 2005). Meanwhile, a small crew, including professional videographer Tim Barksdale, also remained active during the summer months in the area. This operation was kept confidential, so that the teams of biologists could conduct their studies without disturbance and so that the woodpecker or woodpeckers in the area would also remain relatively undisturbed. The primary goal was to document one or more birds to the satisfaction of the ornithological community and the world at large and generally to determine the status of the species

in the area; conclusive documentation of the species had not been seen since photographs presented by Tanner (1942) dating from 1935 in the Singer Tract of Louisiana, about 297 km (185 mi) away from Bayou de View. All sight reports subsequent to those (and even photographic material and audio recordings from the 1960s and 1970s) had been dismissed or discredited by ornithologists, making procurement of physical evidence of paramount importance. A further goal was to set in place a conservation strategy that included private fundraising to acquire critical habitats and comprehensive planning for endangered species recovery actions. The findings of the 2004–2005 search efforts were presented first to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and Arkansas state wildlife agencies on 7 April 2005 and to the public, via press conference, on 28 April 2005. The choice for a public announcement was made because it was judged that discretion could no longer be maintained, given

the increasing number of people aware of the Arkansas sight reports. With the announcement of the findings, we aim to stimulate conservation and search efforts for the species in Arkansas and elsewhere.

The full description of the scientific aspects of the search for Ivory-billed Woodpecker in eastern Arkansas in 2004–2005, including detailed methodology and descriptions of the habitats searched, will be published elsewhere. In short, the methods used to search for the Ivory-billed Woodpecker were quite varied and flexible. Searchers in chest waders walked through the bayou's forests of Water Tupelo (*Nyssa aquatica*) and Baldcypress (*Taxodium distichum*) or navigated channels through it in canoes or other small boats. They also sat quietly—in canoes, on tree platforms, in blinds, and on small areas of dry land—watching and listening for Ivory-billed and other woodpeckers. Searchers used camouflaged equipment and clothing at all times. The deployment of individuals and teams of observers was coordinated by separate crew leaders in Bayou de View and White River National Wildlife Refuge. Search efforts focused on the most promising habitat, prioritized from infra-red aerial photos of the study area, and searchers were frequently mobilized to follow up on potential sightings. Some observers worked along predefined transects, others conducted point counts, others searched for and monitored cavities consistent with former roosting and nest cavities of Ivory-billeds (cf. Figures 2, 3), while others conducted stationary watches along strategic open areas such as lakes and power-line cuts, in an effort to capture an Ivory-billed on video. All searchers used GPS units to keep track of their efforts, and a complete record of searches was maintained. All searchers were provisioned with video cameras, which were kept running continuously while mounted to tripods in the canoes (Figure 4). Other efforts included the use of decoys and audio lures (Figures 5, 6), suet stations, and playback experiments, all of which were limited in extent and carefully monitored. Field activities typically started at dawn and extended until dark in an effort to monitor potential roosting cavities. In addition, Harrison and the crew used lifelike Ivory-billed Woodpecker models (Gallagher 2005), and David Luneau used video camera “traps” with motion-sensitive triggers.

In addition to over 22,000 hours of human searches, between 10 and 18 Autonomous Recording Units (ARUs) were de-



**Figure 2.** Over 150 km<sup>2</sup> of forest in Bayou de View and White River N.W.R. was searched systematically for roost or nest cavities of Ivory-billed Woodpecker in 2004–2005. This cavity in a Sugarberry (*Celtis laevigata*) in the southern part of White River N.W.R. has features fitting the description of an Ivory-billed Woodpecker cavity: the entrance has an irregular, roughly oval shape and is over 9 cm wide, which is larger than the entrance of most Pileated Woodpecker cavities. All photographs courtesy of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

ployed at any given time in an effort to record vocalizations or display drums of Ivory-billed Woodpecker at sites in the study area with promising habitat features and to keep around the clock vigilance at sites where Ivory-billed Woodpeckers were seen or presumably heard. Although analysis of over 18,000 hours of audio recordings is ongoing, a few potentially interesting sounds have been detected so far that give some hope that our hypothesis of a small population of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers in the region might be correct.

### Overview of sightings and other evidence

The extensive surveys of potential Ivory-billed habitat in the White River National Wildlife Refuge (counties of Monroe, Arkansas, Desha, Phillips) did not produce a sighting of the species, though several areas of what appeared to be prime habitat were located. Searches in the Bayou de View and adjacent forested areas (counties of Woodruff, Monroe, and Prairie) did not meet with success in the month immediately following the sight reports of Sparling, Gallagher, and Harrison. However, in April 2004, there were as many as four sight re-

ports 3–4 km south of the original sightings (Figure 1), and David Luneau secured videotape footage 25 April 2004 of a large black-and-white woodpecker in flight—at a place very near the original sight reports (Figure 1). Although the videotape does not show the bird's head—or the eponymous bill (which has not yet been clearly observed by anyone reporting the species in Arkansas in 2004–2005)—we maintain that the patterns of black and white on the back, upperwing, and underwing are fully consistent with Ivory-billed and not with Pileated. This video currently serves as the only potential photographic evidence for the existence of at least one living Ivory-billed Woodpecker, as presented in Fitzpatrick et al. (2005). A brief summary of the six sight records considered most unequivocal is also presented in Fitzpatrick et al. (2005). Below we give a more complete account of possible detections of Ivory-billed Woodpecker in the region during 2004–2005, including some sightings too fleeting to be conclusively documented yet nonetheless intriguing. For each event, detailed written field notes were submitted and videotaped “depositions” of each observer were taken and archived at Cornell Lab of Ornithology.

On 5 April 2004, Jim Fitzpatrick, director of the Carpenter Nature Center in Hastings, Minnesota, was sitting in a canoe on the eastern side of Pawpaw Lake (Figure 1) when he noticed a large black-and-white woodpecker flying toward him from the north, about 10 m above the tree canopy. It veered westward and passed about 100 m from his position. He could clearly see white in the trailing edge of the wing both on downstroke and upstroke of the wing, and the bird's flight appeared direct and powerful, not like the undulating flight of Pileated. His field notes are as follows:

At 10:25 am [CDST], my attention was drawn to a woodpecker flying above the tree line straight at me from the north. It appeared dark and quite large, and I thought to myself “That's a really big Pileated.” and kept watching. At the outset, [the bird] was approximately 200 meters away and coming straight down the lake comfortably above the canopy level right along the west shoreline. At approximately 3 seconds into the viewing, it banked slightly to get back of the tree line and go behind a very large cypress (behind and above). This was now putting it on a SW heading, [which] showed me a profile of the bird. My next thought was “the white is wrong” [for Pileated], because the bird showed much white on both downstroke and upstroke of the wing. The large white patch [above extended to] the body, much like the





speculum of a merganser or goldeneye. It gave the appearance of a bird more white than black, and I saw barely a hint of red at the end of its tucked in crest. As it came out from behind the large but open cypress, it began to dawn on me that this might not be a Pileated, and I realized the bird had not bounced like a woodpecker during the entire flight I had witnessed. The bird's beak did not stand out as an identifier except perhaps [in the overall] impression of a bird more white than black. I grabbed my [...] binoculars but finding them out of focus I just let them go, realizing then that in the next 2 seconds the bird would be out of sight. I followed the bird past the tree line, watching its shape disappear, hoping it would alight somewhere.

The bird was an incredibly strong flier. It did not flap any more often than a Pileated, perhaps maybe fewer times than would a Pileated. It never lost altitude on any flap. Its wings did not flap

wildly; in fact, I would call its flap somewhat reserved, 5" up above the body, 4-5" below, much like a loon. Those flaps gave it more speed than any Pileated. I got no feeling for wing shape or body shape other than that of an obvious woodpecker, except for the fact this was too big for a Pileated, perhaps by as much as 15 or 20%. [I watched two other Pileateds fly the reverse route later that day and am still struck with the size difference; having banded Pileated Woodpeckers (and photographed several that day), I am very aware of their size.] This bird was too big, too white, and flew completely differently than a Pileated.

I watched the bird in the open for just under 10 seconds, and it flew a distance of approximately 250 meters from when I first saw it until it passed beyond the tree canopy. I watched it for a few more seconds through the trees, but any detail was lost at that point. At its closest, it was above the trees across

the pond. I estimated that in its closest point on the flight path it was 100 meters from me, approximately 15 meters above and back from the tree canopy. It did not seem to flush because of me but followed the same flight path and trajectory as many herons and egrets were taking that day on their way in and out of their rookery some few miles to my SW.

I am sure of the characteristics of what I described, and I know they don't fit anything I know about Pileated Woodpecker. Having never seen a *Campephilus* woodpecker, I can't say, "yup that's like the last one I saw." But I can say that it was no Pileated.

The following day, at the same site, Ron Rohrbaugh, Field Coordinator of the Inventory Project, and David Brown, also of Cornell Lab, were concealed on the eastern side of Pawpaw Lake, near the location of Fitzpatrick's sighting. They had a brief look at a very good candidate for Ivory-billed Wood-



Figures 3a, 3b. Various rather large cavities, presumably made by large woodpeckers, were found just 100 m north of the Route 17 bridge across the Bayou de View (left) and about 1.5 km south of the bridge, not far from the February 2004 sight records. Some of these cavities showed signs of relatively recent work in early spring of 2005, but no woodpecker or other bird or animal was observed in association with them. Woodpecker cavities with entrances of 9 cm or greater in width are very scarce in the area.



Figure 4. Searchers working with the Inventory Project used digital video cameras mounted to tripods in canoes; these cameras were kept in recording mode at all times. Shown is Pawpaw Lake, an area that produced three sight reports of Ivory-billed Woodpecker.

pecker at 1203 CDST, a bird flying through the trees on the western side of the lake, about 3 m above the ground and 100 m away, which landed on a snag and moved immediately around to the back side of it. Rohrbaugh saw the dorsal surface well without binoculars, noting the extensively white remiges, reminiscent of the wing pattern of the smaller Red-headed Woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*). The bird could not be relocated by Rohrbaugh and Brown or by subsequent searcher that day, and Rohrbaugh and Brown did not consider their study of the bird adequate to enter it into the Project database as a positive identification of an Ivory-billed Woodpecker.

Four days later, on 10 April, Mindy LaBranche, then project leader for Urban Bird Studies at Cornell Lab who had previously studied Red-cockaded Woodpeckers (*Picoides borealis*), was sitting in a canoe along the eastern side of Pawpaw Lake when at 1224 CDST she saw what she identified as an Ivory-billed Woodpecker flying eastward above the southern end of the lake and passing into a side channel that flows to the east out of that lake. Her field notes, written minutes after the encounter, read: "large woodpecker, larger than Pileated; black and red on head; white on trailing edge of upper wing and under wing; crossed Pawpaw [Lake] about 100 m to my south, moving east; no undulation, powerful wingbeat but not fast flight; crown black on top with red crescent behind, held flat against head and back of neck; wings less rounded and with less dark than Pileated; wings seen mostly

from top, during downstroke; observed with Swarovski 10 x 42 binoculars for about 7 seconds; conditions overcast with light rain having just ended." She recorded her level of confidence in the sighting at 99% and provided a compelling sketch of the bird in flight.

The next day, at 1026 CDST, Melanie Driscoll, project leader for Cornell Lab's House Finch Disease Survey, saw a bird she identified as an Ivory-billed. It flew southward across the central portion of a powerline cut north of Pawpaw Lake, in the direction of the lake (Figure 1). Her field notes are as follows:

Saw large black-and-white bird fly out of trees from north of powerline. Flew south across powerline. My first impression was of a very large, black-and-white bird, with much of body dark and most of the white being on the wings. I saw approximately three downstrokes of the wings. On each upstroke, I saw a flash of white on the trailing edge; on each downstroke, I also saw a large white patch on the trailing edge of the near wing. I also saw a flash of red on the crest but did not see enough detail to detect shape or to see how much of the crest was red.

The bird flew straight across, with powerful wingbeats, between 100 and 150 meters to my east. The wingbeats did not seem very deep or very shallow. They were deep enough for me to clearly see both the upper and the lower surface on each wing beat. The bird

seemed a little higher than my line of sight, but because of the distance did not appear at all 'overhead'. It flew below the [level of the] canopy, at about one-half the average height of the tupelo trees along the powerline edge. It was probably 4–5 m above the water. From where I was seated, it was just beyond the second telephone pole east of me. I did not see the bill or the tail.

My immediate thought, during the first wingbeat I saw as the bird emerged from the trees, was Ivory-billed. It was larger than a Pileated and seemed to move in a more stately way. When I got binoculars [10 x 40 Swarovski] to my eyes, I was certain that the wing pattern looked like that of Red-headed Woodpecker, but the bird was much larger. There was also a distinct trace of white along the body [above]. [Shortly thereafter, Driscoll continued and clarified this last sentence: "the white along the body ran in a narrow stripe down the neck of the bird, along the side, to nearly merge with the white on the wings. The white extended much further than the white on the neck of Pileated Woodpecker."]

There were no sightings through the middle of April 2004, but on 25 April, at about 1530 CDST, David Luneau of the University of Arkansas, a professor of electrical engineering and participant in the Zeiss-sponsored searches for Ivory-billed Woodpecker in Louisiana of 2002, captured a large black-and-white woodpecker on video as it flushed from a tupelo along the Bayou de View, in an area north of the earlier April sightings (Figure 1). Although Luneau did not see the bird for more than a few seconds, the video clearly shows a large woodpecker with the wing pattern typical of Ivory-billed Woodpecker and has been used as the primary evidence in support of the existence of the species in this area (Fitzpatrick et al. 2005, Gallagher 2005). A second observer in Luneau's boat (Robert Henderson) commented on red on the bird's head as it flushed, but this color is not evident in the video.

The most recent adequately documented encounter occurred on 14 February 2005, when searcher Casey Taylor was stationed at the same powerline cut as mentioned under the 11 April 2004 sighting. Between 1557 and 1610 CST, she heard as many as nine distinctive double-rap sounds, which to her ear matched the territorial rap of Powerful Woodpecker (*Campephilus pollens*), emanating from the north side of the east end of the powerline cut. As she advanced on the area of from which the sounds appeared to have come, reviewing the audio portion of the video footage to see if the camera had picked





up the sounds, she observed a large black-and-white woodpecker, being pursued by two American Crows (*Corvus brachyrhynchos*), flying across the cut. Her notes are as follows:

I could see a distinct, large woodpecker body form and shape, a long, straight bill [color not observed, owing to angle and lighting], and black-and-white plumage. Since the camera was in playback mode, I knew I would not be able to get a good shot in time, so I reached for my binoculars instead. I got them up in time to have a good 2–4-second, clear look at the bird before it got into the trees. My first view was a lateral one, so I could see the head shape, white lines leading down the neck, as well as the smaller, rounder white patches under the wings on the leading edges; and larger blocks of nearly continuous white trailing edges above the wings. The bird, on closer view, appeared to be about the same size as the pursuing crows. As it flew into the trees, it turned enough to give me a perfect dorsal view through my binoculars. I saw a dark body with long, slender wings, which were entirely black on the leading edge and brightly white over almost the entire trailing edge of the wings. The bird was in the

trees before I could get a clear look at the tail. The crows followed the bird, which by then I was now pretty much confident was an Ivory-billed Woodpecker, into the forest. I kept track of the bird and was able to get another good look through binoculars, which for me [dispelled] any lingering doubt. I was able to see both the leading white edge underneath [and] the white trailing edge above and below very clearly. As the bird and the crows moved around in the trees, I got the camera recording but lost track of the bird.

Very soon thereafter (1730), Taylor studied a pair of Pileated Woodpeckers in this immediate area, at similar distances, which confirmed her impression that the bird pursued by crows was not a Pileated. "They were noticeably smaller than [the bird seen earlier] and clearly did not have nearly as much white in the plumage. I could see small white patches in the upper wings [primary bases] but the rest of the body was dark, though not as deeply black" as the earlier bird.

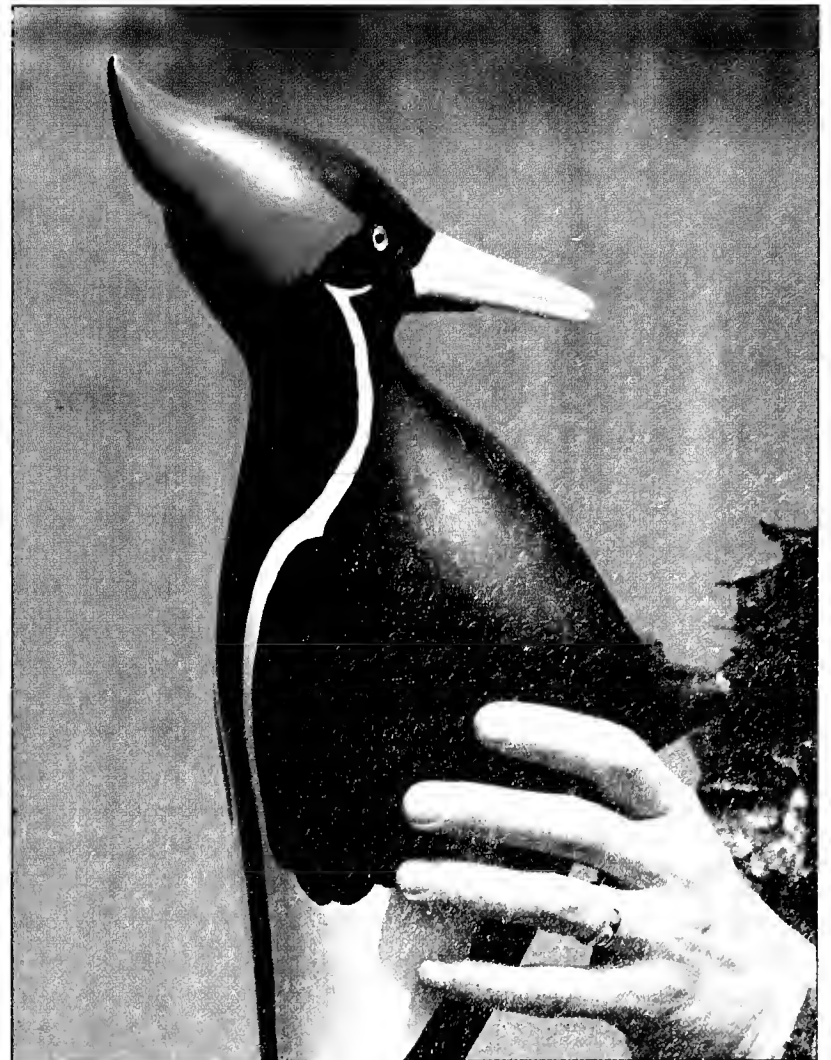
Most other sightings of potential Ivory-billeds after April 2004 have been more tentative in nature, but several observers have had brief views of birds that may well have been an Ivory-billed, and for the sake of

completeness, those potential sightings are indicated by dated asterisks in Figure 1. Original field notes and videotaped interviews describing all possible sightings are archived at Cornell Lab of Ornithology; many of these add much to the field notes and will be deposited with state and national bird records committee, along with these notes and other evidence.

On 4 September 2004, Bobby Harrison deployed a carved decoy of a male Ivory-billed Woodpecker on a tupelo trunk and set a video camera "trap" at the site. At approximately 1254 CDST, he flushed a large woodpecker off the back of a tupelo, and the bird flew in the direction of the decoy and video camera. Checking the videotape, he found that the camera had an image of a large black-and-white bird flying rapidly behind the decoy. Although this segment of videotape is even shorter and more difficult to analyze than the Luneau videotape, the bird shows mostly white remiges and is certainly intriguing. Independently, on the morning of 4 September 2004, Joan Luneau had a sighting of a good candidate for an Ivory-billed flying across the Route 17 bridge across Bayou de View, but the sighting was again brief.

#### Audio evidence and contacts

Few recordings exist of the vocalizations and



Figures 5, 6. During playback experiments and certain other experiments, models of Ivory-billed Woodpecker, both male and female, were placed on trees in an attempt to attract a real one. Because such an experiment has the possibility of disrupting the regular behavior of an Ivory-billed (as is known to be the case with the large Black Woodpecker [*Dryocopus martius*] of Europe), these experiments were carried out as carefully as possible. These models were carved by Eugene Sparling, Sr.





Figure 7. Although very old-growth habitat is patchy in its distribution in the Bayou de View, some areas have a good mix of older second growth, large cull trees, and dead and dying trees. Over 90% of the habitat in Bayou de View is difficult of access. This photograph shows typical habitat in the Bayou, mostly Water Tupelo and Baldcypress.

other sounds of Ivory-billed Woodpecker; searchers' knowledge of the species' vocalizations were limited to the recordings made by Tanner and Allen in the 1930s (Macaulay Library of Natural Sounds catalogue #6784), and to the written descriptions of early ornithologists. These descriptions include frequent mention of a double-knock or double-rap contact/territorial sound, similar to sounds made by other *Campephilus*.

On 9 November 2004, over a twelve-minute period (1635-1648 CST), Marshall J. Iliff, a guide for Victor Emanuel Nature Tours, stationed in an area called "Blue Hole" (Figure 1), heard about 20 "double-rap" sounds consistent with the typical territorial rap of *Campephilus* woodpeckers, from locations approximately 150–300 m east and southeast of his position. No woodpecker was observed, and attempts to make sound recordings were unsuccessful because the microphone was switched off. His field notes are as follows:

While sitting at "Two Holes", I heard a fairly distant (0.25–0.5 mi away) double-knock, not very crisp. I waited, then knocked back, rapped on the side of my plastic kayak, which was very resonant and very closely approximated the sound. Within 20 sec, I heard a distinct "bam-bam." I knocked back again and started to take out the tape deck, the bird knocked two more times before I turned on the tape, then once, close, with two distinct rapid raps after I turned on the tape. I responded and got another response. In total, I heard about 20 raps; one sounded tripled, and one or two sounded like single raps.

The bird may have been moving. The first set of double-raps I heard came from a point straight out to the east of my position; but then, 30–60 sec later, 3–4 more raps, more distant, came from a point to the southeast. A final series came from the area to my east again. If the same bird was involved in making these raps, then the bird would have had to have moved some 0.25–0.5 mi, minimally, between sites, which is possible, but it is also possible that more than one bird was involved. During the encounter, I heard various single knocks in the swamp, more distant, and these distracted me on several occasions, but when the real double-knock came, I recognized it instantly.

I have heard *Campephilus* in Mexico and Central America, including Pale-billed [*C. guatemalensis*], Crimson-crested [*C. melanoleucus*], and Crimson-bellied [*C. haematogaster*]. These sounds [I heard at Blue Hole] reminded me very much of Pale-billed or Crimson-crested knocks (the Crimson-bellieds I heard gave consistently tripled knocks)—two, very rapid, resonant knocks that are very closely spaced together. In trying to imitate it, I cannot quite rap fast enough with one hand to simulate the spacing; while knocking back to the bird, I used two hands to try to more closely approximate the correct spacing. Compared to Pale-billed and Crimson-crested, these knocks were, if any different, even louder. When the sound was at its closest, it was very sharp and loud. I have

not had the same impression of force when hearing other *Campephilus* species.

Other woodpeckers were drumming all around the site. Pileated was most commonly heard, all giving their typical, rolling, rapid-fire drum. Other drums sounded like Hairy [*Picoides villosus*], Downy [*P. pubescens*], and Red-bellied [*Melanerpes carolinensis*]; earlier in the day, a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker [*Sphyrapicus varius*] had drummed. It was a good day for drumming woodpeckers, significantly warmer than 8 Nov.

I considered the possibility that the sounds might be gunshots, but in no instance did I feel that at gun could be a possible source of the sounds. I had heard gunshots in the distance occasionally during the day, and these sounded like they hung in the air longer, perhaps echoed more, and were not as crisp as the sharp, resonant double-raps. The double-raps gave the distinct impression of being on wood, and thus the sound ended abruptly, whereas the gunshots seemed to reverberate more. Furthermore, I would not expect gunshots to be so consistently doubled.

Iliff later noted that in later exploration of the area, he identified the area from which most of the sounds emanated as being "at or slightly west of a secondary channel that runs east of the woods [east of the north end of Blue Hole]. On our 10 November search, we found several snags that could serve as drumming sites. In locating an edge of open field where hunting occurs, I judged the sounds to have been half again closer than the closest point of that field [to Blue Hole]." The area of the encounter is 4 km northeast of the Route 17 bridge, and older-growth tupelo-cypress habitat in this area is very similar to that in the area of the February 2004 sightings (Figure 7).

As a part of the search effort that began shortly after Iliff's encounter, the Cornell Lab mounted Autonomous Recording Units (ARUs) in up to 18 locations, including Blue Hole. Although analyses of recorded sounds are still ongoing, acoustic signatures of sounds that closely match *Campephilus* double-rap have been detected from the Blue Hole area on the evening of 24 and 26 December and morning of 25 December 2004, a time when searchers had taken holiday. All of these detections are of isolated, single double-raps, which is not impossible if the drum signals were given by established paired birds, but a series of double-raps would more readily exclude the possibility of a mechanical source of the sound. The Christmas double raps were recorded during



a spell of cold weather with little bird activity, and one was recorded earlier in the pre-dawn than seems likely for a large woodpecker to have been active.

On 7 September 2004, Tim Barksdale conducted playback experiments in an area very near the February 2004 sightings. Barksdale reported two double-raps in response to the Ivory-billed recordings, given from high in the canopy at a distance of approximately 120–150 m. Due to the heavy vegetation, the bird was not clearly observed, but Barksdale believed that the sounds were produced by Ivory-billed Woodpecker. In addition, three double-raps were heard just west of Robc Bayou (Figure 1) by Casey Taylor and Matthew Sarver between 1710 and 1735 CST on 7 March 2005, and Barksdale again reported a double-rap response at Blue Hole at 1610 CST on 17 March 2005, again with no visual contact with the bird. An ARU there did not pick up this double-rap, but it did record three bird calls at Blue Hole the same evening, spectrographic analysis of which shows patterns consistent with the typical *kent* call of Ivory-billed Woodpecker. Few other observers have heard such calls in Bayou de View. Following up on Casey Taylor's 14 February sighting, however, David Luneau and Timothy Spahr, an astrophysicist at Harvard University, heard and recorded several *kent*-like calls at the east end of the powerline cut on 15 February 2005 at 0730 CST, and Sarver and Elliott Swarthout, Project Leader for the Bayou de View area, heard a *kent*-like call about 500 m away from this site at 0918 CST that day. Other observers have reported single double-rap sounds in the Bayou de View, but in some cases, these sounds have been traced to trees knocking together, to Red-bellied Woodpeckers or to Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers. The sources of some such sounds, however, have not been determined. The results of the ARU studies, once completed, will be published elsewhere.

## DISCUSSION

Our analysis of all available evidence convinces us that at minimum one Ivory-billed Woodpecker was present in Bayou de View within the Cache River National Wildlife Refuge between February 2004 and February 2005. The provenance and ecological requirements of this bird remain unknown, despite over 22,000 hours of varied and intensive search efforts in the Cache River and White River National Wildlife Refuges. Based on the ecological requirements of this species outlined by past authors, it is possible that the individual observed in Bayou de View was a transient, perhaps reaching the area from more extensive bottomland forests to the south. It is equally possible that the

area of Bayou de View in which sightings have been reported is one section of a vast but stable home range, a section that was more frequently visited in 2004 than 2005. It seems likely that the patchy distribution of older-growth forests in the Bayou de View area might provide an occasional food source for the species, allowing the bird(s) to forage for a time in the area before moving on. That this species apparently exploited ephemeral resources perhaps explains the relatively tight cluster of sight records in the first half of 2004.

Tanner (1942) postulates that Ivory-billed Woodpeckers breed for just a few years in one area before moving on, wandering as individuals or pairs in search of resources adequate for foraging and breeding. In the Singer Tract of Louisiana, Tanner (1942) remarked upon Ivory-billed's tendency to forage in areas of wooded swamp usually referred to the upper part or backwaters of the "first bottom." The lower part of the first bottom are covered with water year-round and generally comprised of cypress-tupelo forest, whereas the backwater areas, which are covered with water only part of the year, are dominated by Sweet Gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) and various oaks, especially Nuttall's Oak (*Quercus nuttallii*) over much of the lower Mississippi Alluvial Valley. Tanner (1942) also remarked that the species appeared to spend some time foraging in the "second bottoms" (dominated by oak-hickory forest) bordering the first bottoms and relatively little time in the lowest part of the first bottoms. Thus it is entirely possible, perhaps even likely, that the bird observed in Bayou de View spends most of its time elsewhere, such as in oak-gum habitats, or that it wanders widely. The largest historical populations of Ivory-billeds, which were documented in Florida, were in fact found in cypress bottoms (Tanner 1942). If any aspect of the species' natural history provides hope for Ivory-billed Woodpecker's continued presence in the bottomland forests of the southeastern United States, it is its mobility and its apparent flexibility in habitat usage.

Historically, Ivory-billed Woodpecker was an inhabitant of old-growth bottomland forests and wooded swamps in eastern Arkansas (James and Neal 1986), in the Mississippi Alluvial Plain in the two ecoregions defined as Northern Backswamps and Northern Holocene Meander Belts (Bailey et al. 1994). James and Neal (1986) note records as follows: 5 together, about one mile south of the mouth of the Arkansas River mouth, Chico County, 14 December 1820; 2 singles (male, female), near Marked Tree, Poinsett County, 1888-1889; and one

or more around Osceola, Mississippi County, in 1887 and Helena, Phillips County, as late as 1910. A column called "Yell" in *Field & Stream* magazine (1885) also reports that the species could be found in the nineteenth century around Newport in Jackson County. Tanner (1942) lists older, less specific reports of the species along the Canadian River in 1820, the Arkansas River in 1850, and in northeastern Arkansas in 1888. Of the five extant specimens with Arkansas labels, none has clear data on locality or date (Jackson 2002). Tanner (1942) visited the White River bottomlands briefly in June and August 1938 but could find no evidence of the species and little habitat for it; thus, the last historical report of Ivory-billed Woodpecker in Arkansas in the twentieth century comes from about 1910.

In more recent times, there have been sight reports of the species in Arkansas. Harold Hagar, a hunter and naturalist living in Tuckerman, Arkansas (north of Newport) reported seeing two Ivory-billeds near Diaz, in the Village Creek floodplain in October 1985 (J. Neal, *in litt.*). This location is between the White and the Cache River drainages and is comprised of bottomland hardwood swamp with scattered Baldcypress. It was searched by Joe Neal, Nigel Ball, and their families on 27 December 1986, but no Ivory-billeds were found (J. Neal, *in litt.*). There are also reports from neighboring Louisiana from 22 May 1971, 11 November 1974, and 1 April 1999, the latter a close observation of a perched pair (Jackson 2002). Arkansas birders conducted unsuccessful follow-up searches in 1986–1987, and Jackson (2002) searched southeastern Arkansas in 1986 and 1988, also without finding evidence of the species there. In January and March 2003, David Luneau, Guy Luneau, Bob Russell, Mary Scott, and others (pers. comm.) independently searched the White River National Wildlife Refuge, one year after the formal search of the Pearl River Wildlife Management Area north of Slidell, Louisiana (Knight et al. 2002, Fitzpatrick 2002) had ended, and although bark scaling and cavities indicated the presence of large woodpeckers in the area, only Pileated Woodpeckers were documented with certainty, though Scott privately described seeing a female Ivory-billed on 10 March 2003 (Gallagher 2005; T. Gallagher, pers. comm.).

There is still a tremendous amount to learn about Ivory-billed Woodpecker, and both skill and luck will be needed to observe this apparently wary species. Quietly paddling a canoe through the Bayou de View, one quickly realizes the enormity and complexity of the tupelo-cypress swamps and the difficulty of surveying their avifauna.

na. Pileated Woodpeckers are common, easily heard and seen, often showing themselves as semaphore-like glimpses of black and white flying off into the forest. Stem density is extraordinarily high in some areas, and birding the area is difficult, especially away from main channels in the bayou. Thus the habitat and retiring habits of the birds combine to provide fleeting and distant views in many cases, even of commoner species. The Ivory-billed Woodpecker(s) apparently present in this location managed to elude a team of 20+ researchers conducting field work from dusk until dawn. Single birds were observed only briefly in flight, suggesting that the species is difficult to detect while feeding, perhaps being best looked for at dawn and dusk when it likely moves some distance across open areas (e.g., along water channels, or over tree tops) to reach feeding areas and roost cavities. Somewhat surprising was that most reports of Ivory-billed that were recorded during the search fell between 1100 and 1400 hrs, a time when little activity would be expected. Perhaps the species occasionally makes longer flights at midday after a morning's feeding in one area. Tim Spahr, an Ivory-billed searcher and Harvard astrophysicist who specializes in asteroid movements and the calculation of rare events, created an algorithm based both on James Tanner's description of the daily movements of the species in the Singer Tract and on the habitat in Bayou de View. By his calculations, a single Ivory-billed occupying that area could manage to avoid detection by 20 observers indefinitely!

### The Future

With the announcement of Arkansas's Ivory-billed Woodpecker to the public, we enter a new phase of inventory and research in which birders will play a crucial role. As the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service puts together the endangered species recovery team that will chart the future for conservation efforts on behalf of this great bird, the federal and state agencies are also intent on providing real viewing opportunities for birders who care to visit the Big Woods region. While access to the main Bayou de View channel on Cache River N.W.R. is temporarily restricted (including all areas noted in Figure 1; see <<http://www.fws.gov/southeast/news/2005/images/BirdViewingAreas-NMap.pdf>>), access points have been created on adjacent Dagmar Wildlife Management Area, and the nearby White River N.W.R. remains open to visitors. Birders should check web sites of the Arkansas Game and Fish Commission and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service for updates on access and other possible restrictions. Birders should also be aware that these

areas are usually open for hunting and should check agency web sites for hunting dates and locations and plan their trips accordingly. National Wildlife Refuge staff is developing plans for towers, boardwalks, and other safe viewing opportunities for birders, and hopefully these will be in place by winter 2005–2006.

Birders searching for the species should be prepared to present documentation for all sightings, and carrying a video camera is highly recommended, even crucial. The Ivory-billed Woodpecker apparently frequenting Bayou de View represents perhaps the most endangered species on earth, and, as with any rare bird, compelling evidence will be needed to confirm any report. Documentation in the form of "sight records" of this species has of course not been considered acceptable by records committees or ornithologists for many decades, and even still photographs have been discounted as evidence. Although sight reports are of interest, confirmation by photograph—especially videotape—is considered the *sine qua non* of Ivory-billed reports.

There are many areas that still hold promise for the continued existence of this species, especially given its recent discovery in a relatively unknown and small tract of previously cutover bottomland forest in Arkansas. Nesting Ivory-billeds have been noted to move long distances in order to locate foraging resources in their home range; however, the extent of a single bird's movements during the non-breeding season is a matter of speculation. It is likely that a species such as the Ivory-billed, which specializes on the ephemeral resources of newly dead or dying trees, could move long distances in its search for food, thus allowing it to disperse widely into what little suitable habitat remains. With this in mind, birders can help by searching for the species in areas that still hold promise. Rather than concentrating solely on the Bayou de View, where a large amount of disturbance will almost certainly do more harm than good (and where teams of researchers will already be present), birders might focus on other areas of interest that require extensive search efforts, including Apalachicola, Florida (see article this issue) and the older-growth bottomlands of South Carolina, Mississippi, Florida, and Louisiana. A preliminary list of such places can be found in Jerome Jackson's *In Search of the Ivory-billed Woodpecker* (Smithsonian Books, 2002). Areas worthy of search include the Big Cypress and Fakahatchee Strand, the Gulf Hammock/Wacasassa/Suwannee River areas, and the Apalachicola River basin, all in Florida; the Pearl River basin and the Homochitto National Forest/Three Rivers area (Mississippi and Louisiana); the Delta National Forest

(Mississippi); the Atchafalaya River basin (Louisiana); and the Congaree Swamp and vicinity (South Carolina).

The search for the Ivory-billed Woodpecker is not over. Plans are being assembled for a second season of intensive fieldwork in the Bayou de View and in White River N.W.R. from November 2005 through April 2006. This effort will involve a crew of full-time searchers and biologists, as well as rotating crews of volunteer searchers. In addition, Cornell Lab of Ornithology and Audubon Arkansas will be coordinating the efforts of other visiting birders, and we will be creating an eBird-like web site where birders can report where they looked, what they saw, and upload any supporting notes or photographs of possible Ivory-billeds. We hope that in the coming years, more and more birders will have the opportunity to look for and, with luck, find an Ivory-billed Woodpecker, and that the sum of this newly focused attention will contribute measurably to our knowledge of this noble bird and ultimately to its recovery.

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## Ethical Considerations for Seekers of Ivory-billed Woodpecker: Specific Applications and Amplifications of the ABA Code of Ethics

Birders reading the account of the Arkansas Ivory-billed Woodpecker will undoubtedly ponder the possibility of conducting small-scale searches of their own for the species. While the desire to travel straight to Bayou de View in hopes of glimpsing the bird might be strong, it is important to note the extreme sensitivity of the conservation effort in this location. The fragility of the situation cannot be overstated, as we know essentially nothing about the conservation of this species—even whether it still persists in eastern Arkansas. Birders must exercise the very highest degree of ethical behavior when visiting the area and understand the serious potential consequences of inappropriate and unethical behavior. The area in which this bird was reported has been little disturbed by human activity in recent decades, and large numbers of people visiting this area could seriously threaten its foothold in Bayou de View. A deluge of visitors could drive the bird away from the habitat where it appears to visit at least occasionally and could damage relations with local refuge managers, fishermen, hunters, and others. We are obliged in this situation to observe the very highest ethical standards and use clear-headed common sense, whether in the field or in contact with local people.

The First Article of the American Birding Association's "Code of Birding Ethics" reads "Promote the welfare of birds and their environment," and under this general heading, Article 1b reads "never use such methods [audio lures, playback, tape recordings] for attracting any species that is Threatened, Endangered, or of Special Concern." This cannot be stated any more clearly, but in the Bayou de View area, one could also add: "Do not make vocal or mechanical imitations of the calls or raps of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers; do not knock on trees in imitation of the species. Do not place any item in the habitat that serves as a lure, such as a decoy or model, food item, or other attractant." Article 1c, which treats the matter of publicizing rare birds, reads: "Before advertising the presence of a rare bird, evaluate the potential for disturbance to the bird, its surroundings, and other people in the area, and proceed only if access can be controlled, disturbance minimized, and permission has been obtained from private landowners. The sites of rare nesting birds should be divulged only to the proper conservation authorities." It is this clear, simple

ethical principle that guided the Cornell Lab of Ornithology and The Nature Conservancy to keep confidential its findings for almost 15 months—the time needed to research the habitat and presence of the woodpecker, formulate plans for conserving the area, and inform federal authorities of their findings and recommendations. Genuine concern for habitat disturbance (Article 1d) also undergirded the decision to maintain confidentiality regarding the findings. Anyone so fortunate as to find the bird, especially in a roost site, should inform only designated authorities—not fellow birders.

For those who do visit Arkansas, Article 2 of the Code of Ethics reads: "Respect the law and the rights of others." This means not just property rights and the regulations in various refuges and wildlife management areas (Articles 2a, 2b) but also the stipulations of the Endangered Species Act and the Migratory Bird Treaty Act. Even the slightest action interpretable as harassment could have serious legal consequences, including jail time and fines. Article 2c emphasizes "common courtesy in contacts with other people. Your exemplary behavior will generate goodwill with birders and non-birders alike." In an area where ecotourists and birders are rarities, the local citizens have a right to expect dignified, considerate behavior on the part of visitors to their favorite fishing holes and restaurants alike. We must, as birders, consider every action we take and exercise an extreme of "common sense": parking cars in a way that minimizes inconvenience for others; keeping voices down in areas where others are watching or fishing; perhaps even wearing clothes that blend in to the environment, so as not to startle the woodpecker if we come across it.

There is so much at stake here. Violations of the ethical guidelines laid out above could result in the disorientation or demise of the woodpecker; in the closure to the public of certain areas; and in legal actions against violators or even against agencies involved in protection of the habitat and the woodpecker. We may have but one reprieve, one last chance to learn more about a species on the verge of extinction, and we cannot, as a birding community and as a species, fail this bird again. There is simply no room for misbehavior in this case. If visiting in groups, birders should make absolutely certain that each member

of the group understands the ethical imperatives involved and agrees to help others in the group abide by them. In the event, however, that someone witnesses a violation of the Code of Ethics or of federal law, that person has an ethical obligation to address the situation immediately. Article 4b of the Code reads:

**If you witness unethical birding behavior, assess the situation, and intervene if you think it prudent. When interceding, inform the person(s) of the inappropriate action, and attempt, within reason, to have it stopped. If the behavior continues, document it, and notify appropriate individuals or organizations.**

On the positive side of this fragile equation, birders can clearly be of immense help in documenting Ivory-billed Woodpeckers in the United States, as the number of eyes and ears searching for the species will doubtlessly increase the likelihood of its detection and documentation. How can we as birders best contribute our resources to the search effort? How can we harness the fire that burns for this species within the collective hearts of birders and scientists to help rediscover a species at once so magnificent that it inspired every person who beheld it and yet was so thoughtlessly erased from our avifauna? The skill and determination of the birding community can surely be of great value in preserving the species and its habitat: after all, there have been no observations, despite thousands of hours of field work in the area, of a foraging Ivory-billed Woodpecker, not even so much as a clear photograph that would tell us the sex of the bird or birds. 🐦

**In winter and spring 2005–2006, the Cornell Lab of Ornithology, along with its partners in the Big Woods Conservation Partnership, will again be conducting systematic searches for the Ivory-billed Woodpecker in the Cache River and White River forest systems of Arkansas. We will be staffing our research team with trained field biologists and volunteer birders. If you are interested in applying for a paid position or for a volunteer spot, please see <[www.birds.cornell.edu/About/jobs](http://www.birds.cornell.edu/About/jobs)> for details. Birding tours of the area may soon be offered—see <[www.ivorybilledexpeditions.com](http://www.ivorybilledexpeditions.com)>. For those curious to read more about the species' history, and hopefully its future, see <<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/ivory>>, which also has film footage of the woodpecker and researchers from the 1935 Cornell expedition to the Singer Tract in Louisiana.**

# Large Woodpeckers: Paintings by David Allen Sibley

Once again, now in the twenty-first century, an Ivory-billed Woodpecker has been reported in North America, this time in Arkansas. The last verified photograph of the species comes from 1948, in Cuba, and we are hopeful that the most recent reports will spur birders to seek out and document this species with photographs in the southern United States. Nearly all reports of Ivory-billeds pertain to its smaller relative, Pileated Woodpecker. To help observers distinguish the two, David Sibley has painted these new images (July 2005) from specimens, film footage, and still photographs. Many of the familiar field marks from the old field guides are here, but note the striking difference in the shapes of these species, both in flight and perched. The “jizz” of Ivory-billeds in direct flight has been compared to Northern Pintails, even Common Loons—so long are their bodies and wings.



**Male Ivory-billed  
Woodpecker  
Dorsal view**



**Male Pileated  
Woodpecker  
Dorsal view**

**Female Ivory-billed  
Woodpecker**



**Female Pileated  
Woodpecker**







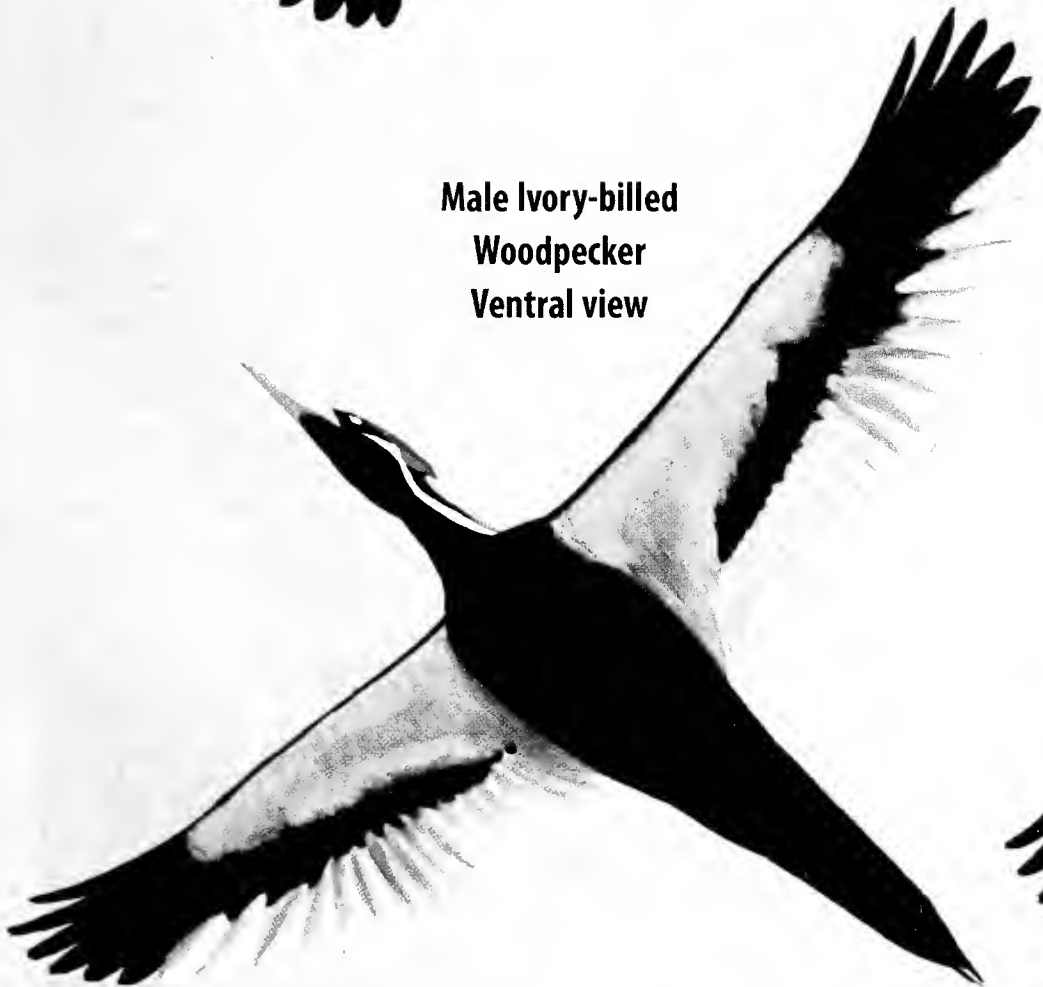
Male Ivory-billed  
Woodpecker  
Dorsal view



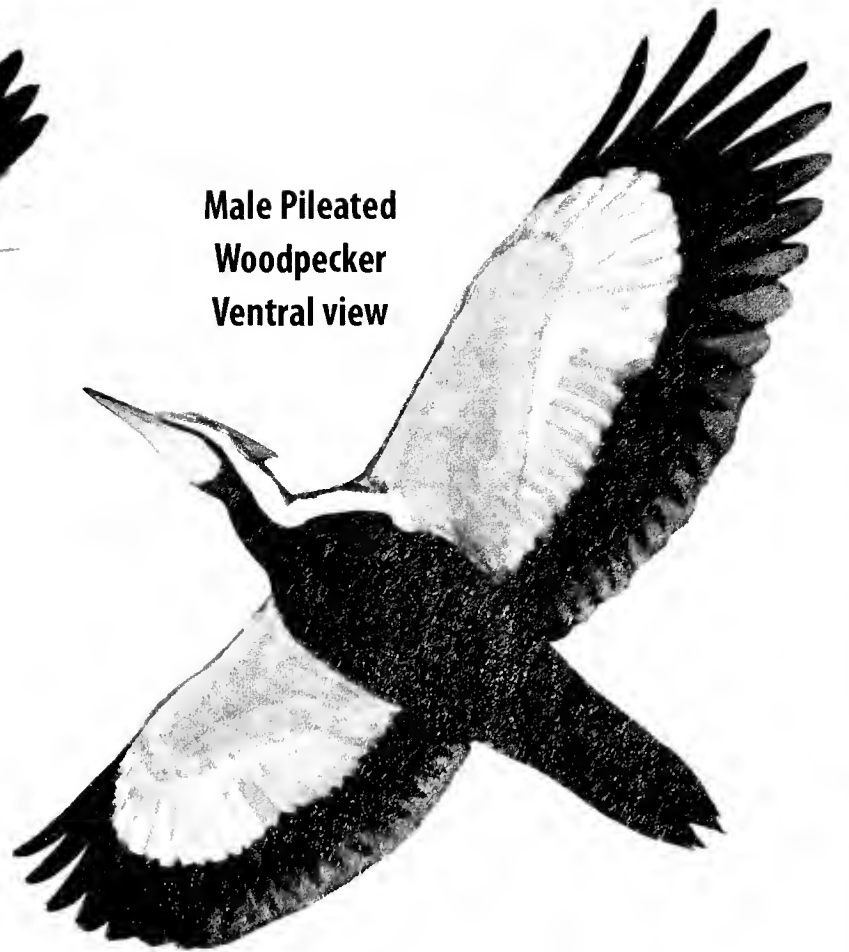
Male Pileated  
Woodpecker  
Dorsal view



Male Ivory-billed  
Woodpecker  
Ventral view



Male Pileated  
Woodpecker  
Ventral view



# Searches for Ivory-billed Woodpecker (*Campephilus principalis*) in the Apalachicola River basin of Florida in 2003

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## ABSTRACT

This paper summarizes searches for evidence of Ivory-billed Woodpecker (*Campephilus principalis*) in the western Florida counties of Gulf, Liberty, Wakulla, Franklin, and Calhoun, particularly in larger tracts of older-growth bottomland forest within the Apalachicola National Forest, Apalachicola River Wildlife and Environmental Area, and Apalachicola

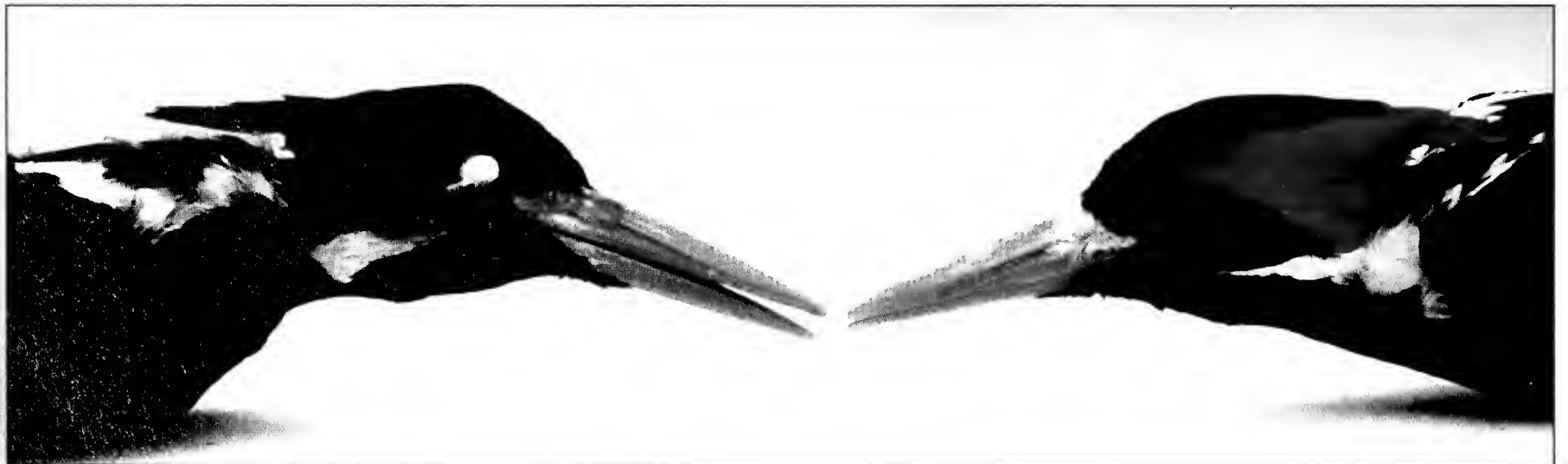
Wildlife Management Area. Twenty-five person-days were spent in late winter 2003 in forested habitats that were identified as having potential for this species, chiefly in hammock or bottomland areas, although five days were spent in pinewoods. No certain evidence of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers was obtained, but the habitat appeared to hold potential, with an abundance of large trees, dead and dying trees, and Pileated Woodpeckers (*Dryocopus pileatus*).

## Background and effort

From 13 January through 3 March 2003, 25 full person-days were spent by myself, sometimes accompanied by Greg Spahr or Jim Fitzpatrick, in forested habitats that were identified as having potential for Ivory-billed Woodpecker (*Campephilus principalis*), chiefly in hammock or bottomland areas but also in pinewoods in the Apalachicola drainage and vicinity in the Florida panhandle. Search activity gener-

ally consisted of arriving at specific areas in the morning to listen for woodpecker activity for the first hour or so after sunrise. After this, we walked transects, looking and listening for evidence of large woodpeckers, specifically large roost holes and scaled trees, and counting Pileated Woodpeckers (*Dryocopus pileatus*). While most of the time was spent in the bottomland habitats, parts of five days were spent investigating the more upland pine forests. Two days were spent canoeing the Apalachicola River and Chipola River, evaluating habitat and looking and listening for large woodpeckers.

The areas visited were selected primarily for historical reasons. Ivory-billed Woodpeckers continued to be reported from the Apalachicola River basin well after the species had ceased to be reported from other parts of the species' range. Sight reports of the species that we feel simply cannot be discounted (but for which we know of no



Ivory-billed Woodpeckers, male (right) and female; specimens in the collections of the United States National Museum. Photograph by Greg Spahr.



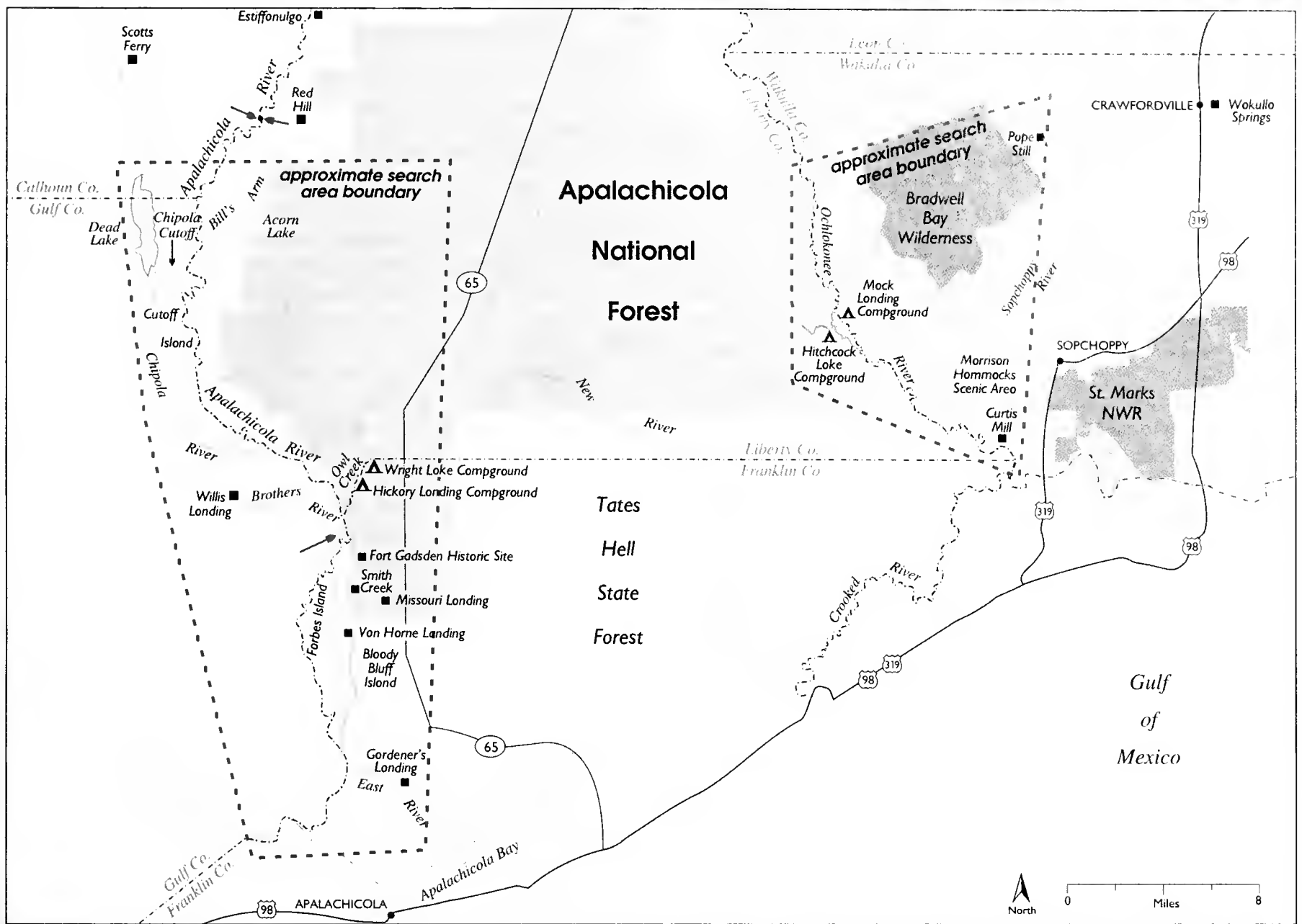


Figure 1. Areas searched on foot, by car, and by canoe in the Apalachicola River basin and adjacent areas of western Florida in 2003. The shaded areas were explored piecemeal, as road and river access permitted. Single arrow on the Brothers River and double arrows west of Red Hill indicate approximate locations of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers reported by local people in recent years. Map by Virginia Maynard.

corroborative photographs, recordings, or other physical evidence) were made at multiple locations in the 1930s through the early 1950s, including: at least two birds reported by George Van Hyning somewhere in the "Wakulla Resettlement Project" in 1936–1937, a vast area that is now largely designated Apalachicola National Forest (Tanner 1942); a nesting pair found by a local guide known as Kelso and reported by Whitney Eastman and others at Scotts Ferry, Calhoun County, along the Chipola River from March 1949 through at least early 1951 (Finlay 1950, Crompton 1950, Eastman 1958, Stevenson and Anderson 1994); one reported by Alexander Sprunt, Jr. in early March 1952 in the same general area (Cokinos 2000); and one seen in flight across Route 363 between St. Marks and Wakulla [Station], Wakulla County by Sam Grimes and Roy Hallman on 10 July 1952 (Stevenson and Anderson 1994, Jackson 2002). Between 1953 and 2002, there have been eight brief searches in this area for Ivory-billeds of which I am aware: one in

1967 (Sykes 1967, in Jackson 2004); four between 1970 and 1975 by Lucy and Bob Duncan; and three in 1987–1988 (Jackson 2004). None of these searches produced a report of the species.

Four post-1952 reports of Ivory-billed Woodpecker in Florida come from widely separated areas: Jefferson County (1959; one bird 2.6 km west of the Aucilla River, reported by William Rhein; Jackson 2002); Citrus County (9 April 1955; a pair 12.8 km south of Homosassa Springs reported by John K. Terres; Jackson 2002); west of Sebring, Highlands County (11 different dates 1967–1969; two birds on a private ranch, reported by H. Norton Agey, George Heinzmann, and party; Agey and Heinzmann 1971a, 1971b; Dennis 1979; Stevenson and Anderson 1994); and Martin County (30 April 1985; one male at Jonathan Dickinson State Park, watched for 15 minutes at very close range; reported by Dennis G. Garratt; Jackson 2004). A sight report in Okaloosa County (28 August 1966; a pair reportedly observed

scaling dead pine trees for 16 minutes near the margins of Eglin Air Force Base, reported by Bedford P. Brown, Jr., and Jeffrey R. Sanders; Dennis 1979) remains unsupported. Specific data that include date and location are not available for several other word-of-mouth Florida sightings (apparently in the counties of Collier and Polk) mentioned in Jackson (2004). Specific data on a pair said to be on a private ranch in central Florida in 1974 have never been published; the late Hal Scott and the late Henry M. Stevenson, who knew the location, did not discuss it openly. As is the case elsewhere, all sight reports of the species from Florida have been regarded with appropriate skepticism by the ornithological community.

In addition to the obvious criterion of a prospective search site's proximity to past sight reports, we considered the size, type, and age of forest parcels; if evidence of extensive recent tree mortality was found, whether owing to insect infestations, wind throw, or fires, we privileged such areas in

particular. Public, protected lands were chosen largely for the ease of obtaining permission to them; however, in many southern states, over half the forested landscape is in private ownership. (For the purposes of this paper, a "protected area" is defined here as simply as land owned by the state or federal government, to include entities designated as National Forest, National Wildlife Refuge, State Forest, and Wildlife Management Area; "protected" is not meant to imply that consumptive activities such as logging do not take place on these lands, just that they are not privately owned.) We used several web-based resources to narrow our search further:

- Terraserver  
(<http://terraserver.microsoft.com>)
- Earth Explorer  
(<http://edcns17.cr.usgs.gov/EarthExplorer>)
- Map of National Forests and Grasslands  
(<http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/map/finder.shtml>)
- Forested Land Distribution Data  
(now no longer available)
- The U.S. Forest Service's Timber Products Mapmaker  
(<http://www.fs.fed.us/recreation/map/finder.shtml>)

We identified Apalachicola National Forest as having all the desired attributes: reports of the species from the mid-twentieth century; extensive forested land (228,639 ha), including both extensive areas of bottomland hardwoods and pinewoods, some stands being over 60 years old, with several large, recently burned areas (especially around the Bradwell Bay Wilderness, burned as recently as 1998) and wind throws (apparently from Hurricane *Kate* in 1985); and relative accessibility. There are two major geologic regions—the Woodville Karst Plain and the Apalachicola Coastal Lowlands (or "Flat Woods")—that break the National Forest into eastern and western sections, respectively, the former characterized by a thick layer of surface sand above a layer of limestone, the latter having a thick layer of sandy clay and peat between the sandy soil and underlying limestone (Mitchell et al., in ms.). The high water table keeps surface areas mostly wet, and travel on foot is moderately to very difficult in bottomland hardwood swamps, and there are areas of soft substrate that can give way quickly underfoot. Most of the hardwood forests are associated with the Apalachicola River, in the Karst Plain; the Ochlockonee River and Sopchoppy River are also large enough to have associated floodplains with hardwood corridors up to 2 km wide. The

Apalachicola floodplain is 5–10 km wide and 50–100 km long in the areas of protected habitat, and perhaps more is available in the upper part and extreme lower areas (also protected) where several rivers eventually discharge into bays of the Gulf of Mexico. Pockets of hardwoods are sporadic but widespread in the low-lying areas within the pine forests. Riparian areas are relatively easy to access by landings and launches, but only a small portion (far less than 1%) of potential habitat in the National Forest can be surveyed comfortably by watercraft. Travel in pairs or in small parties is essential for safety reasons.

After defining our search areas (Figure 1), we privileged searches in hardwood areas near rivers, as most of the sightings in this area were made in such habitats. In the bottomland areas, Water Tupelos (*Nyssa aquatica*) and various oaks (*Quercus* spp.) are most common, followed closely by Baldcypress (*Taxodium distichum*). Sweet Gums (*Liquidambar styraciflua*), maples (*Acer* spp.), bayberry (*Myrica*), and *Magnolia* trees are also common in areas that are not permanently inundated. American Elm (*Ulmus americana*) is present in several locations. Hackberry (*Celtis* spp.) is apparently rare. The largest trees are large, hollow Baldcypresses, likely cull trees from historic harvests. Other than these, Laurel Oak (*Quercus laurifolia*) and Water Oak (*Q. palustris*) are the most common large trees, averaging about 0.8 m dbh (diameter at breast height), and often found clustered on higher ground. These oak groves usually appear deep in the bottomlands but in slightly drier areas called second bottoms. The eastern shore of Forbes Island (see Figure 1) has a conspicuous grove of large Nuttall's Oaks (*Q. nuttallii*). The western shore of the Brother's River has a grove of large Swamp White Oak (*Q. bicolor*). (In both cases, "large" means approximately 0.75 m dbh.) River Birch (*Betula nigra*) was present along a few of the rivers, and these trees were noted to be dying extensively in several areas.

Most of the trees in the bottomlands appeared to average perhaps 0.4–0.5 m dbh, but this quantification simply represents our best effort to estimate dbh of trees (few of which were actually measured) while searching for woodpeckers. There are numerous trees in the 0.2 m dbh range, and these were noted to be closely spaced and dying at a fairly high rate. Occasional trees >0.8 m dbh were noted, most of them oaks. A few pockets of larger trees, mostly tupelos, oaks, and cypresses were found along the western shore of the Brother's River. These trees averaged roughly 0.6–0.8 m dbh. A few stands of old-looking mixed forest and hammock were found within 2 km of the Sopchoppy

River. Pines >1 m dbh were mixed with large cypress trees, and very large water oaks and laurel oaks of >2 m dbh were also recorded. However, little of this area around the Sopchoppy River was searched. Some virgin forest may remain in small areas, but this is probably unlikely. It is notoriously difficult, as Tanner (1942) noted, to get accurate information on logging history on small scales and thus to arrive at estimates of stand age without core-sampling the trees. A reasonable average for hardwood stands, however, is probably about 60 years, with very small pockets of forest perhaps 80–100 years old.

Pine forests cover about three-fourths of the National Forest, largely Longleaf Pine (*Pinus palustris*) and Slash Pine (*P. elliottii*), and many stands can be credited to reforestation projects undertaken by the U.S. Forest Service. The pines average 0.3–0.5 m dbh, with much variation. Some trees are planted in rows, evidence of the timber industry that was active in the area. Also, there are natural stands in a few places of trees averaging 0.6 m dbh or greater. Pines are dying at what seemed to us to be a tremendous rate in several areas (we did not attempt to quantify this rate). The practice of prescribed burning of the entire area every 5–6 years has been practiced on behalf of wildlife and forest health, and researchers, especially those studying Red-cockaded Woodpeckers (*Picoides borealis*) in pinewoods, have carefully studied the relations between the species and fires (e.g., James et al. 2001). In areas where trees were planted close together, fires appear to have made weaker trees more susceptible to damage by beetles and fungi. In the pine forests, >40 years is probably a good value for stand age, with some areas probably exceeding 100 years old. If Ivory-billeds are present in the National Forest, it seems likely that they would forage in pines, especially when stands are dying. There are several reports of Ivory-billeds in Florida scaling pine trees (Jackson 2002, 2004), and the species frequented pine forests in Cuba (Garrido and Kirkconnell 2000).

Some sources (e.g., Tanner [1942]) are quite vague as to sighting locations, and it was necessary to research the history of the area and some locality names that do not exist on modern maps. The area that is now Apalachicola National Forest was deeded to John Forbes & Co. by the Seminole Indians in 1803–1804 and remained in private hands in the nineteenth through the early twentieth century. Between 1913 and 1927, the Graves Brothers Lumber Company clear-cut much of this area, but enough trees were retained to regenerate the second forest that occurs there today (Mitchell et al., in ms.). In 1930, after

A very rare resident of old-growth hardwood forest (especially oak-sweet gum forest) and long-leaf pine savanna, where it feeds mainly on beetle larvae obtained by peeling sheets of bark from recently dead trees. Usually in pairs year-round.

**Ivory-billed Woodpecker**

*Campephilus principalis*

L 19" WS 33" WT 18 Oz (520g)

Larger and more slender than Pileated, with thinner wings, longer and more pointed tail, and longer neck. All white secondaries and pale bill distinctive.

\* Flight similar to Pileated but more direct, steady with rowing wingbeats and no undulation swooping up to land; slender shape may recall ducks such as Northern Pintail.

adult ♀  
all white secondaries and inner primaries

adult ♀  
broad white band on trailing edge of upperwing

adult ♂  
extensive red crest

\* Extensive bark-peeling is characteristic Ivory-bill foraging sign. Also, less often, excavates insects in wood of dead trees. Nest hole nearly round, like Pileated but slightly larger.

\* Juveniles similar to adult female, but with dark iris, shorter crest, and white tips on all primaries. Gradually develops adult characteristics, and male gradually develops red crest, within a few months.

\* Active and energetic, with "spirited" movements. When alert leans back with neck extended and swings whole body abruptly from side to side, pivoting on long tail and flicking the wings with each swing. Moves nimbly up and down trees with springy movements.

adult ♀  
curved and pointed black crest, two white stripes converge on lower back, entirely white secondaries obvious at rest, white stripe on neck does not reach bill, pale ivory-white bill, whitish eye, glossy black body

Voice: Common call a harsh, nasal kent reminiscent of the call of the Red-breasted Nuthatch but much stronger; may be single or doubled and given repeatedly kent, kent-kent, kent..... Another common call is a more drawn-out, upslurred kweent-kweent-kweent given in series; with same nasal quality as kent call. All calls not very loud but far-carrying. The shorter kent calls often given along with strong single or double raps on resonant tree. Never gives rapid drumming like other woodpeckers. Wingbeats very noisy, producing a loud, wooden, fluttering sound.

Although no living bird artist has seen a live Ivory-billed Woodpecker, several have made intensive studies of specimen material and photographs with the intention of providing accurate, field-reliable characters for identification. In 2003, The Nature Conservancy published this plate by David Sibley. The elegant, elongate quality of the bird—in head, bill, tail, and wings—is more evident here than in many more stylized renderings. This plate can be downloaded free on David Sibley's website, <[www.sibleyart.com](http://www.sibleyart.com)>.

extensive tracts had been commercially logged, the federal government purchased and managed the land under the Resettlement Administration, and National Forest designation came on 31 May 1936. It was at this time that biologist George Van Hynning reported several Ivory-billeds in the area, but apparently no specific information survives on their precise location (Tanner 1942). Local forest managers now credit ornithologist Herbert L. Stoddard,

Sr. and his co-worker Leon Neel—who worked as forestry consultants in this area and were successful advocates of long rotation cycles and other pro-wildlife practices—for preserving many of western Florida's forests (Mitchell et al., in ms.). Stoddard, who spent a tremendous amount of time in Ivory-billed habitat over his lifetime and who had seen perhaps dozen or more as a youngster in Florida between 1896 and 1900, reportedly saw three Ivory-

billeds between 1954 and 1969 (Stoddard 1969); at least two of those sightings were believed to have been in central Georgia (Jackson 2002).

**RESULTS**  
**Woodpecker detection**

In our limited search areas, woodpecker densities appeared to be high, although no standardized point counts or transects were conducted that would provide baseline data to compare with other sites. Nonetheless, daily counts were kept to determine overall abundance, and a GPS unit was used to track location and effort. Red-bellied Woodpecker was by far the most numerous species detected, followed, in order of declining abundance, by Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius*), Northern Flicker (*Colaptes auratus*), Downy Woodpecker (*Picoides pubescens*), Red-cockaded Woodpecker, and Red-headed Woodpecker (*Melanerpes erythrocephalus*). Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers and Pileated Woodpeckers were very close in abundance, whereas flickers and Downy Woodpeckers were well below those levels. Seven Red-cockaded Woodpeckers were observed in four locations, and just one Red-headed Woodpecker was seen.

Woodpeckers were especially common in the pine forests with high tree mortality from prescribed and other burns. One small burn area had 8 Pileated Woodpeckers in a 200 m by 200 m section. Pileateds were seen to scale large pines, one bark flake at a time, by prying loose the bark. Especially in the pine forests, woodpeckers were seen making rather long flights over more or less open areas. Single Pileateds and flickers were seen in Bradwell Bay in Wakulla County (ca. 30° 10.25' N, 84° 35.17' W), the largest burned area, traveling on single flights of more than one km at a stretch. One pair of Pileateds was seen on a flight from one open pine area to another, traveling at least 5 km in total. Smaller woodpecker species, including Red-cockaded, were also seen flying above the pine canopy on fairly long flights.

We present five examples of searches below, along with the number of Pileateds counted in each:

- 1 • A 4-km walk with Greg Spahr on the west side of the Brother's River, down to the river's edge, through a deeply flooded swampwood 2 February 2003 beginning at 29.86065° N, 85.057583° W and ending at 29.86900° N, 85.05490° W, on which 20 Pileateds were detected in 6 hours;
- 2 • A 1.6-km walk on Forbes Island 31 January 2003 beginning at 29.86413° N,



85.01492° W and ending at 29.86337° N, 85.01863° W, on which 12 Pileateds were detected in 3.5 hours;

3 • A stationary morning count at Van Horne Landing (ca. 29.900° N, 85.017° W) 14 February 2003 on the bank of the Apalachicola River, on which 5 Pileateds were detected in 35 minutes;

4 • A stationary morning count at Bloody Bluff Landing 22 January 2003 (ca. 29.873° N, 85.011° W), along the Apalachicola River east of Forbes Island, on which 4 Pileateds were detected in 45 minutes; and

5 • A two-day, 58-km canoe trip with Jim Fitzpatrick 3 and 4 March 2003, on which 60 Pileateds were detected. The transit began at Owl Creek (ca. 29.983° N, 85.025° W) and continued past Graham Creek, ending at the FL 65 bridge (ca. 29.85° N, 84.97° W); the following day, the transit began near Larkin Fish Camp (ca. 30.15° N, 85.09° W), passed Acorn Lake and Bill's Arm, to the Apalachicola River briefly before taking the Chipola Cutoff to the Chipola River at the southern end of the Dead Lake area, around Cutoff Island, back to Owl Creek (start point of first day).

In none of the above searches was it trivial for us to estimate the density of Pileated

assume that territorial drumming indicated a territory occupied by a pair, although that may well have been the case in most instances. If one assumes that Pileated's drumming can be detected out to 400 m, then one might extrapolate that a forested area of about 40 km<sup>2</sup> was involved in the two-day canoe search (see above), for instance. Sixty detections of Pileated Woodpecker along that transect would give a moderate density, about 1.5 individuals/km<sup>2</sup> (about 4/mi<sup>2</sup>). Tanner (1942) noted a density of about six pairs/mi<sup>2</sup> in the Singer Tract (and the same for "northern Florida" and the Big Cypress swamp, Florida), but he does not clearly describe his method for arriving at those estimates. If one attempts to estimate the density of Pileated Woodpeckers in our other examples above, using the detection radius of 400 m, then the densities appear to be higher than on the canoe trip (8/mi<sup>2</sup> in the first example, 12/mi<sup>2</sup> in the second, 13/mi<sup>2</sup> in the third, 10/mi<sup>2</sup> in the fourth). It is almost certain that detection of this species by ear is possible at distances greater than 400 m; thus we offer these estimates tentatively here.

Overall, the highest woodpecker densities we noted seemed to be in the bottomland habitat, and several locations had what appeared to us to be especially high densities of Pileated Woodpeckers, places in which one could detect several Pileated territories from a single spot. At one site along the west shore of the Brother's River (the location noted in the first example above), for instance, six different drumming birds could be heard from a single location. In a more southerly spot (near 29° 55' N, 85° 01' W), we walked about one km in the morning, stopping every 100 m or so, and it was common to hear three Pileateds per stop (with likely duplication of individuals, of course). Whatever the actual average density of the species at these locations, it seemed to us to be higher than at any other sites we have visited, in any state, and probably close to what Tanner (1942) describes for several Florida locations and for the Singer Tract.

Woodpeckers were seen feeding in the tops of dead pines, as well as feeding on the dead lowest limbs of large pine trees in several places. Almost all dead trees showed evidence of woodpecker work including

small, conical feeding pits and the larger rectangular excavation pits of Pileateds. Sapwells were also observed, mostly in hammock and bottomland areas. Several trees had thousands of sapwells, from ground up to 10 m or more above the ground. Dead pines were routinely stripped of bark by weather, although Pileateds had clearly contributed to some of this in some cases. In prising the bark from a few dead pines, one could see an abundance of termites and centipedes.

In the hammock and bottomland areas, there seemed to be much more woodpecker work all the way down to the base of dead trees. Several Pileateds were seen within a meter of the ground, hammering away on large trunks. Most dead trees showed a diversity of woodpecker work. We observed a few dozen thoroughly scaled trees along the Sopchoppy River, along the Apalachicola River in one spot, and in another spot along the Brother's River some 5 km away. Most of these trees were 10–30 cm dbh, but all showed long, deeply chiseled, horizontal grooves, the only evidence of whatever bird did the scaling. Most of the scaled trees had scaled patches 1–3 m long, usually 2–10 m above the ground. One particular tree was observed to be newly scaled on three different occasions, though we never observed the bird that did the scaling; by the time of our last observation, the trunk was a mass of huge bark and wood flakes 10+ cm long, many still hanging from the trunk (Figure 2). This tree was full of termites and borers. Another scaled tree on Forbes Island had a 5-cm long grub of some kind exposed by the scaling. I generally ignored scaled pines, as this can be done by weather, but two scaled dying pines (and one scaled dead oak) were seen in a small area (<100 m<sup>2</sup>) near the Sopchoppy River. These were large (60-cm dbh) trees, with bark impossible to pry off with even two hands. Piled at the base of these trees were large bark chips about 5 cm wide and 30 cm long, almost all chips the same size. Several trees that lacked bark also lacked markings associated with large woodpecker work, but the boring galleries of wood-boring insects were nonetheless visible in the exposed wood; it would be incorrect to call these "scaled" trees, perhaps, though it is conceivable that evidence of woodpecker work was not apparent on trees that were in fact scaled by woodpeckers.

No woodpecker was observed in the act of scaling in the bottomland or hammock areas. All woodpeckers were seen to feed on snags, or dead limbs of larger trees, and usually this feeding was on trees long dead. One pair of Pileateds was observed to feed early in the morning on almost all types of trees, but invariably this work involved



Figure 2. One example of a tree actively and heavily scaled and pitted during the search in March 2003; the bird (or birds) that scaled this tree was not observed. Photograph by Timothy Spahr.

Woodpecker, an index discussed in Tanner (1942) and one often mentioned by later writers in the context of looking for suitable Ivory-billed habitat. It was particularly difficult in riparian habitats, where the waterways' sinuous curves make even counting individual birds problematic. We were conservative in counting and tried not to double-count individual birds; we also did not

digging deep foraging pits in the tree. Woodpeckers were heard calling and drumming with increasing frequency toward the end of the trip, as nesting season drew near.

All of the woodpecker activity detected was easily attributed to the aforementioned species, with a few exceptions:

- **14 January 2003** • Near 29° 49.025' N, 84° 59.190', along the East River near Gardener's Landing. I heard repeated loud raps of a large woodpecker with a rhythm unlike any other tapping or rapping sounds heard during the trip, being a repeated series of double raps. The blows were usually pretty close together, and always the second blow exceeded the first blow in volume, unlike in typical *Campephilus* double raps. This was in good bottomland habitat.
- **31 January 2003** • Near 29° 51.790' N, 85° 01.358' on Forbes Island. Greg Spahr and I heard high-pitched calls, probably belonging to a bird, for a two- or three-minute period, repeated at 10–15 seconds intervals. The sound closely resembled the single, isolated high-pitched *kent* calls heard on the Tanner/Allen recordings of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers from 1935. We were probably within 100 m of the source of this sound, but the sound came from across a creek too deep to ford. At other times on the same day, we heard conspicuous single and double raps, probably of a woodpecker. These sounds were confined to the area near the high-pitched calls and seemed to move whenever we were within what appeared to be a few hundred m of the sound's source—almost as though we were being led around in circles. We were not able to locate the source of the sounds.
- **1 February 2003** • In an effort to arrive on the west side of the creek where we heard the high-pitched calls and rapping the day before, we walked north and crossed this creek at a narrow spot, and then proceeded southward. Before we made it to the area where the calls and sounds were heard the day before, we heard numerous distant single raps and at least one double rap near 29° 52.253', 85° 01.262'. One double rap was heard while listening quietly and sounded to be 200–400 m distant.

We cannot ascribe any of the sounds we heard to a woodpecker, or even strictly speaking to a bird, as we did not locate their source(s). Nevertheless, they stood out as different from other bird sounds and anthropogenic sounds (i.e., gunshots) we heard in the area.

### Interviews with local people

Twenty local people were interviewed and asked about woodpeckers, much as Tanner (1942) had done in this area 14–17 March and 30 May–7 June 1939. Three people indicated that they had seen something resembling Ivory-billed Woodpeckers in this area. One man in his fifties remembered seeing them as a boy and knew it by the name "Lord God Bird." One hunter said he knew "the large woodpecker with the black back, and the larger one with white on the back." A very observant bass fisherman indicated he knew both types of large woodpeckers and that had seen 2 Ivory-billed Woodpeckers in the past three years. He described a very large black-and-white woodpecker, with the white patch low down on the back, perched on a dead Baldcypress tree on the Apalachicola River "about 10 miles downriver from Estifanulga [Liberty County]." By my reckoning, Estifanulga is at Mile 63 on the Apalachicola River; 10 miles downstream would be ca. Mile 53, or that point in the river due west of Red Hill (Figure 1; county uncertain, either Calhoun or Liberty, depending on the side of the river the bird was on). This area is 8 km southeast of Scotts Ferry, Calhoun County, the location of the pair reported in 1950–1951 (see above). This fisherman's other reported sighting—from the same area as the sight report of the previously mentioned hunter—was along Brother's River near its confluence with the Apalachicola River (ca. 29.845° N, 85.033° W). These latter sightings are within 5 km of above-described site where the high-pitched calls and double raps were heard 31 January and 1 February 2003.

### Conclusion

A very small portion of this fine area for woodpeckers was examined. The area is vast, and because for most of the time in the area I was alone, I was not able to venture far into some of the targeted areas. The large burned areas of pinewoods in particular need much more coverage. In retrospect, aerial photography or aerial reconnaissance would improve the search by narrowing the search areas to the most promising. Because some older-looking forest tracts were found interlarded among larger areas of younger trees, it is likely that a systematic examination would reveal additional tracts of older forests. Ideally, both low-level aerial photography and infrared photography could be combined to identify and to prioritize such sites for future searches.

### Acknowledgments

My brother Greg Spahr aided me on several days of the search, and Jim Fitzpatrick's help was likewise essential. Both have good ears and strong outdoor skills. Jim also brought

experience from the Pearl River search of 2002 and was able to compare the areas in terms of apparent habitat quality. My thanks to both of them. We wish to thank the Smithsonian Institution for permitting Greg Spahr to photograph specimens in their collection, whose photographs appear in this issue and as frontispiece to this article. Finally, I thank Jerome Jackson, Bill Pranty, and David Shoch for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this article.

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# Forest management for Ivory-billed Woodpeckers (*Campephilus principalis*): A case study in managing an uncertainty

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## ABSTRACT

The near extinction of Ivory-billed Woodpecker (*Campephilus principalis*) has been attributed to the elimination of old-growth forests in the Southeast. Notwithstanding, forest management regimes could be adapted to approximate the natural disturbances with which this species is apparently associated. Uneven-aged management could ensure enough post-harvest structure to support Ivory-billeds and allow stands to generate standing dead wood throughout a cutting cycle. Management regimes would require minimum rotation lengths and variable retention practices sufficient to generate and retain large (>60-cm dbh) stems. A model is advanced to set appropriate standing dead wood stock guidelines, accounting for dead wood stem density, stem dimensions, and stand area. Prescriptions for achieving stock objectives via artificial inputs to standing dead wood, either through selective girdling or prescribed fire, are calculated as a function of existing stocks, observed natural mortality, and decay rate of dead wood. Although focused

on a species nearly extinct, these guidelines offer an approach to deriving practical management applications from incomplete information, a situation with which land managers continue to be confronted.

## Background

Ivory-billed Woodpecker (*Campephilus principalis*) has apparently been on the verge of extinction for over a century. Not since 1944, the last year in which an individual was reported from the Singer Tract in Louisiana, had this species been documented in any area of its former North American range—until 2004 (Fitzpatrick et al. 2005). Understandably, relatively few efforts have been made to formulate conservation practices from the existing, albeit limited, literature on the species. Most research efforts have been focused on searching for surviving individuals, with the implicit understanding that no concerted management actions would be taken without definitive proof of the species' existence.

The limited nature of existing knowledge, from which prescriptions might have been developed, has further stymied the impetus to carry out pro-active management on behalf of this species. The conservation of a potentially wide-ranging species such as this one calls for considerations beyond protected areas. Adaptive silviculture is required, such that forest management can be made to contribute to, or at least not to hinder, broader conservation plans, similar to what has been advanced for the management of Red-cockaded Woodpecker (*Picoides borealis*) (e.g., Seagle et al. 1987,

Hedrick et al. 1998). One fundamental difference between management of Red-cockadeds and Ivory-billeds is that numerous extant populations of Red-cockaded Woodpeckers have been accessible for repeated and detailed studies, whereas information on Ivory-billeds must be gleaned from a single quantitative study (Tanner 1942) and scattered natural history narratives.

This paper was originally written as a hypothetical case study in managing forest dead wood stocks with uncertain objectives—uncertain, that is, until the announcement of the species' recent rediscovery in eastern Arkansas (Fitzpatrick et al. 2005). Although recovery of Ivory-billed Woodpecker is still far from certain, this paper offers one approach to deriving practical management applications from incomplete information, a situation with which land managers continue to be confronted in the case of many species. Despite the fact that explicit causal relationships between the birds and their habitat may not be established, circumstantial evidence can be used to guide initial characterizations of their habitat "preferences." Taking action need not wait until the presence of Ivory-billeds can be confirmed beyond reasonable doubt. Informed management interventions could in fact serve to facilitate their discovery—by drawing individuals to areas where they are likely to be detected, as well as potentially benefiting other species at the same time.

## Ivory-billeds and Timber Harvest

The disappearance of Ivory-billed Woodpecker signaled a fundamental change in





forest structure, dynamics, or composition at some scale over the period of its decline. In North America, the disappearance of the Ivory-billed coincided with the advance of harvests of old-growth forests in the Southeast. Tanner (1942) reported the disappearance of the Ivory-billed over the period 1885 to 1915, which correlates closely with the peak period of activity of the southern logging industry, between 1890 and 1930 (Williams 1992). Logging, with its associated infrastructure, may have further facilitated access by collectors, and indeed the bulk of Ivory-billed skins were collected during this same time period (Jackson 2004). Even so, in areas where the forest was not converted to agriculture and the species was not subject to collecting pressure, some post-logging conditions may have been adequate for Ivory-billeds. For example, Herbert Stoddard noted a pair of Ivory-billeds collected in Florida in 1924 in a stand "heavily cut over" 20 years before (Dennis 1979).

Observations from Cuba offer insight into the use of young regenerating forests by the species as well. Ivory-billeds occupied the Sierra de Moa region more or less continuously from the 1940s through the 1980s, following and during extensive logging. In the Moa area, some 40,000 hectares were logged between 1938 and 1946 (Lamb 1957), and extensive logging took place again between 1956 and 1959 (Short 1985). Ivory-billeds were encountered where habitat was described as young, small-diameter stands of Cuban Pine (*Pinus cubensis*). Dennis (1948) and Short (1985) referred to seven- and 20-year-old stands. Dennis even described a pair occupying a site only two years after logging had taken place. Mean tree diameter at breast height (dbh) in these areas was estimated at around 13–15 cm (Dennis 1948, Lamb 1957). Still, given the apparent low productivity of these ultramafic sites (Smith 1954; ultramafic = soils known for inducing physiological stress in plants and consequent low productivity), size could be a misleading indicator of age. In fact, trees of this size cored by Smith in this same area in 1952 revealed ages of around 60 years. A key component of the structure of these documented stands was the scattered larger dead and cull trees remaining following logging (Dennis 1948, Short and Horne 1986). These stems provided critical opportunities for the excavation of nest and roost cavities, which were often in short supply following logging. Although these second-growth pine forests may have been sub-optimal habitat (home range sizes in the Sierra de Moa were estimated at three to four times those in the Singer Tract in Louisiana [Lamb 1957]), the

Ivory-billed's tenacity in this area demonstrates its resilience to large scale disturbances such as logging and its ability to nest and feed in sub-old growth conditions, though this conclusion should be qualified with the understanding that Ivory-billeds in Cuba were likely more versatile in their habitat use than their North American counterparts due to the lack of interspecific competition with other large woodpeckers (i.e. Pileated Woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*)).

The persistence of scattered large cull trees in regenerating stands could presumably offer some of the same foraging and roosting opportunities as did old growth. In the Singer Tract, an old-growth, mixed-age hardwood stand, Ivory-billeds, while foraging

over a wide range of tree size classes, favored large trees relative to their abundance in the forest (Tanner 1942). Tanner found that 38% of feeding took place on trees greater than 61 cm dbh, which made up only 7% of total stems. These trees were, on average, 60 years old and older, based on study of radial increment of Delta bottomland hardwoods (Figure 1). The threshold for nesting and roosting trees was similar. Allen and Kellogg (1937) measured breast high circumferences of 7.5 and 10 feet for two cavity trees in the Singer Tract, corresponding to equivalent diameters at breast height of 73 cm and 97 cm. Estimated diameter at breast height of three cavity trees—calculated from data on diameter at cavity height in Tanner (1942)



Relict cull tree from mixed age bottomland hardwood stand, Delta National Forest, Mississippi. October 2001. Photograph by David Shoch.

and assuming 1.1 cm taper heights per meter height—ranged from 51 to 56 cm (n=3). A larger dataset of cavity heights summarized by Tanner ranged from closely 7.6 to 21.3 meters (n=17), averaging around 15 m, incidentally comparing closely with the range of 9.1–18.3 m reported by Lamb (1957) for cavity heights in old growth Cuban Pines. Applying a dbh:total height relationship derived from measurements of Delta bottomland hardwoods (Figure 2), these were trees averaging approximately 54 centimeters dbh, assuming cavities were located at approximately one-half of total tree height.

### Ivory-billeds and Forest Disturbance

Discrete patches of dead trees, created by disturbance events, are a defining element in the distribution of dead wood across a landscape. In the absence of sufficient endemic rates of dead wood generation, large-scale disturbances would be critical in providing feeding opportunities for Ivory-billeds, and Ivory-billeds were presumably uniquely adapted to seek them out. Although Ivory-billeds were noted for their specialized means of feeding, knocking chunks of bark off recently killed trees to expose wood-boring insects, this same reliance on newly dead trees may have dictated a transitory and opportunistic lifestyle over the life of an individual. Tanner (1942) notes: "...the Ivory-billed is well adapted to traveling long distances. It is a strong flier with a fast flight for a woodpecker ... they usually travel in pairs ... which would be important for wandering birds of few numbers in order that mates may keep together."

The abundance of shade-intolerant species such as Sweet Gum (*Liquidambar styraciflua*) in Singer Tract is an indication that the forest there initially regenerated in response to extensive disturbance. Even within the Singer Tract, which Ivory-billeds occupied continuously from at least 1934 to 1944, Ivory-billed ranges shifted in response to localized tree death events. For instance, Ivory-billeds colonized an area through which a

cyclone that killed many trees had passed two years previously, and then moved out two years later (Tanner 1942). Tanner believed that Ivory-billed territories within the Singer Tract were steadily becoming less suitable as mortality rates decreased after the loss of weakened stems from the previous disturbance, a fire 14 years earlier. Annual rates of tree mortality in the Singer Tract sites at the time of Tanner's research, expressed as percent of existing stems, ranged from 1.5% to 2.4% (calculated from Tanner, 1942), which are typical of low "background" mortality rates in southeastern bottomland hardwood forests, rather than those resulting from disturbance events such as extended flooding and wind throw, which may result in annual mortality rates, again as percent of pre-existing stems, of up to 16%, and to over 50%, respectively (Conner et al. 2002).

Ivory-billeds foraged in a wide range of

forest types. Tanner's (1942) chapter on habitats frequented by the Ivory-billed reads like a nearly comprehensive description of southeastern forest types, not only including bottomland hardwoods, but also cypress swamps, hammocks, bays, and pine flatwoods. Although by the time of Tanner's study, Ivory-billeds used pines to a lesser degree than hardwoods, the use of pines, which were logged before hardwoods in the Southeast, may have been historically more prevalent (Jackson 2002, 2004). Likewise, Cuban Ivory-billeds, which most recent observations link closely with pine forests, formerly occupied both tropical hardwood and pine forests (Lamb 1957). More than any particular forest type, then, Ivory-billeds seemed to be dependent instead on the conditions and events that generated an abundance of dead trees. While other species of woodpeckers continued to mine snags

throughout the process of wood decay, Ivory-billeds moved on to maintain themselves at the vanguard of forest turnover. The Ivory-billed was thus a unique indicator species, occupying a niche position in the process of forest decline, a species whose abundance was more dependent on rates of tree death than on accumulating stocks of standing dead wood.

A variety of disturbances were attractive to Ivory-billeds, including beetle outbreaks, wind throw, and even logging. Outbreaks of Southern Pine Beetle (*Dendroctonus frontalis*) are often initiated in response to large-scale disturbance events such as fire or wind throw, and during epidemics spread their attacks to healthy trees, creating discrete "spots" of infestation. Herbert Stoddard observed two female Ivory-billeds feeding in beetle-killed pines in southern Georgia in the 1950s (Leon Neel, pers. comm., Greenwood Plantation, November 2002). Ivory-billeds were recorded feeding for extended periods in storm-produced blowdowns in the Singer Tract and at Wakulla Beach, Florida, and among post-harvest logging slash in the Singer Tract (Tanner 1942). Periodic extended

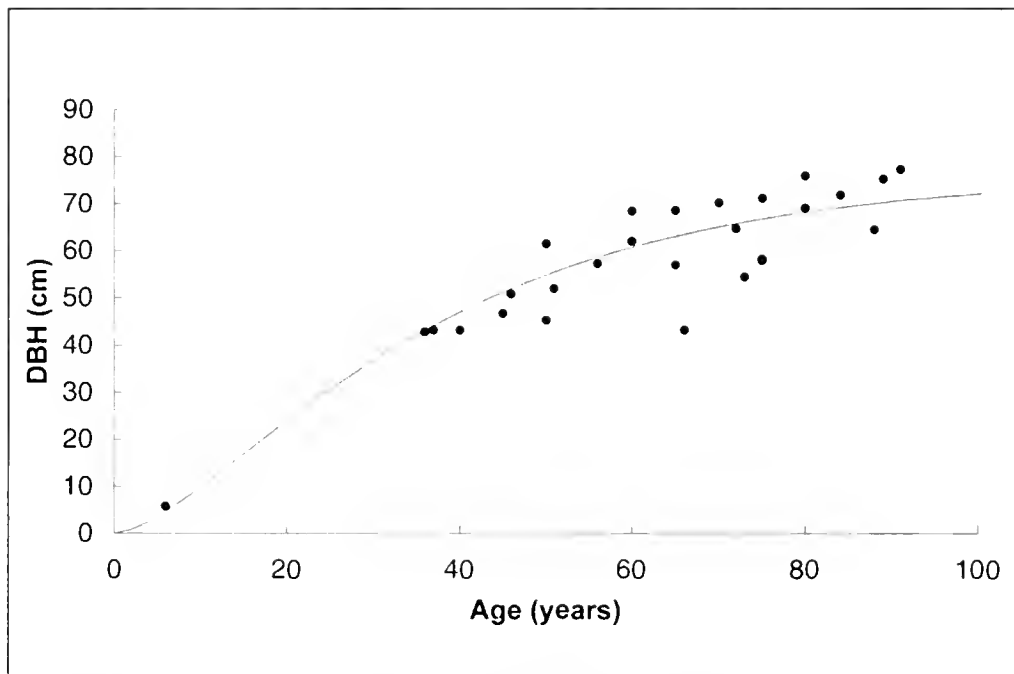


Figure 1. Relationship between age and diameter at breast height for bottomland hardwoods sampled from uneven-aged stands in the Mississippi alluvial valley in Tennessee, Arkansas, and Mississippi (Environmental Synergy, Inc., unpublished). Modeled DBH (cm) =  $76 * (1 - e^{-0.035 * AGE})^{1.67}$ .

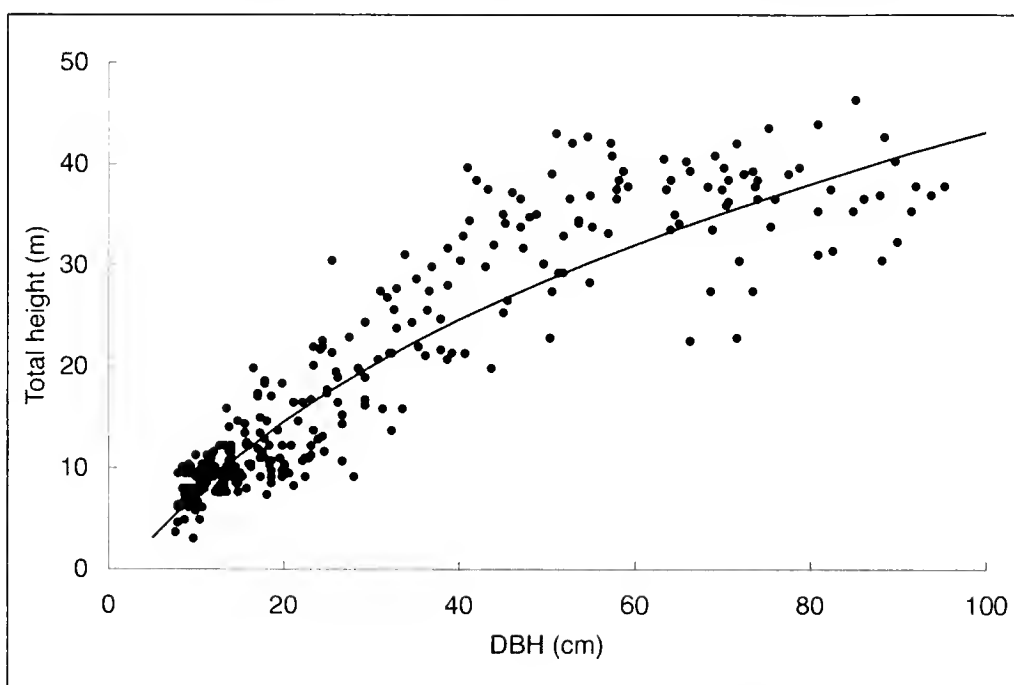


Figure 2. Relationship between diameter at breast height and total height for bottomland hardwoods sampled from uneven-aged stands in the Mississippi alluvial valley in Tennessee, Mississippi, and Louisiana (Environmental Synergy, Inc., unpublished). Modeled Height (m) =  $0.9093 * (\text{LN DBH (cm)})^{2.5271}$ .

flooding events may have been another source of trees kills from which Ivory-billeds profited.

Perhaps the disturbance with which Ivory-billeds were most commonly associated was fire. Historically, fire was a dominant force in shaping the structure and composition of the forests of the southeastern United States. For the Ivory-billed, fire provided not only an abundance of newly-killed trees but left a legacy of weakened trees and delayed mortality that would steadily supply foraging sites over subsequent years. Wayne (1893) remarked on Ivory-billeds feeding on fire-killed trees in the Suwanee River region. Allen and Kellogg (1937) described Ivory-billeds feeding in "small and medium-sized pines that had been killed by fire" in Florida. Herbert Stoddard (1969, p. 39) described areas attracting Ivory-billeds in central Florida around the turn of the century: "...isolated stands of pines on 'islands' surrounded by wet swamp or on high ground between the forks of creeks ... [that] might escape burning for many years ... when at length ... were burned out, the pines became infested with beetles and died ... it was also there that Ivory-billeds, which love the sawyers, could also be seen in late summer and fall." Tanner (1942) includes a report of Ivory-billeds from Highlands Hammock, Florida, occupying an area of recently fire-killed Baldcypress (*Taxodium distichum*) for several months, and then leaving the area after the cypress snags had "dried out." In Louisiana, fires burned over the Singer Tract in 1917 and 1924, at which time, presumably in response to the fires, Ivory-billeds were reported as more numerous according to Tanner's informants (Tanner 1942). Dennis (1948) remarked on the frequent fires in the forests of the Sierra de Moa in Cuba, where Ivory-billeds were seen: "a view of the mountains always revealed columns of smoke rising from a dozen or more points." Although it is not clear that fire-killed trees were what drew Ivory-billeds to the area, Dennis did postulate on the benefits of fire in producing quantities of recently killed trees for foraging Ivory-billeds.

Where the frequency and intensity of these disturbances is diminished (e.g., through fire suppression or flood control), regenerating shade-tolerant cohorts begin to become

established in the understory and midstory. The progressive recruitment over time of volunteer stems will increase competition for resources and may reduce the growth rate of the dominant tree cohort, as well as substantially alter the character of the habitat. Open-forest structure, associated with recurrent disturbance, may well have facilitated movements of this large species (Jackson 2002, 2004) and is evident in photographs (Allen and Kellogg 1937) and descriptions of occupied Ivory-billed habitat, for example the telling account of J. J. Kuhn driving his car through the Singer Tract forest (Gallagher 2005). Wider spacings also favor development of large branches and tend to increase the complexity of the canopy architecture. Though the correlation between Ivory-billeds and natural disturbance is clear, the exact nature of the relationship and detailed characterization of the disturbance regimes that favored Ivory-billeds—information that would serve to prescribe management—is lacking.

### Forest Management for Ivory-billeds

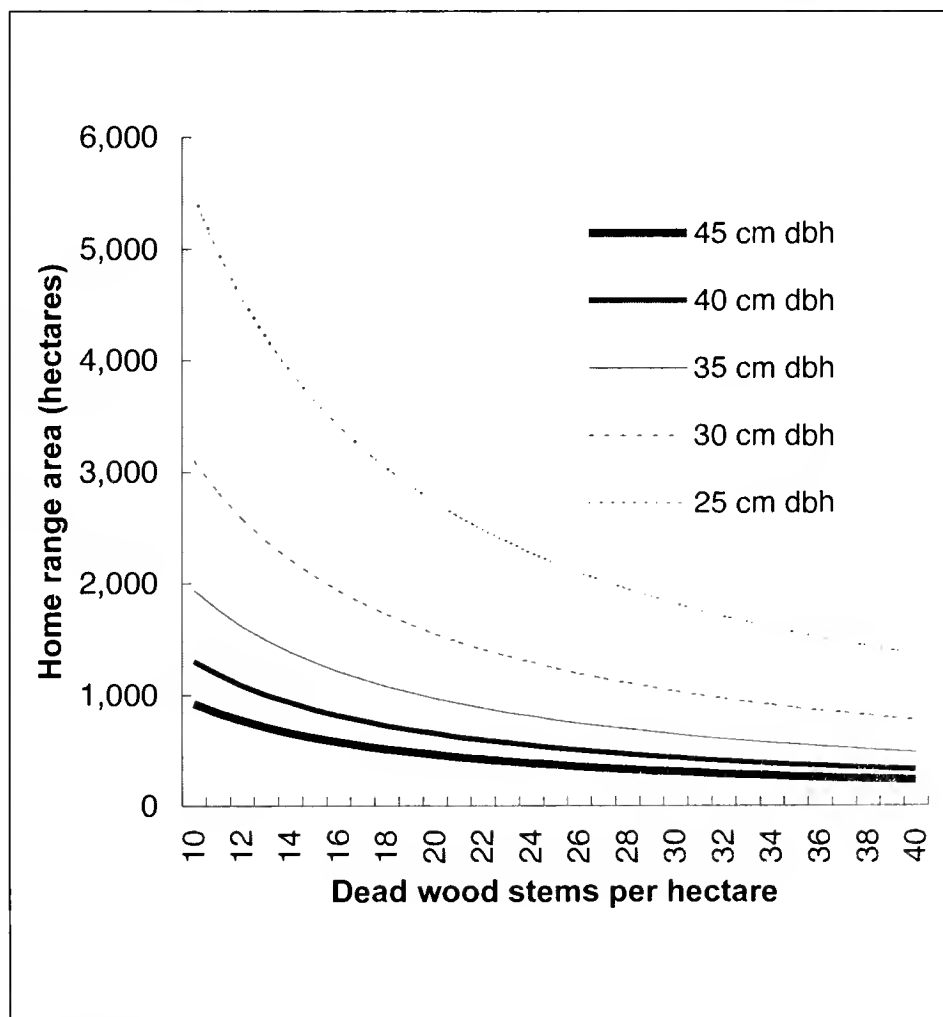
Harvest regimes on managed forests could potentially serve to mimic the disturbances with which Ivory-billeds were associated. Forest management practices can be divided into even-age and uneven-age management systems, each of which generates distinctive

stand structures. Even-aged management, and the stand-replacing disturbances which they simulate, often result in bell-shaped age distributions suggesting a single dominant cohort regenerating from disturbance. Uneven-aged management (e.g., single tree or group selection), with long-term application, results in a negative exponential age distribution, made up of multiple cohorts regenerating from disturbances of limited areal extent (i.e., death or removal of single trees or clusters of trees) recurring at relatively uniform rates. Although even-aged management may best replicate the scale of the natural disturbance detailed above, clearcutting essentially eliminates a stand for use by Ivory-billeds and would require decades to replace. Over time and across a landscape, an even-aged harvest regime, even staggered across annual cutting blocks, would result in significant areas of unsuitable habitat.

A single tree or group selection harvest regime could presumably retain enough structure post-harvest to continue to support Ivory-billeds, and most importantly, stands would retain potential to generate standing dead wood throughout the period of the cutting cycle. Uneven-aged management potentially yields a further benefit in producing more uniform stand conditions across the landscape that could potentially

reduce risk of predation associated with transit across open, non-forested tracts. In fact, forest harvest practices in the region have changed significantly since the initial logging of old growth and contemporaneous disappearance of the Ivory-billed. At that time, clearcuts were the dominant practice, and "left a land surface completely bare of ... mature trees" (Williams 1992), likely precluding the use of newly regenerating stands by Ivory-billeds. Conditions in residual stands improved with the widespread replacement of clearcutting with selective cutting practices after 1930 (Williams 1992), and consequent accumulation of non-merchantable "wolf," or cull, trees in successive stands, which made up over 40% of existing stocks on some 1.1 million acres of Mississippi delta forests by 1984 (Rudis and Birdsey 1986).

Regardless of management regime employed, election of appropriate rotation age is



**Figure 3.** Relationship of standing dead wood stem density, standing dead wood stem dimensions, and Ivory-billed pair home range size. Stem volume calculated using Smalian's formula. Dead wood dimensions use 2/3 total height (Height (m) = 0.9093 \* (LN DBH (cm)<sup>2.5271</sup>), derived previously) and taper (assuming 1.1 cm/m length). 2.54 cm bark thickness was discounted from end diameters.



essential to ensure the continued presence of trees of suitable dimensions, here proposed as 60 centimeters mean dbh minimum for Ivory-billeds, reflecting the size of stems used for cavity construction and preferred for foraging. A minimum rotation of 60 years is required to maintain 60-cm dbh stems. Given the different growth rates associated with the distinct stand structures and light environments produced by even-aged versus uneven-aged management, rotation age required to generate 60-cm dbh stems would potentially differ with management regime (i.e., slightly less for even-aged management). With uneven-aged management, habitat could be further improved by lengthening cutting cycles within the rotation to increase the abundance and residency of stems exceeding 60 cm dbh.

With the long-term application of fixed rotations, however, large trees (i.e., exceeding the maximum dbh permitted by the rotation) will be progressively phased out of the forests as the existing stock of large cull trees steadily deteriorates and succeeding cohorts are not permitted to reach comparable ages and dimensions. Retention of some mature live stems following harvest, or variable retention (*sensu* Franklin et al. 1996), offers the potential to ensure the growth of stems beyond the size classes permitted by the rotation for the eventual generation of large-dimension snags and dead limbs on live stems within the stand. Selection of stems for retention should take place at the end of a rotation, at which point vigorous individuals with the greatest likelihood to succeed into larger size classes and resist windthrow can be identified.

Adequate stocks of dead wood for foraging and cavity construction must be ensured within an occupied home range. Tanner's (1942) survey of dead wood volumes in two recently logged acres of the Singer Tract resulted in an estimate of 208 ft<sup>3</sup> per acre, or 14.39 m<sup>3</sup>/ha, which is used here as a surrogate for standing dead wood requirements for Ivory-billeds. The surface area of dead wood under bark, which is of particular interest in quantifying foraging sites for Ivory-billeds, is assumed to be proportional to volume. Total dead wood volume thus serves as a more easily quantifiable index for surface area under bark. Using a pair's range in the Singer Tract in the breeding season of 4 mi<sup>2</sup>, or 1036 hectares, and assuming uniform distribution of standing dead wood across this area equivalent to the nearby harvested site surveyed by Tanner, this yields a requirement of 14,908 m<sup>3</sup> of standing dead wood per pair for adequate foraging. Figure 3 illustrates a proposed relationship between standing dead wood stem density, standing dead wood stem dimensions, and Ivory-billed home range size, and serves to generate tentative predic-

tions of mean stocks of standing dead wood required across a landscape and maintained over time. For example, a pair of Ivory-billeds would require 31,058 30-cm dbh (0.48 m<sup>3</sup> volume equivalent) stems of dead wood. Across 1036 ha (home range in the Singer Tract), 13 40-cm mean dbh (1.15 m<sup>3</sup> volume equivalent) or 30 30-cm mean dbh stems per hectare are required. The latter value agrees with the mean reported by Tanner of 31 dead stems per hectare, though Tanner did not record mean dead wood stem volume or dbh on the Singer Tract. Although it is unlikely that small-dimension snags alone could support this species, as suggested by the upper line in Figure 3, density of foraging substrates and home ranges of individual woodpeckers have been shown to be inversely correlated (Renken and Wiggers 1989, Fitzpatrick et al. 2005), and it is likely that Ivory-billeds compensate for scarcity by expanding their home ranges.

Where management objectives seek to concentrate presently wide-ranging birds in a specific area (e.g., where they could be better monitored), and ultimately to increase population size and density, dead wood volume per unit area objectives could be set appropriately. For example, the Big Woods in Arkansas where an Ivory-billed was recently reported comprises a large area of some 220,000 ha (Fitzpatrick et al. 2005), a size that presents severe logistical challenges where the management of a few roaming individuals is concerned. If the objective were to provide sufficient dead wood stocks for two pairs of Ivory-billeds within a smaller area of intensive management, of say 2000 ha, roughly corresponding with home ranges reported by Tanner in the Singer Tract, objectives for dead wood stock (29,816 m<sup>3</sup> = 2 × 14,908 m<sup>3</sup> or 14.9 m<sup>3</sup>/ha over 2000 ha) could be achieved by managing for standing dead wood densities of 31 30-cm mean dbh (0.48 m<sup>3</sup> volume equivalent) or 13 40-cm mean dbh (1.15 m<sup>3</sup> volume equivalent) stems per hectare.

Inputs to dead wood are generated via tree mortality. Tree death is by nature a highly variable event both in space and time. Natural mortality rates, as percent of existing stems, are neither constant nor uniform, depending on stand age, stem size and density, and stochastic disturbances. Where natural mortality is insufficient to maintain desired stocks of standing dead wood, killing additional stems is necessary. In place of traditional thinning operations, selective girdling or prescribed fire, which would leave dead stems standing, could be used. Targeted interventions such as this would be of particular importance both in young forests (regenerating from past stand-level disturbance such as logging) and also in intensively managed forests, where less vig-

orous stems are systematically thinned from stands, conditions in which old weakened individuals are absent and incidence of tree mortality is low (Lorimer 1989).

Live trees may house a considerable fraction of dead wood in hardwood forests (Welsh and Capen 1992), and total dead wood requirements of Ivory-billeds were only partly satisfied by dead stems. Aside from labor-intensive interventions such as girdling large limbs, these stand characteristics can only be managed for by extending rotation ages and/or designating some stems for post-harvest retention to allow natural senescence and gradual crown die-back of large stems to take place.

The role of forest management in Ivory-billed conservation would be to maintain desired stocks and inputs of standing dead wood over time across a landscape. For steady state desired stock, *annual inputs = desired stock \* decay rate*.

The annual decay rate of dead wood, expressed as fractional mass loss (*k*), calculated for southeastern U.S. forests, is ~0.08 (Mattson et al. 1987, Onega and Eickmeier 1991), which translates to a mean residence time (1/*k*) of 12.5 years. Although specific gravity of dead wood decreases over the decomposition process, mass per solid volume can be considered as a constant and the mass loss rate applied to decay volume stocks in the above equation. Assuming that dead wood provides no useful foraging opportunities to Ivory-billeds beyond 25% mass loss, given the species' preference for recently killed stems, the lifetime of dead wood utilization by Ivory-billeds is 3.6 years ( $t = \ln 0.75 / -0.08$ ). Thus, a new decay rate of 0.28 was calculated based on a mean residence time of utilization of 3.6 years,

$$\text{annual inputs} = \text{desired stock} \times 0.28.$$

Desired stock, whether in units of volume per hectare or stems of a specific size per hectare, can be determined as in Figure 3, based on inferred dead wood requirements of Ivory-billed pairs. For example, if a tract of 14,183 hectares—for instance, the area of the Pearl River Wildlife Management Area near Slidell, Louisiana, where a pair of Ivory-billeds was reported in 1999—were managed to provide adequate foraging sites for ten pairs of Ivory-billeds (1418 ha per pair), desired stocks must equal 22 30-cm dbh stems per hectare equivalent. Annual dead wood inputs must equal 2.9 m<sup>3</sup> per hectare ( $= ((14,908 \text{ m}^3 \times 10 \text{ pairs}) \times 0.28) / 14,183 \text{ hectares}$ ) or 6 30-cm dbh (0.48 m<sup>3</sup>) stems equivalent per hectare.

Desired annual inputs can be alternatively quantified by subtracting existing stock from desired stock. Existing dead wood stock and/or annual natural mortality can be estimated through periodic forest inventories, which should be designed to estimate

dead wood volumes associated both with snags and live stems. The balance of the total required, whether as stock or input, can be met by killing stems within the managed landscape and leaving them standing. These interventions need not be additional to an established regiment of management activities but could rather be scheduled as part of programmed thinning operations.

The availability of dead wood for cavity excavation and as a foraging substrate should be a critical management concern; however, other, as yet unidentified, factors may be influential in limiting woodpecker abundance (Welsh and Capen 1992), particularly where snag density is, apparently, no longer limiting (Morrison et al. 1987, Bunnell et al. 2002). While invertebrates associated with dead wood were clearly the most important food source, Ivory-billeds further supplemented their diet with seasonal fruits (Tanner 1942). Guidelines for minimum dead wood stocks and rotation ages should be only one component of a more comprehensive management program, which can evolve and be developed progressively with modern data on Ivory-billed Woodpecker ecology.

Clearly, more information is required to design reliable and effective management protocols. Further refinement of forest management prescriptions would require detailed site-specific information on the stand structures required by Ivory-billeds and the disturbance regimes which maintain them, especially at a landscape scale, given the characteristic heterogeneity of dead wood in forests. Where future research opportunities become possible, priority should be given to deriving guidelines for management. Outstanding considerations include comparative benefits of aggregated versus dispersed foraging to optimize the spacing of management-generated dead wood, quantitative recommendations for post-harvest retention of large-dimension live trees sufficient to maintain desired levels of natural mortality, and how to mesh Ivory-billed recovery and conservation with other forest management goals. However, given the anticipated unlikelihood of acquiring new and comprehensive information in a timely manner, the limited management-relevant existing knowledge can serve to develop and implement tentative prescriptions for adaptive management.

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# THE CHANGING SEASONS

## Seeing the Forest for the Trees

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### An Ornithological Parlor Game

What do the following records—let's refer to them as "Category L" records—have in common?

- 1 Manx Shearwater off Los Angeles, California
- 1000+ Turkey Vultures on Ohio Christmas Bird Counts
- 395 Bald Eagles along the Rappahannock River in Virginia
- 106 Sandhill Cranes on the Long Point, Ontario Christmas Bird Count
- 28 Eurasian Collared-Doves at Ballantine, Montana

Next, what do the following—we'll call them "Category S" records—have in common?

- 3 Roadside Hawks in the lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas
- 42 Northern Hawk Owls on the Sax-Zim, Minnesota, Christmas Bird Count
- 46 Red-headed Woodpeckers in New Jersey's Great Swamp
- 7 Townsend's Solitaires in New Brunswick
- 700+ Cedar Waxwings in and around San Salvador, El Salvador

Finally, what is the unifying theme for the following "Category Z" records?

- 1 Great Black-Hawk in Florida
- 1 Chuck-will's-widow in Ohio
- 1 White-striped Woodcreeper along the San Pedro River in far-northern Chihuahua
- 21 Northern Rough-winged Swallows in January in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
- 1 American Dipper in Dallas, Texas

### Collecting Stamps

Ernest Rutherford, discoverer of the atomic nucleus and purveyor of many a memorable one-liner, said, "All science is either physics or stamp collecting." And ever since Rutherford, biologists have been fighting that charge.

The basic argument of the geneticists, evolutionists, taxonomists, and others is that *we too* look for patterns and process, that *we too* seek theoretical unification, that *we too* can see the big picture.

What about birders and ornithologists? Can we make sense out of all of the avian complexity, diversity, and beauty that surrounds us? Can we discern the context, the commonalities, in big-picture phenomena such as status and distribution, range expansions and contractions, population increases and decreases, and the like? Or are we guilty of stamp collecting? Of focusing narrowly and meaninglessly on isolated phenomena, viz., rarities?

What's the fun of birding, one might ask, without that one-in-a-million rarity? Well, there's a flip side to the question. What's the fun of an enterprise in which 999,999 out of a million observations are merely mundane, mere filler? Besides, it is the "ordinary" birds that are, in aggregate, doing the most exciting, the most intriguing things. It is the ordinary birds that make field ornithology truly thrilling. And even the "rarities," it turns out, have their place, their context. To be sure, the analysis that follows is a far cry from the physicist's dream of total unification. But we birders and ornithologists oughtn't lose heart. There are thousands of us, amassing millions of observations every year. Together, we can begin to discern the big picture. Together, we can discover beauty, across large spatial and temporal scales.

### Category L

Perhaps the biggest myth of all is that, over the long haul, populations ought to be stable. That myth was "officially" debunked as early as Malthus and Darwin, but it persists. All populations have an inherent tendency toward natural *increase*. What goes up must come down, of course, and most populations of organisms exhibit sustained periods of *decline* as well. Sometimes, they even go extinct. In any event, long-term population stability is rare. That is a result borne out over and over again, both empirically and theoretically. Our expectation should be that *most* populations of North American birds are unstable and dynamic, increasing or decreasing.

How many records refer to Category L (for "Long-term") phenomena? Asampling follows.

At the top of the A.O.U. *Check-list*, Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks are increasing in the southern United States, evidenced this past winter by single-location counts of 28 in South Carolina, 255 in Florida, and 1000+ in a crawdad-and-rice complex in Louisiana.

Range shifts are typically reported as single-species phenomena, but there is no ecological principle that constrains such phenomena to the species level. Consider the case of the North American Anseriformes (waterfowl). Most species of Anserinae (geese and swans) are undergoing dramatic range expansions and population increases, whereas other anseriform subfamilies are not. To be sure, proliferating populations of Anserinae were widely noted throughout the continent during the winter of 2004–2005. Pink-footed Geese are increasing in the Palearctic, and three were noted this winter in Nova Scotia. Good counts of Greater White-fronted Goose included 2665 at Chautauqua National Wildlife Refuge, Illinois and 3500 at Reelfoot Lake on the Kentucky–Tennessee border. Farther west, smaller—but still higher-than-average—numbers were noted in Colorado, and a good-sized flock of 133 passed over Palo Alto, California. Rapidly growing populations of Snow Goose are of increasing concern to wildlife biologists in North America. This winter, there were records from Ontario and North Dakota, well to the north of the traditional wintering range of the species. Farther south, single-location tallies included 200,000 in Illinois, 250,000 in Missouri, 100,000 along the Tennessee–Kentucky border, and exactly 1,161,608 in Nebraska. Wintering Ross's Geese are on the increase, with notable counts this past winter of 147 along the Kentucky–Tennessee border and 3000 in Humphreys County, Mississippi. Far to the west, the species had another good winter in Oregon and Washington.

Barnacle Geese, many of which may be of wild—that is to say, Palearctic—provenance have been noted with increasing frequency in the mid-Atlantic region. This winter, there were reports from New Jersey, Maryland, Virginia, and Pennsylvania. On the other side of the continent, a Barnacle Goose in California triggered the usual question of "origin." Are populations of the Cackling Goose, recently elevated to full-species status, on the increase? It is gratifying that field ornithologists are tackling Cackling Goose identification head-



on; in time, we should have a good picture of population dynamics in this species. The distinctive *leucopareia* (Aleutian) race of the Cackling Goose has, in fact, been monitored for quite some time now, and the 5000 in Humboldt County, California, reflects recent gains for the population.

A mid-winter waterfowl inventory in Ontario netted an alarming 790 Mute Swans, and there were reports of 201 individuals distributed widely across Ohio; smaller numbers were noted south to Kentucky and Tennessee. Trumpeter Swans, continuing to increase, included 70 near St. Louis, Missouri, 58 across scattered locations in Nebraska, and 1515 near Clear Lake, Washington. Tundra Swans are wintering farther inland than in the past, evidenced by the 2139 on the Long Point, Ontario C.B.C. More than 1800 lingered into December in Ohio, 856 were counted along the Mississippi River in Illinois, and 857 made the Clinton, Iowa C.B.C. Smaller flocks wintered west to Kansas and Oklahoma, and the species was widely reported in small numbers in Ari-

zona and New Mexico.

Continuing a recent trend, Harlequin Ducks were in good numbers in eastern coastal Canada. Farther south along the coast, numbers in New York and New Jersey were rated as excellent. Erie County, Pennsylvania, had two, and there were reports from

multiple locations in each of the western Great Lakes states of Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota.

Wild Turkey is spreading into new (or previously occupied) haunts throughout North America. This winter, there was evidence of movement northward in Ontario and west-



In addition to northern owls and feeder finches, boreal forest and montane frugivores made southward and eastward movements that were extraordinary—if not quite “without precedent.” In the Great Plains—but less so in the Great Lakes or Northeast—Pine Grosbeaks (top, at Guymon, Texas County, Oklahoma 2 January 2005) and Bohemian Waxwings (above, below Fort Peck dam, Valley County, Montana 6 February 2005) launched irruptions that startled even veteran observers. The grosbeak was thought to be of the subspecies *leucura* rather than the closer Rocky Mountain *mantana*, perhaps a clue to the origin of this flight in Canada's boreal forests (a stray in the California desert in November 2004 may also have been *leucura*). Varied Thrushes (upper left, at New Glasgow, Prince Edward Island 30 January 2005) and Townsend's Solitaires (left, at Schooner Pond, Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia 7 February 2005), by contrast, were scattered from the Midwest through the East Coast and quite far south. All this wandering suggests perhaps a failure of fruit and seeds in these species' core ranges, a very productive breeding season, or, perhaps, both. Photographs by Steve Metz (top), Stephen J. Dinsmore (above), Beth Hoar (upper left), and Allan and Cathy Murrant (left).

ward in British Columbia. Farther south, the species is expanding into Santa Cruz County, California. There, as elsewhere in North America, Wild Turkey is being reported from heavily developed districts.

There were yet more West Coast records of Manx Shearwater this winter. Two off Westport, Washington, were the first winter sightings for the state. Singles in California were noted off Monterey and Los Angeles.

Wintering American White Pelicans are being reported from many locations in which the species was formerly scarce or absent. This winter, multiple individuals were noted in Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, and North Carolina. South Carolina's best single-location count was 477. Inland in the East, there were records from Ohio, Arkansas, and elsewhere. The mountain states got in on the action, too, with seven in Wyoming and several in southeastern Colorado. In the far West, there were multiple sightings from British Columbia, where the species had been unrecorded in winter. Finally, good numbers in El Salvador and Guatemala reflect recent wintertime increases in northern Central America.

Wintering vultures continue to push northward in increasing numbers. Black Vultures were reported in good numbers in Rhode Island and Massachusetts, and 100 were noted in Johnson County, Illinois. Wintering Turkey Vultures, too, are on the upswing; the top single-location count in Nova Scotia was 14, and two tarried in Québec. More than 1000 were tallied on Ohio Christmas Bird Counts. In New Mexico, where the species had not wintered in the past, at least 20 were reported from three locations.

There was good news, especially in eastern North America, on the Bald Eagle front. Selected highlights include about 500 from New York and New Jersey; 395 along the Rappahannock River in Virginia; and high counts of 1694 and 187 in Illinois and Indiana, respectively. Southward-spreading Golden Eagles were widely in evidence, with rebounding numbers in New York and New Jersey and encouraging numbers again reported from Maryland and Virginia. Numbers were considered good, too, in the western Great Lakes. There were reports, mainly of singles, from as far south as North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Kentucky, and Tennessee. Farther north, though, in New England, the number of reports was lower than usual. Two falcon species are trending in opposite directions in eastern North America. Dismally low American Kestrel counts came from New Jersey and Ontario; several recent studies have pointed to sharp declines in eastern North American populations of the species. On the flip side, increasing Merlins included 45 in New York and New Jersey. At least five birds were in Pennsylvania, at least 28 were seen in Ohio, and there were reports of singles from 11 Ken-

tucky-Tennessee counties.

Sandhill Crane is undergoing a rapid expansion of its eastern wintering range. Notable were reports from Maine, Connecticut, Massachusetts, and Maryland—far from the core wintering area. Impressive counts farther west included 106 on the Long Point, Ontario C.B.C.; double digits from various localities in Pennsylvania and Ohio; and 350 at Des Plaines, Illinois. In the core range, the Hiwassee, Tennessee C.B.C. turned in a fine count of 14,610.

The ongoing Lesser Black-backed Gull invasion of North America was evidenced by such high counts as 500+ in Broward County, Florida and 272 on three Bucks County, Pennsylvania C.B.C.s. At least 25 were noted on the Yucatán Peninsula, apparently a significant stronghold for the species in North America. Small numbers were very widely noted throughout the lower Mississippi River valley and into the southern Great Plains, and more than 20 were recorded in Colorado, where the species is now expected in small numbers. Farther west, two strayed to Utah and one each to British Columbia, Washington, and Sonora.

Doves, like geese, are faring well in North America. Band-tailed Pigeons are increasingly noted during the winter months in Colorado, with double-digit flocks recorded at two locales in the state this past season. Invading Eurasian Collared-Doves were noted as far north as Pennsylvania, Minnesota, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, Montana, and Oregon. Impressive counts included 18 in St. Genevieve County, Missouri, and 28 at Ballantine, Montana. Meanwhile, triple-digit counts were reported from various towns in southeastern Colorado and in New Mexico, as well as in and around Ejido San Pedro, Chihuahua. Two well-birded counties in California got their firsts, and there were records from the Yucatán Peninsula and from Costa Rica. An exception to the general rule of columbid good fortunes in North America is the Spotted Dove, which remains in drastic decline in southern California. White-winged Dove numbers are exploding in the core range of the species in the southwestern United States, and strays are increasingly noted. This winter, singles wandered to New Brunswick, Massachusetts, Maryland, Georgia, and Nebraska. South Carolina and North Carolina each posted two, and eight made their way to Florida. The species is increasing sharply in Colorado, with close to 100 documented there this winter. Mourning Doves are increasing in Hawaii, and the estimated 300 at Kealia were the highest ever by far for the state. Up to 4 Inca Doves were reported from Thibodaux, Louisiana, where the species is increasingly noted, and 10 made it to Johnston County, Oklahoma. There were multiple records from Colorado, too, where the species

is establishing a toehold. There was generally good news this winter for Common Ground-Dove. Singles wandered northward to Kentucky, Wisconsin, and Utah, and two were at Red Slough Wildlife Management Area, Oklahoma. A goodly 20 were noted at the Savannah Spoil Site, South Carolina, and news of a previously undetected population in Kern County, California, was welcome. In the Ruddy Ground-Dove department, Mississippi got its first, and two remained at Cottonwood Campground, Texas. At least eight were noted at two New Mexico locales, and numbers were higher than usual in Arizona. Up to 15 were observed near Calipatria, California, and two others were noted elsewhere in southern California.

Black Phoebes are wintering farther north than ever, with reports this past winter from Oklahoma, Colorado, and Washington. Meanwhile, the species continues to expand its range northward in Oregon, with two reports from northerly locations in that state.

The versatile and superb Common Raven is slowly but surely filling in the holes in its North American range. This season, there were reports from the eastern Piedmont of Virginia, plus word that the species is spreading south in both Ontario and Texas. Meanwhile, the species is faring well in the "extreme" environments with which it is typically associated; for example, a robust 1860 were counted in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories in early January.

In recent winters, Barn Swallows have been widespread in the Pacific Northwest. This past winter, interior British Columbia produced 12 at seven locations, and there were 118 along the British Columbia coast. Washington produced three interior records, and Oregon four. Meanwhile, triple digits were noted along the Washington coast. Farther south, 92 were detected moving northward along the northern California coast in December. It is still shocking to think of the Cave Swallow—considered a "mega" until about 10 years ago—as regular along the East Coast in early winter. There were 3 or 4 in New Jersey, double digits in coastal Virginia, and several inland in Maryland. Farther south, Cave Swallows were widespread in North Carolina and South Carolina.

Finally, Tufted Titmice continue to spread northward in southern Canada. Several were reported from western New Brunswick, and five made it to the Québec City region. Meanwhile, the species continues to invade Ontario.

### Category S

Peppered atop long-term population trends (often decreasing or increasing, sometimes holding steady) are short-term blips, burps, hiccups. Some are simply statistical "noise," arising from intrinsic random variation, inad-



equate sampling, or both. Others are biologically real phenomena, given rise to by weather events, food shortages, etc. They can last from weeks to years. What is the distinction between a short-term fluctuation of long duration versus a long-term trend of short duration? The breakpoint is essentially demographic: short-term fluctuations typically happen within a generation, whereas long-term trends usually span multiple generations. But there are many exceptions to the rule.

For our purposes, Category S (for "Short-term") phenomena can be viewed as playing out within a season or two. And there was no shortage of interesting Category S phenomena during the winter of 2004–2005.

Barrow's Goldeneyes made waves in the hot desert states. From New Mexico, eight individuals were present at four locations. At Glen Canyon Dam, Arizona, there were 59. And two in Baja California were the first confirmed record for Mexico.

Roadside Hawks were reported from three Texas counties. Intrinsic random variation? Or was there a link to some external factor? Unquestionably the latter, with the hawks being accompanied by a staggering number of individuals of other Mexican species that wander to Texas only occasionally. See the Texas regional report and the Photo Salon for details on the 2004–2005 Super Flight.

Northern Lapwings were widely scattered in eastern coastal North America, with singles noted in Newfoundland, Maine (unconfirmed), New York (unconfirmed), Maryland, Virginia (unconfirmed), and North Carolina.

Alcids penetrated far to the south along the East Coast. Common Murres were in better-than-usual numbers: 43 were noted at Rockport, Massachusetts and farther south, 7 were seen off Delaware, with singles to Virginia and even to South Carolina. The Thick-billed Murre invasion was even more impressive. Good numbers came in from Maine, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island. Scattered smaller numbers were recorded south to New York, New Jersey, and Delaware, and there were reports south all the way to North Carolina and South Carolina. Smaller numbers of Razorbills and Atlantic Puffins were noted well to the south of usual, too, with singles of both species as far south as Florida.

Northern owls staged a massive invasion southward, with the scene at Sax-Zim Bog near Duluth, Minnesota, attracting national media attention. Excellent numbers of owls were also noted across southern Canada and into central Alaska, and scattered smaller numbers were recorded from New York to Iowa. The Sax-Zim, Minnesota C.B.C. produced 42 Northern Hawk Owls, and 87 were banded in central Saskatchewan. Farther afield, 25 were reported from Québec—im-

pressive, but not on par with the approximately 200 there during the winter of 2000–2001. Much farther north, the species was scarce in the Yukon and Northwest Territories. One made it all the way to Oregon, the state's third. Great Gray Owls were likewise on the move. In Minnesota, several parties ran up single-day tallies of 200+. Approximately 600 were reported from Québec, and some 250 were noted in Simcoe County, Ontario alone. To the west, 74 were banded in central Saskatchewan, and two in North Dakota were that state's first since 1966. Farther east, though, only one was recorded in Canada's Atlantic provinces. Southward, three made it to Iowa. Some 150 *dead* Boreal Owls were noted in and around northeastern Minnesota. Elsewhere, 15 were noted south of the breeding range in Québec, several were reported from Ontario and southern Manitoba, five ranged south all the way to New York, and one in Iowa was a first for the state.

Red-headed Woodpeckers invaded the East Coast, with about 10 each in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia and about five in Prince Edward Island. Smaller but still above-average numbers were noted in the New England states. In New Jersey, the 46 in New Jersey's Great Swamp were remarkable. Good numbers were noted farther west, too; for example, 163 were tallied in Jackson County, Illinois. The farthest west of all was a stray to Utah, the second for the state. But numbers were much reduced in Kentucky and Tennessee, due perhaps to a regional hard mast failure. And was the mast failure, in turn, connected to the dispersal of birds elsewhere? Red-bellied Woodpecker, a species whose range has been slowly expanding for decades, surged northward this winter. At least 150 were noted in the Atlantic provinces, 39 in Québec, and at least 246 in Maine. Record-high counts were recorded on various Ontario Christmas Bird Counts, and birds were noted north of their usual haunts in Michigan, Wisconsin, and Minnesota. Downy Woodpeckers dispersed into the western lowlands. A *leucurus* ("Mountain") Downy Woodpecker was photographed on the Colorado plains, 14 were counted at low-elevation Farmington, New Mexico, and singles were noted at four lowland locales in Arizona.

*Time out!* It is not the case that tidy trends can be associated with every bird population. Case in point: Northern Shrikes this past winter. The flight into New England was "mixed," whereas numbers in New York and Virginia were considered good. Numbers were exceptional in Indiana and Illinois, normal in Iowa, and below average in Utah and Nevada.

In the fall of 2004, Blue Jays irrupted into the far west. Numbers dwindled in the ensuing months, but holdovers were nonetheless widely noted. The tally for the winter season was three in Utah, two in Nevada, 37 in Wash-

ington, 17 in Oregon, and one in California.

Townsend's Solitaires disperse eastward in small numbers every winter, and this past winter's flight was especially heavy. The major concentration, as expected, was in southeastern Canada, the northeastern United States, and the Great Lakes region. The final tally, which shows roughly diminishing numbers with increasing distance from the core range, was as follows: North Dakota 60, Minnesota 15, Iowa 10, Wisconsin 8, New Brunswick 7, Québec 7, Michigan 4, Nova Scotia 2, Ontario 2, and singles in Prince Edward Island, Newfoundland, Maine, Massachusetts, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania. Any time you have three Redwings in one season in North America, you're looking at an "invasion." This year, there were records from Newfoundland (the eighth for the province), from Pennsylvania (the state's first), and from Washington (also a first). And what do Alaska, the Bahamas, and the Yucatán Peninsula have in common? All of these places saw notable numbers of American Robins during the winter of 2004–2005. Double- and even triple-digit flocks were scattered across southern coastal Alaska, and at least five wintered inland all the way to Fairbanks. In the Bahamas and on the Yucatán Peninsula, single-digit flocks were widely noted. Varied Thrushes invaded much of the North American continent. Records piled up in the East and in Great Lakes regions, but there were strays all over. The numbers, greatest to the east of the core range and smaller farther away (and in the Southwest), tell the story: 26 in Minnesota, 8 in Wisconsin, 7 in both Ontario and North Dakota, 6 in Arizona, 4 in both Michigan and Massachusetts, 3 in Colorado, 2 in both Pennsylvania and Kansas, and singles in Newfoundland, Prince Edward Island, Québec, South Carolina, Ohio, Iowa, South Dakota, and Wyoming.

What are we to make of Bohemian Waxwing movements in the winter of 2004–2005? In some of their traditional wintertime hotspots—e.g., Newfoundland, upstate New York, and parts of New England—the flight was light. But numbers were good in northern Maine. And elsewhere, they were delightfully abundant. In the North, Bohemians were common and widely distributed in Ontario, and they were in good numbers in the prairie provinces. Working southward, up to 1200 were found in Duluth, Minnesota, some 5000 were registered in Pennington County, South Dakota, and more than 10,000 were reported in Colorado. Small numbers invaded the southern Great Plains, and a few strayed all the way to Texas and New Mexico, where there are few previous records.

The Cedar Waxwing story calls to mind the Red-headed Woodpecker situation. Numbers were decidedly low in central U.S. states such as Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky, and Tennessee.



But observers elsewhere saw many. From New Mexico to Québec and northern Brunswick, numbers were higher than usual. And the real news was from outside the United States. There were 11 in two flocks in the Bahamas, and Central America had its largest invasion ever. More than 700 swept into the San Salvador, El Salvador area, and birds were widely noted in our region as far southeast as Panamá. One wonders how far into the mountains of South America the species actually penetrated.

One of the more-hardy parulids, Pine Warbler was widely noted in northerly climes this winter. The flight into the Atlantic provinces was rated as excellent, highlighted by a cluster of four at Blacks Pond, Prince Edward Island. They were all over New England, too, where 30 were tallied. Elsewhere, seven stayed on in Ohio, five lingered in Illinois, three found their way to Kansas and two to Oklahoma, and one made it to New Mexico.

Harris's Sparrows enjoyed a banner season in the far West. Higher-than-usual numbers were reported from Washington and Alaska, and the 15 in California were above average. In the Great Basin states of Utah and Nevada, the flight was rated as exceptional. Scattered reports elsewhere included two in New Brunswick, one in Québec, two in New York, one in Florida, four in Ontario, and three in Michigan. But for the first time in five years, the species was not recorded in Illinois or Indiana, closer to the main wintering range of the species.

In much of North America, observers had their hands full with one or more species of irrupting finches. In a mini-dispersal of Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches, singles were reported from Québec, Ontario, Michigan, Minnesota, and South Dakota. The Pine Grosbeak flight called to mind that of the Bohemian Waxwing, with normal or below-normal numbers in the traditional northeastern hotspots but with impressive numbers elsewhere. For example, the flight was light in much of maritime Canada, northern New England, and New York. But numbers were good in the Dakotas, and small flocks wandered to the southern Great Plains, from which region the species had been essentially absent for 35 years. A slight incursion was detected in Colorado, and the flight in Arizona was the largest in memory. In the Pacific Northwest, birds wandered widely in British Columbia and Oregon. An extensive Purple Finch invasion surprised observers throughout much of North America. The flight in the Atlantic provinces was considered to be "perhaps unprecedented," and the incursion into Texas was the largest in 20 years. A strong presence was detected in Ohio, and excellent numbers were chalked up in Nebraska and Kansas. The flight in Col-

orado was exceptional, and one individual strayed to New Mexico.

### Category Z

In the Southern Great Plains regional report regional report, mention is twice made of "zooties." What, pray tell, is a zootie? Well, a Google search returns unedifying results. But the meaning is clear enough, in context: a zootie is a freak, a rarity, a marvelous addition to the stamp collection. (By the way, the Southern Great Plains report in this issue is notable for its depth of analysis, and the report is to be commended to all readers.) Surely, certain sightings are of zooties, of "Category Z" birds. They're just plain weird. It doesn't make sense to force them into a big-picture mosaic of long-term range shifts and population changes, of short-term irruptions, spikes, and crashes. Right? Maybe, maybe not. Consider the examples of the following five zooties.

A Great Black-Hawk in Miami-Dade County, Florida, prompts the obvious question: wild (zootie) or Exotic (er, *zooty*)? But it's not that easy. There have been sightings of the species in the area since the 1970s, and the status of the species in the state is unclear. South Florida—well populated, well birded, and supposedly well known—is surely the proving ground for the serious field ornithologist of the twenty-first century. Its vast avifauna of non-checklist entries is virtually undescribed, and this past winter's Great Black-Hawk is more cynosure than zootie.

What on earth are we to make of a December record of Chuck-will's-widow in Ohio? In the view of the regional editors Vic Fazio and Nick Pulcinella, the bird may have been a reverse migrant. Now, in the case of this particular confused caprimulgid, we'll probably never know. But a general knowledge of the reasons for vagrancy—reverse migration, mirror-image orientation, post-breeding *Wanderlust*, etc.—is of tremendous usefulness in the matter of understanding and interpreting dispersal.

Please read Héctor Gómez de Silva's Mexico regional report; the addition of this region is one of *North American Birds*' most exciting developments in recent years. In particular, please give thought to the record of a White-striped Woodcreeper, a Mexican endemic well out of range and out of habitat, in a riparian woodland in northern Chihuahua. If the bird had flown just 42 miles farther north along the San Pedro River, it would have made it to the United States, where it would have established itself as perhaps the most unexpected U. S. vagrant of all time. Imagine! A dendrocolaptid—just about as exotic, as tropical, as you can get—right here in the United States. And a Category Z zootie? Not necessarily. Was this woodcreeper's wandering part of a bigger picture? Was it connected somehow to the event in the Lower Rio Grande Valley? To the

Tufted Flycatchers in Arizona? To the Rufous-backed Robin in Utah? To the Great Kiskadee in New Mexico? To the hordes of Maroon-fronted Parrots drifting about in northern and central Mexico?

What was the context for the 21 Northern Rough-winged Swallows in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in early January? The species is a very early "spring" migrant, of course, frequently returning to the southern United States by early January. But 21 in Philadelphia in January are "without precedent"—that two-word cop-out that birders and ornithologists employ all too often. (To the credit of the regional editors, those two little words do *not* appear in their discussion of the swallows. It is safe to say, though, that someone, somewhere, in discussing this record, used that expression.) Indeed, there is considerable precedent for this sighting. For more than a decade, North American swallows have been doing all sorts of curious things in winter. Consider the examples of Barn Swallows in the Pacific Northwest and Cave Swallows in the mid-Atlantic states. And more generally, scores of bird species are wintering farther north than ever. The Philadelphia Rough-wingeds have plenty of broad context, if not necessarily within their species.

And what about the American Dipper that strayed to Dallas, Texas? Well, we know that montane and boreal forest birds wandered widely all over North America this past winter. Think of all the Townsend's Solitaires and Varied Thrushes, of all the Bohemian Waxwings and Pine Grosbeaks. There were more-local wanderings, too, for example, of Clark's Nutcrackers and Bushtits in the southern Great Plains, of Downy Woodpeckers and Red-breasted Nuthatches in the desert Southwest. Was the Dallas dipper truly a zootie, or was it part of a larger-scale dispersal involving many taxa? And how many other dippers went undetected? It is fair to say that few of us hunt for vagrant dippers (though not for fear of dipping...).

### Coda

The preceding analysis—touching on everything from burgeoning goose and dove populations to invading thrushes and finches to a very cool vagrant in northern Mexico—is all over the place. There is none of the unification that physicists claim and that biologists aspire to. But we birders and field ornithologists, these past several decades, have developed the pedagogical outlook for making sense out of the avian complexity around us. We have learned to connect the dots, to discern patterns of and reasons for population change. We have learned to ask the simplest, but most profound, of questions: Increasing or decreasing? Expanding or contracting? Short-term or long-term? Conceptual unification is sure to follow. ☺



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20 October-2 November 2005.

Contact: Neil Donaghy, Celtic Bird Tours, 84 Coity Road, Bridgend CF31 1JE, Wales, UK; telephone (+44) 01656 645709; cell (+44) 07971 983227; Birds@celtictours.org.uk; www.celticbirdtours.com.

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# EDITORS' NOTEBOOK

The theme of the current issue—"West of the Mississippi"—is a broad one, but it's intended almost as a burr under the saddle: the majority of our readership lives in cities east of the Mississippi River, and most of our articles come from our readership. We very much want to publish more articles on birds from that great expanse of the continent that lies west of the river—but in truth we still get few submissions from the West, especially the sparsely populated interior.

But when it rains, it pours. We set the theme of this issue two years ago, but in winter 2004, as we assembled our final roster of articles, we learned that there had been reports of an Ivory-billed Woodpecker in eastern Arkansas—barely west of the Mississippi, but over an hour's drive west of Memphis and so a contender for this issue, at least if the researchers laboring to document this bird were to be so kind as to send us an article.

They have. We present here not quite what anyone had hoped for—that tear-worthy, frame-filling photograph of a proud

*Campephilus principalis principalis* at its nest cavity—but a nonetheless candid compendium and chronology of sight reports of Ivory-billed Woodpecker, reports that are not covered in such depth elsewhere. The Arkansas experience has been one in extreme frustration, surely: compelling reports by competent observers but as of our press time, no picture-perfect photographic evidence for the birders and naturalists of the world to revel and bask in. Moreover, this skittish bird (or these birds: no more than a single has been seen at a time) has been difficult even to get a long look at, as the field notes of the fortunate few indicate.

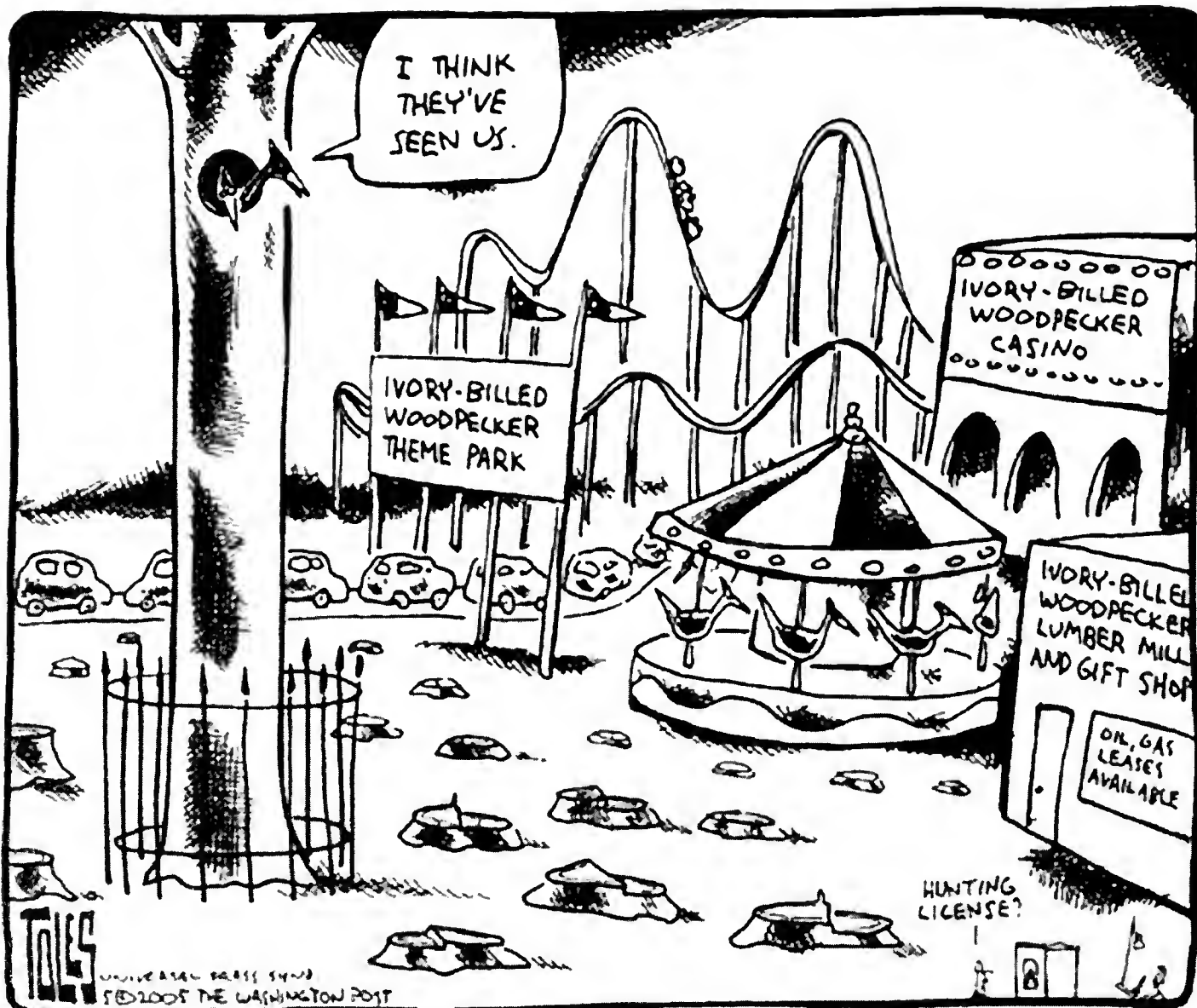
Do we overstep our mission in presenting such field notes—on a species whose very existence has been in real doubt for two generations? We have asked ourselves this question more than once. We have also asked ourselves the question in the negative: should the journal *decline* to publish sight records of rare, possibly extinct birds? In the present instance, because reliable, responsible people have advanced the case for the persistence of this species into the

twenty-first century, we have elected to provide them with space for publication of this extraordinary claim, partly in hopes that their reports will inspire birders to search for the species in places where it has been reported into the modern era—not just in eastern Arkansas, but in Mississippi, Texas, Louisiana, Florida, and South Carolina, too.

Happily, in the aftermath of the 28 April 2005 press conference announcing the Arkansas Ivory-billed, fears of several kinds have not been borne out. The scenario in which thousands of birders, among them rogues and rule-breakers, would descend on rural Arkansas, possibly frightening the bird(s), simply hasn't come to pass. The few birders who have made the pilgrimage to the Bayou de View have shown the utmost respect for the area and its inhabitants. Nor has the town of Brinkley, Arkansas become the circus-and-casino spectacle prognosticated by cartoonists and media pundits. Life goes on there much as before, though one can now get a "woodpecker haircut" and a special commemorative

cheesburger. A few government-approved tours are slated for the cooler months, for those curious to see this part of the world after the leaves and temperatures are down and the mosquitoes and cottonmouths have retired for the season. Despite some anxieties on all sides, then, it is safe to say that the birding community has conducted itself admirably thus far: no stampede, no outlaw birding. Just to be safe, the Cornell team offers a set of guidelines for ethical comportment at the end of that article.

For the present, as we wait for a breakthrough, some glimmer of insight into the secret life of this species, we must marvel at our own limitations: if indeed an Ivory-billed or two still hang on in the great bottomland swamps of the Mississippi Delta or elsewhere, we seem almost powerless to learn more





about its natural history, even to document one bird flawlessly. We will surely never find a needle in a haystack with only a handful of people looking for it: the threshold of detectability of a shy, possibly solitary bird seems vanishingly low. An army of eyes, trained eyes, would be needed to cover areas of promising-looking habitat thoroughly.

And so... we all might consider taking a trip to the southern swamps, just for a look around. If we ask ourselves honestly, as a birding community, "Have we done everything we could to follow up reports of this species, or to search tracts of optimal habitat that exist for it?"—we must surely answer that we have not. Perhaps because such habitats harbor few "specialty" species, almost no one birds in places that might harbor an Ivory-billed. And very, very few birders look specifically for the species. Their preferred habitats, though rich and beautiful, are admittedly difficult to bird, for a dozen reasons. But with modern technology—satellite photography, cell phones, GPS units, digital videocameras—it's far easier now to get into these habitats and to document sightings than it was a generation ago. As with any difficult search, whether for a missing person, a Mountain Lion in Appalachia, or a sunken pirate ship, there will be far fewer fresh trails than false leads. Will there be a heap of misidentified Pileated Woodpeckers reported as Ivory-billeds in years to come? There have been and will be. But our usual response to sight reports of truly rare birds—a shrug and a "show me a photo"—might need some modification at this point in history. We might need to take some sight records more seriously and follow up on them; what, after all, are the ethical implications of not taking any sight reports seriously?

Despite the stigma attached to searching for extinct species, at least in some circles, a few stalwart souls have continued to search for Ivory-billeds. Some were re-energized by the 2002 Zeiss-sponsored search of the Pearl River basin of Louisiana, following the report of two adults there on 1 April 1999. Two of the Arkansas search team, brothers Tim Spahr and Greg Spahr, who were also involved in the Pearl River acoustics study, were kind enough to send us notes on their (thus far fruitless but very interesting) searches for Ivory-billeds in western Florida, and we present these in the Special Section on the species, along with an intriguing short paper by David Shoch on the possibility of managing older forests for Ivory-billeds, no doubt to be a subject of much discussion at the federal and state levels in months to come. While the journal will not be in a habit of pursuing phantom birds wherever they appear, we are moved to present this material—which will seem Quixotic to some, heroic to others—in the faint but

palpable hope that one of our readers will take heart and go out and get that crisp photograph or videotape that causes our jaws to drop and our eyes to well up.

The other woodpeckers featured in this issue, the sapsuckers, are fortunately less camera-shy, but their identification is often anything but straightforward. The article by Robbins, Seibel, and Cicero treats a bird that was first identified as a male Red-naped Sapsucker on a Christmas Bird Count, then considered, after genetic analysis, to be a female Yellow-bellied. But correspondence with Canadian researchers working on hybrid zones in sapsuckers convinced the authors that the male parent of the bird must have been a Red-breasted Sapsucker—a hybrid combination rare anywhere, much less on the plains of Kansas! Mlodinow and Twei's article on Baja California Sur's first Yellow-bellied Sapsucker furthers the conversation, making important points regarding sapsucker identification based on molt timing. We are always happy to get articles on difficult subjects such as this one, and on "stealth" vagrants generally, such as the Harlan's Hawk in Baja California Sur, also a first state record in a fairly well-birded region.

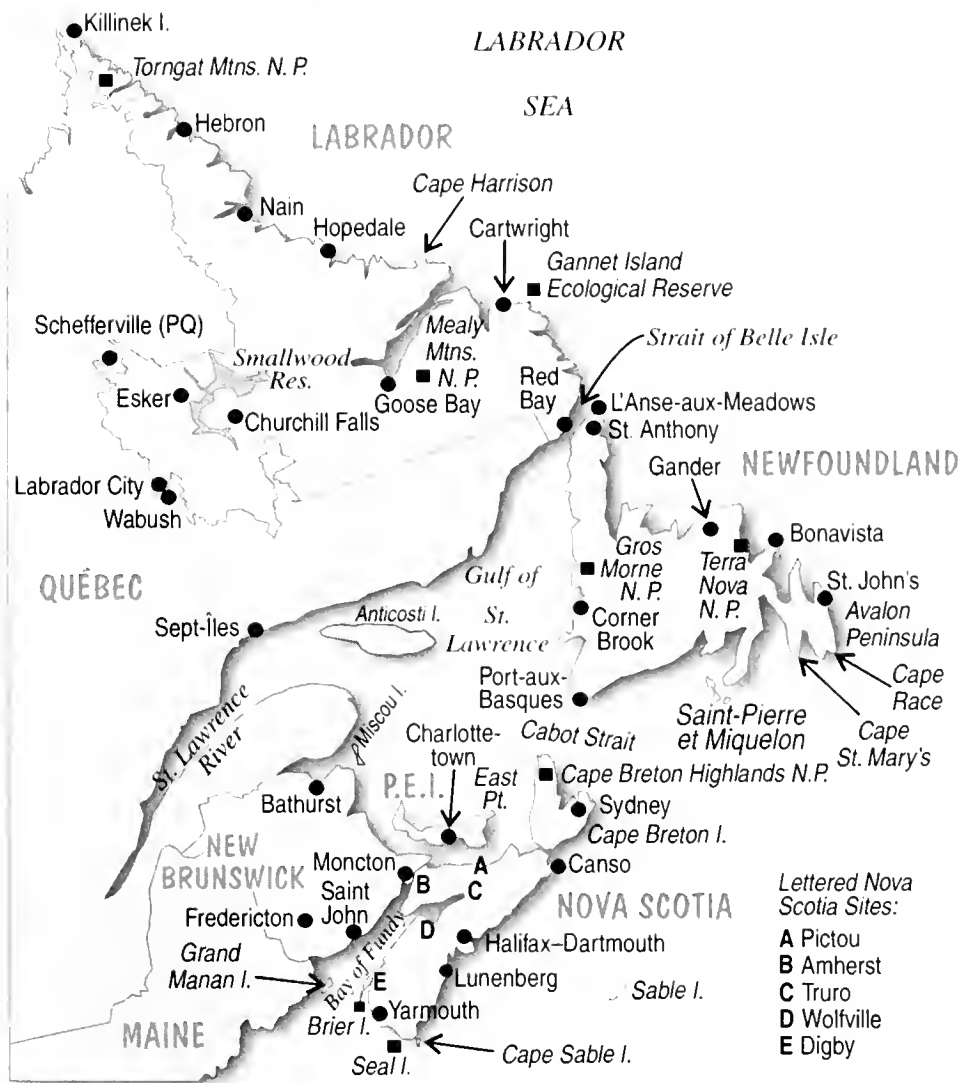
The balance of our articles in this issue treats not boreal breeders on the wintering grounds but northward movements of Aplomado Falcon and Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush. Meyer and Williams carefully document both the historical and the current status of the falcon in New Mexico, a species (at least in our youth!) thought to be so rare in the United States as to be nearly mythical. In the 1970s, birders considered the task of finding an Aplomado Falcon in the wilds of West Texas or New Mexico to border on the impossible, requiring many thousands of hours of searching in extreme heat, mostly in remote areas. Even if one could be found, people wondered, would it stay around to be seen? Then, beginning in the early 1990s, a steady increase in sight records led to photographic documentation and, ultimately, the discovery of several nests in the twenty-first century—a reoccupation of their U.S. range, at long last! It's clear that intense searching was required, but a team of hardworking folks pulled it off. We're very pleased to present their summary here. For fans of Texas birding, Lockwood and Bates deliver the details on that state's (and the United States') first Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush, a long-staying, singing male that appeared to need only a female to arrange a range expansion in that species! And we thank our many contributors of photographs for the Photo Salon: Mexico Comes To Texas, as well as the Salon on the invasion of northern owls in the winter season. Enjoy!

—Edward S. Brinkley  
—Matthew F. Sharp

## STANDARD ABBREVIATIONS AND SYMBOLS USED IN THE REGIONAL REPORTS

*	specimen collected
+	bird(s) seen through end of period
†	written details on file
A.F.B.	Air Force Base
acc.	accepted by records committee
A.R.C.	Avian Records Committee
b.	banded
B.B.S.	Breeding Bird Survey
B.O.	Bird Observatory
B.R.C.	Bird Records Committee
C.A.	Conservation Area
C.B.C.	Christmas Bird Count
C.P.	County Park
cm	centimeter(s)
Cr.	Creek
Ft.	Fort
G.C.	Golf Course
G.P.	Game Preserve
Hwy.	Highway
I. (Is.)	Island(s), Isle(s)
imm. (imms.)	immature(s)
Jct.	Junction
juv. (juvs.)	juv. [plumage]; juvenile(s)
km	kilometer(s)
L.	Lake
mm	millimeter(s)
m.ob.	many (or multiple) observers
Mt. (Mts.)	Mount/Mountain (Mountains)
N.A.	Nature Area, Natural Area
N.F.	National Forest
N.M.	National Monument
N.P.	National Park
N.S.	National Seashore
N.W.R.	National Wildlife Refuge
p.a.	pending acceptance
P.P.	Provincial Park
Pen.	Peninsula
ph.	photographed (by + initials)
Pt.	Point (not Port)
R.	River
R.A.	Recreation(al) Area
R.B.A.	Rare Bird Alert
R.P.	Regional Park
R.S.	Regional Shoreline
Res.	Reservoir
Rte.	Route
S.B.	State Beach
S.F.	State Forest
S.G.A.	State Game Area
S.P.	State Park
S.R.A.	State Recreation Area
S.R.	State Reserve
S.W.A.	State Wildlife Area
S.T.P.	Sewage Treatment Plant/Pond
subad. (subads.)	subadult(s)
Twp.	Township
v.r.	voice recording (by + initials)
vt.	videotape (by + initials)
W.A.	Wildlife Area
W.M.A.	Wildlife Management Area
W.T.P.	(Waste)water Treatment Plant/Pond

# Atlantic Provinces & St. Pierre et Miquelon



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Except for the traditional snowbelt areas of Newfoundland, Labrador, and northern New Brunswick, most of the Region experienced a somewhat tepid winter. Despite sporadic snowfalls that left up to a meter of snow over the southern part of the Region, near-drought conditions prevailed, and the (melted) total of precipitation for the period was generally less than 10 cm. Temperatures were normal or slightly above until late January, when a 10-day period of normal cold set in. February felt more like March, with very few storm events.

With the creation of the Prince Edward Island Birders listerv in 2004, Internet coverage of the four Atlantic provinces is now complete. Tallies were kept in each province, showing that approximately 40% of the birds on each cumulative list can be expected in any particular winter. Nova Scotia reported 192 species (BMy), New Brunswick 172 (SIT), Newfoundland 145 (Todd Boland), and Prince Edward Island 123 (DS).

Abbreviations: A.P. (Avalon Pen., NF), C.B.I. (Cape Breton I., NS), C.S.I. (Cape Sable I., NS), C.W.S. (Canadian Wildlife Service), G.M.I. (Grand Manan I., NB), H.R.M. (Halifax Regional Municipality), NF (insular Newfoundland), PEI (Prince Edward I.), SPM (St. Pierre et Miquelon, France).

### LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

A Pacific Loon at St. Brides, NF 18 Dec represented only the 2nd record for the province (Paul Linegar, Jytte Selnø). Five

single Pied-billed Grebes were reported on salt water in Nova Scotia between 1 Dec and 5 Jan. Horned Grebes seem to have arrived en masse in Nova Scotia in early Dec, with 200 at The Hawk, C.S.I. 1 Dec (MN) and 300 along the w. side of the Aspatogan Pen., H.R.M. 3 Dec (Don MacNeil). The highest counts of Red-necked Grebe were 124 at C.S.I. 18 Dec (C.B.C.), 145 on the G.M.I., NB C.B.C. 4 Jan, and 68 off Cape Miquelon, SPM 2 Feb (RE). Where else but Nova Scotia could Northern Gannet become road kill? A close examination of 13 bird carcasses found on the Canso Causeway, Guysborough/Inverness, NS turned up at least 3 on 7 Dec (Peter Hope).

The only American Bittern reported was found on the Sackville, NB C.B.C. 18 Dec. An exhausted Great Blue Heron was captured in St. Pierre, SPM 24 Dec, fed for a few days, and released (Patrick Boez). Single Great Egrets were found at G.M.I. 3 Dec (Jackie Foote), Eel Brook, Yarmouth, NS 5 Dec (MN), and C.S.I. 18 Dec (MN), and 2 were at Eel Brook 11 Dec, with one still there 28 Dec (Paul Gould). A Snowy Egret at Belvedere Pond, Charlottetown, PEI 4-16 Dec was most unusual and provided a first winter record for the province (DO, DS). An ad. Little Blue Heron was present at the Port Clyde Golf Course, Shelburne, NS 4-12 Dec (Sandy Hiltz, MN).

Three Pink-footed Geese in Pictou Harbour, NS 13 Feb+ (Ken McKenna et al.) were the first documented for the province and drew birders from as far afield as Ontario and New York. The same three birds were present 9-28 Jan at nearby Cumberland, Queens, PEI but misidentified as Greater White-fronted Geese until re-examination of photographs taken during their stay (DO). Spring migrant Brant built up quickly late in the period at C.S.I., with an estimated 3000 on 28 Feb (MN). Gadwall inexplicably favor Prince Edward Island in winter over other parts of the Region, with a high of about 30 at Mayfield, Queens (Beth Hoar). Up to 40 Northern Pintails were present at Hardings Creek, near Clinton, Queens, PEI in Feb (LH). The main landfalls for Eurasian Wigeon in the Region appear to be St. John's, NF and Glace Bay, C.B.I., with a high of 8 reported wintering in the former (BMT) and 11 at Beacon St. Dam in the latter 5 Dec (CM, AM), where there were also 76 American Wigeons. Another good count of American Wigeon was 75 at Pier 9, Halifax harbor 6 Dec (Darrell Adams). The only Canvasback to come to light was a drake at Courtney Bay, Saint John, NB on 6 Feb+ (GB). Ring-necked Ducks are quite rare in winter in New Brunswick, but there were 3 at Saint John 18 Feb (Tracey Dean). Seven male and 2 female Tufted Ducks wintered in St. John's (BMT), while single Tufted Duck x Greater

Scaup hybrids were found at New Harbour, Guysborough, NS 2 Jan (Fulton Lavender, Clarence Stevens) and at West River, Pictou, NS 15 Feb (IAM, EMi, BMy).

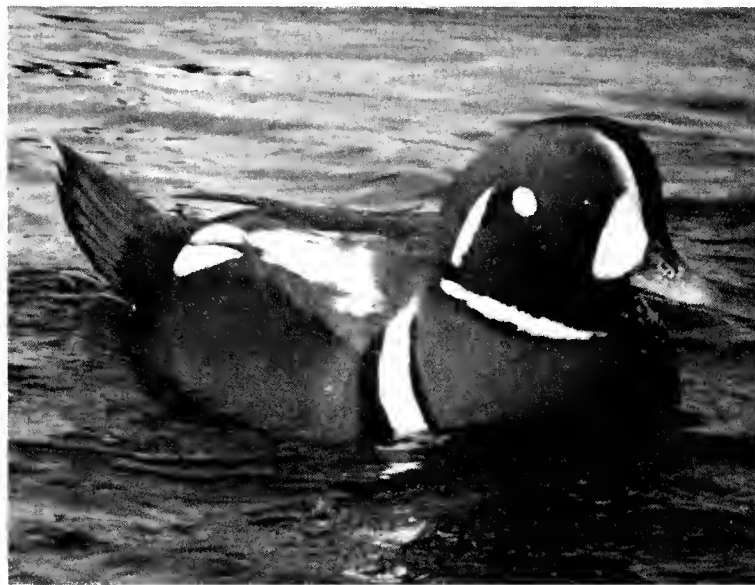
The high count of Greater Scaup came, as usual, from Pictou Harbour, NS, with 4744 on the C.B.C. 1 Jan. Reports from apparently new wintering areas include 72 in a salt pond at Miquelon, SPM in only their 3rd winter there (RE) and 42 on the Dalhousie, NB C.B.C. 2 Jan. The high count of Lesser Scaup was 48 around a sewer outfall in Dartmouth harbor, NS 16 Jan (EMi). King Eider is rarely found off the e. coast of New Brunswick in winter, so a drake at Cape Tormentine 9 Jan–2 Feb was notable (Norman Belliveau). A King Eider × Common Eider hybrid off St. Andrews, NB 29 Jan (GB) was apparently returning for its 3rd winter. Common Eiders numbered about 4000 sw. of St. Pierre, SPM in Jan and Feb, the largest count reported (RE). Harlequin Duck fortunes continue to improve in the Region. Surveys for the species by the C.W.S. found 115 around Digby Neck, NS 9 Feb and 100 in Shad Bay, H.R.M. 18 Feb. Another really good concentration of 179 was found on the Cape St. Marys, NF C.B.C. 18 Dec. White-winged Scoter is not known to winter in large numbers in the Region, so 600 off the Isthmus of Miquelon, SPM 2 Feb (Frédéric Disnard) was a notable tally. Numbers of Long-tailed Duck seemed to be generally depressed, perhaps because of terribly backward weather in the High Arctic in summer 2004. A total of 416 Bufflehead on the St. Andrews, NB C.B.C. 18 Dec was by far the largest Regional gathering. A drake Common Goldeneye × Barrow's Goldeneye hybrid was a good find at Cardigan Bridge, PEI 12 Jan (DO). The highest total reported of Hooded Mergansers was 122 on the Lunenburg, NS C.B.C. 2 Jan; Common Mergansers were most common in Pictou Harbour, NS, with 1337 tallied on the C.B.C. there 1 Jan. Good concentrations of Red-breasted Merganser—325 and 811—were found on the G.M.I., NB C.B.C. 4 Jan and at Pictou Harbour on the C.B.C. 1 Jan, respectively.

## VULTURES THROUGH TERNS

A Black Vulture was present at an undisclosed location in the H.R.M. 6–9 Dec (*vide* BMy), while another was in the vicinity of Canning, Kings, NS 28 Jan–26 Feb (Richard Stern et al.). High counts of Turkey Vulture in Nova Scotia were 14 on the Brier Island C.B.C. 14 Dec and 8 at Chebogue, Yarmouth 10 Jan (MN), the latter attracted by a homeowner who puts seal carcasses out every winter especially for them. Eight were still at Brier I. 13 Jan (June Swift). Cooper's Hawk

can no longer be considered unusual in winter in New Brunswick, owing to its increasing numbers. One at St. Leonard, Madawaska (RLP) was back for its 3rd winter, with other singles found during C.B.C.s in mid-to late Dec at St. Stephen, Kouchibouguac N.P., Fredericton, and Edmundston. Other singles were at Campbellton 12 Feb (Margaret Doyle) and Memramcook 26 Feb (Jules Cormier).

An imm. dark-morph Gyrfalcon wintered in St. John's, NF (as did one last winter), and there were sightings of 3 others on the A.P.



Harlequin Ducks are rare but annual in Prince Edward Island in winter, where they frequent fast-flowing water (usually under bridges) at the mouths of rivers and streams. This approachable drake was present throughout the period at Cardigan Bridge (here 29 January 2005). Photograph by Dwaine Oakley.

(BMt). A gray morph on the Isthmus of Miquelon, SPM 22 Feb was a first for long-time resident Etcheberry and only the 4th record for the islands. Two were reported by reliable observers during the Saint John, NB C.B.C. 28 Dec. Single dark morphs were at Brier I., NS 13–19 Dec (EMi) and Bayview, Queens, PEI 15 Jan (DS, DO). Eight reports of Peregrine Falcon came from Nova Scotia, four from St. Pierre (RE), and a like number from New Brunswick. A Sora walking on a lawn at Renew, NF 5–7 Jan provided the only Regional report of the species this season (BMt et al.).

A Northern Lapwing found freshly dead on the side of the road 11 Dec near Ship Cove, Great Northern Pen., NF was preserved (*vide* BMt). A carefully identified Semipalmated Plover was present at Crystal Crescent Beach, H.R.M. 1–15 Jan (HT, IAM). A Killdeer was in St. Pierre, SPM 22 Dec–11 Jan (TV et al.). A late Lesser Yellowlegs was at The Guzzle, C.S.I. 8–17 Dec (MN), and a Ruddy Turnstone on the Miscou I., NB C.B.C. 18 Dec was also tardy—but 5 at Tracadie Bay, Queens, PEI 16 Jan were even more so. The sheltered bay was still unfrozen, as was a narrow verge along the shore where they were feeding. Twenty Red Knots on the Miquelon C.B.C. 18 Dec provided the Regional high count. A Western

Sandpiper was reported at C.S.I. 31 Dec, along with 3 White-rumped Sandpipers 20 Dec–30 Jan (MN). A Purple Sandpiper in mostly ice-bound Charlottetown harbor, PEI 29 Dec (DO) was quite a novelty there. An imm. Long-billed Dowitcher at Conrad's Beach, H.R.M. 2–9 Jan (Joan Czapyly et al.) was carefully identified.

Black-headed Gulls were in good numbers, with the highest counts being 108 on the St. John's, NF C.B.C. 26 Dec, 148 on the Halifax–Dartmouth, NS C.B.C. 18 Dec, and 85 at nearby Threc Fathom Harbour 9 Jan (IAM). A total of 30 found on the Eastport, Maine/Campobello I., NB C.B.C. 26 Dec frequented both sides of the international border and furnished a record number for New Brunswick at any season. A tally of 1014 Bonaparte's Gull on the same C.B.C. was typical of recent Dec counts in the Passamaquoddy Bay area. Another good early winter count was 1000+ at Ogden's Pond, Antigonish, NS 2 Dec (RLA). As birders become better informed, reports of Mew (Common) Gull have increased. Five were recorded in Newfoundland, four in Nova Scotia, one at St. Pierre, SPM 2–23 Jan (Pascal Asselin), one at Bathurst, NB 17 Dec (RG), and one at Charlottetown, PEI 31 Dec (DO). An ad. or near-ad. Glaucous-winged Gull in St. John's, NF 24 Feb–6 Mar (BMt

et al.) provided a first record (or even report) for the Atlantic coast of North America; however, there are apparently single records from both Morocco and the Canary Islands. Iceland Gull was especially common in the lower Bay of Fundy during the winter, with a record 827 on the Blacks Harbour, NB C.B.C. 19 Dec. Thayer's Gull sightings are also on the rise. Documented reports included an imm. at Brier I., NS 14 Dec (EMi) and single ads. on the Halifax–Dartmouth C.B.C. 18 Dec; at Glace Bay, C.B.I. 14–15 Feb (CM, AM); at Lunenburg, NS 18 Feb (BF); and at Charlottetown, PEI 29 Dec+ (DO). An ad. Yellow-legged Gull returned to St. John's, NF for its 3rd consecutive winter 1 Jan–28 Feb (BMt). An imm. Ivory Gull was at St. Thomas, Kent, NB 22–28 Dec (LEC). Nova Scotia had 3, all imms.: a long-staying bird at Dartmouth 5 Jan–11 Feb (Bernard Burke et al.), another at Chcbucto Head, H.R.M. 16 Jan (A. & H. Hunter), and the last at Chcbogue Point, Yarmouth 6 Feb (Phil Taylor). None were reported from NF. This species bears watching in future, as breeding success in the High Arctic in recent years is said to have been unusually poor. The only tern reported during the period was an ad. Forster's Tern 4 Feb at Lockeport, Shelburne, NS (Donna Crosby).



**SA** Not all owl invasions are pleasant. A Great Horned Owl at Labrador City, Labrador tried to carry off a tiny dog being walked at dusk on a leash 21 Dec (*fide* Gordon Parsons), but the owner was able to rescue the dog. Another attack, around 5–6 Feb, is best described by GP: "This past weekend in Goose Bay (Labrador), Barry Compton was attacked by a Great Horned Owl. He was at a cabin at night and went out to take a leak, when something hit him hard on the head and knocked him off balance; recovering, he saw it was an owl. He reached up and felt blood, so he knew he had been cut. He got up and went back inside where he told his brother. They came out and Barry went to the tree to show where he had been attacked—when he got hit in the face again, with the owl this time digging the talons in quite deeply. Barry hit the ground and got the owl under his shoulder and dispatched it. At the hospital, he received seven stitches for three deep talon cuts in his ear, jawline, and head." The victim was apparently a conservation officer—and likely wearing a fur hat (but this could not be confirmed).

## DOVES THROUGH FLYCATCHERS

A White-winged Dove at Pointe-Verte, Gloucester, NB 4–30 Dec (RG) gradually weakened and died on the last date; another was at nearby Lamèque, NB 23 Dec–9 Jan (Jude Larocque).

It was said to be a "poorish" year for Snowy Owl in Newfoundland (BMT) but not so bad in the Maritime provinces otherwise. Multiple sightings included 3 at Cape Light, C.S.I. 16 Dec (JN); 5 on the Miscou I., NB C.B.C. 18 Dec; 3 at St. Pierre, SPM 9 Jan (TV); and 4 at C.S.I. in late Feb (MN). One picked up dead at Ebenezer, PEI 10 Dec had starved (*fide* EMA). All reports of Northern Hawk Owl came from New Brunswick, mostly in the north (about 10); the southernmost was reported at Lower Jemseg, Queens 24 Feb (Pierre Champigny). One Long-eared Owl was found roosting by day in the middle of Saint John, NB in early Jan (*fide* JGW), while 2 were present at Lower Canard, Kings, NS 21 Feb (BF). Good concentrations of Short-eared Owl were 5 at Cape Light, C.S.I. 18 Dec (MN); 4 at Grand Pré, Kings, NS 2 Jan (BF); 2 at Mahoneys Beach, Antigonish, NS 10 Jan (*fide* RLA); and a roost of 11 at Grand Pré 13 Feb (BF). Boreal Owls began to call on territory at Lamèque, NB 22 Feb (Rose-Aline Chiasson). Despite an immense invasion in Québec, only one Great Gray Owl turned up: at Point la Nim, near Dalhousie, NB 31 Jan–3 Mar (Mike Lushington).

Red-bellied Woodpeckers invaded the Region in unprecedented numbers beginning mid-Oct and appeared to be still arriving in Dec. The minimum number of individuals reported reliably in each province is as follows: 61 in Nova Scotia (*fide* IAM), 69 in New Brunswick (*fide* JGW), 15 in Prince Edward Island (*fide* DS), and 2 in Newfoundland (*fide* BMT), the latter only the province's 3rd and 4th records (at Corner Brook and Clarendville). Most were concentrated in mainland Nova Scotia and the s. half of New Brunswick, with lesser but significant numbers in C.B.I. and n. New Brunswick. Red-headed Woodpecker also had a good flight, but it paled in comparison to the Red-bellieds, with ca. 10 each in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia and 5 on Prince Edward Island. Single Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were

at Masons Beach, Lunenburg, NS 4 Jan (JH) and at Hantsport, NS 23–28 Feb (Marion Fulton). An Eastern Phoebe was found at Starrs Point, Kings, NS 18 Dec on the Wolfville C.B.C., while a Say's Phoebe was present on the Mactaquac, York, NB C.B.C. 1 Jan (Bev Schneider).

## SWALLOWS THROUGH SPARROWS

A Tree Swallow at Machias Seal I., NB 13–14 Dec (Ralph Eldridge) was reported to be in good condition. Tufted Titmouse now occurs annually in w. New Brunswick, and breeding is anticipated soon. One was at Bear I., York, near Nackawick in early Dec (*fide* Don Gibson); one was at St. Andrews



Present at the same location as the Harlequin Duck on the previous page was this drake Barrow's Goldeneye × Common Goldeneye hybrid (here 29 January 2005, right), a first record of this combination for the province returning here for its third winter.

Photograph by Dwaine Oakley.

14–26 Dec (Nancy Perry); and another was at Grand Bay, Kings 8 Jan+ (Jim & Betty Evans). Red-breasted Nuthatch occurred in above-average numbers in New Brunswick (DSC), while 10 on the Miquelon C.B.C. 18 Dec was described as a record high for the count. White-breasted Nuthatch was well reported in both New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Single Carolina Wrens popped up 3 Dec at St. Leonard, NB (Marcelle Godbout) and Sackville, NB 17 Dec–28 Feb (Kathy Popma). The only Marsh Wrens were singles found at Wolfville, NS 4–18 Dec (AMe) and on the Amherst, NS C.B.C. 20 Dec. Five Ruby-crowned Kinglets on the Brier I., NS C.B.C. 14 Dec was an unusually high number for one location, while one on the Petit-Rocher, Gloucester, NB C.B.C. 2 Jan was particularly far north. The only Blue-gray

Gnatcatcher reported was at Broad Cove, Lunenburg, NS until 7 Dec (Sylvia Fullerton). An Eastern Bluebird was a local novelty at Douglastown, Northumberland, NB 2 Dec (Nan Johnson).

Seven reports of Townsend's Solitaire from New Brunswick was without precedent: Petite Lamèque, Gloucester 16 Dec (Jacques Guignard); Caissie Cape, Kent 23 Dec (Roger LeBlanc); Scotchtown, Queens 30 Dec (Margie Pacey); Saint-Joseph-de-Madawaska 5 Feb (Eileen Pike, J. Denys Bourque); Lamèque, Gloucester 6 Feb (Gérard Benoit); Cocagne, Kent 11–12 Feb (LEC); and Bertrand, Gloucester 25 Feb–5 Mar (*fide* Rosita Lanteigne). Elsewhere in the Region, singles were found at Basin Head, PEI 18 Dec (VL); Sand Lake, C.B.I. 8–14 Feb (CM, AM); Baddeck Inlet, C.B.I. Jan–7 Mar (Jack & Eileen MacKillop); while one at St. John's, NF 2 Feb–Mar was the province's 5th (*fide* BMT). A Veery photographed near Liverpool, Queens, NS 28 Jan (Christopher Clark) was a first post-Dec record for the province. A Redwing at Kelligrews, NF 6 Jan (Dave Brown et al.) was probably the same one seen 5 km away 3–5 Feb at Topsail (Kim Whitfield) and the 8th

for Newfoundland. A Varied Thrush at New Glasgow, PEI 30 Jan (BH) was a provincial first; the only other report came from Long Pond, Conception Bay, NF 30 Jan+ (Graham Peddle), the 3rd for Newfoundland.

Bohemian Waxwing deviated from its pattern of previous winters by showing up first in n. New Brunswick, e.g., 950 at St. Leonard 25 Nov (RLP), 700 at Caraquet 17 Dec (SIT), and ca. 1000 at Buctouche 21 Jan (Stella

LeBlanc). By the end of the period, flocks of under 200 were being found in Prince Edward Island and se. New Brunswick, while Nova Scotia's flocks were usually 50 or fewer, excepting 150+ at Canso, NS 3 Jan (Ethan Hunter). In Newfoundland, where the species has usually shown up first in large numbers in recent winters, it was considered a "very light" flight (BMT). Cedar Waxwing was found in above-average numbers in n. New Brunswick during C.B.C.s (DSC), e.g., 98 at Lamèque 26 Dec, and outnumbered Bohemians in mainland Nova Scotia throughout the season, with a peak of 100+ at Wolfville 21–22 Feb (Judy Tufts).

Two Nashville Warblers were at Tallahassee School, H.R.M. 5 Dec (AMe), one was at Rothesay, Saint John, NB 10 Dec (Paul Mansz), and one was at C.S.I. 17 Dec (JN). A

Northern Parula was at Bisset Lake, H.R.M. 18 Dec (Terry Paquet); another came to a feeder at Hampton, NB early Dec–5 Jan (Margaret Churchill). A Magnolia Warbler was found 10 Dec at Port Williams, Kings, NS (BF, AM). An Audubon's Warbler was discovered at Bear River, Digby, NS 31 Jan (Bob Buckland-Nicks). At isolated and enchanted Sable I., NS 40 Yellow-rumped Warblers were found wintering 20–23 Dec (Zoe Lucas). A Black-throated Green Warbler was at White Point Beach, Lunenburg, NS 18 Dec (JH). Three Yellow-throated Warblers came to light in Nova Scotia: an *albilora* at Point Pleasant Park, H.R.M. 7 Dec (Andy Horn); one not identified to subspecies at Liverpool 10–14 Dec (*vide* JH); and a *dominica* 19 Dec at North Sydney, C.B.I. (Lynn MacLean). The only other report was of one coming to a feeder at Renew, NF 11–24 Jan (*vide* BMt). Pine Warbler had an excellent fall flight into the Region, such that 4 could be found away from feeders at Black Pond, Kings, PEI 17 Dec (VL). A Blackpoll Warbler was reported at C.S.I. on the C.B.C. 18 Dec.

Eastern Towhee also had a good fall flight into the Region, with at least 10 found at feeders in both New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, and perhaps 5 in Prince Edward Island. In Newfoundland, an “amazing” 4 singles at feeders on the ne. A.P. was unusual; one per winter is the average (BMt). A Vesper Sparrow was at C.S.I. 9 Dec (MN), and another was at a Hebron, Yarmouth, NS feeder 12 Feb (June Graves). The only Lark Sparrow reported was at Canso 3 Dec (Tom Kavanaugh). Away from the s. shore of Nova Scotia, Ipswich Sparrows were found inland at Port Williams, Kings, NS 22 Jan (George Forsythe) and, most surprisingly, at Fredericton, NB 19 Dec on the C.B.C. A Seaside Sparrow was reported at C.S.I. 9 Dec (MN). Two separate Harris's Sparrows were reported at feeders within a few miles of each other in far ne. New Brunswick: an imm. at Caraquet 12 Dec–21 Jan (Réjean Laforge) and an ad. at Shippagan 31 Jan–3 Apr (Lucille Degrâce). An ad. Golden-crowned Sparrow at St. George, NB 26 Dec–Apr was only the province's 2nd (Ralph Eldridge). Single Oregon Juncos were carefully identified males at Fredericton, NB 12 Dec+ (Ron Wilson) and Oyster Pond, H.R.M. 22 Jan+ (Lucas Berrigan). The largest flocks of Lapland Longspur in the Region are traditionally found in Prince Edward Island, such as 100+ at Sherbrooke, Prince 30 Jan (LH).

## GROSBEAKS THROUGH FINCHES

Imm. male Rose-breasted Grosbeaks faithful-

ly attended feeders at Lower Prince William, York, NB 13 Dec+ (Wayne Williams); at Sussex, NB Dec–22 Jan+ (David Hughes); and at Wolfville, NS 16 Dec+ (Bill Thexton). Northern Cardinal is consolidating its range well in parts of s. New Brunswick, such that 28 could be found on the Hammond River–Hampton C.B.C. 2 Jan. The only Indigo Bunting that came to light was an imm. male at Albert Bridge, C.B.I. 1–2 Jan (Susann Myers). In contrast to recent winters, some large flocks of Red-winged Blackbirds (mostly imms.) were found in Nova Scotia: 70 at Italy Cross, Lunenburg 30 Dec (JH); 40 at Centreville, Kings 18 Jan (*vide* Sherman Williams); and 100+ at Branch LaHave near Bridgewater 22 Jan (*vide* JH). Eastern Meadowlark was in



Only the second Golden-crowned Sparrow ever reported in New Brunswick, this obliging adult was first discovered coming to feeders in St. George on 26 December 2004 (here 8 January 2005), where it stayed through 4 May. Photograph by Alain Clavette.

short supply, with only one found in the Region, at a Mount Hebert, PEI feeder 20 Jan+ (Lloyd Evans). New Brunswick's 6th Western Meadowlark was a long-staying bird at a feeder near Neguac, Northumberland from early Dec into Apr (Alphonse Thibodeau, David MacLeod). The only Yellow-headed Blackbird was an imm. male 13 Jan near Cornwall, PEI (Charlene Felker).

Pine Grosbeak was found in above-average numbers on New Brunswick C.B.C.s in the n. of the province (DSC), such as 297 at Ste-Anne-de-Madawaska 16 Dec. Numbers increased in s. New Brunswick and n. Nova Scotia late in the period, with flocks of generally fewer than 10 birds reported. Numbers in Newfoundland were reported as “normal” (BMt), while Prince Edward Island had flocks of up to 50 birds. Purple Finch occurred throughout the Region in truly astonishing and perhaps unprecedented numbers, being described as “abundant” everywhere. It seems that most of them did not even bother to leave after the breeding season, due to excellent cone crops on both White Spruce and Red Spruce. To be sure, many came to feeders (100+ reported at some), but many more obviously did not. At the present e. edge of their breeding range in the Region, 18 House Finches were recorded

on the Buctouche, NB C.B.C. 28 Dec.

Red Crossbill was described as above average only in n. New Brunswick, with 22 on the Caraquet C.B.C. 19 Dec. White-winged Crossbill was “very abundant” in Newfoundland and started singing in late Feb, indicating nesting was imminent (BMt). Elsewhere they were simply very common to abundant, examples being 330 on the St. Paul, Kent, NB C.B.C. 2 Jan and 500+ at Dollar Lake P.P., H.R.M. 15 Dec (HT). Common Redpoll was common only in the n. reaches of New Brunswick and throughout Newfoundland, with a maximum of 577 found on the Edmundston, NB C.B.C. 18 Dec. It was late in the period before small numbers present there all winter began to increase in

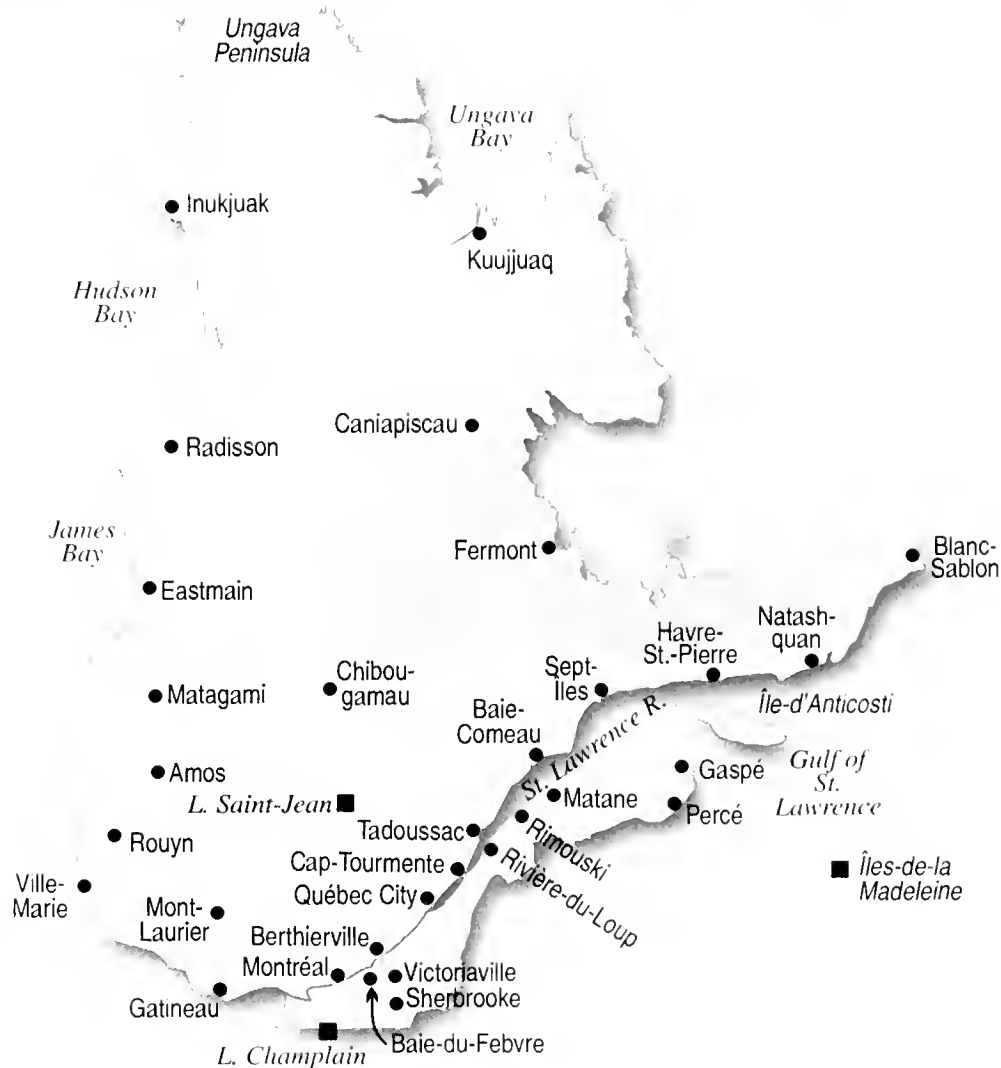
se. New Brunswick and mainland Nova Scotia. Only a single Hoary Redpoll surfaced, on the aforementioned C.B.C. Pine Siskin was “abundant” in Newfoundland, in average numbers in n. New Brunswick, but below average in the south. Best total for Nova Scotia was 200+ at Dollar Lake P.P. 15 Dec (HT), but that was the exception, with generally only a few present at feeders. American Goldfinch was very common throughout the Region, even in Newfoundland, where they are relatively recent additions to the regular avifauna. Evening

Grosbeak, whose fortunes have been faltering of late, was described as “fairly common” in Newfoundland. In Nova Scotia, it was most common on C.B.I., where about 125 were found at North River Bridge 14–15 Jan (Bethsheila Kent). Three C.B.C.s in New Brunswick recorded in excess of 300, but numbers were still described as below average in the south and only average in the north (DSC).

**Corrigendum:** All references to Fish Crow in Nova Scotia in the previous winter season report should be deleted, due to insufficient sighting details.

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# Québec



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Most of Québec experienced a colder-than-normal winter except for the densely populated regions of the south, where the temperature was normal and precipitation levels were generally 20% lower than normal. It was a season highlighted by spectacular irruptions not only of northern owls but also of Red-bellied Woodpecker and Townsend's Solitaire,

species not usually known for their irruptive behavior in the province.

### LOONS THROUGH OWLS

Single Common Loons at Percé (AC, YC) and Forillon N.P. (M. Côté, MC. Rancourt), both on 13 Feb, were either overlooked wintering birds or very early migrants. Late Turkey Vultures involved singles at La Martre, Gaspésie

19 Dec (C. Desjardins, B. Charlebois) and Saint-Armand 17 Jan (L. Messier).

A Mute Swan was present at Lacolle 16 Feb+ (P. Savoie, m.ob.). A Cackling Goose lingered at Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu until 9 Dec (M. Gauthier, G. Éthier). A Wood Duck, the first in winter for Abitibi, was found at Rouyn-Noranda 31 Dec (R. Gauvin), while a male overwintered at Bécancour (R. Barbeau). A female King Eider was killed by a hunter in the Beauharnois canal, near Saint-Louis-de-Gonzague, in mid-Dec (*vide S. Bougie*). Bald Eagles continued their success story, with many overwintering in the Laurentians, along the St. Lawrence R., and around the Gaspé Peninsula. Single Northern Harriers at L'Ascension-de-Patapédia, Gaspésie 18 Dec (L. Martin, *vide C. Pitre*) and at Lac Joannès, Abitibi 15 Jan (L. Jourdin) were notably late so far n. in the province. Single Cooper's Hawks at Bic 7 Dec (GG) and Matapédia 26 Jan–28 Feb+ (ph., J. & L. Michaud) were n. of their normal winter range. For the 2nd consecutive winter, an ad. Red-tailed Hawk of the *calurus* race turned up at Gatineau 15 Dec–29 Jan (A. Cloutier, F. Leduc et al.). Over 20 Gyrfalcons were reported, a good year for this species (*vide PB*).

One of the most intriguing records of the winter involved a Sora present in the Philipsburg sanctuary 1–21 Feb (JG. Papineau, ph., m.ob.). This bird, presumably present since last fall, was feeding in a small stream emptying into a frozen marsh. For the 6th consecutive winter, a Wilson's Snipe overwintered at Val d'Or, Abitibi (C. Siano). A Black-headed Gull at Fatima, Magdalen Is. 19 Feb was a good find for the season (DGG). An ad. Lesser Black-backed Gull seen at different locations along Rivière des Mille-Iles 19 Dec (F. Rousseau et al.), 16 Jan (GL, É. Presseau), and 19 Feb (P. Franche, A. Gosselin) had most likely overwintered locally. The only large concentration of Dovekies was counted at Percé, where 4000 were noted 1 Jan (AC, YC). A Black Guillemot was found dead at the airport near LG-3 hydro-dam, James Bay 5 Feb (EP, *vide JR*). This bird most probably originated from the small population that overwinters in Hudson Bay.

An Eastern Screech-Owl's nest already contained an egg 23 Feb, most probably a record-early date for the Region (G. Burelle). A total of over 25 Northern Hawk Owls reported since last fall represented a high

**Table 1.** Recent Great Gray Owl irruptions in Québec.

Winter Season	Great Gray Owls Counted
1978-1979	ca. 60
1983-1984	350
1987-1988	26
1991-1992	ca. 60
1996-1997	60+
2000-2001	103
2004-2005	ca. 600





This Great Gray Owl at Hudson, Québec 24 February 2005 was very effective at keeping traffic under 40 km/hr. Unfortunately, in their pursuit of prey along cleared roadsides, many Great Grays are struck and killed by vehicles. Photograph by Pierre Bannon.

count (although still far below the record 200 of winter 2000–2001; *fide* SB). With approximately 600 Great Gray Owls recorded by the end of Feb (*fide* SB, PB), the winter's invasion represented the largest ever recorded in the Region (see Table 1). In contrast to the distribution of birds observed in the 1983–1984 invasion, now the next highest on record, few birds crossed the St. Lawrence R., at least in the Montréal area, suggesting that voles were plentiful n. of the river. Few birds showed any signs of moving back n. in Mar. A least 5 of these rare visitors reached the Gaspé Peninsula in Mar (*fide* PP). An astounding concentration of Great Grays occurred on Ile aux Coudres, Charlevoix, a small area (ca. 60 km<sup>2</sup>), where 67 birds were counted 5 Feb, with at least 51 still remaining there 20 Mar (JP. Ouellet, M. Lafleur).

Short-eared Owls were represented by 4 at Saint-Basile for most of the winter (*fide* PB), 3 at Saint-Alexandre 18 Dec (F. Saint-Denis et al.), and 3 at Carignan 11 Jan+ (PB). At least 15 Boreal Owls were noted s. of the species' breeding range (*fide* PB).

### KINGFISHER THROUGH FINCHES

Single overwintering Belted Kingfishers were located at Magog and Rock Forest 4 Feb (B. Turgeon) and Stoke 8 Feb (J. Turgeon). The season's final count of Red-bellied Woodpecker in the Region was an amazing 39 birds, including 27 males, 11 females, and

one of undetermined sex (*fide* PB). Some birds dispersed far e. and n., as shown by 11 in the Gaspé Peninsula (*fide* PP) and one in Abitibi (*fide* LI). Large numbers were also reported in the adjacent areas of the Maritimes and in n. New England. The reasons for this widespread irruption remain unclear at this moment. Normally, only 4–5 birds visit the Region in an entire calendar year. The Region is now overdue for a first nesting record.

The Ash-throated Flycatcher at Bois-de-Liesse Nature Park, Montréal last fall continued through 3 Dec (m.ob.). Tufted Titmice continued to be seen in impressive numbers, most of them e. of the Richelieu R., with 5 reaching the Québec City area (*fide* JL). At least 20 Carolina Wrens were located mostly in s. Québec, including pairs at Baie d'Urfée and Philipsburg (*fide* PB). A Winter Wren successfully wintered at the Montréal Botanical Gardens (S. Robert, E. Samson), while another showed up at Beaconsfield 8 Jan (S. Mathieu).

In addition to the 3 birds reported last fall, 7 more Townsend's Solitaires were discovered during the winter, resulting in the largest irruption ever for the Region. Single birds appeared at Amqui 10 Dec (R. Lang), Sept-Iles 2 Jan through at least 12 Feb (N. Chouinard, B. Poulin), Price 4 Jan (D. Ruest,



This Sora present in the Philipsburg sanctuary, near the Vermont border, 1–21 (here 2) February 2005 was without doubt the most unexpected bird of the season in Québec, presumably a bird present since autumn here. Its feeding territory was limited to a small stream emptying into a frozen marsh. Photograph by Marcel Gauthier.

GG), Alma 8 Jan–28 Feb+ (M. Bourgeois, G. Seullion et al., ph.), Saint-Simon from early Jan through at least 17 Feb (*fide* F. Bourret, m.ob., ph.), Saint-Joseph-de-la-Rive 26 Jan (J. Bernier), and Beauport 12–28 Feb+ (JM. Giroux, m.ob., ph.). A Varied Thrush brightened Laval 9 Jan–17 Mar (D. Bellemare, GL, m.ob., ph.). Single Gray Catbirds lingered at Boucherville 13–19 Dec (A. Messier, m.ob.) and at Sainte-Catherine 18 Dec (P. Mitchell et al.). A Brown Thrasher successfully wintered at Cantley (MC. Vanier).

Cedar Waxwings turned up in unusual numbers this winter, e.g., 1800 at Percé 13

Feb (J. Wiseman, D. Cahill). A late Black-throated Blue Warbler delighted many at the Montréal Botanical Gardens 30 Nov–20 Dec (S. Guimond, m.ob.). A late Yellow-rumped Warbler at Beaconsfield 21 Jan was worthy of mention (P. Tarassof). The Yellow-throated Warbler previously reported at Asbestos was last seen 5 Dec (G. Lacroix). The Yellow-breasted Chat at Saint-Joseph-de-la-Rive survived until at least 5 Dec, a new Regional record-late date (G. Desgagnés).

At least 6 Eastern Towhees were known to have wintered throughout the Region (*fide* PB). A Chipping Sparrow overwintered at Saint-Eusèbe, Lower St. Lawrence (M. Beaulieu). A late Field Sparrow stopped at Longueuil 19 Dec (D. Granger, JF. Noulain), and a late Savannah Sparrow was most unusual at Dorion 2 Jan (M. Gabauer et al.). A Harris's Sparrow overwintered at Pointe-du-Lac, a rare occurrence for the Region (R. Landry, m.ob., ph.). A White-crowned Sparrow at LaSarre 19 Dec represented a first winter record for Abitibi (J. Aubé), while singles overwintered at Saint-Hubert (R. Bellhumeur) and Sainte-Foy (P. Otis). A Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch, the 3rd for the Region, was well described at Guyenne, Abitibi 23–25 Dec (M. & B. Rivest, *fide* S. Gagnon). Departing from the expected pattern, Common Redpolls irrupted for a 2nd consecutive year.

**Addenda:** A Wilson's Storm-Petrel at Bergeronnes 2 Nov 2004 was record late for the North Shore (YA). An American White Pelican was killed by a hunter in a flock of 6 birds s. of LG-3 hydro-dam, James Bay in late May 2004 (ph. EP, *fide* JR). A Turkey Vulture was photographed at Wemindji, James Bay 24 Jul 2004 (*fide* JR). Three imm. King Eiders (2 male, one female) were killed by hunters in Oct 2004 near Montréal, more precisely 2 on Lac des Deux-Montagnes and one at Châteauguay (*fide* P. Brousseau). The song of an Acadian Flycatcher was taped at an automatic recording station in

La Mauricie N.P. 18 Jun 2004 (*fide* G. Falardeau).

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# New England



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By all available meteorological summaries, the winter of 2004–2005 in New England was relatively uneventful. January was a tad cooler than the 100-year average, but slightly warmer temperatures in December and February made the season as a whole right about average. The story for precipitation was much the same, and although the Region was blessed with its usual share of nor'easters, these generally failed to result in any significant seabird concentrations.

The trends of the season were perhaps ex-

emplified by two groups of birds moving in opposite directions, with both converging on the n. three states, particularly New Hampshire and Maine. From the north came an influx of Bohemian Waxwings, Pine Grosbeaks, and Common Redpolls that was far larger than any off-year invasion in recent memory. From the south came Red-bellied Woodpeckers (and lesser numbers of Carolina Wrens) that started moving in the fall and settled in at feeders as the winter set in. The woodpeckers made it at least as far as the Canadian border in e. Maine and also north of New Hampshire's White Mountains for only the second time in history.

Across the Region as a whole, counts of wintering Bald Eagles were up, murres showed up in coastal areas in numbers higher than usual, and more Pine Warblers were reported than in an average winter. Several noteworthy birds lingered from the fall, including a Ruby-throated Hummingbird in Rhode Island and an Ash-throated Flycatch-

er in Massachusetts. Among the annual assortment of western strays were two Townsend's Solitaires, five Varied Thrushes, a Townsend's Warbler, two Western Tanagers, and three Lark Sparrows. Of course, there were a few outstanding birds this season. Topping the list has to be American White Pelican. Starting with a flock of five on Cape Cod in early December, pelicans appeared up and down the coast and inland, with single birds reaching Maine, New Hampshire, and Rhode Island. The pelican in the latter state survived well into January but unfortunately succumbed (apparently to starvation) sometime before early February. Vying for second place were a Northern Wheatear in Vermont, a California Gull and a Chestnut-collared Longspur in Massachusetts, a Northern Lapwing in Maine, and a very cooperative Yellow-throated Warbler at a New Hampshire feeder.

Abbreviations: Gloucester (Essex, MA), Little Compton (Newport, RI), M.V. (Martha's Vineyard I., Dukes, MA), Nantucket (Nantucket I., MA), Ogunquit (York, ME), P'town (Provincetown, Barnstable, MA), Rockport (Essex, MA).

## LOONS THROUGH VULTURES

Maine seemed to corner the market on Pacific Loons, with three reports from the length of the coast throughout the period (Bar Harbor, Biddeford, Ogunquit). Unfortunately, most of these sightings were not accompanied by descriptions, and those that were, did not eliminate the admittedly unlikely Arctic Loon (*vide* JD). The only record away from the Pine Tree State came from P'town 15 Jan and 19 Feb (GE, m.ob.). Meanwhile, in ne. Massachusetts, Gloucester's Eared Grebe returned for a 10th year. After last winter's unidentified storm-petrel off Cape Cod, it would almost appear as if the bird returned to allow for a better look. In the aftermath of a Christmas nor'easter, a Leach's Storm-Petrel was seen by several observers at First Encounter Beach, Barnstable, MA 27 Dec (BN et al.). Substantially farther offshore, a dead right whale 120 km off Nantucket was well attended by Northern Fulmars, many of which appeared to be of the darker morphs, which are scarce in the North Atlantic and always outnumbered by lighter individuals.

A Least Bittern in Boston 25 Feb (D. Swenson) provided just the 2nd winter record for the state and one of only a handful of such records for the Region. There seemed to be more lingering Great Egrets this winter, with seven reports from the three s. New England states. The latest were from Warren, Bristol, RI 10 Jan (m.ob.) and Nantucket 19 Jan. An imm. Little Blue Heron at Eastham 1–19 Dec provided one of the latest records for Massachusetts, but when it was relocated 14 Jan at Orleans, it

**SA** Unlike in recent years, there were no Brown Pelicans in New England this winter, but if any had appeared, they would have been upstaged by their counterparts from the continent's interior. The **American White Pelican** saga apparently began with a flock of 5 at P'town 5 Dec (ph. S. Landry et al.). A few days later, on 9 Dec, single birds were reported in Woburn and Belmont (both *Middlesex*; MR, B. Ramsey et al.). Even though the locations are only 10 km apart, observers differed in their descriptions of bill color, and these differences were consistent with variation described in the birds photographed at P'town. Another pelican was observed flying s. along the Merrimack R. in Manchester, *Hillsborough*, NH 18 Dec (R. Tulloh). Presumably the same individual was reported later that same day with a flock of Canada Geese on the Nashua R. in Hollis, *Hillsborough*, NH (C. Beaudry), where it remained through 20 Dec. The New Hampshire sightings are roughly 60 km as the pelican flies from the 9 Dec locales, so it is tempting to speculate that at least one of the birds from Greater Boston wandered n. of the border.

Meanwhile, on the coast, unsubstantiated reports of another (or the same) white pelican came from Rye, *Rockingham*, NH around 22 Dec and Biddeford Pool, *York*, ME 23 Dec. In the absence of details on plumage, bill color, or other distinguishing markings, we are unlikely to know how many birds wandered n. into New Hampshire and Maine. At least one bird went s. from P'town and was seen in Eastham, *Barnstable*, MA 12 Dec (C. Goodrich). The same or another appeared on Prudence I., *Newport*, RI 13–19 Dec (M. Rehor). It then moved to Westerly, *Washington*, RI, where it remained 29 Dec–20 Jan (m.ob.). This bird was found dead 13 Feb, having not quite added Connecticut to the list of New England states hosting the species this winter. Outside of the Region, 4 American White Pelicans appeared in n. New Jersey 11–12 Dec, with one in *Cape May*, NJ 8–9 Jan. Given that we know at least 2 were still in New England in mid-Dec, one is left wondering just how many pelicans really were involved in this winter's sightings.

became just the 2nd mid-winter record for the state. Similarly rare in winter was a Green Heron that stayed from the fall through 19 Dec in Amherst, *Hampshire*, MA (m.ob.). Another of this species was reported without details from Hollis, NH 2 Jan. A Yellow-crowned Night-Heron was unusual in E. Providence, *Providence*, RI 20 Dec. Black Vultures continue to increase in the sw. portion of the Region, both in Rhode Island and w. Massachusetts. Seventeen on the Napatree C.B.C. 19 Dec ties the Ocean State's record high count, and 14 were still present at a roost in Ashaway, *Washington* 12 Feb. The high count for the season in Massachusetts was 10 in Sheffield, *Berkshire* 19 Feb (M. Lynch). Another was reported without details from the Nashua landfill, *Hillsborough*, NH 10 Feb (M. Medeiros).

## WATERFOWL

As usual, Greater White-fronted Geese appeared in the s. part of the Region, although this winter they were all in the Connecticut River valley. Northernmost was one in Amherst and nearby Hadley, MA 19 Dec, while Connecticut hosted 7 (*fide* GH). In the wake of the recent split, a Cackling Goose at Vinalhaven I., *Knox*, ME 30 Dec–20 Jan (ph. Kirk Gentalen) may represent the first winter record for the Region. Tundra Swans were also in the s. states. Least expected was a bird at Egremont, *Berkshire*, MA that lingered from the fall through 4 Feb (m.ob.). Coventry, *Washington*, RI again hosted 4 of this species in Jan and Feb, while another wintered

along the lower Connecticut R. in Connecticut. A Whooper Swan of presumed captive provenance spent a few days on the ocean off Rye, NH in mid-Jan.

Dabbling duck counts were unremarkable, with a few exceptions. A count of 13 Gadwalls on Great Bay, NH 18 Dec was one of the highest totals for the state in winter, while 14 Northern Shovelers off Cape Elizabeth, *Cumberland*, ME 3 Dec (*fide* DL) were even more remarkable for the Pine Tree State. A report of 11 shovelers at Newburyport, MA 4 Dec (S. Mirick) was nearly as unusual and perhaps indicative of an excep-

tional winter for the species: at least 10 additional birds were in Massachusetts, and a flock of 6 was reported in Rhode Island. An escaped male Mandarin Duck entertained birders at Ogunquit, ME throughout the winter. While Canvasbacks occur with some regularity in fall and spring in New Hampshire, mid-winter records are scarce, especially away from Great Bay. A male at the Exeter W.T.P., *Rockingham* 17–20 Jan was thus unusual in both respects. Some 10,700 Greater Scaup in upper Narragansett Bay 22 Jan was the highest total for Rhode Island since 1992 (R. Farrell). Barrow's Goldeneyes seemed more common than usual this winter in some parts of the Region. At least 7 were reported from New Hampshire, where the usual winter total is under 4, and there were at least 13 in Massachusetts in Dec. In Maine, there was an influx of the species in early Jan, with a high count of 23 in South Freeport (*fide* DL). Totals of 4 for Rhode Island and 2 for Connecticut were more typical. A *borealis* Common Eider in South Freeport, *Cumberland*, ME 14 Feb (*fide* DL) was rare: this subspecies normally winters only as far s. as the Gulf of St. Lawrence. A female King Eider was at Hammonasset Beach S.P., *New Haven*, CT for its 4th winter. A total of 12 King Eiders in Maine was above that state's winter maximum of 8 (*fide* JD).

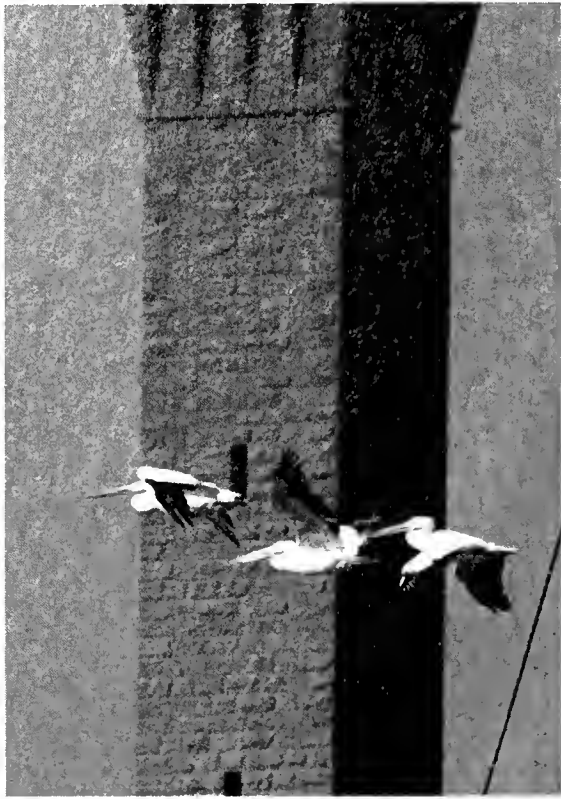
## RAPTORS THROUGH ALCIDS

Lingering Ospreys in s. New England were not reported after 18 Dec. Numbers from the mid-winter Bald Eagle count set records in many parts of the Region, including 20 in Vermont, 55 in New Hampshire, and at least



This dead Right Whale was discovered off Nantucket in December 2004 (here 10 January 2005). During the time it was under observation by various parties, it was well attended by scavenging Northern Fulmars, including a good number of dark morphs, a plumage that is relatively uncommon in U.S. North Atlantic waters, unlike in the North Pacific. Photograph by Peter Duley/NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service.





While the Pilgrim's Monument in Provincetown is a familiar sight to birders at the tip of Cape Cod, a flock of American White Pelicans in front of it is not. These three were part of a flock of five photographed on 5 December 2004. The group subsequently dispersed, with birds visiting other locations in Massachusetts, as well as New Hampshire, Maine, and Rhode Island. Photograph by Scott Londry.

69 in Massachusetts. During surveys in the latter state, a new nesting location was discovered. Eagles at Rhode Island's only known nest site were apparently getting ready for the breeding season by the end of Feb. Golden Eagle reports, on the other hand, were fewer than usual: the only report was of a single at Pelham, *Hampshire*, MA 5 Dec (M. Lynch). The Region's only Gyrfalcon was an imm. gray morph in Burlington, *Chittendon*, VT 23 Feb (ph. R. Renaud, A. Boccio).

Participants on the Napatree C.B.C. (*Washington*, RI) had the unusual luck to tally three species of rails (Clapper, Virginia, and Sora) on 19 Dec. Farther n., 2 Virginia Rails at Kittery, *York*, ME 26 Dec (DL) were the first winter record since at least 1987. A Common Moorhen was on Nantucket 14 Dec (N. Slavitz); the species has been recorded on the island fairly regularly in recent winters. Sandhill Cranes showed up in three states. A bird in Auburn, *Androscoggin*, ME through 14 Jan had been present since at least Nov (m.ob.), while another made a one-day appearance in Norridgewock, *Somerset*, ME sometime in

the first week of Dec (*vide* JD). These are the first winter records for Maine since at least 1987. Farther s., a long-staying crane was in Exeter, *Washington*, RI 2–27 Feb (m.ob.), while one was briefly at S. Windsor, *Hartford*, CT 18 Dec (C. Ekroth).

From mid-coast Maine came an intriguing report of a Northern Lapwing at Deer Isle, *Hancock* 8 Dec (T. Nichols); this bird would represent only the 2nd record for the state. Lingering shorebirds included an unusual combination—a Semipalmated Sandpiper and a Marbled Godwit at Chatham, *Barnstable*, MA 19 Dec (BN). Other highlights were a Western Sandpiper in Scabrook, *Rockingham*, NH 18 Dec (R. Aaronian et al.) and a Western Willet at Scarborough, *Cumberland*, ME through 9 Jan (M. Brush, m.ob.). Two Long-billed Dowitchers lingered until at least 5 Jan at Milford, *New Haven*, CT (m.ob.). Jaeger numbers were down from recent years in Massachusetts' waters. High counts of 7 Pomarine and 5 unidentified jaegers came from Rockport (RH) and Eastham (BN), 7 and 27 Dec, respectively. The latest Pomarine was at Rockport 12 Jan (RH). A Laughing Gull on M.V. 5 Jan (T. M. Day) was one of only a few post-Dec records for the Bay State. Almost all records of Mew Gull from Massachusetts are from



This extremely dark Kumlien's Iceland Gull photographed at Rochester Wastewater Treatment Plant in Rochester, New Hampshire 9 December 2004 is presumably distinguished from Thayer's gull by its very small bill, round head, petite jizz, and uniformity of plumage color; one assumes that hybridization cannot be ruled out in this case, but the Thayer's/Iceland complex is still very much a puzzle, taxonomically and otherwise. Photograph by James P. Smith.

the immediate coast, so a bird at Haverhill (*Essex*) 29 Jan (RH) was noteworthy. The gull of the season was the first-winter California Gull on Nantucket 3–20 Jan (ph., P.

Dugan, m.ob.), marking only the 2nd time this w. species has been recorded in Massachusetts. Iceland Gulls seemed more common than usual, with peak counts of 161 on Nantucket (ER), 43 at Gloucester (RH), and 15 at Rochester, *Strafford*, NH (J. Smith), with state totals of 20 in Connecticut and 9 in Rhode Island. The latter is the highest total for the Ocean State since 1988 (*vide* RF). The only terns in the Region were a remarkable 6 Forster's at Wellfleet, *Barnstable*, MA 12 Dec (BN) and a late Forster's at Freetown, *Bristol*, MA 2 Jan (JB).

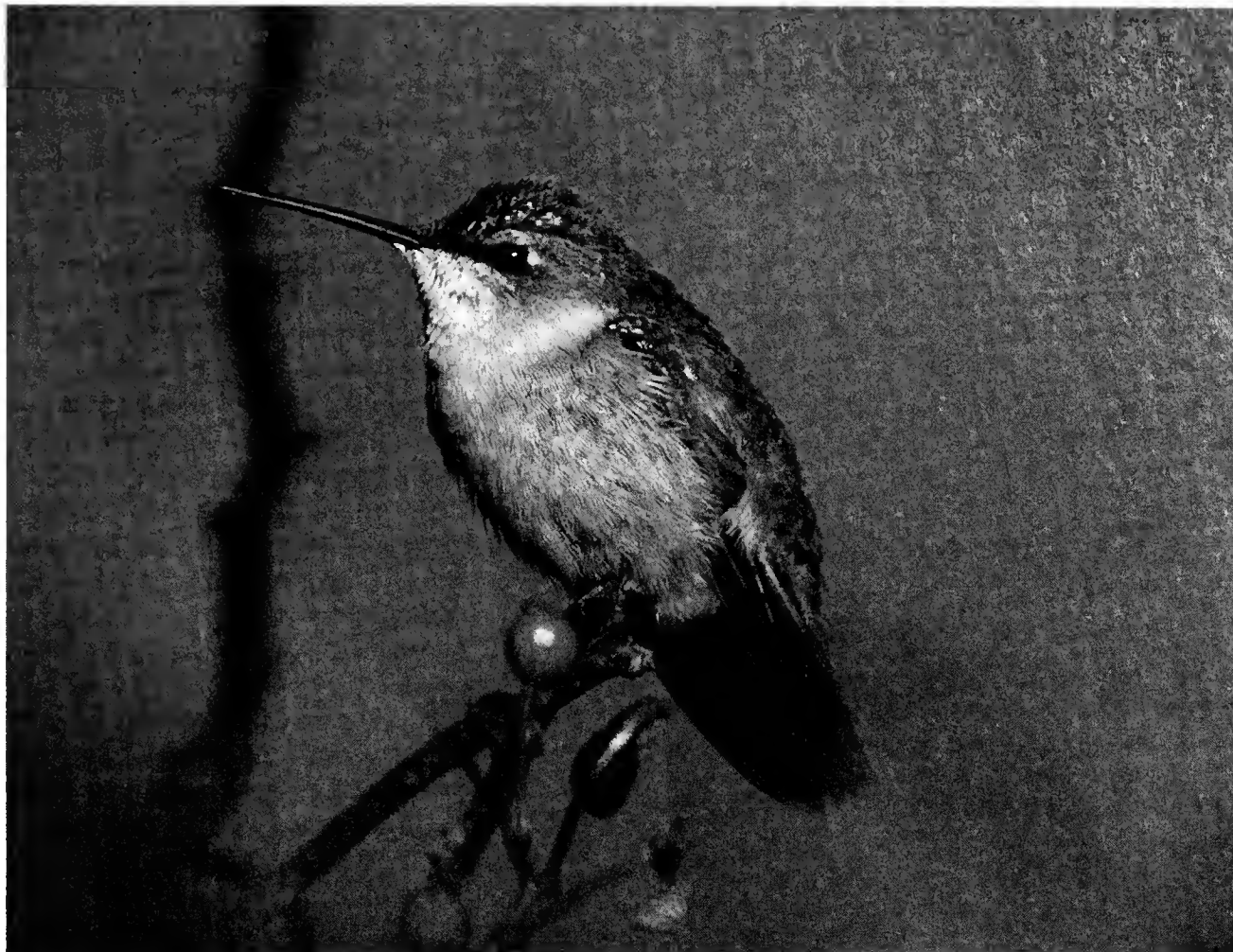


First found in November, this White-winged Dove lingered on Nantucket through 17 January 2005 (here 31 December 2004), providing the New England region with its first winter record of this increasing vagrant. Photograph by Stephen Mirick.

Impressive numbers of Common Murres were tallied at Rockport, with a high count of 43 on 7 Dec and 27 on 4 Feb (RH). Thick-billed Murres staged something of a minor invasion beginning in late Jan. The seasonal total for Maine was 25, almost twice any other total since at least the early 1990s, and the six reports from Rhode Island represent the 5th highest ever for the state (*vide* RF). In the traditionally aleid-rich waters of Massachusetts, numbers peaked at 110 off Rockport 4 Feb (RH), with regular counts of 10 or more at P'town. Razorbill numbers from traditional locations in the Gulf of Maine were not unusual, but the species continues to increase in Long Island Sound, where the high count was 29 off Mystic, *New London*, CT 1 Jan (B. Dewire).

## DOVES THROUGH VIREOS

The White-winged Dove that appeared on Nantucket in late Nov was last seen 19 Jan (m.ob.), providing the Region with its first winter record and also the longest-staying individual to date. Snowy Owls made a better showing this year, with at least 9 in Maine, 6 in New Hampshire, and 15 in Massachusetts. None made it to the southernmost states of Connecticut and Rhode Island. To the w. of the Region, one of the major events of the season was an invasion of Great Gray Owls. Despite several individuals



This female Ruby-throated Hummingbird visited a feeder in Tiverton, Rhode Island from November through 25 (here 4) December 2004, a first winter record for the New England region. Photograph by Geoff Dennis.

as close as Montréal, only one made it to New England, at Gray, Cumberland, ME 16 Jan (ph., *fide* DL).

In Rhode Island, a Ruby-throated Hummingbird remained at a Tiverton, Newport feeder until 25 Dec (ph. m.ob.), a first winter record for the Region, while nearby at Little Compton, 2 Rufous Hummingbirds visited the same house (but consistently used different feeders) through 21 Dec and 18 Jan, respectively (ph., m.ob.). Both birds, an imm. female and an imm. male, appear to have perished during windy nights with temperatures at or near 0° F (*fide* RF). Another Rufous, an imm. male, was at Ashfield, Franklin, MA 1–15 Dec (m.ob.). After a good fall flight, it was not surprising to have above-average numbers of Red-headed Woodpeckers in the Region: Massachusetts hosted 4, Connecticut 3, Maine 2, and New Hampshire one. Red-bellied Woodpeckers also surged northward during the fall, and as winter progressed, it appeared that the species had probably made new gains in n. New England. Maine reported at least 246 individuals, surely only the tip of the iceberg (*fide* WT), and 4 made it at least as far “down east” as Mt. Desert I., Washington 3 Jan. In New Hampshire, at least 2 were recorded n. of the White Mts. to Lancaster and Randolph, both Coos. Red-bellieds even made news in Rhode Island, as evidenced by a record total of 29 on the Newport–Westport C.B.C. 18 Dec.

An interesting mix of flycatchers graced the Region this season. There were the re-

quisite Eastern Phoebes, the latest of which was at Little Compton, RI 15 Jan (GD). Lingering from Nov was Rockport's Ash-throated Flycatcher, last reported 19 Dec. Also at Rockport was one of Massachusetts's 2 Western Kingbirds 21–22 Dec (S. Hunt); the other was at a less-expected locale, inland at



This Yellow-throated Warbler of the *albilora* subspecies spent the entire winter at a feeder in Dover, New Hampshire, eating mealworms (here 11 January 2005). Photograph by Tom Murrey.

Northampton, Hampshire 17 Dec (L. Therrian). Northern Shrikes had something of a mixed flight, with good numbers early in the season as far s. as Massachusetts, but few after early Feb and only 5 in all of Connecticut and Rhode Island. This season's Blue-headed Vireos were at Wayland, Middlesex, MA 7 Dec (H. Norwood) and on the New Haven C.B.C. in Connecticut 18 Dec.

## SWALLOWS THROUGH WARBLERS

Tree Swallows remained until at least mid-Jan at both Napatree and Nantucket, with 9 and 10 on 9 and 16 Jan, respectively. Carolina Wrens, like Red-bellied Woodpeckers, seemed to have a good fall: the total of 15 reported from Maine is the highest this editor has seen in nine years of writing this summary and is likely a new winter high for the state. In the far nw. corner of the Region, observers on the Grande Isle C.B.C. found a Northern Wheatear at Georgia, Franklin, VT 19 Dec (P. Mallet, L. Rainville). If accepted by the Vermont Bird Records Committee, this would be the first winter record for the Region and one of only a few for North America. A Townsend's Solitaire appeared at Staeyville, Penobscot, ME 1 Feb and was last seen just before the close of the season on 26 Feb (ph., BS, m.ob.); another made a one-day showing at Gloucester 19 Dec (S. Hedman). Even more notable, if verified, would be the Swainson's Thrush reported at a feeder on Deer Isle, Hancock, ME “since Christmas”

(*fide* WT). The more expected thrushes, particularly American Robins and Eastern Bluebirds, continued their recent trends of remaining in numbers throughout the Region all winter. Four of the 5 Varied Thrushes this season were in Massachusetts, the longest-staying bird frequenting a Newburyport feeder 21 Dec–25 Feb, while others were at Concord (Middlesex) 29 Dec–4 Jan and M.V. 19–23 Jan, and Sheffield 2 Jan (the last bird a cat-kill). A 5th was at Contoocook, Merrimaek, NH 15 Jan.

In light of last winter's major influx, birders in the Region were not expecting the return of Bohemian Waxwings this season. In n. Maine, an excellent fruit crop made for numbers just as impressive as last winter's, including a maximum of 2500 in Presque Isle,

Aroostook, in late Jan (*fide* JD). Most flocks in Maine, and the relatively few large groups in Vermont and New Hampshire, came in at under 300 birds. The only Bohemian in the s. portion of the Region was one on Nantucket 6 Feb (E. Ray). There was some indication that Yellow-rumped Warblers were less common than usual in s. New England this winter. However, Pine Warblers lingered in num-





With very few Regional winter records, Black-throated Green Warbler is only marginally more likely to be found on a New England Christmas Bird Count than its northwestern counterpart Townsend's Warbler. This bird found on the Cape Cod C.B.C. 19 December 2004 furnished a first record of the species for that long-running count. Photograph by Jeremiah Trimble.

bers for the record books, especially in Connecticut (*vide* GH), where at least 15 were reported throughout the season—Massachusetts hosted 14, Rhode Island 5, Maine 4, and Vermont and New Hampshire one each. Among the less-expected warblers were 2 Black-throated Blues: one at a feeder in E. Brunswick, *Cumberland*, ME through 18 Dec (G. Sergeant; a first winter record for the state), and another at Brewster, *Barnstable*, MA 12 Jan, almost exactly a year later than an individual of the same species at nearby Chatham! More noteworthy was a Townsend's Warbler at Rockport 19 Dec (M. Goetschkes). One of the more cooperative warblers of the season was a male *albilora* Yellow-throated Warbler at a feeder in Dover, *Stratford*, NH throughout the season, a bird that subsisted largely on mealworms (ph., D. Carr, m.ob.). Two very late Blackpoll Warblers were at Arlington, *Middlesex*, MA 19 Dec and South Kingston, *Washington*, RI 22–25 Dec, the latter the latest ever recorded in the Ocean State. Single Ovenbirds were at Boston 11–16 Dec and far to the n. in Lancaster, *Coos*, NH 17–24 Dec, and a Hooded Warbler at Cambridge, *Middlesex*, MA was last reported 5 Dec.

#### TANAGERS THROUGH FINCHES

A female Western Tanager frequented a feeder at Georgetown, *Sagadahoc*, ME 17 Dec–7 Jan (ph., m.ob.); another, also female, was at Westwood, *Norfolk*, MA 31

Dec–23 Jan (R. Saunders, m.ob.). Lark Sparrows put in a fine showing. The first showed up on M.V. 2–3 Dec, the next in Walpole,



This Chestnut-collared Longspur was a one-day wonder on Plum Island 15 December 2004. It furnished only the fifth record for Massachusetts and the second winter record for the Region. Photograph by David Weaver.

*Cheshire*, NH 18 Dec (T. Johansen), and the last at Scarborough, *Cumberland*, ME 5 Feb–Mar (ph., m.ob.). A Chestnut-collared Longspur at Plum I., MA 15 Dec (ph., B. Gette, D. Weaver) furnished just the 5th record for Massachusetts and 2nd winter record for the Region. Rusty Blackbirds were observed in above-average numbers in the Region. In Lincoln, *Providence*, RI, up to 68 were present 11 Jan–24 Feb (D. Finzia et al.), and multiples were reported in inland New Hampshire locations, including 2 far to the n. at Errol, *Coos* 16 Dec. Massachusetts counts, however, were unremarkable. Up to 12 Boat-tailed Grackles wintered in se. Connecticut at the traditional location of Stratford/Bridgeport, *Fairfield*. A total of 5 Baltimore Orioles in Maine was well above the usual few and in fact was higher than the 4 reported from Massachusetts this season.

Pine Grosbeaks staged a small off-year invasion limited to the n. portions of the n. three states. Most were in Maine, with

flocks of 30 in the n. and 5–10 in the cen. portion of the state. The Regional maximum was 219 on the Pittsburg C.B.C., *Coos*, NH 15 Dec. Common Redpolls were also back in reasonable numbers for the 2nd year in a row. As with the previous species, most were in n. Maine, where three flocks of over 100 birds were reported from *Aroostook* in late Feb (BS). Numbers dwindled rapidly to the s., where flocks tended to contain fewer than 10 birds. Common Redpolls did make it to Massachusetts, where most birds were found in the e. half of the state, and Rhode Island, where there were 2 at Providence 3 Jan (RF et al.). Given the reappearance of large redpoll flocks in n. Maine, it was perhaps not surprising that 2 Hoary Redpolls were also reported from Presque Isle, *Aroostook* from mid-Jan through mid-Feb (*vide* JD).

Subregional editors (boldface), contributors (italics), and observers: **Jim Berry**, *David Deifik* (NH), *Jody Despres* (ME), *Rachel Farrell* (RI), *Greg Hanisek* (CT), *Rick Heil*, *David Hoag*, *Seth Kellogg* (MA), *Derek Lovitch*, *Julie Nicholson* (VT), *Blair Nikula*, *Edie Ray*, *Marjorie Rines* (MA), *Bill Sheehan*, **William Townsend** (ME). ☉



December weather was moderate except for bitter cold from the 19th to the 21st, with warmer weather returning by the 23rd. The first two weeks of January were relatively warm, but intense cold set in on the 21st, and a major storm on 22–23 January blanketed most of the Region with heavy snow. Temperatures for the remainder of the month were well below normal. February mirrored January to the extent that the first half was moderate and the second half cold.

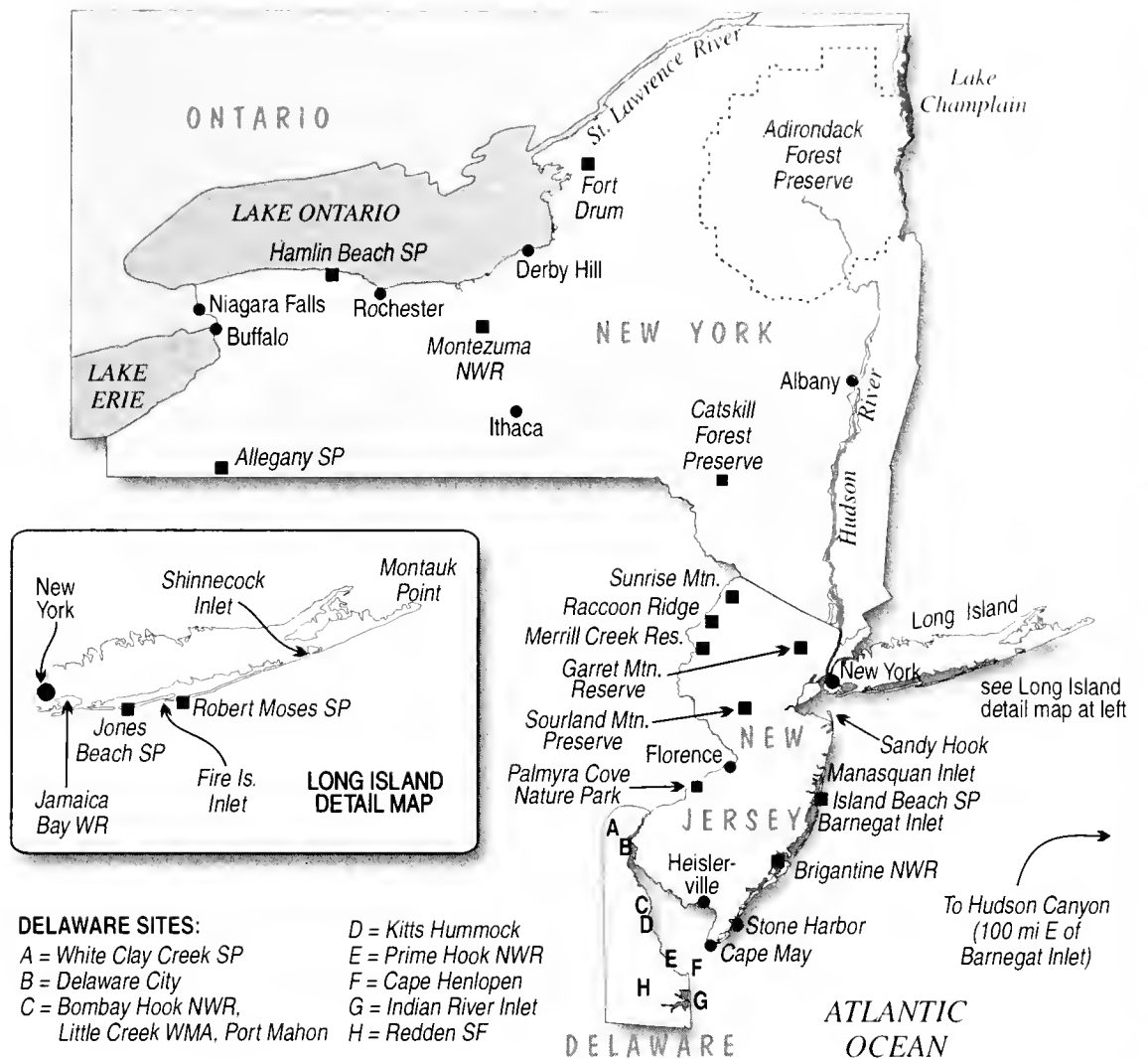
Highlights of the season included Pacific Loons, Western Grebe, Sabine's Gulls, an influx of Thick-billed Murres, Black Guillemots, Boreal Owls, an incursion of Red-headed Woodpeckers, Townsend's Solitaires, and Black-throated Gray Warbler. Also noteworthy were Tufted Duck, Varied Thrush, Gyrfalcons, California Gulls, Ash-throated Flycatchers, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Painted Buntings, and numerous American White Pelicans. On the negative side was an oil spill in the lower Delaware R. off Paulsboro, New Jersey on 28 November. About 300 birds were taken to a rehabilitation center, and the effects were still evident at C.B.C. time.

**Abbreviations:** Avalon (sea watch at Avalon, Cape May, NJ); Bombay Hook (Bombay Hook N.W.R., Kent, DE); Central Park (New York City); Hamlin Beach (Hamlin Beach S.P., Monroe, NY); I.R.I. (Indian River Inlet, Sussex, DE); Montauk Pt. (Montauk Point S.P., Suffolk, NY); Sandy Hook (Sandy Hook Unit, Gateway National Recreation Area, Monmouth, NJ).

### LOONS THROUGH VULTURES

For the 5th consecutive winter, Pacific Loons have been reported, this year at Avalon 6 Dec (CV, BF) and from Montauk Pt. 16 Dec (BPF et al.). New Jersey has 14 accepted prior records and New York a similar number. Though more common in recent years than in the past, this species is still considered very rare, remains tricky to identify, and requires careful documentation. Five Eared Grebes were reported: 2 at Lakes Bay, Atlantic, NJ 4–24 Dec (TB, Al Driscoll et al.) and singles at Aurora, Cayuga, NY 16 Jan (Bob Guthrie, Leona Lauster), Cupsogue County Park, Suffolk, NY 29 Jan (ABa), and the Ponquogue Bridge over Shinnecock Bay, Suffolk, NY 9 Feb (Carl Starace). Now virtually annual, Eared Grebes have visited New Jersey over 40 times and New York over 100. Continuing the string of rare waterbirds, the Western Grebe at S. Amboy, NJ continued through 24 Dec (MBr et al.). Another or possibly the same individual was reported at Island Beach S.P., Ocean, NJ 1–2 Jan (G. Cantrell). The former report constitutes New Jersey's 2nd accepted record (14 others are listed as Western/Clark's Grebe). A good count of 118 Northern Fulmars was record-

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Providing a first photographic record for the state and a memorable sight for only a few of its would-be admirers, this gray-morph Gyrfalcon at least stopped long enough to be captured on film 15 February 2005 at the east end of Port Mahon Road, Kent County, Delaware. There appear to be two prior reports of the species in the state. Photograph by Robert Lego.

ed in Delaware waters on a pelagic trip from Lewes, DE 26 Feb (PG et al.), one of the highest Regional totals since the establishment of the offshore Exclusive Economic Zone that limits foreign fishing fleets to waters more than 200 nautical miles from shore. Manx Shearwater reports were 6 on a pelagic trip out of Lewes 11 Dec (PG et al.), one out of Belmar, *Monmouth*, NJ 31 Dec (PG et al.), and one 10–15 km off Surf City, *Ocean*, NJ 31 Dec (Doug Gill).

For the 3rd time in the past five winters, American White Pelicans were present. There are no more than about five previous Regional winter records. In New York, a group of 4 was reportedly seen in the Bronx 8 Dec (NJ Birds listserv). In New Jersey, single birds passed through Hereford Inlet, *Cape May* 5 Dec (A. & M. Smith); Heislerville, *Cumberland* 8 Dec (JD, CS); Corbin City/Tuckahoe W.M.A., *Atlantic/Cape May* 8–9 Jan (Karen Johnson); Shark R. Estuary, *Monmouth* 11 Jan (Bob Henschel); and Bombay Hook 24 Dec. A group of 3 visited Jakes Landing and Goshen, *Cape May* 30 Dec (CV, Jeff Stratford) and 31 Dec (Harvey Tomlinson). And a group of 4, possibly the same group reported in the Bronx, was

observed at Cranbury, *Middlesex* 10–12 Dec (Warren Barnes, Roger Dreyling). The year's last Brown Pelican passed Avalon 3 Dec (BF, CV). Despite the cold Feb weather, a Glossy Ibis at Southaven County Park, *Suffolk*, NY 26 Feb (John McNeil) was perhaps record early. Birds of this species do not normally arrive before late Mar.

## WATERFOWL

Unprecedented was a group of 12 Greater White-fronted Geese on the Princeton University soccer field 19 Dec on the Princeton C.B.C. (*vide* LL). About a dozen more scattered over the Region was a normal number. Nine Ross's Geese this year was also fairly normal. Nearly 40 Cackling Geese were found, with a surprising 12 also on the Princeton C.B.C., on a corporate lawn not far from the Greater White-fronted Geese (*vide* LL). Black Brant were excellent finds at S. Amboy, NJ, where this race has appeared previously, 21 Dec (†PEL, †RC) and 2 Feb (†SB), and a continuing bird from the fall was at I.R.I. through 30 Jan (Mary Gustafson, Bruce Peterjohn, Matt Hafner et al.). After two years with multiple reports, and last year with just a single report, the only Barnacle Goose was in Wantage Twp., *Sussex*, NJ (†JB, Jim Zamos, ph. Cheryl Boyd et al.). The provenance of this individual, which was not banded, is unknown but probably wild.

Ten to 11 Eurasian Wigeons in New Jersey was high for that state, while numbers were closer to normal in New York and Delaware. Two Northern Shovelers at Dunkirk Harbor, *Eric*, NY 1 Jan–13 Feb (†WW) were out of place in midwinter. Three Common (Eurasian Green-winged) Teal was a good count: one at the Corbin City W.M.A. and Tuckahoe W.M.A., *Cape May/Atlantic*, NJ found 7 Jan and still present on 16 Feb (CS, JD); one at Tuckahoe and Yonkers, *Westchester*, NY 10 Feb+ (Andrew Block, MB, KJ, Sandra Marraffino); and one at L. Takanassee, *Monmouth*, NJ (Al Pochek, ph. Mike Fahay). This race has averaged a bit over one per year over the past decade, although most years with none, but two years with 3 and one year with 4.

In the Finger Lakes, 6600 Redheads at Keuka L., *Yates/Steuben*, NY 29 Jan (BO) was well below last year's 19,000 on Cayuga L. but still impressive. The high count away from the Finger Lakes was an outstanding 5374 at Conesus L. 2 Jan on the Conesus–Hemlock–Honeoye Lakes C.B.C. Farther south, where even a few are of interest, an excellent total was 24 on Barnegat Bay, off Brick Twp., NJ 12 Feb (Richard Heddy). A duck at Weehawken, *Hudson*, NJ 24–26 Dec (Glenn Mahler) caused a stir when reported as a possible Common Pochard; it was thought to be a hybrid. The only report of Tufted Duck was of one undocumented at Rye, *Westchester*, NY 20 Jan (Pat Pollock, Chuck McAlexander, KJ). This area has been a hot spot for the species in recent years. High counts of Greater Scaup were 20,000 in Raritan Bay off *Monmouth*, NJ 2 Feb (SB) and 8000 in the Niagara R., *Erie*, NY 10–18 Jan.



An exploratory inshore boat trip along the northern New Jersey coast 29 January 2005 turned up a record four Thick-billed Murres within 400 meters of shore. This individual sat for its portrait about 100 meters from the shore at Long Branch, Monmouth County, New Jersey. Photograph by Chip Krilowicz.

But a greater number may have been present in a raft of about 70,000 ducks, mostly Greater Scaup and Canvasback, in the Niagara R. near Grand I. in early Feb (*vide* MM).

With over 30 reported, King Eider had one of its best recent years. Peak counts included 4 at Montauk Pt. 24 Dec (Seth Ausubel, Isaac Grant, Kevin O'Leary) and 3 at Barnegat Inlet, NJ 7 Feb (LM), with smaller numbers spread along the coast from Cape May to Montauk Pt. At the opposite end of the Region, Morgante commented that reports were more numerous in New York's Niagara Frontier than in any recent winter. Common Eiders also enjoyed a good year, with high counts of 1550 on the Montauk C.B.C. 18 Dec and 500 at Montauk Pt. 30 Jan (ABa et al.). Away from Montauk, the peak was 13 at Barnegat Inlet 7 Feb (LM), with counts of one to 5 scattered from there to Cape May. Harlequin Ducks were also present in excellent numbers, with the typical maximum of 34+ at Barnegat Inlet 17 Feb (Nikolas Haass) and about 25 more scattered from Montauk to I.R.I. Farther afield, a female was at Niagara Falls 4–5 Dec (WD). A fantastic 112,000 scoters were recorded on the Sagaponac, NY C.B.C. 19 Dec: 64,400 Surf, 782 White-winged, 34,300 Black, and 13,400 unidentified scoters. The adjacent Montauk C.B.C. partially made up for the low count of White-winged Scoters, with 8900 on the previous day. This species appears to be in decline. Eleven Barrow's Goldeneye was a somewhat below-normal tally. Six of them were in New York's northernmost corner: single males were at Plattsburgh, *Clinton* 8–13 Dec (Bill Krueger, Charles Mitchell, Jr.) and Essex, *Essex* 12 Dec (Matt Medler), and 4 more were added on the New York State Waterfowl Count 15–16 Dec. Elsewhere, 3 males were farther w. in New York, one on Long I. and 2 females in New Jersey.

## RAPTORS THROUGH CRANES

With about 500 reported, Bald Eagles continued their strong recovery. The highest total of Northern Harriers was 105 on the Bombay Hook C.B.C. 26 Dec. An impressive 42 were found along the lower Mullica R., *Atlantic/Burlington*, NJ 25 Jan (JD, CS), pushed there by the heavy snowfall two days earlier. The Central Park Broad-winged Hawk continued from last season until 31 Dec (TF, m.ob.). One group of the many observers reported that it had an injured right wing. Another Broad-winged was observed at Sandy Hook 5–9 Dec (SB); that observer did not note any injury. Barring unusual circumstances, a healthy Broad-winged Hawk should be long gone by this date. With over 100 reported, Rough-legged Hawks were well represented. The high count was 21 along the lower Mullica R. 25 Jan (CS, JD).



While trying out a new camera lens to photograph chickadees from her upstairs window at Niagara Falls, New York on 17 December 2004, the photographer (who claims not to be a birder) saw an unfamiliar bird. After looking through a field guide, she decided it was a Black-throated Gray Warbler. Luckily, she had this photograph to confirm its identification; the bird was last seen the next day. Photograph by Joan Hilts.

This year's total of 22 Golden Eagles was substantially better than last year's, considering that we did not get a report from the Franklin Mt. Hawkwatch in *Delaware*, NY. The high count of 3 was on the Walnut Valley, NJ C.B.C. 18 Dec. A sampling of C.B.C. totals had American Kestrel numbers similar to last year's—dismally low. This species is showing no sign of recovery. However, about 45 Merlins was a good number, with 6 at the roost on the SUNY campus in Buffalo through the season. A gray-morph Gyrfalcon at Mannington Marsh, *Salem*, NJ 11–12 Dec (vt. Dave Magpiong) and probably the same individual at Port Mahon, *Kent*, DE 15–18 Feb (Bob Lego et al.) was outstanding. Another visited Aurora, *Cayuga*, NY 28 Feb (Matt Victoria). And finally, a gray-morph Gyrfalcon was reported 12 Feb at Plattsburgh, *Clinton*, NY (Donna Fletcher), where they occur more frequently. New Jersey has only 17 accepted previous records and Delaware just one or two, while New York has well over 100.

## SHOREBIRDS THROUGH ALCIDS

Tantalizing was a report by non-birders of an apparent Northern Lapwing at Southold, *Suffolk*, NY 16–19 Dec, reasonably described but not photographed. Sadly, it was gone before word got out. Two Semipalmated Plovers made for an outstanding find along the Manasquan R. on the Lakehurst, NJ C.B.C. 18 Dec (AT), with one remaining through 8 Jan (Nick Taylor). One to 2 were present off Ocean Drive, Cape May, NJ 30 Dec–1 Jan (RC), with one near Jones Beach S.P., *Nassau*, NY on about 9 Jan (Bill Reeves, Scott Ogeri). In most years, a few individu-

als have lingered along the coast into Dec, but by Jan they are quite rare. The high count of American Oystercatcher was 508 on the Cape May C.B.C. 19 Dec, obliterating the prior count record of 352. Ninety five of these remained near Nummy I. 1 Feb (PEL). Twenty-eight Willets was typical of the past three years' counts on the Oceanville, NJ C.B.C. Six were present at Nummy I., *Cape May*, NJ 7 Jan (MO) and 3 there 1 Feb (PEL). Of 2 at Point Lookout, across the inlet from Jones Beach S.P. in early Jan (m.ob.), one remained through season's end. Willets in winter in this Region are normally *inornatus*. A report of a very late Spotted Sandpiper came from Whitesbog, *Cumberland*, NJ 1 Feb (Augie Sexauer); there are no previous Feb reports for the state. Typical of recent years, 20 Marbled Godwits were observed on the Oceanville C.B.C. 18 Dec, in the usual location at Absecon Inlet, *Atlantic*. The same C.B.C. recorded 11,000 Dunlin for only the 2nd time in its 50-year history.

Single Parasitic Jaegers at Avalon 10 & 13 Dec (BF) provided the only jaeger reports. Some 12,000+ Ring-billed Gulls at a roost at Round Valley Res. on the Northwest Hunterdon, NJ C.B.C. 19 Dec (Pete Kwiatek) was a high count there. Expected were 2 ad. California Gulls at the Niagara Power Project on the Niagara R., *Niagara*, NY until 27 Dec (+WD, +WW); a Herring Gull × Glaucous Gull hybrid was also there 12 Dec and later. Two Sabine's Gulls, one ad. and one imm., at Dunkirk Harbor, *Chautauqua*, NY 28 Dec–1 Jan (Dick Miga, Peter Yoerg, Ben Coulter) were one of the season's real highlights. Even in the Niagara Frontier, Sabine's Gulls are exceptionally





A very rare bird for inland New York, and even more rarely found wintering, this Lark Sparrow was discovered and identified by Vicki Rothman at her feeding station in the town of Porter, Niagara County 15 (here 25) December 2004 and stayed at least through 19 February 2005. Photograph by Willie D'Anna.

rare in winter. A late Black Skimmer at the Cape May Coast Guard Station 17 Dec (Coast Guard personnel) was missed on the C.B.C. two days later.

For the 3rd winter in a row, alcids were recorded in some numbers coastally. A pelagic trip out of Lewes, DE produced 33 Dovekies 26 Feb in Delaware waters (PG et al.), and pelagic trips out of Belmar, NJ 4 & 31 Dec produced 7 and 9, respectively (PG et al.). Seven Common Murres were also found on the 26 Feb trip from Lewes, and another was at Jones Inlet, Nassau, NY 2 Jan (Ken & Sue Feustel). About 220 Razorbills were observed on pelagic trips from Belmar on 4 & 31 Dec and 29 Jan and from Lewes on 11 Dec and 26–27 Feb (PG et al.); the Montauk C.B.C. had 258 on 18 Dec. Razorbills were observed daily at Avalon, with a maximum of 19 on 17 Dec (BF); roughly 50 more were scattered along the coast. Three Black Guillemots, perhaps the Region's rarest alcid, were also reported: one ad. at Avalon 16 Dec (Cameron Cox); one at Montauk Pt. 22–24 Dec (Vicki Bustamante); and one at I.R.I. 29 Jan–9 Feb (m.ob., finder un-

known), Delaware's 2nd. Seven Atlantic Puffins were observed on the pelagic trip from Belmar 4 Dec (PG et al.), while a total of 3 was observed on the trips from Lewes on 11 Dec and 26 Feb (PG et al.)

#### DOVES THROUGH WOODPECKERS

Snowy Owls totaled 12 in New York, 4 in New Jersey, and one at Port Mahon, Kent, DE 26 Dec–7 Jan (Jim White). *Scelasphorus* hummingbirds continued at Central Park until 13 Dec (m.ob.) and at Orient, Suffolk, NY until 5 Dec (HM et al.). The Allen's Hummingbird at Villas, Cape May, NJ continued until 19 Dec (JD, Doyle Dowdell). A highlight of the season was an influx of Red-headed Woodpeckers. Forty-six were recorded in the Great Swamp, Morris, NJ 18 Dec on the C.B.C. (Bill Boyle, Tom Fritz et al.). Other counts of 7 at Batsto, Burlington 30 Jan and 13 Feb (TB), 5 at Wharton S.F., Atlantic/Burlington 20 Feb (TB), and 4 singles elsewhere gave New Jersey one of its highest winter totals ever. Eight at Barcelona Neck near Sag Harbor, Suffolk NY 19 Dec (BK) and 9 more statewide gave New York a

**SA** After two decades in which Thick-billed Murres have been exceptionally scarce, this season produced an invasion, beginning with a report on 27 Jan in Maine and extending to South Carolina. This Region's first reports came on 28 Jan, with 2 each at Barnegat Inlet (Blake Mathys) and at Shinnecock Inlet (PSc). With peaks of 5 individuals reported in New Jersey on 29 Jan and 7 on Long I. 30 Jan, and with the southernmost at Cape Henlopen 2 Feb (Meta Little, Colin Campbell), reports came almost daily from Montauk Pt. to Cape May until about 11 Feb. The last reports were of one at Westhampton, Suffolk, NY 13 Feb (Andy Murphy) and one at Shinnecock Inlet 20 Feb (Karen & Barbara Rubinstein). This is the first winter ever in which all six Atlantic alcid species were recorded in Delaware.

very high count as well. Another bird at Newark, DE 12 Dec–1 Jan (Ginny Schiavelli) made the Region's total 78, possibly a record. A single American Three-toed Woodpecker at Ferd's Bog, Hamilton, NY in Dec (Gary Lee) was the only report; a total of 12 Black-backed Woodpeckers was reported from the usual locations in the Adirondack area.

#### FLYCATCHERS THROUGH WAXWINGS

The Ash-throated Flycatcher from last season at Cape May remained until 19 Dec (ph. MO, Louise Zemaitis), and one at Prospect Park, Brooklyn was joined by another 5 Dec (Rob Jett et al.); the latter 2 remained until the C.B.C. 18 Dec. Another Ash-throated at Hamlin Beach 3–7 Dec (DT, †DS, †RS, ph. B. Carlson, m.ob.) furnished the first record for New York's Genessee Region. Extremely rare before the early nineties, this species has become almost expected in

small numbers in late fall. Three C.B.C.s in New Jersey recorded one Western Kingbird apiece: the Lakehurst C.B.C. 18 Dec (AT), the Cape May C.B.C. 19 Dec (T. Reed et al.), and the Cumberland C.B.C. 2 Jan. Even more interesting was a Scissor-tailed Flycatcher at Assunpink W.M.A., Monmouth, NJ 5 Dec (†John Maret, Pat Brundage) and 19–20 Dec (†TB et al.)—the state's first Dec record, the previous late date being 6 Nov, and possibly the first Dec record for the Region. With about 100 reported, Northern Shrikes were well represented, nearly all in New York, with 5 in New Jersey, and one in Delaware at Prime Hook N.W.R., Sussex for the entire season. A White-eyed Vireo at Hamlin Beach 2 Dec (Kenny Frisch, DT, †DS) was record late in New York's Genessee Region; another was found at Green Creek on the Cape May C.B.C. 19 Dec (PEL). A Blue-headed Vireo on the Hudson Falls, NY C.B.C. 19 Dec was a Dec first for Washington. The peak count of Gray Jays was 19 on the Saranac L., NY C.B.C., with a few other reports from Essex and Franklin, NY. Three to 4 Cave Swallows, all in New Jersey, remained from Nov, with the last reports on 12 Dec at Cape May (PEL) and at Cedar Run, Ocean (†MBr, Bill Elrick). Unrecorded prior to 1990, this species has recently been annual. Two Black-capped Chickadees were s. of their normal range at Rancocas, Burlington, NJ 12–26 Dec (TB, Sandra Keller). Single Blue-gray Gnatcatchers lingered at Baiting Hollow, Suffolk, NY 2–8 Dec (ABa) and the Montauk area 18 Dec (Willy Becker).

The Nov Townsend's Solitaire at Cedar Run, *Ocean*, NJ was last seen 18 Dec (Chip Krilowicz, JG); another turned up at Maidstone Park, *Suffolk*, NY 19 Dec–18 Jan (BPF, m.ob.). New Jersey has five previous records and New York not many more. Two exceptionally late Wood Thrushes were reported, one at Central Park 2–27 Dec (TF, m.ob.; a late date for the state) and one at Garret Mt. Park, *Passaic*, NJ 19 Dec (Ivan Kossak; only a few prior winter reports). No details were received on either bird, but the reporters are experienced observers. The Varied Thrush from last season at River Vale, *Bergen*, NJ remained until 9 Jan (ph. Leona Krauth, Judy Cinquina). Brown Thrashers were unusually well represented, especially in s. parts of the Region, but one at Hamlin, *Monroe*, NY 31 Jan (DT) was well out of place. Last year's incursion of Bohemian Waxwings did not repeat itself; the peak of 150 was recorded at Keene, *Essex*, NY 21 Feb (Robert McGrath), with 75 elsewhere in Keene and 60 farther n. in Peru, *Clinton*, NY.

## WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Very rarely remaining later than Oct, a **Blue-winged Warbler** at Hamlin Beach 29 Jan (DT) was record late at that location and for the entire Region as well. A photographed Yellow Warbler on the Brooklyn C.B.C. 18 Dec was also very late; this species has been reported on C.B.C.s in the s. half of the Region on several previous occasions. But a **Black-throated Gray Warbler** at Niagara Falls, NY 17–19 Dec (Joan Hilts, †WD et al.) was the warbler of the season. This vagrant species has provided about a dozen previous records for New York, mainly in fall. Finally, a well-described **Canada Warbler** at Sayville, *Suffolk*, on the Captree (NY) C.B.C. 19 Dec was record late, by about a month. The Smithtown, NY C.B.C. produced a Western Tanager at Setauket, *Suffolk* 27 Dec (BK, PSc, HM); a bright male was at Absecon, *Atlantic*, NJ 28 Jan+ (Kris Arcuri).

Three Chipping Sparrows at Wilson, *Niagara*, NY 10 Dec+ (Betsy Potter, WD) was a record high winter count for the state's Niagara Frontier. A Clay-colored Sparrow was at the Clinton, *Hunterdon*, NJ S.T.P. (John DeMarras); 3 were recorded on the *Cumberland* C.B.C. in the same state 2 Jan. Vesper Sparrows, once not uncommon in New Jersey, were reported as singles only at Columbia, *Warren* 5 Dec (Brian Hardiman) and on the *Cumberland* C.B.C. 2 Jan. A Lark Sparrow at Porter, *Niagara*, NY 15 Dec+ (Vicki

Rothman, †WD, m.ob.) provided a first winter record for the Niagara Frontier and the 5th overall. Others were at W. Cape May, NJ 16–17 Dec (Karl Lukens, PEL) and at Croton-on-Hudson, *Westchester*, NY 18–19 Dec (Charlie Roberto). Excellent finds were Harris's Sparrows at Baldwin Harbor, *Nassau*, NY 2–3 Jan (SM, Pat Lindsay) and at Hamlin, *Monroe*, NY 8 Jan (DT, Mike Davids). Three Gambel's White-crowned Sparrows, one in New York and 2 in New Jersey, was about average. An Oregon Junco at Wilson, *Niagara*, NY 22 Jan (WD, WW) was the season's only report. An Indigo Bunting, very scarce in winter, visited W. Cape May 13–19 Dec (CV et al.). New Jersey hosted 3 Painted Buntings: an ad. male at Erma, *Cape May* 14 Nov+ (F. MacDonald, †m.ob.) and single green birds at Woodbridge, *Middlesex* 2 Jan (†George Roussey) and Eatontown, *Monmouth* 23–30 Jan (ph. Larry Jones et al.). Six Dickcissels in New Jersey was above average, while another was farther n. at Five Rivers, *Albany*, NY 19 Dec–2 Jan (Denise Hackert-Stoner, Tina Markopoulos, Patti Packer, Scott Stoner).

Eastern Meadowlarks made a strong showing relative to recent years, with totals of 60 on the Montauk C.B.C. 18 Dec and of 20+ on two other C.B.C.s, along with many reports of smaller numbers. Yellow-headed Blackbird reports consisted of a female at Noyack, *Suffolk*, NY 4 Dec (Bob McGrath) and an ad. male n. of Wilmington, DE 7 Feb (Frank Rohrbacher). The blackbird roost at Great Meadows, *Warren*, NJ produced 280,000 Common Grackles on the Walnut Valley C.B.C. 18 Dec (BT et al.). Boat-tailed Grackles did well too, with a surprising 1075 at Amassas Landing, *Burlington*, NJ 25 Jan (CS, JD). The blackbird roost at Great Meadows also held 10,000 Brown-headed Cowbirds 18 Dec (BT et al.). Baltimore Orioles were well represented in s. parts of the Region; one at Flood Gates near Repaupo Station, *Gloucester*, NJ 28 Feb (JG) was exceptionally late.

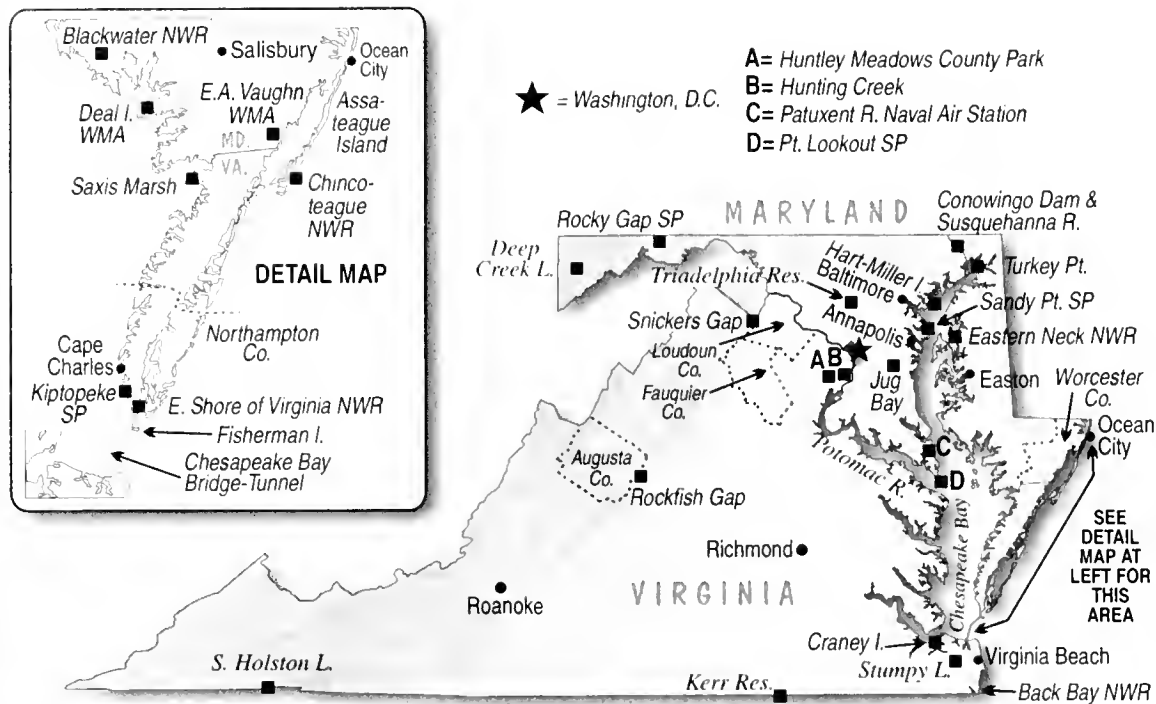
Winter finches were again scarce. Even Purple Finches and Pine Siskins, though widespread, were not unusually numerous. The only reports of Pine Grosbeaks were of 5 on the Saranac Lake C.B.C. 2 Jan and singles at five other *Clinton*, *Essex*, and *Hamilton*, NY locations. A paltry 33 Red Crossbills—with a maximum of 20 on the Rome, NY C.B.C. 19 Dec—were all that were reported. A total of 34 White-winged Crossbills included 20 near Vermontville, *Franklin*, NY 12 Feb (Matthew

Young) and 13 on the Saranac Lake C.B.C. 2 Jan. The Common Redpoll maximum was 266 on the Saranac Lake C.B.C. 2 Jan, but except for 60 at Pompey, *Onondaga*, NY 23 Feb (fide BP), most were confined to the Adirondaeks and surrounding areas. The high count of Evening Grosbeaks was 130 at Vermontville 12 Feb, with 89 on the Ferrisburgh C.B.C. 18 Dec (partly in New York, partly Vermont) and 87 on Saranac Lake C.B.C. 2 Jan. A handful of other reports of smaller numbers, nearly all in ne. New York, rounded out the total.

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**SA** Up to 5 **Boreal Owls**, all in New York, constituted an invasion by modern standards. The first was discovered at Wilson-Tuscarora S.P., *Niagara* 18 Dec (Bret Ewald, †WW), and possibly the same individual visited some remote property at nearby Wilson 23 Jan+ (Marg Partridge, †WD). On the Lower Hudson C.B.C., one was in Central Park 19 Dec–14 Jan (Jim Demes, Peter Post, m.ob.). Another was at Manitou Beach, *Monroe* 30 Dec–1 Jan (DT, m.ob.); possibly the same individual appeared at Hilton, *Monroe* 22 Jan (Mary Leary).

# Middle Atlantic



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The Region's weather was rather a roller-coaster between December and February, but it ended up averaging warmer and drier than average in both states. The first real storm of the season arrived 19 December, with brutal cold and high winds. A week later, 26 December, southeastern Virginia was hit by heavy snow squalls that spared much of the rest of the state (<<http://www4.ncsu.edu/~nwsfo/storage/cases/20041226>>). January, as usual, was generally quite cold over most of the Region, while February had several breaks (up to 70° F days in some spots) that broke local records. The National Weather Service has recently (December 2004) posted a summary of Virginia winters on the web (<<http://www.vaemergency.com/library/vawinter/va-win.htm>>) that may be of interest.

Birding was brisk in both states, with a potential first state record in both (Northern Lapwing). The tail end of the Cave Swallow invasion came to a close, and the southernmost Northern Shrikes in that species' strong flight were found. But finches and owls belonged to other regions this winter,

and state birders barely detected the great invasion of murres that observers noted in New Jersey, Delaware, and the Carolinas, possibly for lack of seawatching activity.

Thanks to past editor Marshall J. Iliff for composing the S.A. box on the lapwing.

Abbreviations: Assat. (Assateague I., Worcester, MD); Bay (Chesapeake Bay); Black. (Blackwater N.W.R., Dorchester, MD); Black Hills (Black Hills Regional Park/Little Seneca Res., Montgomery, MD); C.B.B.T. (Chesapeake Bay Bridge-Tunnel, s. of Northampton, VA); D.C. (District of Columbia); O.C. Inlet (Ocean City Inlet, Worcester, MD).

## LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

A Pacific Loon was seen at Dameron Marsh, Northumberland, VA 27 Jan (p.a., †FA). Inland Red-throated Loons included 2 on the Potomac R. near Lowes I., Montgomery, MD 5 Dec (KG, Linda Millington, Kim Peacock) and singles at Beaverdam Res., Loudoun, VA 20 Jan (John Drummond), Black Hills 28 Jan (DCz), and Kerr Res., Mecklenburg, VA 12 Feb (AD). The Cape Charles C.B.C. on 30 Dec tallied 4231 Red-throated Loons, the 2nd highest in count history (HTA et al.). A Clark's Grebe was again found off Virginia Beach at Fort Story, with the only sighting this year 1 Jan (vt. RLAn, Thuy Tran et al.); it or another has appeared in this area in four previous winters: Feb 2000, Dec 2001, Dec 2002–Jan 2003, and Dec 2003–Jan 2004. Another *Aechmophorus* grebe, thought to be a Western Grebe, was seen 15–16 Jan at L.

Anna, Louisa, VA (Chris Elliot, *vide* MRB, BTe). An Eared Grebe was discovered at Black Hills 26 Nov, where it was later joined by another 1 Jan; the 2 were last reported 28 Jan (DCz, HH, m.ob.). Nine reports of Red-necked Grebes spanned 1 Jan–28 Feb, five of these from more expected coastal locations, with the C.B.B.T. hosting 3 birds. Less routine sightings were singles at L. Anna, Louisa 16 Jan (G. & R. Harris, BTe); Little Hunting Creek, Fairfax, VA 21 Jan (Stephen Williams); Fort McHenry, Baltimore ca. 27 Jan (JP); and Germantown Res., Fauquier, VA 16 Feb (TMD).

A pelagic trip out of Lewes, Delaware into Worcester waters 26 Feb produced 30 Northern Fulmars (PG et al.). An American White Pelican was at Jug Bay, Anne Arundel/Prince George's, MD 17–18 Dec (p.a., Jeff Shenot, MH); another was in s. Northampton 30 Dec (GLA, ph. BTA, SWS, Will Russell). Twelve Brown Pelicans were out of place 2 Jan sitting on pound nets off South Point Cove, Calvert, MD; rarely are they that far n. in the Bay in such numbers in winter (Arlene Ripley). A Tricolored Heron at Deal I., Somerset, MD 6 Feb was a good find (JB); 2 were seen there 13 Feb and one 16 Feb (D&CB). The Cape Charles C.B.C. 30 Dec had 66 White Ibis, a high winter count (HTA et al.) typical of recent years.

There were four reports of Ross's Geese totaling 7 individuals 30 Dec–21 Jan, all e. of the Bay and all but one in Maryland. Greater White-fronted Geese (subspecies unknown) were widely reported, all singletons at 10 locations 6 Dec–23 Feb, many of them holdovers from fall. A Barnacle Goose wearing a metal band on its left leg was at Pickering Creek Audubon Center, Talbot, MD 12 Jan; the band was never read, thus provenance remains uncertain. Another wintered at Layman's Pond, Botetourt, VA, originally found 19 Dec (Barry Kinzie, Katrina Knight). Since the recent split, Cackling Geese reports have poured in, overwhelmingly from Maryland. There were no fewer than 26 reports from 21 locations in 13 counties 21 Nov–28 Feb in Maryland, all apparently of the expected nominate form. Virginia reports numbered four, from 15 Dec–3 Feb in four counties, also of Richardson's. The largest count was of 9 birds in flight at dusk among thousands of Canada Geese at Black Hills 10 Dec (DCz). While many of the reports are certainly credible, it does provoke wonder as to whether the identification of this subspecies is considered carefully enough; note that a flock of 8 *minima* was documented just s. of Virginia in North Carolina.

It was a good winter for Eurasian Wigeon, with eight total reports. Five in Virginia were initially spotted 23 Dec–11 Jan, with at least 3 staying through and past the end of the reporting period; only one was found away



**SA** Well documented has been the recovery of Bald Eagle through much of its former range. A count conducted along the Rappahannock R. between Virginia's Northern Neck and Middle Peninsula in Feb 2005 (Sandy Specner, Bill Portlock, Jeff Cooper) found **395** (219 ads., 168 imm, and 8 not aged). The previous high count for this survey was 278 in 2001, with 257 in 2002. The ten-year average is 178, though this was the first year the count was conducted in Feb. A run of fish into the river could be responsible for the increased count. Another impressive count was 131 found at Black. coming to three evening roosts 11 Jan (Levin Wiley). Surprisingly, the Fort Belvoir C.B.C. has reported triple digits of the species since 1995, and this year noted only 79 during the count, held 2 Jan (KG).

from the Coastal Plain, the bird at Airlie, Fauquier returning for its 11th winter 23 Dec (TMD, ICT). In Maryland, 3 were reported beginning 11 Dec, with the last discovered 21 Feb, all on the Coastal Plain, and 2 staying through the end of winter. A Blue-winged Teal was at Greenspring Mill Pond, Frederick, VA 1 Jan (Jon & B. J. Little). The Route 3 ponds in King George, VA produced a count of 3560 Ring-necked Ducks 2 Dec, with 12% noted as females (FA). One King and 6 Common Eiders were reported on the Cape Charles C.B.C. 30 Dec. Both O.C. Inlet and the C.B.B.T. had eiders and Harlequin Ducks this winter, though no Kings were reported at the C.B.B.T. The high count of Common Eiders was 15 on 20 Feb at O.C. Inlet (RFR). The Harlequin Duck from fall at Wades Point Inn, Talbot, MD was last seen 6 Dec (LR, vt. RFR, m.ob.). Inland Long-tailed Duck reports in Virginia were 21 Dec at L. Braddock, Fairfax (Stephen Eccles); 9 Jan at Claytor L., Pulaski (Mark Prosser, *fide* CK); and 16 Feb at Saltville, Smyth (*fide* Allen Boynton). Maryland had three such reports: 2 on the Potomac R. at Fort Washington, Prince George's 2 Dec (DM); 2 on Triadelphia Res., Montgomery 12–13 Dec (with an ad. White-winged Scoter) (KS, BO); and one at Little Seneca L., Montgomery 30 Dec (Dave Powell et al.). Two Black Scoters were with several Surf Scoters at Cobb I., Charles, MD 16 Dec (GMJ, MH). A good count of 1000+ Common Mergansers was at Centennial L., Howard, MD 29 Dec (KS); 1200–1300 were there 23 Feb (JS).

## RAPTORS THROUGH ALCIDS

An imm. male Northern Goshawk was seen

1 Jan at Kiptopeke, Northampton (ESB, HFD, SAH et al.), the only one reported in the state after Dec. Single Rough-legged Hawks were reported from seven Maryland locations 13 Dec–13 Feb, all on the Eastern Shore except one at Patuxent R. Naval Air Station 13 Dec and one 27 Dec along Camp Brown Rd., Scotland, both Saint Mary's (both KR). The only report of multiple birds was 5 hunting the edge of a marsh fire 11 Feb at the Lower Nanticoke R. at Sandy Hill and Savannah L., Wicomico (SHD). Virginia had eight reports from 19 Dec–26 Feb, with only two Piedmont reports, the balance coming from the Mountains and Valleys. There seemed to be more Golden Eagles wintering in the Region than in recent years; the species was reported from seven Virginia and five Maryland locations. The Virginia reports were all in the Mountains and Valleys, aside from one at Dick Cross W.M.A., Mecklenburg 4 Jan (Will Cook, *fide* Gene Sattler); the Maryland reports were all from the Eastern Shore, except an ad. over a yard in Davidsonville, Anne Arundel 2 Jan (PD et al.).

King Rails have at least two reliable locations where reported year-round in Virginia: Back Bay N.W.R./False Cape S.P. in Virginia Beach and Occoquan Bay N.W.R., Prince William, VA; 3 were found at the latter 3 Jan, along with one Virginia Rail (JK, KG, BL). Elsewhere, the Brooke C.B.C., Stafford, VA noted its first since 1973 on 14 Dec (*fide* TK), and 5 were heard calling at dusk 26 Feb at Drake's Marsh, Westmoreland, VA (FA). We should continue to track this scarce nester and migrant in our Region. A Virginia Rail was heard at Lilypons, Frederick, MD 1 Jan (GM, BC). A Black Rail was seen in flight

16 Jan along Elliott I. Rd., Dorchester, MD (Bob Abrams, Joan Boudreau). A Common Moorhen was found on the Cape Charles C.B.C. 30 Dec at the Riverview Farm, Northampton, a traditional spot for the species and one that has been newly acquired by The Nature Conservancy (ESB). The Sandhill Crane found in fall near Poolsville, Montgomery, MD was seen regularly through 26 Dec (m.ob.); however, a report of one at a farm in the general area 11 & 13 Feb suggests the bird never strayed far (Sheila Coehran).

An American Avocet was at Craney 11 Dec (EE), and 2 were at Black. 21 Feb, rare there in winter and the first report for Feb (Paul Noell, RFR). A Spotted Sandpiper was found on the Cape Charles C.B.C. 30 Dec (*fide* HTA). A Willet was at Eagle's Nest Campground, Worcester 16 Jan (SA, BH). Fourteen Red Knots were noted on the Cape Charles C.B.C. (HTA); one was reported 1 Jan from O.C. Inlet (DCz, MAT); 21 were at the Thoms Cr. Flats at the sc. end of Mockhorn I., Northampton 20 Feb (HTA). A Pectoral Sandpiper was late at Huntley Meadows, Fairfax 5 Dec (Andy Rabin, Phil Kenny). A Dunlin was unexpected in Rockingham, VA 16 Dec at the Rte. 768 pond (AL, PL). Good counts of Purple Sandpipers were at Poplar I., Talbot, MD: 23 and 64 on 8 & 30 Dec, respectively (JR, *fide* LR). Six Red Phalaropes were seen on a pelagic trip into Maryland waters off Worcester 26 Feb (PG et al.).

A Pomarine Jaeger was seen from the C.B.B.T. during the Chesapeake Bay C.B.C. 26 Dec (ESB et al.); an unidentified jaeger was on the Cape Charles C.B.C. 30 Dec (Jim Beard, David O. Matson, *fide* HTA). A Laughing Gull was late at Little Seneca L., Montgomery 10 Dec (DCz). An ad. Black-headed Gull was at Schoolhouse Pond, Prince George's, MD 12–18 Dec (HH, ph. BH, JLS, m.ob.); another was at Lynnhaven Inlet, Virginia Beach, VA 25 Feb (Robert Ferrell et al.). A Little Gull was at O.C. Inlet 12 & 14 Dec (HH, ZB). A Mew Gull of the North American race, *brachyrhynchus*, was found at Schoolhouse Pond 24 Dec (p.a., †SS);

**SA** An ad. **Northern Lapwing** at Creagerstown, Frederick, MD 12–16 Feb and again 2–6 Mar (Lyn & Skip Nelson, ph. GMJ, ph. DCz, m.ob.) was widely enjoyed for a state and Regional first. Potentially Virginia's first, one sketched and described by two observers along the entrance to Dameron Marsh Rd., near Kilmarnock, Northumberland 24 Dec (the day after North Carolina's second at Mackay Island, appeared, then vanished) has been submitted to the state committee for review (†Richard R. Hinch, †Phillip H. Hinch). It was observed at a distance of 6 m or so for 10 minutes. Like the Mackay Island bird, it was in a recently harvested soybean field with 5–6 Killdeer.



The eventual appearance of this species in the Region was anticipated, given 18 records from other eastern states, including Florida, Ohio, Delaware, New Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, Massachusetts, South Carolina, North Carolina, and Maine (as well as records from Atlantic Canada). Though primarily a winter visitor, a lapwing was seen in Delaware 6–7 Jul 1996. A landmark invasion to the New World occurred in Dec 1927, which Bagg (1967. Factors affecting the occurrence of the Northern Lapwing in eastern North America. *Living Bird* 6: 87–122) argued was due to a low-pressure system in the North Atlantic that displaced migrant flocks westward as they departed Scandinavia (much as European Golden-Plovers have been displaced to Newfoundland in Apr); apparently, no such event on this scale has occurred since that time.

A first for the Middle Atlantic region, this Northern Lapwing at Creagerstown, Frederick County, Maryland (here 14 February 2005) may have been the same individual seen in North Carolina 23 December and in Virginia 24 December. Photograph by Mark L. Hoffman.

Maryland's one accepted record is of a first-winter *canus* at Conowingo Dam in Jan 1994, but Virginia has photographed records of both taxa from C.B.B.T.

An ad. California Gull and an ad. Thayer's Gull were found at the landfill in Fauquier, VA 26 Feb (TMD, ph. EMH, BF, ph. SAH). A first-winter Thayer's was seen 2 Jan from the Occoquan R. bridge at Rte. 123, the line between Fairfax and Prince William, during the Ft. Belvoir C.B.C. (JK, George Ledec). Maryland had first-winter birds 16–17 Dec at Benedict, Charles (MH, GMJ), 15 Jan at the Cecil landfill (ph. JBC), 22 Jan+ at North East Town Park, Cecil (SM), and 2 & 5 Feb at the Frederick landfill (HH, JLS). Two others described as Thayer's/Iceland Gulls were seen 27 Dec at Schoolhouse Pond (GM, BC) and 15 Jan at the Beulah landfill, Dorchester, MD (Clive Harris). Virginia had four coastal reports of Iceland Gulls 4 Dec–20 Feb from the C.B.B.T., Suffolk, Virginia Beach, and Northampton. Maryland birders reported Icelanders from seven locations 14 Dec–18 Feb, the two most notable report here being 3 at Little Seneca L., Montgomery (DCz): singles on 29 Dec (described as a dark Kumlien's/pale Thayer's type), 1 Feb, and 12 Feb. Some 65 Lesser Black-backed Gulls were counted 7 Dec during a survey of Back Bay N.W.R., Virginia Beach (DS et al.). Three

Glaucous Gulls were reported from Virginia 2–29 Jan, while reports from 11 Maryland locations represented at least 15 birds, 11 Dec+. The Sandgates, MD Kelp Gull was reported throughout winter (Jane Kostenko).

A Common Murre was reported twice from the C.B.B.T. 15–16 Jan (Charles Ziegenfus) and 2 Feb (DCI). Neither report was accompanied by details; Virginia has only one photographic record of the species. Razorbills were seen several times this winter from the C.B.B.T. 29 Dec–21 Jan (SAH, BL, DCI, RLak, m.ob.); one to 2 were seen 1 Jan–20 Feb from O.C. Inlet (DCz, MAT, RFR, Danny Poet, m.ob.); another was seen 17 Feb off Back Bay N.W.R., Virginia Beach (RLak, DS); and one was seen 20 Feb from Kiptopeke S.P., Northampton (fide RLak). Two Atlantic Puffins, 576 Dovekies, and 82 Razorbills were seen 26 Feb on a Maryland pelagic trip (PG et al.).

### DOVES THROUGH FINCHES

A White-winged Dove, only Maryland's 4th, was seen along Golf Course Rd. at Ocean City, Worcester 4 Dec (+Shelly & Glen Lovelace). Eurasian Collared-Doves are still rare throughout most of the Region. Six were along Longview and Woodland Dr., Isle of Wight 7 Feb, first discovered here in Aug (AD); more surprising was a popu-

lation discovered in Pulaski, VA. Birds were found at three locations 6 Feb: one at Fairlawn, 4 at Belspring, and 6 about 2 km from Belspring (CK, AK); Pulaski has one previous record, and there are two records in nearby Montgomery.

Barn Owls are known to nest at virtually any time of year; however, 2 ads. with 3 small young found 2 Jan in a feed storage hopper at DeBusk Mill during the Glade Spring C.B.C., Washington (Chris O'Bryan, Andy Jones, J. Wallace Coffey) was anything but expected, shattering the earliest nesting record for Virginia. Two Snowy Owls were reported in Virginia during winter: 29–30 Dec at Chinc. (TK et al.) and 30–31 Dec at Ship Shoal I., Northampton (fide HTA). There was a spectacular concentration of Short-eared Owls wintering in n. Fauquier near Rectortown, a recently discovered wintering area. The first bird was reported 15 Jan (RW); T. Day made frequent visits over the following two months, regularly seeing 12–18 birds interacting with up to 10 Northern Harriers, topping off with 30 seen 25 Feb (TMD, KBW, MD). Other sites with decent numbers included Zion Crossroads, Louisa 10 Feb+, with 3–6 seen regularly, and Dulles Airport, Loudoun, VA, where 7 were noted 21 Feb (fide TMD).

Maryland's first Calliope Hummingbird reported in fall was seen at Bowie, Prince George's through 18 Dec (Mary Gustafson); another bird thought to be a Calliope was seen in a yard along the Nansemond R. at Suffolk, though photographs were perhaps inconclusive (CLW). Virginia's 2nd Black-chinned Hummingbird, found 28 Nov at Cape Charles, Northampton, was seen through 19 Dec, when a strong storm hit the area (ESB, m.ob.). A Ruby-throated Hummingbird was found at the same Cape Charles feeder 30 Dec–19 Jan (Henry Floyd, ESB); 2 others were at a feeder in Virginia Beach 21 Jan (Claude Bell). A Rufous Hummingbird was at the Mary Ripley Garden, D.C. 18 Dec–7 Feb (Steve Pretl, m.ob.); this urban location hosted vagrant hummingbirds the previous winter. Again this year, multiple unidentified hummingbirds haunted Virginia Beach feeders.

A Western Kingbird was found 19 Dec on the Saint Michael's C.B.C. at Smith Point Farm, Talbot (fide LR); details have not yet been seen. Common Ravens are increasingly reported from the e. Piedmont in Virginia; 2 were heard at Great Falls, Fairfax 2 Jan (RW), 2 were at Meadowood West, Fairfax 2 Jan (Ron Staley, Chris Kessler, Lucy Uncu), and one was seen on I-95 in Caroline 12 Feb (SAH). Three Brown-headed Nuthatches were found 8 Jan in Pulaski; these birds are part of a disjunct population, the westernmost of its kind in Virginia, present since 1994 (CK, Ryan Mays, AK, Len Diloia).

**SA** The unprecedented influx of Cave Swallows into the Middle Atlantic in Nov continued well into Dec, with Maryland observers finding birds in locations across the state, while Virginia's were confined to the coast. Thought to arrive on the winds of fast-moving storms from Texas and vicinity, this year's event had birds lingering in the area longer than previously experienced here. The bulk of these birds continued in s. Northampton, with several reports of 25 or more from fields along Rte. 600 at Latimer's Siding Road. Following a late Nov sighting, inland Frederick, MD had another bird at Lilypons along the Monocacy R. 1 Dec, lingering through 2 Dec (PEL). This species has so quickly gone from being unknown in the Region to being a "regular" in Nov on the coast (lately outnumbering Tree Swallow in some areas!) that few details were provided for these sightings, despite careful study by dozens of observers. The species is on the Review List in both states, and observers are urged to send photographs and field notes to the respective state committees.

**Table 1. Cave Swallows observed in Virginia and Maryland, December 2004.**

Date	Number	Location	Observer(s)
1–2 Dec	1	Lilypons, Frederick, MD	PEL
2–4 Dec	1	Wades Point Inn, Talbot, MD	ZB, LR
2–5 Dec	25+	Capeville, Northampton, VA	KK, RLAn, BTe
3 Dec	6	Winslow Bunker, Northampton, VA	RLAn
3 Dec	1	Potomac R., Loudoun, VA	DCz
3 Dec	3	Tilghman I., Talbot, MD	HH
3 Dec	2	Assateague I., Worcester, MD	D&CB
3–5 Dec	1*	Chincoteague, Accomack, VA	GK, Mike Braun et al.
5 Dec	1	Piscataway Park, Prince George's	DM et al.
11 Dec	2**	Craney Is., Portsmouth, VA	EE
11 Dec	1	Hart-Miller I., Baltimore, MD	EJS
11–12 Dec	7***	Coastal Worcester, MD	MH, JLS, GS et al.
12 Dec	12	Capeville, Northampton, VA	DCr et al.
17 Dec	2	Eagles Landing G.C., Worcester	SHD

\*One bird found roosting 5 Dec (GK); it was the only bird observed roosting.

\*\*Of 7 *Petrochelidon* swallows observed, only 2 were positively identified as Cave.

\*\*\*Several Worcester locations, including the Eagle's Nest Campground, the Verrazano Bridge, S. Point boat ramp, Assat., and O.C. Inlet. Great care was taken to determine the precise number of birds present by time, location, and flight direction.

It was a good winter for shrikes. A Northern Shrike was found 30 Dec at Fisherman I., Northampton on the Cape Charles C.B.C. (Matt Sharp); it was relocated 5 Mar–2 Apr (ESB, RLak, J. Getgood, F. Smith, m.ob.).



Northern Shrike made a good showing in the Middle Atlantic region this season. In addition to a long-staying subadult on Fisherman Island N.W.R., Northampton County, Virginia, this bird was found at the end of February 2005 (here 7 March) at Pickering Creek, Talbot County, Maryland. Photograph by George M. Jett.

Another Northern was found at Pickering Cr. Audubon Center, Talbot 17 Feb, perhaps also seen two weeks prior; it stayed well into Mar (Terry Allen, *vide* LR, HH, m.ob.). A Loggerhead Shrike was found 27 Dec near Downsville, Washington, MD (p.a., Hugh Mahanes, Barbara Gearheart, m.ob.) and was seen throughout winter (with a 2nd bird discovered there in Mar). Virginia Loggerhead reports came from Foxbridge, Montgomery 11 Dec (John Kell), Burke's Garden, Tazewell 26 Dec (Jim and Judy Phillips), along Montessor Rd., Loudoun 15 Jan–6 Feb (Glenn Koppel, Mary Alice Koeneke, m.ob.), Blandly Experimental Farm, Clarke 29 Jan (SAH), and s. of Rural Retreat L., Smyth 15 Feb (Glen Eller). Two were seen about a km apart at Swoope, Augusta 3 Feb (AL, PL).

A Nashville Warbler was in a Norfolk, VA yard 25 Dec–9 Jan (DCI). A Black-throated Green Warbler was found 18 Dec rooting through gutters on a building at Sugarloaf Mt., Frederick, MD (ph. DCz); another was on the Nansemond River C.B.C., Suffolk 2 Jan (RLak). A Prairie Warbler was at Fort McHenry, Baltimore 3 Dec–18 Jan, along with 2 Palm Warblers (Jim Peters, *vide* Keith Eric Costley). A Black-and-white Warbler was discovered on the Newport News C.B.C. 18 Dec (*vide* Joyce Williams); another (a female) was in a Norfolk yard 15 Jan (RLak). Two Wilson's Warblers were present, one at Patuxent R. Naval Air Station 27–31 Dec (Sigrid Stiles) and one at a Cape Charles, Northampton garden 31 Dec–21 Feb (ESB, m.ob.). Bolton Hill

in Baltimore hosted a Yellow-breasted Chat 13 Dec–5 Apr (Bryce Butler).

A female Western Tanager at Castleton, Virginia Beach throughout the reporting period was enjoyed by many (ph. Nylia &

Steve Proescher) and may have been one of 3 in that city, but we do not have details on the others (*vide* Karen Beatty, Mary Reid Barrow). An ad. male Painted Bunting at a feeder in the Deep Creek area of Chesapeake, VA 5 Feb+ (Susan Hubbard, m.ob.) was banded by Paul W. Sykes. A Dickcissel was found 18 Dec at Jones Point, Alexandria (KG, Marc Ribaud, ph. Larry Meade). A Le Conte's Sparrow was at the Wilna Tract of the Rappahannock River N.W.R., Richmond, VA 18 Dec–12 Jan (Sandy Spencer, ph. JF), for one of few Jan state records away from Virginia Beach; a Clay-colored Sparrow was found at the same refuge 9–12 Jan (Allen Bryan, ph. JF). Other Clay-colored included one n. of Tyaskin, Wicomico, MD 8 Jan (JLS) and one 26 Feb at Jones Cr. Rd., near Newland, Richmond (FA). A Lark Sparrow appeared at a Chesapeake, VA feeder during the storm 26 Dec and was seen through 29 Dec and again 29 Jan (KK). Good counts of Snow Buntings were found at Poplar I., Talbot, with 110 there 8 Dec and 135 on 30 Dec (JR, *vide* LR).

The Cape Charles C.B.C. 30 Dec boasted an amazing 1.5 million Common Grackles and 800,000 Red-winged Blackbirds, crushing the previous highs for both species (HTA et al.). There were four reports of Yellow-headed Blackbird, all singles: 1 Jan near Kiptopeke Elementary School, Northampton, picked out of the same flock of ca. 2 million blackbirds (ESB); 23 Jan near Sandy Point, Anne Arundel (*vide* Al Haury); 20 Feb along Rte. 20, Orange, VA with a flock of 5000

icterids that also included an unspecified number of Brewer's Blackbirds (G&RH); and 25 Feb at a feeder during snow at Tunis Mills, Talbot (LR). An imm. male Brewer's Blackbird was at Dry Valley, Montgomery, VA 4 Dec (CK, RC); one was with a flock of Brown-headed Cowbirds along Rte. 16, Caroline, MD (John Hubbell); the regular flock in Nokesville, Prince William was first noted 17 Jan with 17 birds present, and was seen regularly during winter (SAH, m.ob.); and one was in a flock of European Starlings at Creaerstown, Frederick, MD 19 Feb (SS). At least 8 Baltimore Orioles were detected at seven locations 3 Dec–20 Jan, all but one in Virginia.

Reports of wintering finches were scant. Six Red Crossbills were found on the Cape Charles C.B.C. 30 Dec (GLA); 6 were seen 31 Dec at Shenandoah Mt., Augusta (Mark & Betty Gatewood); and 12 were at Gatewood Park, Pulaski 2 Jan (Rachel Muheim). Five reports of Common Redpolls were noted, all singles: 7 Dec at C.B.B.T. (DCR et al.); 18 Dec along Horseshoe Rd., Caroline (JLS, HH, JB); at a feeder in Elkton, Cecil 20 Dec (ph. SM); and during the count week of the Rockingham C.B.C. (*vide* TK). The only report of Evening Grosbeaks was 19 Dec on the Lower Kent C.B.C., Kent, MD, a flock of 24 birds (*vide* WGE).

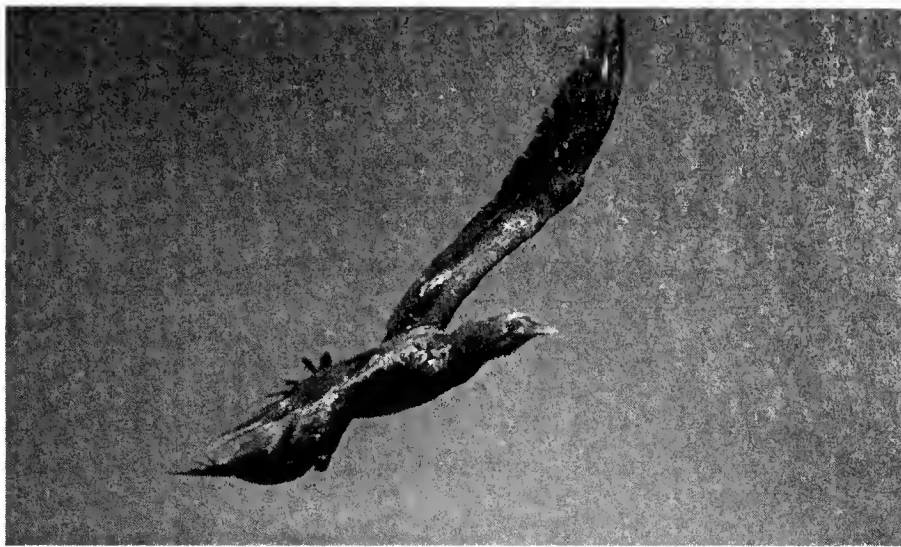
Contributors (subregional/county compilers in boldface): Robert L. Ake (RLAk; coastal Virginia), Robert L. Anderson (RLAn), George L. Armistead, Henry T. Armistead, Stan Arnold, Fred Atwood (e. Virginia), Zach Baer, Michael R. Boatwright (cen. Virginia), Jim Brighton, Edward S. Brinkley, Ray Callahan, J. B. Churchill, David Clark (DCI), Barry Cooper, Dan Cristol (DCr), Dave Czaplak (DCz), David Davis, Phil Davis, H. Fenton Day III, Mike Day, Todd M. Day, Lynn Davidson, Adam D'Onofrio (se. Virginia), Samuel H. Dyke, Walter G. Ellison, Elisa Enders, Bart Frazier, John Fox, Kurt Gaskill (n. Virginia), Paul Guris, Matt Hafner, Susan A. Heath, Hans Holbrook, Eric M. Hynes, George M. Jett, Teta Kain, Karen Kearney, Jay Keller, Alan Kessler, Clyde Kessler, Gretchen Knapp, Allen Larner, Patricia Larner, YuLee Larner (Augusta, VA), Bev Leeuwenburg, Paul E. Lehman, Roger & Linda Mayhorn (sw. Virginia), Gail Mackiernan, Sean McCandless, Dave Mozurkewich, Bonnie Ott, Elizabeth Pitney, Jim Peters, Kyle Rambo, Jan Reese, Robert F. Ringler, Les Roslund, Fran Saunders, Norm Saunders, Eugene J. Scarpula, Kurt Schwarz, Gary Smyle, Jo Solem (Howard, MD), John Spahr (JSp) (w. Virginia), James L. Stasz, Samuel W. Stewart, C. Michael Stinson (s.-cen. Virginia), Dana Stolley, Sherman Suter, Brian Taber (BTa), Brenda Tekin (BTe), Mary Ann Todd, Ian C. Topolsky, Ralph Wall, Kathryn B. Warman-Day, Hal L. Wieringa, C. Les Willis. 🌐





al.), 118 at L. Keowee, SC 9 Feb (PC), and 163 at Garden Lakes, Floyd, GA 20 Feb (MD). The very rare King Eider was found twice: a female at Pea I. 5 Dec (RD, ED) and an imm. male at Folly Beach, SC 1 Jan+ (CW, m.ob.), the latter providing about the 8th report in that state. A dozen Common Eider reports were over twice the normal for a winter season; farthest south was a female at Edisto Beach S.P., SC 31 Jan (RC), and the highest count was 5 at Oregon Inlet, NC in early Jan (DM, SS et al.). Also rare in the Region, Harlequin Ducks were seen off Pea I. 28 Dec (a female; RD) and at a Myrtle Beach, SC pier 13–19 Feb (a male; RL, SS et al.). Inland scoters of note included 6 Surfs at Salacoa Creek Park, Gordon, GA 4–8 Dec (JE, JSp), a White-winged at L. Hickory, NC 25 Dec (DM), and a Black on L. Norman, NC 19 Dec (*vide* TP). Along the coast, scoter numbers were definitely up in all three states, highlighted by impressive White-winged counts of 50 flying n. at Cumberland I., GA 19 Feb (BB) and 60 along the NC Outer Banks 20 Feb (HL et al.). Long-tailed Ducks were reported often, with the most noteworthy being 4 at L. Hickory, NC 20 Dec (DM) and 3 at Garden Lakes, GA 28 Dec (MD). Common Mergansers peaked at 317 at the usual Phelps L., NC wintering site 30 Dec (*vide* LW); 4 on the Henderson, NC C.B.C. 26 Dec (DB, ST, BO) furnished a rare mountain record.

An extremely early Swallow-tailed Kite was seen well at Butler I., Glynn, GA 9 Feb (*vide* LT). This, along with several other reports from that state, suggests that there was an early push by a few individuals. An ad. Swainson's Hawk was seen just n. of Avon, NC on the Outer Banks 4 Dec (JMe et al.); if accepted by the N.C.B.R.C., it would provide about the 8th record for that state. Rare in our Region were a *calurus* Red-tailed Hawk in Murray, GA 21 Dec (JSp) and a *krideri* in Carteret, NC 7 Jan (JF, JFe). A Rough-legged Hawk at Alligator River N.W.R., NC 4 Jan (JL) was the only certain report of the species. Continuing a recent



Hanging out on the M2R6 Tower 77 km off Sapelo Island, Georgia, this juvenile Brown Booby provided the first winter season record for the state here on 4 December 2005. Records of this species in the Southeast have increased sharply in recent years, but winter records are still quite unexpected. Photograph by Russ Wigh.

trend, Golden Eagles were reported from all three states, all single imms. except for the ad. in Kershaw, SC 3 Jan (RC, CE).

A Purple Gallinule, rare in winter, was a good find in Lee, GA 1 Jan (JFI, EH). Sandhill Crane reports included 11 on the ACE Basin C.B.C. 26 Dec (*vide* RC), 3 in Henderson, NC 24 Dec–early Jan (WF, RS, v.o.), and one in ne. Guilford, NC early Feb+ (JWa, ET, m.ob.), an above-average tally. The Region hosted 7 reintroduced Whooping Cranes this winter: 4 wintered in Colleton and Beaufort, SC and 3 wintered in Jones, NC Dec+ (*vide* BR). It will be interesting to see if these birds return next winter.

### SHOREBIRDS THROUGH ALCIDS

A Northern Lapwing photographed at Maekay I. N.W.R., NC 23 Dec (ph. TC) was easily the rarest bird of the season in the Region. Present for only one day, this bird was just 2 km s. of the border with Virginia and may be the same individual seen the next afternoon in that state. It provided the 2nd record for North Carolina, the first being from 1926! South Carolina has one report, from 1940. Wilson's Plovers are annual winter residents at a few sites in our Region. The best counts included 60 on Little St. Simons I., GA 17 Dec (BN et al.), 11 on Harbor I., Beaufort, SC 11 Feb (*vide* ND), and 3 at Bird Shoal, Carteret, NC 19 Dec (SCo et al.). Some excellent Piping Plover totals included 56 on Cumberland I., GA 14 Jan (PS, RW et al.),

55+ on Little St. Simons I., GA 17 Dec (BN), and 25 at Bird Shoal, NC 19 Dec (SCo et al.). Extremely rare and unexpected in winter, Black-necked Stilts made news with 1–2 at the Altamaha W.M.A., GA 29 Dec–15 Jan (JSp, EH) and one at Alligator River N.W.R., NC 2–4 Jan (EM, TF, JL). Spotted Sandpiper reports were about average; six inland sightings were spread across the Region. Wintering Whimbrels numbered 39 on the Charleston, SC C.B.C. 2 Jan (ND et al.) and 6 on the e. end of Shackleford Banks, Carteret, NC 29 Jan (JWr et al.). One or 2 Long-billed Curlews were found at the usual

wintering sites. The wintering population of Stilt Sandpipers at the S.S.S. peaked at 57 individuals 22 Dec (SC) and one near Folly Beach, SC 15–16 Jan (AH et al.) was locally very unusual for the season. Red Phalaropes were noted offshore again this winter: 321 off Sapelo I., GA 12 Feb (RW et al.) and 60 off Hatteras, NC 19 Feb (BP et al.).

Two Great Skuas were off Hatteras, NC 19 Feb (BP et al.). Onshore, 2 Pomarine and 16 Parasitic Jaegers were counted at Cumberland I., GA 18–19 Dec (MB), and one Parasitic was in the Charleston, SC harbor 11 Feb (*vide* ND). Gulls made news at several inland sites in the Region. At Jordan L., NC an ad. Little Gull was present 19 Feb (GB) and an ad. Black-headed Gull was found 16 Jan (RD, HL, JPi), providing the first truly inland report for the latter species in the state. Other Black-headed Gulls were noted at the L. Matt. causeway 4 Dec+ (JEn, m.ob.), at the Jacksonville, NC W.T.P. 29 Jan (*vide* JF), at H.B.S.P. 17 Dec (*vide* STu), and at the Conway, SC W.T.P. 20 Jan (JP). A California Gull was at C. Hatt. 26 Feb (RD, DC), where regular, but one at the Raleigh, NC landfill 22 Jan (DC, JPi, HL) provided a first truly inland report for that state. At L. Tobe-sofkee, Macon, GA, an amazing assemblage of gulls included a first-winter California Gull, a first-winter Thayer's Gull, a first-winter Iceland Gull, and a first-winter Glaucous Gull 19–20 Jan (MB, EB, RB); Thayer's and Glaucous were seen there into Feb. If

**SA** A major alcid invasion occurred again this winter, and no fewer than five species were reported. A Common Murre was reported from H.B.S.P. 30 Dec (JP) and again 26–29 Jan (MBd, ND). If accepted by the S.C.B.R.C., this would be the second report from that state. Multiple Thick-billed Murres were found this winter; the spring report will treat the Mar records. One was off C. Hatt. 2 Jan (BP), one was at Wrightsville Beach, NC 3 Jan (RD, DC, JPa), up to 2 were at H.B.S.P. 22 Jan–25 Feb (ND, JP, MBd, RC, KF et al.), at least 2 were in the Atlantic Beach–Ft. Macon area in late Jan (GL, S&LSe), and one was at Atlantic Beach 27 Feb (RD). Razorbills were found in all three states, with good numbers all the way to Georgia's offshore waters, where 106 were e. of Sapelo I. 12 Feb (RW et al.), a new state high count. Other totals of note included 283 at Wrightsville Beach, NC 3 Jan (RD et al.), 300+ at Atlantic Beach, NC 27 Feb (RD), and 612 off Hatteras, NC 19 Feb (BP et al.). In South Carolina, the peak total reported was 12 at H.B.S.P. 29 Jan (ND). Dovekies were found in generally small numbers. In North Carolina, they were scattered along the coast, and the highest count was 10–20 off Beaufort Inlet 15 Feb (*vide* JF). One made it as far s. as H.B.S.P. 30 Jan–13 Feb (AS, ND et al.). A species perhaps less prone to irruptive influxes than the others, Atlantic Puffins posted a record state count of 31 off Hatteras, NC 19 Feb (BP et al.), and 19 were reported even farther s. off of C. Fear 20 Feb (*vide* BP). These represent only the 5th and 6th reports for that state.



Though most birders were aware of the "tiny" Canada Geese that have often turned up during winter, it was not until winter 2004–2005, after the American Ornithologists' Union elevated Cackling Goose to species level, that they were widely reported. This bird at Lake Junaluska, Haywood County, NC was present from late (here 30) December 2004 through mid-January 2005; it appeared to be of the nominate *hutchinsii* form. Photograph by Jonathan Mays.

accepted, the California Gull would be a first for Georgia, while the Thayer's would be a 2nd. Other Thayer's Gulls included ads. at Oregon Inlet, NC 16 Jan (SS et al.) and C. Hatt. 26 Feb (DC, RD). Iceland Gull reports included 2 on the C. Hatt. C.B.C. 27 Dec (fide PM), one at Ft. Macon, NC 29–30 Jan (HL et al.), an ad. off Hatteras, NC 19 Feb (BP et al.), one at the S.S.S. 25–26 Feb (SC), one at C. Hatt. 26 Feb (DC, RD), and one at C. Lookout, NC 27 Feb (JF et al.). First-winter Glaucous Gulls at Sullivan's I., SC 7 Jan (fide CWA) and H.B.S.P. 8 Feb (DM) were noteworthy. Lesser Black-backed Gulls were present in larger-than-normal numbers this year, as evidenced by the record count of 180 on the C. Hatt. C.B.C. 27 Dec (fide PM). Black-legged Kittiwake reports were few: an ad. at Oregon Inlet, NC 16 Jan (SS et al.), 4 off Sapelo I., GA 12 Feb (RW et al.), 3 off Hatteras, NC 19 Feb (BP et al.), and one at Atlantic Beach, NC 28 Feb (JF, SB).

### DOVES THROUGH WAXWING

Eurasian Collared-Doves continued to be found at several new localities throughout the Region. The only White-winged Doves reported were 2 on the Hilton Head I., SC C.B.C. 18 Dec (fide RC) and singles at North R. Farms, Carteret, NC 12 Dec (JF et al.), Jekyll I., GA through 14 Dec (MC), and at Ocracoke, NC 20 Feb (PV). Encouraging for a declining species was the count of 20 Common Ground-Doves at the S.S.S. 16 Feb (SC). The very rare Snowy Owl was found twice this year: singles at Carova, NC on the n. Currituck banks the first week of Dec (fide SM) and a moribund bird in Jones, GA in the last week of Dec (fide MB). Short-eared Owl numbers seemed down somewhat this winter, and only one Northern Saw-whet Owl was reported along the coast, that being one heard at Wilmington, NC 1 Jan (RD). A Common Nighthawk was at Fayetteville, NC

1 Dec (HB), and an unidentified nighthawk was at Columbia, SC 6 Dec (JG). Hummingbirds once again wintered in the Region in high numbers, although only five species were reported. Ruby-throats continue to winter mostly along the coast, while *Sceloporus* wintered all across the Region, with fewer along the immediate coast. At least 6 Black-chinneds were spread across all three states, and only one Calliope was reported, in Decatur, GA during Dec (fide TM). A second-year male Allen's Hummingbird was at Ashburn, Turner, GA 3–5 Feb (RT).

Totally unexpected was the Eastern Wood-Pewee seen and heard calling at



Perusal of a hunter's bag at Oden's Dock, Hatteras village, North Carolina turned up a Black Brant (here with an Atlantic Brant), very rare in the Southeast, on 21 December 2004. Photograph by J. Brian Patteson.

Brown's Summit, Forsyth, NC 13 Jan (ET). In the Carolinas, this report would be unbelievable if not for three previous Dec reports and a late Dec specimen from South Carolina. Georgia had 3 Vermilion Flycatchers this winter: 2 in Baker and one in Lec 13 Dec–Jan (AA, CG et al.), both in the sw. part of the state. An Ash-throated Flycatcher was found at North R. Farms, Carteret, NC 5–19

Dec (JF et al., R&SBo et al.), and another was at Ft. Macon 19–22 Dec (RN, MT), providing the Morehead City C.B.C. 19 Dec with 2 on one count, unheard of in our Region. Western Kingbirds were noted more than usual this winter; exceptional reports were 2 at C. Hatt. 11 & 21 Dec (RCa, BP), 2 at North R. Farms, Carteret, NC 12 & 19 Dec (JF et al., R&SBo et al.), and 2 on the Bainbridge, GA C.B.C. 27 Dec (TJ et al.). Common Ravens continued to be found in e. areas well away from the mountains; 2 in Chapel Hill, NC 31 Jan (fide RG) were the farthest afield, and the best count was a rather impressive 19 on the Greensboro, NC C.B.C. 18 Dec (fide HH).

Cave Swallow reports in North Carolina included one at the Ocean Isle W.T.P. 1 Dec (MM), 5 near L. Phelps 4 Dec (RD), 4 on the New Bern C.B.C. 15 Dec (BH et al.), and one at Alligator R. N.W.R. 8 Jan (RD). In South Carolina, 3–4 were at H.B.S.P. 13–16 Dec (JP, TK), one was at McClellanville 18 Dec (WP), 2 were at Savannah N.W.R. 18 Dec (CR), one was at C. Romain N.W.R. 4 Feb (RC), and one was at Bird Key, Charleston 11 Feb (fide ND). A Varied Thrush was reported from Ashmore Heritage Preserve, n. Greenville, SC 15 Jan (fide JC); if accepted, this report would represent the 4th for that state. Cedar Waxwings, common in coastal Carolina last winter, were more numerous in w. and s. areas this winter. Flocks of 700–1000 were noted in Forsyth, NC in Jan and Feb (RSn), while 2000 were seen in the Valdosta, GA area 25 Feb (BB).

### WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Lingering Tennessee Warblers were in Randolph, GA 12 Dec (JF1, EH) and Griffin, GA 18 Dec (fide EB). Orange-crowned Warblers away from the Coastal Plain were at Marietta, GA Feb+ (BZ), at Decatur and Lilburn, GA 12 Feb (fide TM), and at Charlotte, NC 26 Dec (AK). Nashville Warblers are also rare winter visitors; singles at Raleigh, NC





This Black-legged Kittiwake was one of four found off Sapelo Island, Georgia on a 12 February 2005 pelagic trip. This species is rarely documented in that state's waters, though it is almost certainly an irregular visitor there. Photograph by Dan Vickers.

18 Dec (JCo et al.), Ft. Fisher, NC 16 Jan (GM), and S.S.S. 20 Feb (SC) were the only reports. Two lingering Northern Parulas were detected: on the Congaree Swamp, SC C.B.C. 19 Dec (RC) and on the L. Matt. C.B.C. 29 Dec (WC). Other rare winter warblers included a Yellow Warbler at L. Matt. 29 Dec (WC) and another at Savannah N.W.R., SC 15 Jan (CR et al.), a Cape May Warbler at Durham, NC 18 Feb (MS), a Black-throated Green Warbler at Santee N.W.R., SC 28 Feb (DS), 2 Northern Waterthrushes at the S.S.S. 22 Dec–25 Feb (SC, RC, CE), a Wilson's Warbler at Sunset Beach, NC 17–27 Dec (MM) and another near Rowland, Robeson, NC 31 Jan (DW), and a Yellow-breasted Chat that overwintered in a yard in Morehead City, NC (JF). Single Audubon's Warblers were noted in Chapel Hill, NC at a feeder in mid-Jan (JMu, WC et al.) and at Ft. Moultrie, Sullivans I., SC 26 Feb (D&DF). Very rare in winter anywhere in the Region, a Summer Tanager was attending a feeder in Durham, NC 15–23 Dec (ph. OF, NBu). A Scarlet Tanager on the Alligator R. N.W.R. C.B.C. 2 Jan (S&LM) was rarer still. Much more expected in winter, single Western Tanagers were reported from all three states again, continuing a recent trend dating back to the late 1990s.

Bachman's Sparrows are regular winter residents but rarely seen due to their secretive nature. Seven in Croatan N.F., Carteret, NC 20 Jan and one in another part of the forest in Craven 17 Feb (JF) were located by their calls in response to a tape. The rare American Tree Sparrow was reported at Brevard, NC 17 Dec (fide NS), near Rich Square, Northampton, NC 19 Jan (DW), e. of Ridgeway, Fairfield, SC 3–4 & 25 Jan (RC, CE, DSI), and at Oregon Inlet, NC 30–31 Jan (KF, JL). Wintering Clay-colored Sparrows are of annual occurrence, albeit in very small numbers. North River Farms, Carteret, NC hosted 3 all winter, with a peak of 7 on 12 Dec (JF et al.). Singles were seen near L. Phelps, NC 4 Dec (RD) and on the Litchfield-Pawleys I., SC C.B.C. 30 Dec (fide JP).

The top counts for Vesper Sparrow, a species in decline as a winter resident, were 12 on the S. Lake Norman, NC C.B.C. 19 Dec (fide TP) and 11 along Hall Rd., Colquitt, GA 13 Feb (JFL, EH). Lark Sparrows turn up somewhere in the Region each winter. This season a remarkable count of 5 came from Resaca, Gordon, GA 10 Dec (GS); elsewhere, 2 were at Goldsboro, NC 18 Dec (RD) and one

was at Ft. Fisher, NC 21 Dec–2 Jan (BS, RD).

Savannah Sparrow numbers were inexplicably down over much of the Region, while Grasshopper Sparrow reports were about average, with the best counts being 9 at the Savannah River Site, Barnwell, SC 31 Dec (PC et al.), 5 at Birdsong Nature Center, Grady, GA 18 Dec (MBe), and 5 on Daniel I., SC 9 Jan (ND et al.). Two Henslow's Sparrows were at the Savannah River Site, SC 31 Dec (PC et al.), with singles seen at the Birdsong Nature Center, GA 18 Dec (MBe) and at Southlands Forest, Decatur, GA 6 Jan–8 Feb (MBe). Le Conte's Sparrows were found in similar numbers: singles at Birdsong Nature Center, GA 18 Dec (MBe), at the Savannah River Site, SC 31 Dec (PC et al.), and near L. Phelps, NC 8 Jan (RD). Lincoln's Sparrows were once again reported widely across all three states; 6 in the L. Phelps area of the Pettigrew S.P., NC C.B.C. 30 Dec (RD) and 3 on the Morehead City, NC C.B.C. 19 Dec (fide JF) were the highest tallies. The farthest inland was one on the Amicalola Falls, GA C.B.C. 27 Dec (JPK).

Lapland Longspurs numbered 20+ at Fite Bend Rd., Resaca, Gordon, GA 7 Jan (JSp et al.; smaller numbers present early Dec–early Feb); other reports were of 4 at Clemson, SC 12 Jan (PC), 3 on Masonboro I. on the Wilmington, NC C.B.C. 1 Jan (JF et al.), 4 at Oxbow Meadows, GA 28 Jan (WCh), and singles at Pea I. 5 Dec (RD), Fanning Bridge Rd., Henderson, NC 12 Feb (TL), Kiawah I., SC 11 Feb (fide NC), H.B.S.P. 25 Jan (JP et al.), and Southern Pines, NC 19 Dec (fide SCA). Another Smith's Longspur was found in the Region, this one at H.B.S.P. 22 (JW et al.) & 25 Jan (BF), about the 5th for that state. Snow Bunting counts were high: 18 at C. Hatt. 27 Dec (fide PM), 16 at Pea I. 22 Dec (BVD), 5 at Clemson, SC 12 Jan (PC), 4 on Bulls I. on the

Charleston, SC C.B.C. 2 Jan (ND et al.), and 3 on Portsmouth I., NC 31 Dec (PV et al.).

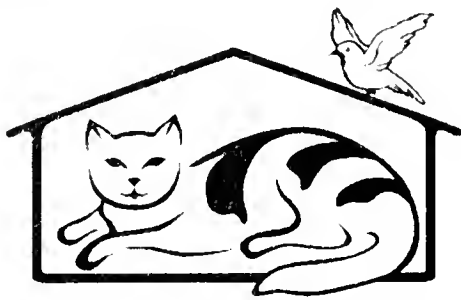
Rare in winter were single female-plumaged Rose-breasted Grosbeaks at feeders at Griffin, GA (fide EB) and Buxton, NC 27 Dec (SCa et al.). Rare was the lingering Blue Grosbeak on the Clemson, SC C.B.C. 14 Dec (fide RC). Painted Buntings were once again found at several coastal North Carolina locations, with the highest count being 4 at Morehead City during late Jan (fide JF). Georgia birders reported males at Colbert, Madison 15 Feb+ (PS) and at Glenville 16 Dec (fide TM). The only Dickcissel reports came from Myrtle Beach, SC 1–2 Jan & 18 Feb (P&STu). North River Farms, Carteret, NC 9 Jan (JF, JFe), and Hall Rd., Colquitt, GA 3 Feb (EH). Noteworthy Brewer's Blackbird sightings included 20 at the usual Carteret, NC location 7 Jan (JF, JFe), 2 at a dairy farm near Raleigh, Wake, NC 20 Feb (GB), one at Savannah N.W.R., SC 18 Dec (CR), and 50 in Floyd, GA 23 Feb (MD). A male Shiny Cowbird at Goose Creek S.P., SC 19–20 Jan (CD) was the only one reported. Baltimore Orioles seemed to be wintering in better-than-average numbers this season. Red Crossbills were reported twice: one at a feeder e. of Canton, Cherokee, GA 5 Jan (PP) and up to 3 in McCaysville, Fannin, GA 29 Jan–14 Feb (fide TS). Purple Finches and Pine Siskins occupied most areas of the Region this season, though not in especially large numbers, and there were even several Evening Grosbeaks found: singles near Chapel Hill, NC 26 Dec (CF), on the Wayne, NC C.B.C. 18 Dec (JF),



Several Thick-billed Murres were found in the Southern Atlantic region in winter 2004–2005, following a flurry of reports from states to the north. This bird was photographed on 3 January 2005 at Wrightsville Beach, North Carolina. Photograph by Jim Parnell.

and on the Durham, NC C.B.C. 19 Dec (fide MSc), plus 2 in Epworth, Fannin, GA 22 Jan (fide TS).

Contributors: Alan Ashley, Nate Bacheler, Steve Barlow (SBa), Michael Bell (MBe),



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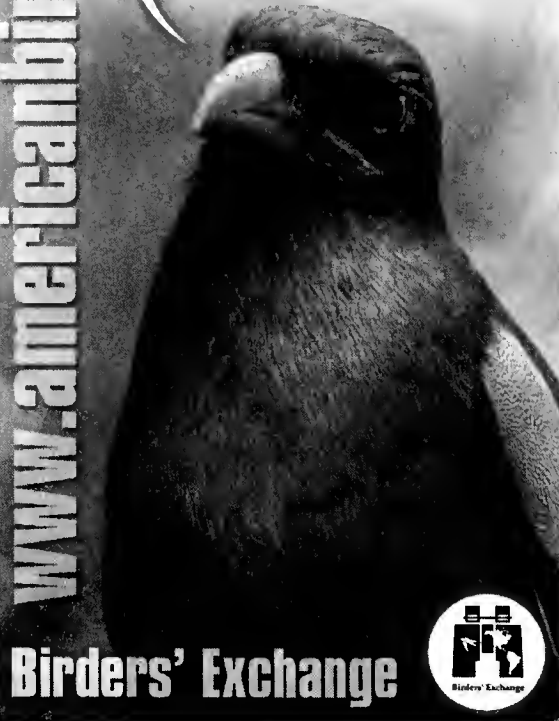
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This Rose-breasted Grosbeak frequented a feeder in  
Buxton, North Carolina; it was located on the Cape Hatteras  
C.B.C. and photographed 27 December 2004.

*Photograph by George Armistead.*

(JCo), Will Cook, Sam Cooper (SCo), Tim Cooper, Sudie Daves, Ricky Davis, Eric Dean, Nathan Dias, Marion Dobbs, Curtis Dykstra, Jim Eager, Caroline Eastman, Steve Ehly, John Ennis (JEn), Jack Fennell (JFe), Oliver Ferguson, Kent Fiala, Jim Flynn (JFI), Dennis & Donna Forsythe, Wayne Forsythe, Tommy Fulcher, Billy Fuller, John Fussell, Christine Gibson, Rob Gluck, Jerry Griggs, Phil Hardy, Andy Harrison, Don Hendershot, Herb Hendrickson, Bob Holmes, Earl Horn, Terry Johnson, Noah Kahn, Tim Kalbach, Alan Kneidel, Carol Lambert, Gail Lankford, Harry LeGrand Jr., Jeff Lewis, Tim Lewis, Ritch Lilly, Merrill Lynch, Dwayne Martin, Greg Massey, Jonathan Mays, Janet Mehmel (JEe), Mary McDavid, Pat Moore, Terry Moore, Elizabeth Morey, Skip & Linda Morgan (S&LM), Judy Murray (JMu), Randy Newman, Ann Newsome, Brandon Noel, Perry Nugent, Bob Olthoff, Johnny Parks (JPK), Jim Parnell (JPa), Brian Patteson, Jack Peachey, Taylor Piephoff, Parrie Pinyan, Jeff Phippen (JPI), Will Post, Clive Rainey, Carroll Richard, Bob Russell, Georgann Schmalz, Mike Schultz (MSc), Ron Selvey, Steve & Liz Semanchuk (S&LSe), Steve Shultz, Norma Siebenheller, Andy Siegler, Mike Skakuj, Donna Slyce (DSI), Dan Small, Bruce Smithson, Ramona Snaveley (RSn), Joshua Spence (JSp), Tom Striker, Paul Sykes, Lydia Thompson, Simon Thompson, Mike Tove, Rusty Trump, Phil & Sharon Turner (P&STu), Emily Tyler, Brian Van Druten (BVD), Peter Vankevich, Judy Walker, Jim Ward (JWa), Craig Watson (CWA), Russ Wigh, Dan Williams, Lisa Williams, Chris Wilson, John Wright (JWr), Bob Zaremba.

The season was mild, with temperatures dipping to the freezing point at Orlando only twice. Rain levels were near normal. Red-breasted Nuthatches, Purple Finches, and Pine Siskins irrupted in small numbers south to the central peninsula. More notable were the hundreds to thousands of American Robins, Cedar Waxwings, and American Goldfinches that appeared early in the fall and remained in numbers throughout the season. Several species of hawks, shorebirds, vireos, warblers, and tanagers were in record or near-record numbers. It is likely that this was due to a protracted fall migration rather than to an increase of wintering birds, as most of these individuals were recorded in December and not throughout the season.

**Abbreviations/definitions:** L.A.N.S.R.A. (Lake Apopka North Shore Restoration Area, *Orange*); report (any observation); record (only those reports verifiable from photograph, videotape, or specimen evidence); UF (Florida State Museum).

### LOONS THROUGH FALCONS

One Red-throated Loon ranged s. to Melbourne, *Brevard* (m.ob.), with another at St. Marks N.W.R. 11 Dec (TC). At nearby Alligator Pt., *Franklin*, a Pacific Loon was seen 15 Jan (PBi et al.). Pacifics are casual along the Region's Atlantic coast; one at Titusville, *Brevard* remained through 4 Feb (RP, BHA, KR et al.), and 3 were at Jupiter Inlet Colony, *Palm Beach* 22 Dec (JaH). Eared Grebes were at L.A.N.S.R.A. 1 Dec (HR), *Hamilton* mines 18 Dec (JK, SC), and *Polk* mines 11 Dec–10 Feb (PT, PF). Four Manx Shearwaters seen off *Flagler* 5 Dec (JoH, BW) were rare. Single Brown Boobies were at Siesta Key, *Sarasota* 13 Jan (*fide* JeD) and *Canaveral N.S.*, *Brevard* 18 Jan (DF), while a flock of 35 was seen 23 Dec at *Dry Tortugas N.P.*, *Monroe* (RD). Inland, Brown Pelicans were at *Leon*, *Alachua*, *Orange*, *Highlands*, and *Polk*, where there were 10 at Saddle Creek Park 17 Jan (B&LC). Nearly annual in the Region, a White-faced Ibis, *Alachua's* first, visited Kanapaha Prairie 19–21 Dec (RR, JoH et al.). At Snake Bight, *Everglades N.P.*, the Greater Flamingo flock totaled about 40 (LM).

Black-bellied Whistling-Duck numbers continue to increase: 255, mostly imms., were at L.A.N.S.R.A. 22 Dec (BHA), 140 were at Emerald Marsh Conservation Area, *Lake* 17 Dec (C.B.C. data), and 73 were in *Alachua* 19 Dec (*fide* JoH). Greater White-fronted Geese were in *Leon* (GM et al.), *Brevard* (C.B.C. data), and *Alachua*, with 14 at Kanapaha 7–11 Jan (MS). Small numbers of Snow Geese were found in *Hamilton* (SC, JK), *Alachua* (RR et al.), *Hernando* (MG), *Lake* (PMA), *Orange* (HR), and *Brevard* (TR). At Merritt I., 3 Canada Geese were flying southward 16 Dec (DF). An amazing 200

# Florida



Gadwalls, rare in the peninsula, were at *Polk* mines 10 Feb (PF et al.). Eurasian Wigeons graced *Duval* (BR), *Alachua* (PBU et al.), *Brevard* (m.ob.), and *Collier* (m.ob.). More Mallard x Mottled Duck hybrids were noted on C.B.C.s in *Hernando* (94!), *Pasco* (13), and *Martin* (3). St. Marks hosted at least one Cinnamon Teal 21 Dec–14 Jan (JaD et al.). Single drake Common (Eurasian Green-winged) Teal were photographed at Ding Darling N.W.R., *Lee* in early Feb (*fide* CE) and at *Gainesville* 15 Feb+ (PBU et al., ph. SC). One Surf Scoter was s. to *Brevard* 20 Jan (MB). The only White-winged Scoters were 5 at *Canaveral N.S.* 3 Dec (TR) and 50 at Ft. Clinch S.P., *Nassau* 19 Feb (BB). Black Scoters appeared in fair numbers along the Atlantic coast south to *Brevard*, where 149 were counted at *Canaveral N.S.* 16 Dec (DF). The only Long-tailed Duck reported remained in *Brevard* through 2 Jan (AV et al.). A Bufflehead was far s. in *Charlotte* 10 Dec (JBo). Common Goldeneyes penetrated the peninsula s. to three *Brevard* locations (DF, BAH et al.) and to *Lakeland*, *Polk* (B&FH et al.)

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The earliest Swallow-tailed Kite was at *Sarasota* 12 Feb (ML). Rare White-tailed Kites were found at *Polk* mines 11 Dec–29 Jan (PT, PF et al.), *Avon Park A.F.R.* 15 Dec (C.B.C. data), and *Kissimmee Prairie Preserve S.P.*, *Okeechobee* 2 Feb (PMi). A pair of White-taileds at *Everglades N.P.* 26 Feb appeared to be building a nest (DSi). A Mississippi Kite at *Gainesville* 27 Feb (LH) may have wintered. A Great Black-Hawk of unknown provenance was seen 18 Dec on *Virginia Key*, *Miami-Dade* (RD), where the species has a history since the 1970s. About 7 Broad-winged Hawks wintered n. to *Hillsborough*, *Pinellas*, *Polk*, *Seminole*, and *Brevard*. A Short-tailed Hawk at *New Port Richey*, *Pasco* 1 Dec (KT) was late. One



Short-tailed at Saddle Creek, *Polk* 15 Dec (*vide* PF) might have been one of 2 there 17 Jan (B&LC). Of only casual occurrence, a Golden Eagle was reported at Avon Park A.F.R. 15 Dec (GW).

### RAILS THROUGH LARIDS

A Yellow Rail was flushed at Weekiwachee Preserve, *Hernando* 13 Dec (MG). Becoming reliable in winter locally in *Pasco*, Black Rails were found 31 Dec (RS) and 2 Jan (KT), with one in *Hernando* 31 Dec (BP). At least one Purple Gallinule remained n. at St. Marks 27 Dec–17 Jan (*vide* GM). An American Coot 21 Dec (RD) was one of only a few ever found at Dry Tortugas. This fall 13 Whooping Cranes followed an ultralight aircraft from Necedah N.W.R. in Wisconsin to Chassahowitzka N.W.R., *Citrus*, where they arrived 12 Dec. Since 2001, 53 cranes have made this trip to new wintering grounds; 45 are still alive. Some of these birds are stopping off early, to winter in the Carolinas (<<http://www.operationmigration.org>>).

Casual on Florida's Atlantic coast, a Snowy Plover graced Huguenot Memorial Park, *Duval* 26 Dec (PP). This season's high count of 42 Piping Plovers wintered far s. at Crandon Beach, *Miami-Dade* (RD). Three American Oystercatchers in *Palm Beach* 2 Jan (BH) were s. of their usual range. Black-necked Stilts lingered into Dec in *Duval* (BR), *Alachua* (C.B.C. data), and *Brevard* (C.B.C. data). Two stilts at *Polk* mines 11 Dec had increased to 44 by 27 Feb (PT, CG). Up to 3 were n. to St. Marks 1 Jan–5 Feb (EW et al.). Surprising were 270 American Avocets n. to Quarantine I., *Duval* 26 Dec (BR) and one at Alligator Pt. 1 Jan (JM). Small numbers of Solitary Sandpipers lingered, several until 2 Jan (RR et al., C.B.C. data); presumably wintering were singles found later in the season at L.A.N.S.R.A. (HR), in *Pinellas* (*vide* JF), *Brevard* (DF), and *Palm Beach* (DSi). Rare inland was a Willet at Gainesville to 19 Dec (SC et al.). Whimbrels were late, with flocks up to 10 seen along both coasts through 30 Dec (C.B.C. data). Two Long-billed Curlews visited Cedar Key 6 Dec (JoH), with another at Marco I., *Collier* 16 Feb (TR). Lone Long-billeds wintered at Bunche Beach, *Lec* and Ft. De Soto. A Purple Sandpiper at Ft. De Soto 7 Dec–28 Jan (ph. LA) was the first verified there. Along the e. coast, Purples followed jetties s. to *Martin* (C.B.C. data). A Ruff was a one-day wonder at West Palm Beach 26 Feb (BH). Rare anytime, 2 Red Phalaropes were viewed from a boat off *Flagler* 5 Dec (JoH, BW).

First-winter Iceland Gulls were at Amelia I., *Nassau* 30 Jan (BW), Huguenot Park 14 Feb (BR), and at Ft. Lauderdale 26 Feb (KR). Also in *Broward*, where the greatest

numbers of Lesser Black-backed Gulls have been reported in Florida, K. Rosenberg estimated more than 500 on 26 Feb. A high Regional total of 6 first-winter Glaucous Gull reports came from *Nassau* (PL), *Duval* (RCL), *Flagler* (BW), *Volusia* (BW, BHA, KR et al.), *Brevard* (DSi, RoS), and *Miami-Dade* (MB). Seven Great Black-backed Gulls were far s. at *Miami-Dade* 18 Dec (RD). On the Gulf coast, a total of about 8 Great Black-backed wintered in *Lec* (C.B.C. data) and *Pinellas* (RoS). Single Black-legged Kittiwakes were at Canaveral N.S. 16 Dec & 18 Jan (DF) and Ft. Clinch 19 Feb (BB). A kittiwake was found wrecked at Satellite Beach, *Brevard* 30 Dec (*vide* TW, \*UF 44403). Gull-billed Terns are at their n. limit in *Hernando*, where 6 were counted 31 Dec (BP et al.). Rare inland in winter, 2 Gull-billeds were at *Polk* mines 11 Dec (PT), and one was found on the Econlockhatchee C.B.C. 26 Dec. Two Royal Terns were inland at *Polk* mines 13 Feb (PT, CG). Three Sandwich Terns and 5 Sooty Terns were seen at Dry Tortugas 22 Dec (RD); a Sooty beached at Sanibel I. 26 Dec (*vide* TW, \*UF 44391). Only 2 alcids were reported: a **Razorbill** was swimming in Boynton Inlet, *Palm Beach* 18 Jan (BH, PC), and Florida's 2nd **Atlantic Puffin** was found alive at St. Augustine Beach 23 Dec (died 25 Dec, *vide* TW, \*UF 44359).

### DOVES THROUGH WOODPECKERS

Likely w. migrants, up to 7 White-winged Doves wintered at Cedar Key (DH), while one paused at Bald Pt., *Franklin* 6 Dec (JaD, JM, RCr). A Smooth-billed Ani was found in West Palm Beach 2 Jan (C.B.C. data), with 2 others resident at Ft. Lauderdale airport. At the latter location, a Groove-billed Ani accompanied the Smooth-billeds 8 Feb+ (LM). Another Groove-billed was at Boca Raton, *Palm Beach* 30 Jan (BH). Up to 6 Groove-billeds loafed at L.A.N.S.R.A. 27 Dec–6 Feb (HR, m.ob.).

A Barn Owl at Dry Tortugas N.P. 22 Dec (RD) was unexpected. Up to 7 Short-eared Owls wintered at L.A.N.S.R.A. (HR), while others were reported in *Brevard* (C.B.C. data) and *Sarasota* (JP et al.). Likely migrants, 3 Lesser Nighthawks were at Bald Pt. 12 Dec and at nearby Alligator Pt. 18 Dec (JaD et al.), while one was at L.A.N.S.R.A. 5 Dec (HR). On 7 Dec, Manfredi estimated up to 100 Lessers at Frog Pond W.M.A., *Miami-Dade*, just outside Everglades N.P., where the species regularly winters. Inside the park, Lessers were seen at Long Pine Key (RD) and Eco Pond (m.ob.).

This winter, the tireless Fred Bassett banded 63 hummingbirds of five species s. to the cen. peninsula. Surprising was that 16 of the 30 Ruby-throateds banded were in Tallahassee. Fifteen Black-chinneds were

banded: at Tallahassee (8), Gainesville (2), Valrico (3), Brooksville (one), and Lakeland (one). Of the 22 Rufous captured, 5 in Tallahassee and one in Valrico had been banded in previous years. Banded for the first time were 11 Rufous in Tallahassee, one at Alligator Pt., and 4 in Gainesville. Rare in the Region, a Buff-bellied was captured in Tallahassee 13 Jan. A Buff-bellied banded in Gainesville in the fall continued through the winter (HB et al.). At Tallahassee 18 Dec, Bassett banded one of only a few Allen's Hummingbirds ever verified in the Region.

### FLYCATCHERS THROUGH WAXWINGS

Up to 8 Least Flycatchers wintered at L.A.N.S.R.A. (HR). Other Least in *Hamilton* 18 Dec (JK, SC) and *Suwannee* 27 Dec (RR) were likely late. Vermilion Flycatchers were in *Columbia* (JK et al.), *Wakulla* (6; TC, SM et al.), *Taylor* (JCa), *Alachua* (RR), *Pasco* (KT), *Volusia* (MW), *Polk* (*vide* CG), and *Miami-Dade* (2; JHB et al.). Up to 4 Ash-throated Flycatchers wintered at L.A.N.S.R.A. (HR). Other Ash-throateds were in *Alachua* (2; PBU, AK), on the *Volusia/Brevard* border (DSi, AB, vt.), in *Brevard* (2; TR), and in *Pinellas* (JF, IH). One or more Brown-crested Flycatchers were identified at Everglades N.P., *Miami-Dade* 12 Dec–7 Feb (RD et al.), up to 2 were at L.A.N.S.R.A. 16 Dec–23 Feb (HR, BHA et al.), and one was at Key Largo 16 Feb+ (BM, PBi). Two Cassin's Kingbirds wintered at L.A.N.S.R.A. for a 2nd season (HR, m.ob.). Another Cassin's was seen near Sunnyland Station, *Collier* 18 Dec (TH et al.). Western Kingbirds and Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were widely distributed in cen. and s. Florida. The established kingbird roost near L.A.N.S.R.A. reached a maximum of 61 Westerns on 22 Dec and also included 5 Scissor-tailed Flycatchers (C.B.C. data). A Scissor-tailed at Merritt I. 20 Dec (TR, ph. AV) was unusual. A very early Eastern Kingbird appeared at *Polk* mines 27 Feb (PT, CG).

Rare at any season, a Bell's Vireo highlighted L.A.N.S.R.A. 16 Feb (HR). Yellow-throated Vireos appeared in unprecedented numbers, with 8 on six C.B.C.s n. to Gainesville and Stuart. An excellent description accompanied a **Warbling Vireo** photographed at Merritt I. 28 Dec (†AV et al.). The earliest Purple Martin was reported in *Brevard* 9 Jan (JDr). Two Cave Swallows at St. Marks 3–7 Feb (BR, JaD et al.) and 5 at Pembroke Pines, *Broward* 22 Feb (DSi) were believed to be of the w. race *pelodoma*. Four Caves were in *Palm Beach* 19 Dec (BH).

Barn Swallows were late, with singles in *Alachua* 19 Dec (RR et al.) and *Duval* 26 Dec (BR). Early Barns were in *Brevard* 25 Jan (DF) and *Pinellas* 30 Jan (ph. LA). Two Tuft-

ed Titmice were reported in *Miami-Dade*, where the species is casual (EL, m.ob.). Single Red-breasted Nuthatches in *Pinellas* 19 Dec (MK) and *Wakulla* 12 Dec–26 Jan (m.ob.) provided the only Regional reports. There were slightly more reports than usual of Brown Creepers, Winter Wrens, and Golden-crowned Kinglets. One creeper was s. to *Alachua* 12–28 Dec (JBR, PBu et al.). A Golden-crowned Kinglet was far s. to *Polk* 11 Jan (JiD). A Wood Thrush on the Econlockhatchee C.B.C. 22 Dec (C.B.C. data) was unexpected. A Hermit Thrush at Sandy Key, *Monroe* 22 Dec (BM) was far s., as were up to 4 American Robins at Dry Tortugas 22–23 Dec (RD). Robins and waxwings invaded the Region in great numbers, as was illustrated by a report of thousands of robins and hundreds of waxwings at Cape Coral, *Lee* 7–14 Feb (CE).

### WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Twenty-six species of warblers were reported this season. Two Blue-winged Warblers in *Alachua* 19 Dec (*fide* RR) were late, and one remained in *Broward* 11 Dec–8 Feb (ph. MB et al.). An unprecedented nine reports of Nashville Warbler from seven counties (*Alachua* to *Miami-Dade*) were received. Yellow Warblers ranged n. to *Alachua* (AK), *Pasco* (KT), and *Volusia* 4 Jan (MM). Four Cuban Golden Warblers were on mangrove islets off Arsenickcr Keys, *Miami-Dade* 17 Dec (RD). Rare were Chestnut-sided Warblers at Loxahatchee N.W.R., *Palm Beach* 5 Jan (BH), and Key West 8 Feb (DF). A Chestnut-sided in *Miami-Dade* 18 Dec (C.B.C. data) was probably late. A Magnolia Warbler in *Pinellas* 6–26 Jan (JF) was rare. A Cape May Warbler was n. in *Brevard* 18 Dec (C.B.C. data). While a few Black-throated Blue Warblers regularly winter in s. Florida, the species was reported far n. of usual in the Gainesville area 19 Dec–5 Feb (RR); another was at Merritt I. 20 Dec (DSi, AB). A Black-throated Gray Warbler remained at Seacoast Scrub Nature Center, *Palm Beach* 13 Jan–14 Feb (BH et al.). Black-throated Green Warblers ranged n. to *Seminole* (AV), *Brevard* (C.B.C. data), and *Pinellas* (BAh).

Two Bay-breasted Warblers on the Cocoa C.B.C. 18 Dec (DF) were probably late migrants. At least 2 American Redstarts wintered in *Orange* (AV). Worm-eating Warblers were widespread at the s. tip of the Region, with one n. to *Palm Beach* 2 Jan (BH). Northern Waterthrushes ranged n. to *Duval* (RCL), with 13 at L.A.N.S.R.A. 30 Jan (HR). Louisiana Waterthrushes were at two sites in *Miami-Dade* (JHB, RD) and two sites in *Orange* (AV, HR); a Louisiana in *Wakulla* 12 Feb (JM) was a likely migrant. A MacGillivray's Warbler was a one-day wonder at West Boynton Cypress Area, *Palm Beach* 2 Jan (BH et al.). A Hooded Warbler wintered at Key

Largo (BM). Wilson's Warblers were widespread, with eight reports from *Alachua* (*fide* RR) to *Collier* (TD, KOD) and *Miami-Dade* (TR). There were nine reports of Yellow-breasted Chats from *Duval* (JCo) to *Monroe* (BM).

A Bananaquit at Ft. Lauderdale 14–21 Jan (BM) was seen by many. Summer Tanagers were found in unprecedented numbers, with about 22 reports from at least 13 counties. A Western Tanager again spent the season in Tallahassee, *Leon*, where it was joined by another 8 Jan (FR et al.). The green-backed Western Spindalis found at Key West in the fall remained to winter, as did a female spindalis at Long Key (JBo et al.). A Clay-colored Sparrow stopped in *Duval* 3 Dec (RCL), and small numbers wintered from *Orange* (up to 7; HR) to Key Largo 16 Feb+ (BM, PBi). A Field Sparrow was s. to *Palm Beach* 9 Jan (BH, PC). Far s. were 3 Vesper Sparrows in two areas of Everglades N.P. (RoS, RP). Lark Sparrows were in *Alachua* (RR et al.), *Orange* (HR), *Hillsborough* (BAh), *Polk* (4; PF et al.), and *Miami-Dade* (3; JHB et al.). Eleven Savannah Sparrows were at Dry Tortugas 22 Dec (RD). Le Conte's Sparrows were identified at L.A.N.S.R.A. 22 (C.B.C. data) & 25 Jan (TR) and at Inglis, *Levy* 29 Dec (MG). Three Fox Sparrows were at O'Leno S.P., *Columbia* 10 Dec–8 Jan (PBu, JBR et al.), with another at Bald Pt. 14 Dec (JaD). A Song Sparrow was s. at *Hendry* 27 Feb (ph. MB). Also found in record numbers were Lincoln's Sparrows, with 12 reports in nine counties from *Duval* (RCL, RR) to a remarkable occurrence at Dry Tortugas (C.B.C. data; no details). Far s. was a White-throated Sparrow at Cape Florida 24 Dec (RD). A Golden-crowned Sparrow at L.A.N.S.R.A. 6 Feb (TS) could not be relocated. Dark-eyed Juncos were more common than usual. Only one junco was found s. of Gainesville, at Titusville 4 Feb (DF). A Lapland Longspur was seen near Mahogany Hammock, Everglades N.P. 4 Dec (ph. JHB).

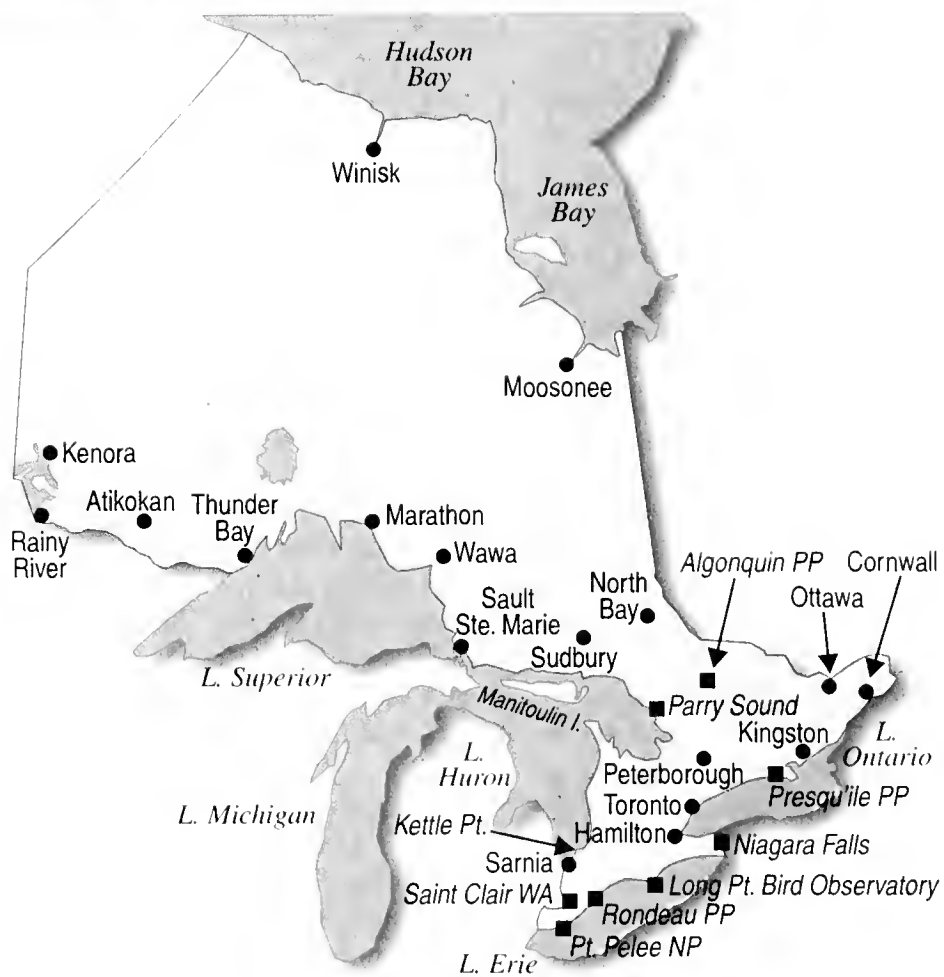
Casual in winter, 4 Rose-breasted Grosbeaks at L.A.N.S.R.A. 1 Dec were migrants, although one wintered (HR). Others were at St. Marks N.W.R. 18 Dec (C.B.C. data), Long Key 28 Dec (JBo et al.), the Lake Placid C.B.C. 29 Dec, *Alva*, *Lee* in late Jan (L&LW), and Frog Pond 26 Feb (RD). Up to 6 Blue Grosbeaks wintered at L.A.N.S.R.A. (HR), and singles were on the Lake Placid C.B.C. and in n. *Brevard* 6 Jan (DSi). Painted Buntings were widely distributed in the cen. and s. peninsula, but rare so far n. were birds at Tallahassee 20 Feb (JDo) and in *Alachua* 28 Dec+ (DW). Lone Dickcissels were in *Palm Beach* (two locations; JaH, BH) and *Miami-Dade* (JHB et al.).

Up to 3 Yellow-headed Blackbirds were at Naples, *Collier* 6 Feb+ (AM et al.), and one was found at Cedar Key 23 Feb (TR). The

only Rusty Blackbirds reported were 3 found on the Jacksonville C.B.C. 26 Dec, 3 at St. Marks 8 Jan (JoH), and 10 at Lake City, *Columbia* 17–19 Jan (JK). Rare in the Region, 20 Brewer's Blackbirds were in *Madison* 7 Jan (GM). The only report of Bronzed Cowbird was up to 28 at Naples 18 Dec+ (DSu et al.). One Orchard Oriole was at L.A.N.S.R.A. 16 & 25 Jan (BR, TR). Small numbers of Purple Finches (44) and Pine Siskins (about 20) made it into the cen. peninsula. Except for up to 28 Purple Finches reported in the Gainesville area (MD, RR et al.), most were in flocks of 5 or less. The southernmost Purple Finches were 2 that wintered at Spring Hill, *Hernando* (ph. LA et al.), 2 near Brooksville 12 Jan (MG), 2 at Altamonte Springs, *Seminole* 27 Dec (ph. PH), and one at Clermont, *Lake* 1 Jan (SB). Eleven reports of Pine Siskins extended s. to Merritt I. (one; DF), Spring Hill (one; A&BH), and near Brooksville (2; MG). The largest numbers of siskins were 6 at Lake City 29 Jan–3 Feb (JA, SC) and 4 in the Gainesville area 18 Dec+ (RR et al.).

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# Ontario



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The weather remained fairly benign until about 19 December, when it turned extremely cold and windy, even in southern Ontario. There was plenty of snow by Christmastime, and it remained on the ground until 28 February. By the time of the Lake Ontario Mid-Winter Waterfowl Inventory on 9 January, there was considerable ice close to the shore of Lake Ontario. From early January to the end of the period, both the eastern portion of Lake Ontario and most of Lake Erie were frozen. Snowfall amounts varied by location but were generally above average. Winter finches were generally scarce except for redpolls, but northern owls staged a major irruption toward the south.

Abbreviations: P.E. Pt. (Prince Edward Pt.), P.P.B.A. (Point Pelee Birding Area), P.P.N.P. (Point Pelee N.P.), K.F.N. (Kingston Field Naturalists), L.O.M.W.W.I. (Lake Ontario Mid-Winter Waterfowl Inventory), S.L. (Sewage Lagoons), ROMZ (Royal Ontario Museum of Zoology).

## LOONS THROUGH FALCONS

Red-throated Loons outnumbered Common Loon sightings over the winter: there were 2 at Darlington P.P. on the Oshawa C.B.C. 19 Dec and singles at P.E. Pt. 5 Dec and 9 Jan (JHE, RDW), Erieau 2 Dec (AW), and Port Hope 1–3 Jan. Truly remarkable, however, was the count of 62 at Niagara-on-the-Lake 4 Dec (AW, KO et al.). Noteworthy so far n. were the 2 Common Loons on the Minden C.B.C. 19 Dec. The count of 70 Red-necked Grebes 28 Dec in Hamilton Harbour (KMCL) was high. An Eared Grebe (JF) at Humber Bay East, Toronto 10 Dec was a good find. The flock of up to 53 Double-crested Cormorants in Hamilton Harbour 18 Jan (PS) was an indication of this species' increasing presence year-round. An American Bittern discovered 13 Jan in the Point Pelee Marsh was a rarity for the date (TA, CA). A Great Egret was noted on the Pt. Colborne C.B.C. 2 Jan, and another at the Valley Inn Marsh, Burlington 1–15 Dec (m.ob.) became a new winter tick for many listers.

A Greater White-fronted Goose 4 Dec at Komoka Pits (PF) was a good find, as were 3 in Whitby Harbour 10 Dec. Snow Geese are no longer a rare sight in winter. There were 6 in Whitby Harbour on the Oshawa C.B.C. 19 Dec, and the count of 3 on the Kitchener C.B.C. was locally a record high. At Thedford 10 Dec, there were 6 Snow

Geese, of which 4 were blue morphs. A pair of Ross's Geese at Jack Miner's in Kingsville 22 Feb were the only ones reported (DW). Mute Swans have reached alarming numbers, as evidenced by the record high total of 790 on the L.O.M.W.W.I. Tundra Swans have become increasingly common in early winter, but the counts of 354 on 9 Jan (KFN) and 2139 on the Long Point C.B.C. 18 Dec were especially high. Newly arriving spring migrants included 23 at Lake Pond, P.P.N.P. 10 Feb (AW), only 32 days later. A male Eurasian Wigeon 23 Feb at Hillman Marsh, P.P.B.A. (DW) was rare and record early, and there was a pair (although not together) at Erieau 2–3 Dec (m.ob.). Also very early was the pair of American Wigeon at Lake Pond P.P.N.P. 15 Feb (AW). A pair of American Black Ducks 27 Feb at the Pog Lake Dam in Algonquin P.P. (B&CW) were early so far north; the peak of 2650 tallied on 9 Jan (L.O.M.W.W.I.) was heartening, because this species is declining overall. A Northern Pintail, recorded on the Peterborough C.B.C. 19 Dec, was the first for the count there since 1956. A male Common (Eurasian Green-winged) Teal at Niagara 5 Dec (originally discovered 29 Nov) was a good find (BL, DG).

Counts of 7500 Redhead along the St. Clair R. and 9272 on L.O.M.W.W.I. were record highs. A Tufted Duck × Greater Scaup hybrid was at Burlington 9 Dec (RD, BC, CE). The count of 8000 Common Goldeneye 7 Feb at P.P.N.P. (AW) was exceptionally high. Barrow's Goldeneye was represented by 2 males on the Ottawa River (m.ob.) and another male off Stoney Creek 8 Dec (LS et al.). There were 241 Ruddy Ducks on the L.O.M.W.W.I. at Hamilton Harbour, where they have congregated in recent winters, but the count of 25 at Humber Bay East on 14 Dec (BY) was high for Toronto. Another 71 were found on the Long Point C.B.C. 18 Dec. Wild Turkeys are flourishing and spreading northward. The count of 66 on the 18 Dec Minden C.B.C. was record high, as was the total of 8 observed on the Gravenhurst–Bracebridge C.B.C. the next day.

Bald Eagle numbers are on the increase at all seasons, but the count of 17 on the ice at P.P.N.P. (AW) 7 Feb was a record single-day high count for the park. On 23 Jan, 46 Rough-legged Hawks, deemed southbound migrants, were observed flying westward at Sturgeon Creek during an all-day hawk-watch. Another 7 were at Pelee Marsh on the same day. The recent apparent decline of American Kestrels was brought into focus by the record low of 5 on the West Elgin C.B.C. 27 Dec, just 6 on the Woodhouse C.B.C. 19 Dec, and the same number on the Toronto C.B.C.—the lowest since 1959. The usual smattering of Gyrfalcons included singles s. to Kingston 5 Dec (BRp, JRp) and 12 Feb (RB), and to Cobourg 8 Dec (CG). At Thunder Bay, where they are more usual, 2 were



**SA** Great Gray Owls staged a major invasion. They passed through Canadian Shield country mostly in Dec and early Jan but stopped at plentiful vole areas n. of Lake Ontario. These locations were different from previous irruptions. High counts or estimates were **250** for *Simcoe*, **40** for *Durham*, about **100** for *Peterborough*, **93** from the Kingston region, and 28 elsewhere in e. Ontario; at least **111** were within 50 km of Ottawa. These are observed counts, not estimates, so the actual numbers of birds involved would obviously be much greater. The owls were most easily found in early Jan, when they hunted both day and night due to their starved condition. Many were found as road-kills: 61 injured birds had been taken to the Owl Research Foundation in Vineland as at time of writing. Of the 26 specimens recovered (\*ROMZ), 20 were female, and all were adults. Hundreds were killed in the bordering United States, mostly in Minnesota.

seen along the waterfront (BM, NE), and there were 2 on the North Bay C.B.C.

## RAILS THROUGH OWLS

A Virginia Rail was at Whitby Harbour 19 Dec on the Oshawa C.B.C., and another was found on the Pt. Colborne C.B.C. 2 Jan at the Taquonyah C.A. One Sandhill Crane lingered on the Whitby waterfront until well into Feb (m.ob.); the count of 106 on the Long Point C.B.C. 18 Dec was record high. A Killdeer at Kingsville 6 Feb was a remarkably early spring migrant (DW). The hardy Black-necked Stilt at the Ridgeway S.L. remained until 10 Dec (m.ob.). Two White-rumped Sandpipers at the Harrow S.L. became record late for all of Ontario when they remained until 5 Dec (RPH, RAH). There were more Purple Sandpiper reports than usual: 13 on Sebastopol I., Presqu'île on 3 Dec (2 remained until the Presqu'île C.B.C. 19 Dec), plus singles at Cobourg Harbour (MB), at Niagara Falls 4 & 22 Dec (WD'A), on the boardwalk of Ward's I. on the Toronto C.B.C. 19 Dec, and at Darlington P.P. the same day on the Oshawa C.B.C. A Wilson's Snipe returned to Ottawa at the usual location near Montreal and Blair Roads 1–20 Dec (BCe, LS); another was found on the Peterborough C.B.C. 19 Dec.

The California Gull at Adam Beck, Niagara R. remained until at least 12 Dec (WD'A). Lesser Black-backed Gulls reached a peak count of 11 on 5 Dec along the Niagara River (WD'A). A Sarnia Slaty-backed Gull 6–28 Feb (AR) awaits O.B.R.C. decision. An ad. Ivory Gull was found on the Presqu'île C.B.C. 19 Dec. Remarkably, this species also appeared on that C.B.C. in 1967; even more remarkably, a different Ivory Gull was seen nearby 21 Dec (PH).

A Barn Owl was found dead near Mt. Forrest 6 Dec, and another was "count week" for the Fisherville C.B.C. of 23 Dec. Snowy Owls were somewhat scarce overall, although 6 were recorded on the 4 Jan Casselman C.B.C. Northern Hawk Owls were found in at least 10 locations s. of their regular haunts. Of these, 3 long-staying birds were close to the biggest human population centers. These were at Bolton 3 Dec+, Port Hope 24 Dec+, and Bracebridge 21 Feb+. Single Boreal Owls were reported at Omeme, *Simcoe*, Amherst I., and from Leslie Spit in Toronto, and there were 3 in the Ottawa area. Discoveries of roosting Bo-

reals are routinely suppressed due to a perceived danger from overzealous photographers.

## HUMMINGBIRDS THROUGH WAXWINGS

The female Rufous Hummingbird at Niagara Falls was banded by A. Chartier 2 Dec and was later found dead, on 18 Dec. A pair of Red-headed Woodpeckers wintered at Constance Bay near their breeding site (m.ob.); a single was at Tobermory 15 Dec, and yet another was found on the Dunrobin C.B.C. 18 Dec. Single Red-bellied Woodpeckers were unusual at Atikokan and Kingston, but record-high C.B.C. counts at more expected locations included Kitchener (9), Strathroy (57), West Elgin (55), Ingersoll (21), Niagara Falls (33), and St. Catharines (27).

A Fork-tailed Flycatcher discovered at Hillman marsh near P.P.N.P. 5 Dec (MS, DS) was found dead the next day (\*ROMZ); it was determined by Mark Peck to be of the nominate subspecies, a long-distance South American migrant. A White-eyed Vireo was discovered 1 Dec (BY) at High Park in Toronto, where it remained until 19 Dec. At P.P.N.P., a Red-eyed Vireo was record late 1 Dec. The Blue Jay count was extremely low on the Toronto C.B.C. 19 Dec, with only 18 (fewest since 1949), but other counts had record highs, such as Huntsville 14 Dec with 340. American Crow counts displayed a sim-



This Sandhill Crane was seen for several weeks at Lynde Shores Conservation Area, Whitby, Ontario (here 1 January 2005). It disappeared sometime in January, but there was second-hand report of it at the end of February. It would be quite remarkable if this bird survived the winter here; it may have departed for a more hospitable location for a short while. Photograph by Willie D'Anna.

ilar pattern, with only 26 in Toronto (fewest since 1959) and 72 on the Oakville C.B.C. 18 Dec making for the 3rd lowest count ever; however, the count of 13,681 on the Ingersoll C.B.C. 28 Dec tripled their previous high. The mosquito responsible for West Nile Virus, an urban dweller, is surely to blame for the low counts in urban areas. Common Raven is spreading southward: the Huntsville C.B.C. 14 Dec tallied a record 134, and there were even 2 in the south at Hamilton 26 Dec (JM).

Tufted Titmouse is another species on the increase, although, strangely, none at all were recorded on the Canadian side of the Niagara C.B.C. One spent the winter attending a feeder in Kingston (RS), another wintered at Almonte (RG), and there were high counts of 5 on the London C.B.C. 18 Dec and 19 on the St. Catharines C.B.C. the next day. The lone Blue-gray Gnatcatcher reported to us was found on the Long Point C.B.C. 18 Dec. A Townsend's Solitaire was found 28 Feb near Pete Chapman's home in *Middlesex*; and another was at Ottawa 2–24 Feb (JP). There were seven Varied Thrush reports, many more than usual: Hamilton 17 Dec (DP), P.P.N.P. in the White Pine Picnic area through 12 Dec (AP), Moscow 22 Dec–14 Feb (K.F.N.), Rodney 27 Dec–early Jan, a window-kill at Nepean, Ottawa 21 Dec (AB, TB), near Orillia (GB), and at Thunder Bay (G&RC). The latter 2 remained throughout the period. European Starling's C.B.C. numbers have declined over the past seven years for the two biggest counts at Hamilton and Toronto. Hamilton's total was down to 8525 in 2004. At Toronto, the numbers have declined from over 25,000 in 1998 to 9603 on the 19 Dec C.B.C.; however, most of the decline occurred when the e. portion of the Gardiner Expressway was demolished in 1999, thus eliminating a key roosting area. A Bohemian Waxwing was unusually far s. at P.P.N.P. 1 Dec–20 Dec (AR). Otherwise, Bohemians were widely distributed and common in Canadian Shield country, e.g., 76 on the Petroglyphs C.B.C. 28 Dec and 723 on the Sudbury C.B.C. 27 Dec.

## WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

An Audubon's Warbler (AA) was found on Toronto I. 22 Dec and refound in early Jan. Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warblers were generally scarce, even at the usual wintering places like Pelee. A remarkable discovery was a Black-throated Gray Warbler at High Park 6–16 Dec (SF), a 2nd Toronto winter record (the other was last seen 19 Dec 1952; HC). Pine Warblers were at Mississauga 21 Dec on the Oakville C.B.C., at Lambton woods, Toronto 16 Dec–13 Jan, at Shell Park in Bronte 26 Dec+, and at Kingston 18 Jan (RS). An Ovenbird was found on the Kitchener C.B.C. 18 Dec. The third member of the

amazing High Park trio was the Wilson's Warbler 1-18 Dec (SF), after which it must have succumbed to the  $-30^{\circ}$  C wind chill. The Summer Tanager at Woodstock was found dead 6 Dec (ph. MM). An Eastern Towhee was counted at Carleton Place on the C.B.C. 27 Dec, and a female came to a feeder in Middlesex 1 Dec+. The only Spotted Towhee was in the north, where it attended a feeder at Ignace (ph. DPe). A Field Sparrow, also quite far n. of usual, frequented a feeder at Deep River—count week for the C.B.C. and still present 10 Jan. At P.P.N.P., there were very few White-throated Sparrows this winter. An imm. Golden-crowned Sparrow continued to be seen along Hall's Road in Whitby until about 10 Dec. Notable reports of White-crowned Sparrow included a single on the Warton C.B.C. 19 Dec, 8 on the Os-hawa C.B.C. 19 Dec, 15 on the Woodhouse C.B.C. 19 Dec, 50 on the St. Clair C.B.C. 1 Jan, and 70 in the P.P.B.A. 20 Dec. Harris's Sparrow reports included one at Atikokan 20 Dec-15 Jan (DHE), one at Welcome 18 Dec-17 Jan, one found dead 28 Jan at Staples (MR), and one at Orillia 19 Jan+ (MSc).

A total of 5 Northern Cardinals spent the winter at North Bay, and there were 2 found far n. on the Thunder Bay C.B.C. 26 Dec. Po-

tentially a first for Canada, a female Pyrrhuloxia found on the West Elgin C.B.C. 27 Dec (ph. BC) was later seen by many until 1 Jan. While its identity is not questioned, the O.B.R.C. will no doubt have discussions about its provenance; there was a minor irruption of this species out of range in late fall and winter. The only Rose-breasted Grosbeak was reported 19 Dec on the Woodhouse C.B.C. Three Brewer's Blackbirds, all males, were at Ericau 2 Dec (AW), and a single was at Long Point 18 Dec for the C.B.C. A major highlight this winter for Ontario birders was the Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch (interior race) at the feeder of John Somerset near Chelmsford, Sudbury. It arrived 19 Dec and remained until 25 Feb. (ph. CE). Red Crossbills were exceptionally scarce, although a few were seen 16 Dec along the Barron R. road in Algonquin Park (MRu). Common Redpolls came southward in good numbers, along with a few Hoary Redpolls: one at Darlington P.P. 13 Feb (TH), 2 at Moscow 25 Jan (OW), one at Camden East 28 Feb (PJG), 2 at the Siberian Bed & Breakfast w. of Orillia, and one on the Ontario side of the Ottawa C.B.C. 19 Dec. At North Bay, the count of Evening Grosbeaks was just 79 on the 19 Dec C.B.C., while on the Ottawa C.B.C., none were noted.

**Corrigendum:** The 4 Greater White-fronted Geese at Sturgeon Creek (N.A.B. 57: 340) were seen 23 Mar, not 23 May.

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# Eastern Highlands & Upper Ohio River Valley



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The winter period is by far the most dynamic for avian activity in the Region. Between late fall migration and early spring migration, winter incursions of cyclical irruptives and facultative migrants were punctuated by real surprises, such as this season's Chuck-will's-widow near Cincinnati, perhaps a reversed migrant, along with three new species for Pennsylvania. As in surrounding areas, the warm late fall caused waterfowl to delay their departure until severe Arctic blasts began in mid-December. An early January thaw offered a brief respite, perhaps inducing vulture and cranes to remain when normally they are

long gone. Wintry weather in the west, among the snowiest and coldest in Ohio's history, contrasted with a milder season east of the Allegheny Front, where there was light to moderate snowfall and no deep-freeze; most lakes were open in time for the start of waterfowl migration near the end of the period. After a dramatic shift in both ice and waterfowl concentrations on Lake Erie 20 January, the gull concentrations at warm-water outlets were remarkable. A pulse of near-record warmth in mid-February, reaching into the southern portions of the Region, brought a brief taste of spring and a few overly enthusiastic migrants (e.g., Lesser Yellowlegs) before giving way again to a winter pattern.

**Abbreviations:** Hoover (Hoover Res., Franklin/Delaware, OH); K.I. (Kelleys I., Erie, OH); K.P.W.A. (Killdeer Plains W.A., Wyandot/Marion, OH); L. Ontelaunee (Berks, PA); N.S.P. (Nockamixon S.P., Bucks, PA); O.D.N.R. (Ohio Department of Natural Resources); P.O.R.C. (Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee); P.I.S.P. (Presque Isle S.P., Erie, PA); P.V.P. (Peace Valley Park, Bucks, PA); S.G.L. (State Game Lands).

## LOONS THROUGH VULTURES

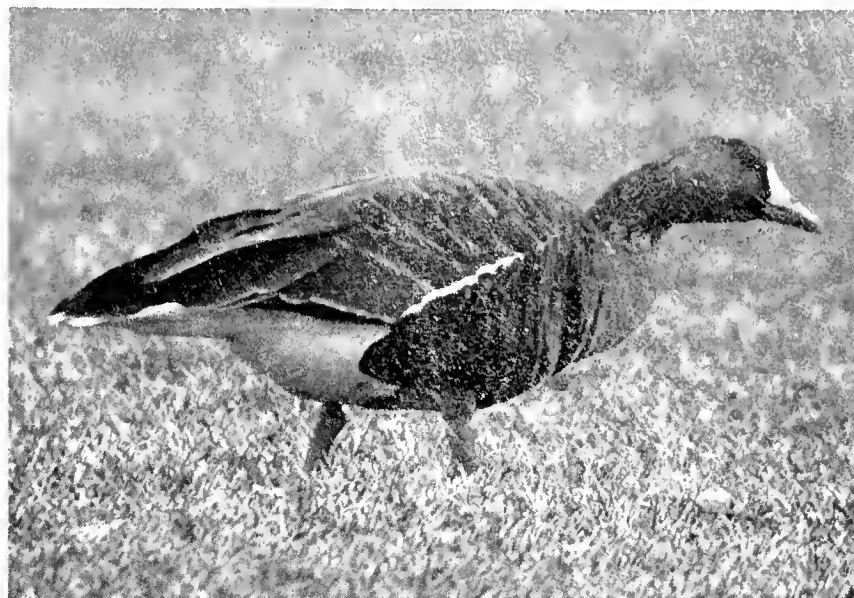
In Ohio, single Common Loons wintered in *Hamilton* (RF et al.), *Delaware* (RT), and *Lucas* (fide G. Links). Late-fall Red-throated Loons were found at L. Perez, *Huntingdon*, PA 2 Dec (A. Fuller), N.S.P. 19 Dec (BE), and in Ohio 1–11 Dec from *Summit* (GB), *Erie* (VF), and *Lake* (JP). Single Red-necked Grebes appeared at P.I.S.P. 1 Jan (JM), on the Maumee R., OH 2 Jan, in *Holmes*, OH 22 Jan (L. Jordan), and 29 Jan in *Lake*, OH (JP). A late Eared Grebe was at P.I.S.P. 18 Dec (JM, BC). The Western Grebe in Ohio from the fall period remained through 8 Dec (S. Landes). The only mid-winter Horned Grebes on L. Erie appeared in Lorain Harbor 11–15 Jan (CC, P. Lozano). The first American White Pelicans to winter in the L. Erie Basin involved perhaps 2 birds: one that roamed between Vermilion, *Erie* and Lorain, *Lorain*, OH 2–27 Jan (J. Vormelker, CC, m.ob.), and it, or another, at Rossford, *Wood* on the Maumee R. 19–21 Feb (J. McKinney, m.ob.). Great Cormorants continue to spread inland, with 3 present at N.S.P. 25 Dec (BE).

An American Bittern near Mt. Orab, *Brown*, OH 30 Jan (B. Stevens) was exceptional. Late Great Egrets were widespread Regionally; in *Bucks*, PA 18 Dec (BM); *Berks*, PA 30 Dec (B. Smith); *Philadelphia*, PA 8 Jan (D. McGovern et al.); 19 Dec in *Summers*, WV (J&JP); and through 27 Jan in *Putnam*, WV (KKz, C. Ellis, m.ob.). Inexplicably, wintering Great Blue Heron numbers in the Western Basin were depressed, with only 79 found 1 Jan around the Sandusky Bay (VF et

al.). The 47 birds in Parkersburg, WV 31 Dec were representative of winter numbers on the Ohio R. (C.B.C. data). The season total of 85 Black-crowned Night-Herons detected along L. Erie was led by 55 at Sandusky, *Erie* 1 Jan (S. Young et al.). Not since 1972–1973 have more been found wintering in Ohio. Away from L. Erie, one in *Holmes*, OH 6 Jan (ES, W. Sarno) and 4 along the Olentangy R., in Columbus 12 Jan (P. McSweeney) were rare. Over 1000 Turkey Vultures on Ohio C.B.C.s demonstrated the tolerance the species has developed for more northerly latitudes. No longer restricted to the Ohio R. counties, as many as 285 were found n. to *Holmes/Tuscarawas*, with 130 remaining in e. *Holmes* 9 Jan (ES). Numerous reports through the winter n. to the L. Erie shore rendered it impossible to distinguish spring migrants.

## WATERFOWL THROUGH CRANES

Fall Greater White-fronted Geese were one at P.V.P. 26–29 Dec (I. Baldoek, AM), 2 at Bluestone L., *Summers*, WV (J&JP), with 11 in mid-Dec throughout Ohio. These were followed by rare winter records of 2 birds in *Wyandot*, OH 14–17 Jan (RC, RR), one at L. Ontelaunee 9–18 Jan (RK, KL, B. Uhrich), and one in *Putnam*, WV 26 Jan (KKz). Coin-



Though annual in Pennsylvania, this Greater White-fronted Goose at Neville Island, Allegheny County 20 February 2005 was the first for the county in over 100 years. Photograph by Geoff Malosh.

identally, 11 total spring migrants 6–21 Feb in Ohio were reported from *Clark* (JH), *Darke* (RS), and *Ottawa* (JP), while 4 total in Pennsylvania 5–27 Feb were at P.V.P. (AM, PEL, NP), *Allegheny*, (MV, m.ob.), and N.S.P. (BE). Peak counts of Snow Geese at L. Ontelaunee 9–15 Jan ranged from 20,000 to 40,000 (RK). In Ohio, more than 130 Snow Geese lingered through Dec, with 30 wintering in the Western Basin (EP et al.). The appearance of 14 at Hoover 1 Jan (CB) likely indicated late fall migrants. The spring flight began 15 Feb, with passage of 18 birds led by 6 at K.P.W.A. 24 Feb (RE et al.). Barnaele Goose, a species now annual in Pennsylvania, made solo appearances at Churchville Res., *Bucks* 30 Jan (N. Zahn, DF) and P.V.P. 28 Feb (KR). Unexpected in midwinter were 4 Brant at P.V.P. 17–18 Jan (AM) and singles on Cheat L., *Monongalia*, WV 11–15 Dec (MO, ph. G. Felton) and in *Ohio*, WV 15 Jan (P. McKay). Although the West Virginia records are only the 11th and 12th for the state (fide MO), the species has been annual there since 2002. Attention to “small Canada Geese” has brought about an increase in reports of Cackling Goose. Not all of these reports were accompanied by details that are conclusive, and the status of this species in the Region remains to be clarified. In Ohio, sufficient details on 27 birds suggest that Cackling Goose is an uncommon fall migrant, with up to 5 present in *Knox* as late as 21 Dec (JL). Three Jan reports, led by 5 in *Wyandot* 16–17 Jan (JL et al.), indicate the species may occasionally winter. A lone bird 12 Feb in *Ottawa* (JP) was the only spring migrant. Another 15 potential Cackling Geese were reported without details. In Pennsylvania, 5 in *Delaware* 18 Dec were likely fall migrants, while one at L. Ontelaunee 23 & 27 Feb (RK, DF) was a spring bird. Four detected in West Virginia 19–21 Dec (WA, J. Tharp II) added to the fall migrant tally.

A winged-tagged Trumpeter Swan



There are very few well-documented winter records of Broad-winged Hawk in the northeastern United States. This immature was near Beltzville, Carbon County, Pennsylvania 10 (here) through 12 January 2005. Photograph by Richard Rehrig.





This Black-headed Gull—the seventeenth species of gull reported locally—was discovered in late November on the Delaware River at Franklin's Cove, adjacent the Tullytown Landfill, Bucks County, Pennsylvania and remained in the area through 8 December 2004. It spent some time at the Falls Township Park, a five-minute flight from the landfill, where it was photographed here 2 December. Photograph by Bill Etter.

hatched in 2002 at Georgian Bay, L. Ontario was observed at Peters Creek, Berks, PA 2 Jan (KL). Another Trumpeter Swan was found at Jamestown S.P., Crawford, PA 12 Jan (RFL). A flock of 22 at K.P.W.A. 8 Feb (N. Howell et al.) is indicative of Ohio numbers 10 years into its introduction there. More than 1800 Tundra Swans remained in Ohio in mid-Dec, with 700 in the Western Basin into early Jan, although no more than 186 wintered at O.N.W.R. (EP). In West Virginia, 38 were at Morgantown 20 Dec (C.B.C. data). The 105 birds in Wyandot, OH 14 Jan (RC) were likely southward bound, and spring migration saw a little more than 200 enter the ne. part of the state 22 Feb+ (D. & J. Hochadel, J. McCormac et al.). A record 201 Mute Swans across 30 Ohio counties included 64 within the Western Basin and 54 in the ne. part of the state, a doubling of the winter population over the last 10 years.

Wood Ducks lingered, with 43 reported on Ohio C.B.C.s, and a flock 13 at N.S.P. 15 Dec (BE). Few remain to winter, so 2 on Summit L., Summit, OH 13 Jan (GB) and one through 7 Feb at Edinboro, Erie (D. Snyder) were exceptional. Early spring migrants numbered 18 at Spring Valley W.A., Warren, OH 19 Feb (L. Gaynor). The winter flock of American Black Ducks in Ohio has steadily declined for decades, so 800 at Blendon Woods Metropark., Franklin 29 Jan was encouraging (B. Simpson). Two Blue-winged Teal on the Allegheny R. near Pittsburgh 20 Feb were early migrants (D. Yagusic, C. Knoll). The aerial survey of 670 Northern Shovelers, 375 Northern Pintails, and 4835 Gadwalls in the Western Basin 8 Dec were indicative of the mild start to the season (O.D.N.R.). Spring Northern Pintails numbered 175 in Wayne, OH 26–27 Feb (BW et al., S. Snyder). An 18 Dec C.B.C. tally of 54 Green-winged Teal on the

Scioto R. bottoms, Scioto, OH was exceptional.

Greater Scaup appeared in small numbers, with 164 detected 23 Jan at K.I. (TB); in contrast, Lesser Scaup continued mid-winter gains, with 600 in Lorain 20 Jan (VF). An astounding 1400 Ring-necked Ducks were reported on Ohio C.B.C.s, with a record 130 wintering on the Scioto R. in cen. Ohio 24 Jan (RR, RT). Late-fall Surf Scoters numbered 30 in Ohio, with 3–4 wintering on L. Erie. One at Caesar Creek S.P., Warren, OH 6–23 Feb (R. Asamoto, LG) was unexpected. Up to 3 Black Scoters wintered on L. Erie in Ohio (J. Glover, N. Anderson). Two White-winged Scoters wintered on L. Erie,

while ad. males inland—at Hoover 31 Dec–21 Jan (B. McNulty, CB) and at Milton



This adult Sabine's Gull confirmed a second winter record of the species on Lake Erie at Presque Isle State Park, Erie County, Pennsylvania 21 (here) through 22 December 2004. Photograph by Nate Zolik.

W.T.P., Cabell, WV 20 Jan (WA)—were unexpected. Two Harlequin Ducks were at P.I.S.P. 27 Dec (JM, ph. BC et al.). Ten Long-tailed Ducks in Ohio were led by 4 in Summit 9 Jan (GB) and singles inland to Warren 20 Feb (NS) and Clermont 28 Jan–12 Feb (M. Miller, J. Brown, m.ob.); one visited Cheat L., Monongalia, WV 12 Dec–1 Jan (J. Boback). Twenty Common Goldeneyes on the Juniata R. at Mattawanna, Mifflin, PA was a good count (G. Grove). L. Erie flocks were disappointing, with no more than 509 around K.I. 27 Feb (TB). Concentrations of 3600 Common Mergansers in Cuyahoga, OH 20 Jan (VF), 2670 in Lake, OH 25

Jan (VF, JP et al.), and 3200 in Lorain, OH 2 Feb (BW) were part of an estimated 10,800 total wintering in the Central Basin of L. Erie. Good counts were also had in se. Pennsylvania: 1000 at the Penn-Warner Tract, Bucks 9 Jan (GD), up to 2000 at Core Creek Park, Bucks, (GD), and up to 700 at Silver L. Park, Bucks (D. Filler). Red-breasted Mergansers held off fall migration later than usual: 19,800 were in the Central Basin (C.B.C. data) and 23,000 were in the Western Basin (O.D.N.R.) through mid-Dec, and as many as 1200+ remained through 20 Jan off Cleveland (VF). The late fall peak for Hooded Merganser came 9 Dec, with 465 at Hoover (RT). Two Hooded Merganser x Common Goldeneye hybrids, rare but reported regularly in Ohio, were seen: at Hoover 9 Dec (RT) and at Port Clinton, Ottawa, OH 13 Feb (ph. JP). Late-fall Ruddy Ducks included a count of 515 at L. Arthur, Butler 18 Dec (CBC) and 1150 on Wellington Res., Lorain 2 Dec (VF).

With only one previously documented winter record for Ohio, to have 2 Ospreys photographed in the state this season was unexpected. One appeared 11–12 Dec in Darke (ph. K. Schlietz & RS et al.), and the other was noted 15 Dec at Buck Creek, S.P., Clark (ph. B. Menker). In Ohio, 366 Bald Eagles (247 ad., 119 imm.) included concentrations in Sandusky (56), Ottawa (49), Erie (35), Wyandot (27), and Trumbull (19) (O.D.N.R.). An above-average flight of Northern Goshawks had 6 birds detected throughout Ohio s. to Muskingum 1 Jan (JB). Two Golden Eagles wintered at The Wilds, Muskingum, OH (A. Parker, m.ob.). Several dark-morph Western Red-tailed Hawks in Ohio included singles 9 Dec on K.I. (VF), 10 Dec at Hoover (R. Richards), and 26 Dec in Mercer (JBo). The 42 Red-tailed Hawks at The Wilds, Muskingum 1 Jan afforded a good count (JB). Providing one of few well-documented winter records for ne. United States was an imm. Broad-



First noticed by a local birder at the Shamrock Tree Farm in Pomeroy, Chester, Pennsylvania, this Gray Kingbird was reported to Larry Lewis, who quickly identified it 12 (here 18) December 2004. It was not seen after 20 December.

Photograph by Geoff Malosh.

**SA** Over 1800 Sandhill Cranes were detected in a record-breaking southward migration through the w. corridor, roughly centered on Cincinnati, where observers noted 1000 on 14 Dec (B. Wharton). The peak exodus came on the heels of the first Arctic blast of season, when temperatures dipped into the teens. Coupled with Nov records, the fall 2004 flight through Ohio numbered at least 2300 birds. By comparison, the record autumn flight of 1997 numbered just 1100. Not surprisingly, a record 30 Sandhill Cranes attempted to winter, led by 20–26 in *Medina* (J. Wert, m.ob.) through 13 Jan and 4 birds through 22 Jan in *Montgomery* (DD). In *Lawrence*, PA, up to 19 wintered (m.ob.).

winged Hawk near Pohopoco Creek, *Carbon*, PA 10–12 Jan (ph. R. & B. Rehrig). Merlins are now rare but regular winter throughout the Region. Pennsylvania observers recorded singles from urban Pittsburgh and 4 in *Berks* (KK, KL, MW). In Ohio, at least 28 birds were accounted for across 15 counties. In a season with a strong



One of many frugivores on the march in winter 2004–2005, this Townsend's Solitaire was discovered at State Game Lands 30 in McKean County, Pennsylvania 15 (here 21) January; it remained into March. Photograph by Geoff Malosh.

prairie influence, Ohio's first Richardson's Merlin at K.P.W.A. 19 Feb (ph. A. Boone, J. Kuenzli) did not seem so out of place. A total of 5–6 Peregrine Falcons was noted throughout the period at P.I.S.P. (JM, BC). Ohio had not one but 2 Prairie Falcons this winter. In addition to the wintering bird (in its 2nd year) at The Wilds, *Muskingum* through 29 Jan (B. Crow, m.ob.), an imm. male was found moribund near Amanda, *Fairfield* (fide O.D.N.R.).

A late Common Moorhen was flushed 18 Dec in Tincum Twp., *Delaware*—one of the few areas in Pennsylvania where this species can be found, albeit irregularly, in Dec (R. Miller). A security guard for Parkersburg Steel in *Wood*, WV returned to his truck after completing his rounds to discover a Purple Gallinule standing on the tailgate 4 Jan. The distressed bird was turned into wildlife rehabilitators but died 2 days later (fide RE). A large wintering flock of American Coots at

Camp Dennison, *Hamilton*, OH 26 Dec–23 Jan numbered 810 on the first date, 400 on the latter (JS, FR, m.ob.).

### SHOREBIRDS THROUGH GULLS

Some 41 Killdeer were still at L. Cowan, *Clinton* 4 Dec (LG), and 15 were at Mercer W.A., *Mercer* 7 Dec (JBo), while a straggler at L. Erie was detected 26 Dec in *Lake* (JP). The 155 at Huntington, WV 2 Jan provided some indication of how many may winter along the Ohio R. (WA). Spring returnees to L. Erie included birds in *Medina* 9 Feb and *Lorain* 10 Feb (R. Harlan). A Lesser Yellowlegs at Gilmore Ponds, *Butler*, OH 20–27 Feb was record early for the state (ph. MB, B. Lacker). Lingering Dunlin in Ohio numbered 17 at O.N.W.R. 5 Dec (EP et al.), 8 in *Lake* 19 Dec (JP), and one in *Knox* 20 Dec (JL). A Purple Sandpiper remained at H.B.S.P. 6 Dec (D. Best). A Wilson's Snipe was n. to *Warren*, OH 16 Jan (J. Lehman). American Woodcocks returned 8 Feb to *Vinton*, OH (fide L. Andrews) and Blue Marsh L., *Berks*, PA (J. Silagy).

Among the largest concentration for the species anywhere, 64,000 Bonaparte's Gulls took shelter in Lorain Harbor, *Lorain* 3 Dec (VF). Modest numbers into winter on L. Erie included 1000 at Fairport Harbor 17 Jan (K. Metcalf), where several hundred were seen to circle to great height before turning southward; the species was recorded only as singles thereafter on L. Erie. Rare inland in midwinter, a flock of 25 in *Perry*, OH 24 Jan (J. Faulkner) was odd. Only 2 Little Gulls were reported: an ad. 23 Dec in *Lake*, OH and a second-year bird 1 Jan in *Ashtabula*, OH (JP). Late single Laughing Gulls were found on 18 Dec at the Tullytown Landfill, *Bucks* (CR) and on the Delaware R. near Chester, *Delaware* (JF). Outstanding was a Black-headed Gull discovered in late Nov–8 Dec at Tullytown, *Bucks*, PA (CR, ph. BE). Dec concentrations of Ring-billed Gulls on L. Erie numbered only 51,000 in *Lorain* (VF), 45,000 in *Lake* (JP), and 22,000 in *Erie* (VF). Inland however, was a different story: 7000 in *Hancock*, OH 20 Dec (K. Noblet et al.) and 3700 in *Hamilton*, OH 24 Jan (RF) gathered after severe cold snaps, the latter coincident with a general exodus from L. Erie that left fewer than 6000 the remainder of the season. The

9 Ohio Thayer's Gulls were in *Lucas* (1), *Erie* (1), *Cuyahoga* (4), and *Lake* (3). A report of a California Gull at P.I.S.P. 14 Dec (JM), potentially a 3rd Pennsylvania record, is under review. An ad. 8 Jan in Cleveland (LR, ph. m.ob.) was about the 25th for Ohio in the last 25 years. Nineteen Iceland Gulls on three *Bucks*, PA C.B.C.s in mid-Dec was a good count; 26 on L. Erie were mainly noted across the Eastern (15) and Central (10) Basins, with one w. to *Lucas*, OH. A total of 272 Lesser Black-backed Gulls was tallied on the three *Bucks* C.B.C.s. An above-average 21 Lesser Black-backed Gulls made up the L. Erie flock; 6 of those were at Oberlin Res., *Lorain*, OH 10 Jan (C. Priebe), while one was inland to *Tuscarawas*, OH 11 Feb (T. Sponseller). One of the larger incursions of white-winged gulls into L. Erie brought at least 45 Glaucous Gulls (20 ad., 13 subad., 12 unknown) into the Eastern (12), Central (30) and Western (3) Basins. Local concentrations were topped by 14 at Avon L., *Lorain*, OH 30 Jan (VF) and 12 at Lake View Landfill, *Erie*, PA (BC, JM). An ad. Herring Gull × Glaucous Gull was present Jan–Feb in Cleveland (ph. JP, m.ob.). The 30-minute passage of 440 Great Black-backed Gulls 19 Dec (JP) along the shore in *Lake*, OH hinted



One of two in Pennsylvania this winter, this Varied Thrush was present at Middle Creek W.M.A., Lancaster County 31 January–27 (here 2) February 2005. Photograph by Tom Amico.

at thousands entering the Central Basin. This was supported by the count of 1960 ads. 20 Jan from just *Cuyahoga* and *Lorain*, OH (VF). Despite the prevalence of the species, only one bird was seen inland to Independence Dam, *Defiance* 27 Jan (J. Yoehum). One, possibly 2, Great Black-backed Gull × Herring Gull hybrids were well studied in Cleveland 8 Jan+ (ph. JP, ph. VF, SZ, m.ob.). Furnishing the 2nd winter record on L. Erie was an ad. Sabine's Gull at P.I.S.P. 21–22 Dec (ph. N. Zalik, C. Kern).



**Table 1. Rufous Hummingbirds in Pennsylvania and Ohio, fall and winter 2004–2005.**

<u>Location</u>	<u>Age/sex</u>	<u>Date(s)</u>	<u>Observers/sources</u>
Indiana, PA	ad.	8 Dec	<i>fide</i> M. Higbee
Franklin, PA	ad. female	Oct–2 Dec	<i>fide</i> S. Weidensaul
Knox, OH	ad. male	3 Oct–4 Dec	b. AC
Erie, PA	ad.	through 14 Dec	A. Parmeter
Ross, OH	ad. female	23 Oct–18 Dec	b. AC
Bucks, PA	ad. female	early Nov–19 Dec	E. Schwartz, ph. NP, L. Rowan et al.
Hamilton, OH	ad. female	early Oct–15 Jan	b. AC
Fayette, PA	ad. female	28 Nov–17 Jan	b. MV, A. Leppold et al.
Muskingum, OH	ad. male	1 Oct–17 Jan	b. AC

b. = banded

**DOVES THROUGH FINCHES**

A Eurasian Collared-Dove was seen sporadically in Franklin, PA throughout the winter (D. Gearhart). This species has attempted to nest here in previous years. Without precedent in the Region, a Chuck-will's-widow was discovered alive 9 Dec in Milford, Clermont, OH (GF). It was subsequently rehabilitated and released in Florida. Recent population gains by Barn Owl in Ohio are now reflected during the winter, as 22 birds were found on C.B.C.s. Away from known strongholds, the species was detected at K.P.W.A. through Dec (VF, L. Gardella), Pickerel Creek W.A., Sandusky 5–6 Feb (D. Vanek, N. Bixler), and at Higginsport, Brown 12 Feb (S. Clingman). In the wake of West Nile virus, owl populations in nw. Ohio were devastated in 2002. However, signs of a recovery can be seen in the results of owling efforts on the Grand Rapids, Lucas C.B.C. 2 Jan, on which 193 Eastern Screech-Owls and 37 Great Horned Owls were detected. The hoped-for invasion by Snowy Owls did not pan out, as Ohio had just 3 birds at Bayshore, Lucas 19 Dec (M. Anderson et al.). In Pennsylvania, a few cooperative birds included one at a truck stop near Shippensburg, Cumberland, 12 Dec–15 Jan (m.ob.), in Lycoming 13 Dec (S. Pinkerton), and a 2nd for Lycoming in Williamsport 13–29 Dec, which was found dead on the last date. One at P.I.S.P. was present from the fall to 15 Jan (m.ob.). In Findlay Twp., Allegheny, PA, 30+ Short-eared Owls were found throughout the season (MV et al.), and near Gettysburg, Adams, birders were treated to 30–40 birds (m.ob.). After one of the heaviest fall flights of Northern Saw-whet Owls into Ohio in which more than 50 were banded in Nov (TB, K. Sieg), it was surprising that only 3 singles from as many counties were detected through the winter. Rufous Hummingbirds were long anticipated as regular fall migrants through the Region, but their hardiness continues to astound (Table 1). The Muskingum, OH bird returned to the same feeder at which it had been banded the year before as a hatch-year male, and the Hamilton, OH bird was origi-

nally banded as an after-hatch-year female in Jan 2003 in Sumter, GA (*fide* AC).

Twelve late Eastern Phoebes in Ohio, led by 4 in Adams 18 Dec. (CBC), included one n. to Portage 30 Dec (E. Faber). One at Spring Valley W.A., Warren 4 Feb (JH) may have wintered. Pennsylvania's first Gray

**SA** On 5 Feb, beginning birder Jessica Huff was eager to find Fox Sparrows, a species she had never seen before, at P.V.P. Together with veteran birder August Mirabella, she hiked toward a feeder frequented by the species. Amidst a small flock of American Robins, Jessica spotted a robin with streaked underparts. After field guide study and consulting with other birders by mobile phone, she and August came to the conclusion the "strange robin" was a Redwing, a thrush far from its European home. About 50 lucky birders were able to see the bird before dusk, securing clear photographs to confirm the identification.

Kingbird frequented the Shamrock Christmas Tree Farm, Pomeroy, Chester 17–20 Dec (J. Meloney, L. Lewis m. ob.). Single Loggerhead Shrike reports came from Hardy 29 Jan (C.B.C. data) and Berkely 13 Jan (MO), both in West Virginia and the only Regional reports. There were 20 reports of Northern

Shrikes throughout Pennsylvania, while 14 birds across 10 Ohio counties made for an average season. An out-of-range Common Raven was in LeBocuf Twp., Erie, PA 19 Feb (C. Gehringer), and 2 were over Nockamixon Twp., Bucks, PA 26 Feb (H. McGarity). There are a half-dozen American Crow roosts of 10,000 or more birds in Ohio. While the 20,000 noted in Clark (D. Overacker) indicates some roosts have returned to capacity, the 20,000 within the Cincinnati roost is still far below the 70,000 birds documented before the coming of West Nile virus (FR, m.ob.).

An extraordinary 21 Northern Rough-winged Swallows were found at the Northeast Water Pollution Control Plant, Philadelphia, PA 8 Jan during the annual Philadelphia Mid-Winter Census (R. Horwitz, P. Kurtz, M. Sharp). A Sedge Wren was present at Martins Creek, Northampton, PA 26 Dec–20 Jan, providing the state's first record of a wintering bird. It frequented a small patch of sedge where it seemed to feed on midge larvae (*Chironomus* sp.), spiders, and other invertebrates (ph. RW). A late Blue-gray Gnatcatcher was found at the Penn-Warner Tract, Bucks, PA 18 Dec (DF). Single Varied Thrushes were at Caledonia S.P., Franklin, PA 11 Dec+, Middle Creek W.M.A., Lancaster, PA 31 Jan–27 Feb (B. & P. Hunsberger, ph. T. Amico, m.ob.), and 16 Dec–28 Feb at a Carroll, OH feeder (C. Ickes, D. Sanders, m.ob.). A Townsend's Solitaire was discovered at S.G.L. 30, McKean, PA 15 Jan+ (L. Groshek, J. Fedak, m.ob.).

An above-average 14 Gray Catbirds from Ohio included 5 mid- to late Dec birds n. to L. Erie in Lucas (2), Erie (1), and Lorain (2). Four were detected into Jan from Hamilton (D. Russell), Hocking and Pickaway (C.B.C. data), and to 28 Jan at Oxford, Butler (ph. B. Wilson). Eleven Brown Thrashers on Ohio C.B.C.s was average, while the only mid-winter record came from Clermont 16 Jan

**Table 2. Late warblers and vireos in Pennsylvania and Ohio, winter 2004–2005.**

<u>Species</u>	<u>Date(s)</u>	<u>Location</u>	<u>Observers/sources</u>
White-eyed Vireo	19 Dec	Portage, OH	LR, W. Stover
White-eyed Vireo	19 Dec	Lucas, OH	J. Komorowski et al.
Orange-crowned Warbler	21 Dec–9 Jan	Allegheny, PA	T. Bledsoe
Yellow Warbler	18 Dec	Montgomery, PA	C.B.C. data
Cape May Warbler	18 Dec	Stark, OH	C.B.C. data
Black-throated Blue Warbler	29 Dec	Dauphin, PA	R. Koury, D. Williams
American Redstart	until 2 Dec	Snyder, PA	M. Brown
Ovenbird	until 14 Jan	Chester, PA	J. Carpenter, ph T. Fernandes
Ovenbird	8 Jan	Philadelphia, PA	D. Wiedener
Ovenbird	3–14 Dec	Lake, OH	ph. D. Seaman
Wilson's Warbler	18 Dec	Butler, OH	MB, L. Peyton
Wilson's Warbler	18 Dec	Lehigh, PA	C.B.C. data
Wilson's Warbler	19 Dec	Lancaster, PA	C.B.C. data





This Sedge Wren was present in a tussock sedge marsh near Martin's Creek, Northampton County, Pennsylvania 26 December 2004 (here)—20 January 2005; it established a first winter record for Pennsylvania. Photograph from videotape by Rick Wiltraut.

(GF). The largest mid-winter flock of American Pipits numbered 6 in Dayton, *Montgomery*, OH 23 Jan (NS). Of 300,000 European Starlings on Ohio C.B.C.s, 81,000 were migrants observed streaming from Canada past K.I. toward the mainland on 19 Dec (TB et al.).

Late warblers and vireos were legion this season (Table 2). Pine Warblers visited feeders across the Region: 7 were reported in Ohio n. to *Lucas* 30 Jan (M. Anderson), *Cuyahoga* 16 Jan (ph. J. Andes), and another in *Cuyahoga* 11 Jan (SZ). Late Palm Warblers in Ohio included singles in *Stark* 18 Dec (C.B.C. data) and in *Brown* 24 Dec (DM). Another Pennsylvania first, a *MaeGillivray's Warbler* was found in *Maxatawny Twp., Berks* 18–20 Dec (A. Jennings, B. Morris, K. Sieminski, T. Watkins, m.ob.). Mid-winter Common Yellowthroats were located in *Wayne*, OH 4 Jan (JL et al.) and *Clermont*, OH 8 Jan (RF).

Nearly annual in Pennsylvania in winter, a Clay-colored Sparrow was with a flock of 20 American Tree Sparrows in *Oley Twp., Berks* 16 Jan (RK). Ohio's only wintering Chipping Sparrow was reported from *Hamilton* (K. Westerndorf). Unexpected were single Grasshopper Sparrows at *Neshaminy S.P., Bucks*, PA 18 Dec–1 Jan (M. Jeitner, L. Rowan) and in *Butler*, OH 31 Dec (MB). The Western Basin continues to collect records of Oregon Junco, with 2 present on K.I. 23 Jan (TB et al.). Singles were also reported from *Lucas* (CBC) and *Knox*, OH 19 Dec (VF). A high count of 145 White-crowned Sparrows was noted at *Buffalo Creek, Washington*, PA 26 Dec (L. Helgerman). An imm. Harris's Sparrow was found at *Stone Church, Northampton*, PA 18 Jan+ (RW), the same location where an ad. spent the previous winter. The Amish farm country of *Holmes/Stark/Tuscarawas*, OH is a magnet for sparrows in winter. Three C.B.C.s cover this area

and together represent 18% of the party-hour effort in Ohio. This effort detected +300 (38%) of the state's American Tree Sparrows, 1911 (65%) of the White-crowned Sparrows, and 40 (66%) of the Savannah Sparrows. The latter, normally confined to the Lower Ohio R. Valley in winter, persists here late as well, as indicated by 14 in e. *Holmes* 29 Jan (ES). White-throated Sparrow reaches its greatest population density

in the Region along the Ohio R., with 33% of the Ohio C.B.C. totals coming from just *Hamilton/Butler*, OH in the sw. part of the state. This season's Lincoln's Sparrow appeared 19 Dec at *Maumee Bay S.P., Lucas*, OH (B. Zweibel). Snow Buntings outnumbered Lapland Longspurs 4:1 on Ohio



This first-winter Harris's Sparrow was "chummed" in with millet 18 January (here)—20 March 2005 at Stone Church, Northampton County, Pennsylvania—the same location where an adult was present about nine months earlier. Photograph by Rick Wiltraut.

C.B.C.s. The 500 Snow Buntings vs. 200 Lapland Longspurs 12 Jan in *Wyandot*, OH (RC) is further indication of the atypical ratio this season.

A male Painted Bunting visited a feeder in *Northampton Twp., Bucks*, PA 6 Feb+ (B. Ilenda et al.), about the state's 23rd since 1883. Single Dickcissels were found near *New Hope, Bucks*, PA 26 Dec–20 Jan (DF, KR) and at *Buckingham Twp., Bucks*, PA 3–25 Feb (V. & R. Smith). The 200 Rusty Blackbirds in *Butler*, OH 12 Jan provided a good mid-winter count (FR). Exclusive of two Ohio C.B.C. reports of 11 birds, one to

3 Brewer's Blackbirds were reported from *Clermont*, OH 8 Jan (RF) and *Lucas*, OH 13 Feb (JP). The 39,000+ Red-winged Blackbirds on Ohio C.B.C.s were led by 15,000 in *Hocking* 2 Jan and 12,000 at *Pickrel Creek W.A., Sandusky* 1 Jan (VF). Of the 222,000 Common Grackles on Ohio C.B.C.s, 181,000 were detected in the *Pickaway/Fairfield/Hocking* region of cen. Ohio 1–2 Jan. Up to 27 Eastern Meadowlarks were at *The Wilds, Muskingum* 17 Jan (JS et al.), with one n. to *Geauga* 18 Jan (A. Fondrk). Lingered Baltimore Orioles were found in *Bucks*, PA 18 Dec (PEL, G. L. Armistead) and *Manchester Twp., York*, PA 13–16 Jan (S. Godack). Common Redpolls, mostly singles, were scattered through Pennsylvania and Ohio, with 12 along the *Pymatuning Causeway, Crawford*, PA 13 Feb (RFL). A strong incursion into Ohio by Purple Finches was led by 50 in *Hamilton* 11 Dec (fide P. Wharton). A White-winged Crossbill 31 Jan–28 Feb at a *Vandalia, Montgomery*, OH feeder (B. Landis, DD) was the Region's only report. West Virginia had modest Red Crossbill reports this season, with up to 16 at *Pipestem, Summers* 24 Dec (J&JP). A high count of 50 Pine Siskins was reported from *New Richmond, Clermont*, OH (DM),

but most reports were of 3–7 birds (N. Troyer et al.). Evening Grosbeaks made sporadic appearances in w. Pennsylvania, with 10 at *Conneaut Marsh, Crawford* 5 Feb (RFL).

Initialed observers (subregional editors in bold): Ohio: Tom Bartlett, Gregory Bennett, Charlie Bombaci, Jill Bowers (JBo), Jenny Brumfield (JB), Mike Busan, Craig Caldwell, Allen Chartier, Rick Counts, David Dister, Ginny Fantetti, Victor Fazio III, Robert Foppe, John Habig, Ned Keller, Denis Kline, Jason Larson, Greg Links, Kevin Metcalf, Donald Morse, Jr.,

Ed Pierce, J. Pogacnik, Frank Renfrow, Larry Rosche, Robert Royse, Ed Schlabaach, Regina Schlietz, Nick Smith, Jay Stenger, Rob Thorn, Bill Whan, Sean Zadar. Pennsylvania: Ben Coulter, Gerry Dewaghe, Bill Etter, Devich Farbotnik, John Freiberg, Paul Hess, Rudy Keller, Katrina Knight (KK), Robert C. Leberman, Ronald F. Leberman, Ken Lebo, Paul E. Lehman, Bob Mercer, Jerry McWilliams, August Mirabella, Nick Pulcinella, Ken Reiker, Cameron Rutt, Mark Vass, Rick Wiltraut. West Virginia: Wendell Argabrite, Richard Esker, Kim Kazmierski (KKz), Matt Orsic, Jim & Judy Phillips. 🌱

# Illinois & Indiana



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Overall, the winter of 2004–2005 was mild and wet, the seventh wettest on record in Illinois. According to the *Chicago Tribune*, the winter averaged 3.4° F above normal across Illinois and 2.4° F above in the Chicago area. The coldest period (compared to seasonal norms) occurred during the third week of December, when temperatures plunged 10° F below normal. Mid-January also experienced a significant cold snap. February temperatures were quite mild.

This winter was similar to last year's, with fine bird diversity, lots of lingering migrants, and several rarities. It was a good winter for gulls, with excellent numbers of the regular species, plus a Mew Gull and multiple Black-

legged Kittiwakes. Present in unusually high numbers this winter were Tundra Swans, Northern Saw-whet Owls, Northern Shrikes, and Varied Thrushes. Noteworthy among the lingering migrants were American Bittern, Fish Crow, Lincoln's Sparrows, and Dickcissels. In addition, it proved to be an above-average season for the fickle winter finches.

**Abbreviations:** Carl. L. (Carlyle L. in Clinton, Fayette, and Bond, IL); I.B.S.P. (Illinois Beach S.P., on the lakefront 16 km s. of the Wisconsin border); Jax. P. (Jackson Park on the Chicago lakefront); L. Cal. (Lake Calumet on Chicago's s. side), Chau. (Chautauqua N.W.R., IL); L. Gibs. (L. Gibson, sw. Indiana).

## LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

Except for 2 on Carl. L. 11 Dec (DMK) and single imms. at Summit L., IN 8–15 Jan (Ron Kolde, DGo, SAP) and at L. Lemon, IN 21 Jan (DGo), Red-throated Loons were restricted to the Indiana lakefront, where 6 were counted. Two Pacific Loons were re-

ported without details at Carl. L. 12 Dec (JU, JE) and at Morse Res., IN 22–23 Dec (JCo et al.). Following last fall's dearth of Common Loons on L. Michigan, a record winter flight was noted at Dunes S.P., IN 13 Dec, when 529 southbound migrants were noted (DGo, KJB). The Region's only Red-necked Grebe was reported at Summit L., IN 15 Jan (SAP). Single Western Grebes were observed on the Indiana lakefront at West Beach 5 Dec (JJM) and at Dunes S.P. 18 Dec (†AA).

Along the Mississippi R., American White Pelicans peaked at 200 in Monroe, IL 12 Jan (JPZ). Most unexpected was the discovery of an American Bittern at Carl. L. 14 & 26 Dec (DMK, RSR); only a handful of winter records exist for the Region. A tardy Great Egret lingered in Will, IL until 11 Dec (EWW) to provide an Illinois winter record for the 2nd consecutive year. An injured Green Heron was discovered in the Palos area of Cook, IL 19 Dec and was found dead 21 Dec (WSS, †WJM). Although wintering Black-crowned Night-Herons are regular in the Chicago area, an ad. that attempted to winter in Fort Wayne, IN, was unexpected; it was last seen 17 Jan (Haw, ph. EP). Black Vultures were widespread and appeared in good numbers; the peak tally consisted of 100 in Johnson, IL 2 Jan (KAM, CL).

In general, geese rebounded from last winter's depressed numbers. Peak counts included 2665 Greater White-fronteds at Chau. 11 Feb (RGB, SBj) and 200,000 Snows at Carl. L. 9 Jan (DMK). In Indiana, however, Snow Geese remained scarce. Ross's Geese were also relatively plentiful, with 28 in Illinois and 4 in Indiana. Wintering Mute Swans peaked on Wolf L., IL with 116 on 31 Jan (CAM). The most impressive swan report consisted of a whopping 856 Tundras on the Mississippi R., Whiteside and Carroll, IL 16 Dec (KJM, KR, m.ob.). This total is surely one of the largest ever recorded in the Region.

Dabblers appeared in typical numbers; the most unusual records consisted of early Blue-winged Teal reports—12 at Mermet L., IL 26 Feb (KAM) and 2 at Carl. L. on the same day (DMK). Winner of the odd-duck award was an ad. male "Brewer's Duck," (Gadwall × Mallard hybrid) at L. Cal. 19 & 26 Feb (†WJM). Bay ducks were slightly above normal; peak tallies included 4000 Canvasbacks in Hancock, IL 26 Feb (AD), 6000 Ring-necked Ducks in Calhoun, IL 18 Dec (WCR), and 1540 Greater Scaup at I.B.S.P. 8 Jan (DFS). It was an above-average winter for sea ducks. Female or imm. Harlequin Ducks were reported at one Indiana and two Chicago lakefront locations, and an ad. male was reportedly photographed at Jax. P. 15 Jan (GAW). Scoter reports were clearly up this winter, with peak tallies of 16 Surfs at I.B.S.P. 4 Dec (AFS), 18 White-wingeds (all males) at I.B.S.P. 1 Jan (GAW),



and 6 Blacks at I.B.S.P. 4 Dec (AFS). One to 3 of each scoter species were also reported at inland sites. A count of 655 Long-tailed Ducks at Winthrop Harbor 19 Feb (EES) constitutes one of the Region's better counts in recent years. The male Hooded Merganser × goldeneye hybrid returned to the Hammond, IN marina for the 4th consecutive year (ph. JKC et al.). Ruddy Duck numbers were up somewhat this winter, peaking at 700 at Chau. 19 Feb (Rjk).

## HAWKS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

High Bald Eagle concentrations on the Mississippi R. yielded counts of 1694 in *White-side* and *Rock Island*, IL 7–8 Jan and 1458 in *Hancock*, *Henderson*, and *Mercer*, IL 9–10 Jan (KJM). The Indiana Department of Natural Resources mid-winter survey produced 187 Bald Eagles 6–7 Jan, well above average (JSC). It was a good winter for harriers, with peak counts of 58 in sw. Indiana 4 Dec (LWS) and 52 in the Arklands Reclamation Area, *Perry*, IL 12 Feb (TAM). Northern Goshawks were frightfully scarce this winter: only 2 were reported in the Region. Red-tailed Hawks were reported in typical numbers, but a wintering Harlan's Hawk appeared at Horseshoe L., *Madison*, IL (FHo), and 2 were in *Harrison*, IN (Skip Stocksdale). A total of 12 Golden Eagles across the Region was above normal. Fifteen Merlins were reported (about average) Regionwide, with the highlight an ad. male *richardsonii* in *Randolph*, IL 5 Feb (JE). Impressive counts of gallinaceous species included 106 Greater Prairie-Chickens at Prairie Ridge State Natural Area, IL 21 Dec (JW m.ob.) and 226 Wild Turkeys near Rockford, IL 18 Dec (DTW, m.ob.).

An exceptional tally of 350 Sandhill Cranes logged in Des Plaines, IL 21 Dec (AA) attests to the winter abundance of this species n. of the Jasper–Pulaski, IN staging area. The Region's only Virginia Rail reports came from Beverly Shores, IN, where one was reported 4 Jan (DGo) and 2 were detected 5 Feb (JJM). A straggling Sanderling, recorded at Waukegan 11 Dec (AFS), was unexpected. Now a rare but regular winter species in the Region, Least Sandpiper was reported at six locations; the peak count consisted of 28 in *Jasper*, IL 17 Dec (BS). Two Purple Sandpipers at Waukegan, IL 10 Dec (ph., †GAW) were exceptional, and 3 very late Dunlin were seen in *Jasper*, IL 17 Dec (BS).

## JAEGERS THROUGH OWLS

An apparent Parasitic Jaeger worked the outer breakwall at the Port of Indiana throughout the day on 11 Dec (BJG, JKC, JJM, MT, KJB et al.). Likely the same bird, also identified as a



Winter-period Purple Sandpipers are casual on Lake Michigan, so these two at Waukegan 10 December 2004 were quite a find. Photograph by Geoffrey A. Williamson.

juv. Parasitic, was at Miller Beach (7 km farther w.) 13 Dec (JJM). This constitutes the first winter record of a Parasitic Jaeger on the Indiana lakefront in more than 60 years. Casual throughout the Region in winter, a Laughing Gull at Salamonie Res., IN 16 Dec (†Haw) provided a first winter record for ne. Indiana. Peak tallies of the more common gulls included 8000 Bonaparte's at Carl. L. 11 Dec (DMK), 50,000 Ring-billeds at Carl. L. 14 Dec (DMK), and 6900 Herrings at I.B.S.P. 8 Jan (DFS). The season's rarest gull was an ad. Mew Gull at Carl. L. 16 Jan (DMK, ph. TAM, CT, JE, CMI et al.). Also noteworthy was a second-winter California Gull at Carl. L. 12 Dec (ph. DMK). An organized "Gull Frolic" at Winthrop Harbor, Chicago on 19 Feb yielded impressive



Casual anywhere in the Region, and especially rare away from Lake Michigan, this adult Mew Gull at Carlyle Lake, Illinois 16 January 2005 was the Region's rarest gull of the winter. Photograph by Travis A. Mohan.

counts of several of the less-common species: 12 Thayer's, 5 Iceland, and 6 Lesser Black-backed (GAW et al.). Interestingly, one first-year Iceland observed during the "Frolic" had a bicolored bill (ph. RHu), a character sometimes associated with—but apparently not diagnostic of—the nominate form. It was also an exceptional winter for Glaucous Gull, with a state record 13 counted along the *Lake*, IN lakefront 15 Jan (JKC, SRB, JJM, RJP, DD). A record count of Great Black-backed Gull was also logged along the Hammond-Whiting, IN lakefront 23 Jan, when 25 were recorded (JKC, JJM). Remarkably, some 8 juv. Black-legged Kittiwakes were reported in Dec along the Indiana lakefront, including 3 on 11 Dec (JJM). Two birds lingered at the Port of Indiana through 1 Jan (RLH, LAC, TH) to provide the state's first multiple-bird total for Jan, one lingered at that site through 9 Jan (JJM, BJG). An ad. Black-legged Kittiwake visited Eagle Creek Park, IN 26 Feb (†DOC, †KWy). Without details, another ad. was reported at Loek & Dam 14, *Rock Island*, IL 29 Dec (SF).

The Carbondale, IL Inca Dove reported in the fall summary remained through 13 Dec (JL). Some of the 82 Monk Parakeets reported in Burnham, *Cook*, IL 7 Feb (DFS) have apparently spilled over into nearby Hammond, IN, where 10 birds, along with 2 nests, were reported in mid-Jan (CAM). Some 6 Snowy Owls, 3 in each state, were reported this winter. Interestingly, only half of these appeared on the L. Michigan lakefront,





Only a half-dozen Snowy Owls appeared in the Illinois & Indiana Region this winter. This dark individual, photographed 5 December 2004 at Rotary Park in Sangamon County, was one of the more southerly of these wanderers.

Photograph by Travis A. Mahan.

which has been the traditional location for this species. The southernmost birds included an imm. female at Springfield, Sangamon, IL 5 Dec (ph. TAM, CS, RJk) and another in Huntington, IN 31 Dec–22 Feb (Joyce Gottschalk, Haw, m.ob.). The “eared” owls were reported in typical numbers, with maximum counts of 8 Long-eareds at Summit L., IN 4 Dec (SAP) and 14 Short-eareds in Huntington, IN 2 Feb (Joe Steinmetz, m.ob.) and 14 also at Prairie Ridge State Natural Area, IL 19 Jan (JW, TE). Northern Saw-whet Owls were unusually plentiful and vocal. Peak tallies included 9 at Carl. L. 20 Feb (DMK, BS), 7 at Willow Slough W.M.A. 1 Jan (EMH), plus 6 more in another section of Willow Slough 1 Jan (JJM).

### WOODPECKERS THROUGH WAXWINGS

An exceptional winter count of 163 Red-headed Woodpeckers was logged in Jackson, IL 1 Jan (KJM, SJ). The season's only Rufous Hummingbirds were reported in Indiana, where 4 were banded (*fide* DGo). Once again, Eastern Phoebes dallied in the Region. Mid-winter birds included 2 in Monroe, IN 30 Dec (LWS), one in Massac, IL 31 Dec (KAM, DMK), and another in Marion, IN 8 Jan–5 Feb (JCo). Additionally, 5 overzealous migrants were recorded in s. Indiana during the last half of Feb. A maximum count of 7 Loggerhead Shrikes was recorded at Prairie Ridge State Natural Area, IL 19 Jan (JW, TE). Indiana Loggerheads have been quite scarce in recent years; consequently, the singles reported in Orange 19 Dec (JSC) and in Jackson 27 Feb (DL) are noteworthy. It was an exceptional winter for Northern Shrike, with some 21 reported in the Region. The highest count consisted of 3 at Kingsbury W.M.A., IN 29 Jan (JJM), and the southernmost birds reached Sullivan, IN 1 Jan (ph. LWS) and Shelby, IL 31 Dec (DFS).

A mid-winter Fish Crow in Rock Island, IL 2 Jan (KJM, JSa) was unexpected. Early returning Tree Swallows appeared at Horse-

shoe L., Madison, IL 19 Feb (FHo) and at Carl. L. 26 Feb (DMK). Red-breasted Nuthatches were more abundant than normal across n. portions of the Region. Winter Marsh Wrens were reported at Eagle Creek Park, IN 26 Dec (BL, RFB, LPv, ph. JSu), in Kankakee, IL 2 Jan (DFS), and in McHenry, IL 15 Jan (DFS). K. J. McKay commented that Hermit Thrushes were “noticeably less abundant” in Illinois. Nine were reported at Rend L., IL 18 Dec (KAM, CL) and 3 at Kingsbury W.M.A. 29 Jan (JJM). It proved to be a fine winter for Varied Thrushes: a female was at Calumet Park, IL 22–26 Dec

(CAM, WJM, DFS, m.ob.), a male was at Eagle Creek Park, IN 12 Jan (Dawn VanDemen, Frank Rouse, Angela Ngigi, *fide* DGo), and another male was at Kingsbury W.M.A. 28 Jan–12 Feb (ph. BHu, JJM, JKC, SRB,



Always rare in winter, Loggerhead Shrikes were slightly more numerous in southern Illinois numbers this winter. This bird was photographed 12 February 2005 at Pyramid State Park, Perry County, Illinois. Photograph by Travis A. Mahan.

m.ob.). Also attesting to the mild winter were reports of 7 Gray Catbirds in Dec (3 in Illinois, 4 in Indiana). Brown Thrasher, normally a casual species in the n. reaches of the Region, was in Cook, IL all season (JA), with others in Allen, IN 7 Jan (Casey Ryan, *fide* Haw) and at Ogden Dunes, IN 9 Jan (JJM). American Pipit numbers were up this winter, with peak counts of 88 at Urbana, IL (GL),

64 at Rend L., IL (KAM, CL), and 40 in Lawrence, IN (LWS), all on 18 Dec. Noteworthy among several Jan reports of pipits was a single bird on Whihala Beach, Lake, IN 8 Jan (JKC, SRB, JJM et al.), which provided a first winter record for the Indiana lakefront. Cedar Waxwing concentrations were decidedly scarce this winter; only three reports exceeded 100 birds. The largest of these consisted of 125 waxwings on the Purdue North Central campus 1 Dec (SRB).

### WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

By recent standards, the selection of warblers that appeared in the Region this winter was modest. Tardy Orange-crowned Warblers were reported in Cook, IL 8 Dec (JA) and at Rend L., IL 18 Dec (DMK). Perhaps the season's most remarkable warbler was a Cape May Warbler that spent the last half of winter at a feeder outside the School of Public and Environmental Affairs building at Indiana University/Bloomington; it was discovered by Vicky Meretsky about 15 Jan and was still present 22 Mar (RBr, ph. JH). Some 50 Yellow-rumped Warblers were logged in Du Page, IL 3 Jan (UG), which constitutes an excellent winter count for ne. Illinois. Other warbler reports included 4 Pines at Rend L., IL 18 Dec (DMK), a Pine at Carl. L. 14 Dec (TAM), and an ad. female Common Yellowthroat in Chicago 9 & 19 Dec (†AA).

The season's only Spotted Towhee, a female, was found at the Green Wing Environmental Lab, Lee, IL 17 Dec (SBH). Peak tallies of the expected *Spizellas* included 545 American Trees in Stephenson, IL 29 Jan (DFS) and 149 Fields in Massac, IL 31 Dec (KAM, DMK). Once again, it proved to be a fine winter for Chipping Sparrows, with 5 in Illinois and 4 in Indiana. Always scarce in winter, single Vesper Sparrows were reported in Perry, IL 25 Dec (KJM) and at Mermet L., IL 31 Dec (KJM). Le Conte's Sparrows were restricted to s. Illinois, where singles were reported in

Jasper 16 Dec (BS) and at Rend L. 24 Jan (KAM). Quite rare in winter, single Lincoln's Sparrows appeared in Carroll, IL 16 Dec (KJM, KR), in Allen, IN 18 Dec (†BW et al.), and in Alexander, IL 29 Dec (KJM). For the first time in five years, Harris's Sparrow went unreported in the Region. Lapland Longspur numbers were typical, with a peak count of 800 at Carl. L. 9 Jan (DMK) and seven other



Wildly out of character for a Marsh Wren, this bird at Eagle Creek Park, Indiana 26 December 2004 was photographed as it captured and dined on minnows. Photograph by John Summer.

triple-digit reports. Compared to last winter's massive incursion into s. reaches of the Region, this year's Snow Bunting flight was considerably smaller; the peak tally consisted of "a flock of hundreds" in Allen, IN 28 Dec (CP, EP). An imm. female Dickcissel remained in Union, IL 30 Dec (DFS), and another female was in Jersey, IL 22 Jan (WCR).

Red-winged Blackbirds numbered about 44,400 at Rend L., IL 18 Dec (KAM, CL) and about 40,000 at Carl. L. 5-6 Feb (DMK). Meadowlark maxima of 64 Easterns in Perry, IL 25 Dec (KJM) and 10 Westerns at Carl. L. 6 Feb (DMK) were above average. Twenty-five Brewer's Blackbird in Perry, IL 27 Feb (JE) and 20 at Carl. L. 29 Feb (DMK) were likely migrating. A Great-tailed Grackle was identified in Perry, IL 25 Dec (KJM, documentation sent to the state committee), one of a few that have recently slipped across the Mississippi R. into Illinois.

Following last fall's unexpected winter finch incursion, above-normal winter numbers were recorded across the Region. Peak tallies included a female or imm. male Pine Grosbeak in Hammond, IN 16 Dec (Joy Bower); 40 Purple Finches that wintered in Sand Ridge S.F., IL (RGB, SBj), plus 45 Red Crossbills there 9 Jan (RJ) and 5 White-winged Crossbills there 14 Dec (EES); 13 Common Redpolls in the Indiana Dunes 11 Jan (SRB) and 13 in the Chicago Botanical Gardens 30 Jan (MM); 81 Pine Siskins in Winnebago, IL 2 Jan (DTW); and an Evening Grosbeak in Lowden-Miller S.F. 12 Feb (DFS)—the latter being Region's first report in seven years. Eurasian Tree Sparrow num-

bers decreased this winter, especially in cen. Illinois (*vide* KMJ).

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# 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 Eric 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

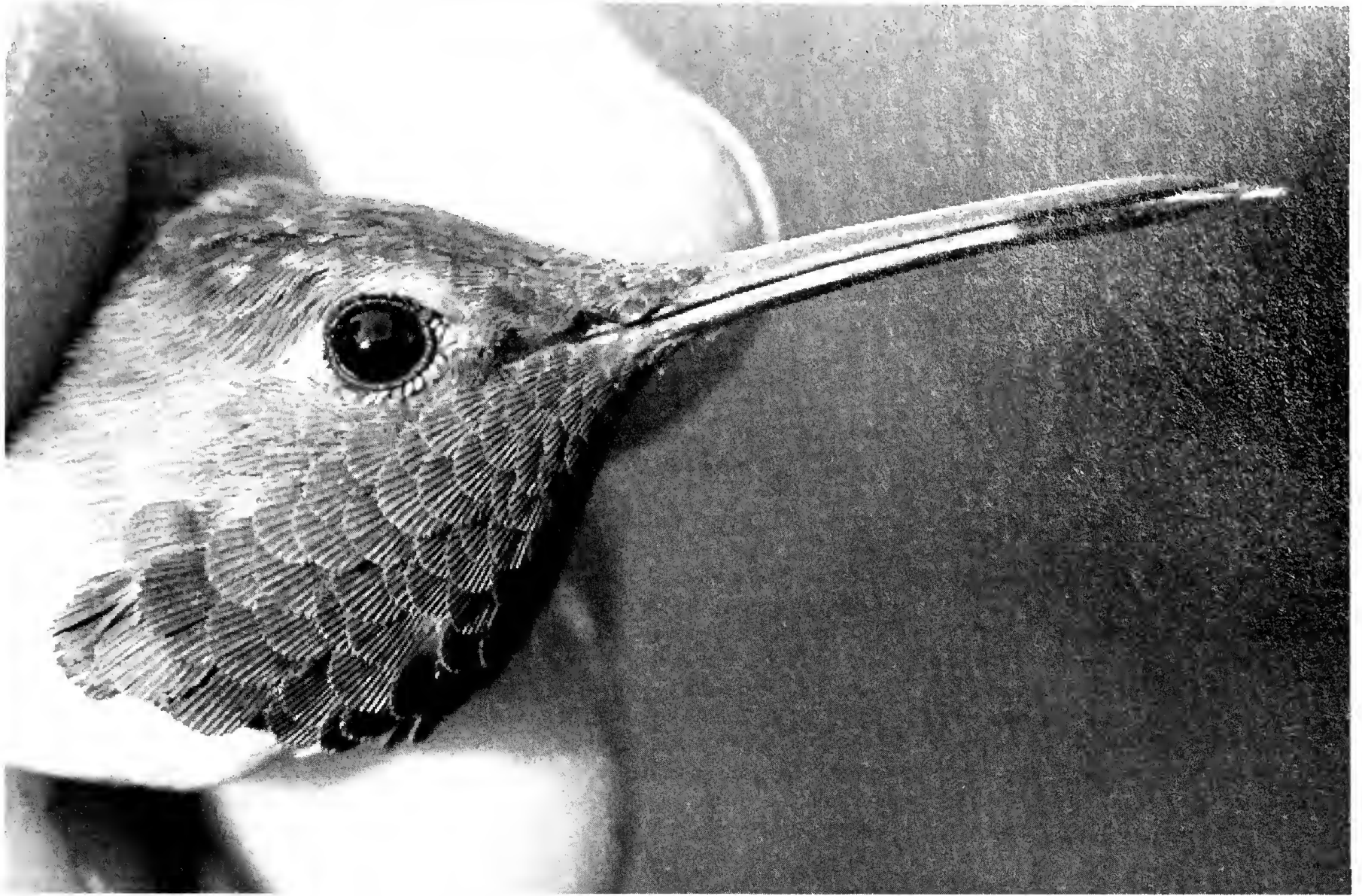
latest being 4 on 16 Jan at Paw Paw L., Berrien (SJ). Wisconsin reported a high of 268 Trumpeter Swans 1 Jan in St. Croix (LP). Minnesota had reports of Harlequin Duck 23 Dec at Duluth, St. Louis (AB, fide KE) and 2 wintering in Two Harbors, Lake (JL, m.ob.), while Michigan had one 10 Dec and 1 Jan in 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 Thayer's 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 (*fide* 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* (*fide* 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, *fide* 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 *Decrton*, *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* JWL). Michigan had singles at *Grand Merc 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* JSo), 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 *Saywer* 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 at *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 *Hinckley*, *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.

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Despite the heavy snows in some parts of Missouri, birders there were rewarded by a number of lingering passerines, perhaps enticed to stay by the warmer-than-usual temperatures. Iowa, too, had a warm December but without the excitement—even the waterfowl were gone on schedule. January weather was typical. In Iowa, the month ushered in an “invasion” of northern owls, while in Missouri, January’s cold weather sent the waterfowl packing in many areas but concentrated gulls and ducks at the Riverlands Environmental Demonstration Area near St. Louis. February was well warmer than usual, with several heavy snowfalls in Missouri. The warmer temperatures kick-started migration of waterfowl, gulls, and icterids, which arrived in southern Missouri during the first week and had saturated the Region by the end of the month. Most of the usual winter visitants appeared in normal numbers. Always of interest, winter finches presented a good diversity of species but only small numbers of most; curiously, there were more Purple Finches and Red Crossbills recorded in Missouri than in Iowa.

After years of exemplary service to *The Bluebird*, Brad Jacobs has stepped down as its winter field reports editor, just one of his many contributions to Missouri’s ornithology. His insight and expertise will be sorely missed by myself and many others. The void, however, will be admirably filled by Tommie Rogers of Mound City. In just three years in the state, she has developed an enviable grasp of the state’s birdlife and brought with her the skill to produce an excellent seasonal report. Welcome on board, Tommie.

Abbreviations: P.S.P. (Prairie S.P., Barton, MO); R.E.D.A. (Riverlands Environmental Demonstration Area, St. Charles, MO); S.C.N.W.R. (Squaw Creek N.W.R., Holt, MO); S.L.N.W.R. (Swan Lake N.W.R., Chardon, MO).

## GREBES THROUGH FALCONS

A Horned Grebe on 28 Feb at R.E.D.A. was early (CM). A remarkable heron season in Iowa included an American Bittern 2 Jan in Clay (LS), a Great Egret on the Saylorville Res. C.B.C. (a first record), and a wintering Black-crowned Night-Heron at Cedar Rapids for the 7th consecutive year (BS). There were 100 Black Vultures at Table Rock L. dam 13 Feb (SK) and 58 through Jan in St. Genevieve MO (JE).

About 20 reports of 1–330 Cackling Geese were submitted in the Region, but few reports included details (one in Jan in the St. Louis area was well documented; †BR). Until both observers and editors become more comfortable with the separation of this species from small Canada Geese, details would be helpful. Snow Goose numbers peaked on 28 Dec at S.L.N.W.R. at 250,000

# Iowa & Missouri



(SK, LL); similar numbers had returned to S.C.N.W.R. by 20 Feb (TR). Mute Swans were reported in small numbers from five locations, while Trumpeter Swans continued to increase, with peaks of 70 at R.E.D.A. (KMc) and 13 on 19 Feb in Warren, IA (JG). A Tundra Swan was seen in Dec and Feb at R.E.D.A.; in Iowa, there were 857 on the Mississippi R. for the Clinton, Iowa C.B.C. Despite the milder winter, there were few reports of wintering dabblers, with most out of the Region by 1 Jan. Migrants returned to both states during the last two weeks of Feb, e.g., 9000 Northern Pintail on 21 Feb at S.C.N.W.R. (TR). Divers made the season slightly more interesting. Canvasbacks peaked at 1000 at R.E.D.A. 16 Jan and 40,000 in late Feb at their usual Pool 19 staging area in Iowa (RCu, CE). Greater Scaup had a good showing, with 140 on 9 Dec at L. Jacomo, Jackson, MO (KM), 50 on 13 Feb at R.E.D.A., where Bill Rowe noted that they outnumbered Lessers, and 49 on 5 Dec at Spirit L., Dickinson, IA (ET). Surf Scoter reports were all from Iowa, with 2 on 7 Dec in Scott (JF) and one on the Keokuk C.B.C. Black Scoters were all from Dec: 2 at R.E.D.A. (MA, CM, m.ob.), one in Scott, IA

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(JF), one at West Okoboji L., Dickinson, IA (LS), and 2 on the Keokuk, Iowa C.B.C. After missing the species last winter, Missouri had 2 Long-tailed Ducks on 16 Dec–30 Jan at R.E.D.A. (DR, JU, m.ob.).

Gray Partridge was reported only from five contiguous counties in n.-cen. Iowa, where there were six reports of 3–16 birds. Missouri Greater Prairie-Chickens included 30 on 29 Dec at P.S.P. and 25 on 27 Feb in Harrison (SK). An Osprey was documented 25 Jan in Knox, MO (†AD). Exceptional were 35 Northern Harriers 21 Dec at P.S.P. (MR). Unusual among three Iowa reports of Northern Goshawks were 3 (1 ad. and 2 imms.) together 30 Jan in Winneshiek (DK, DC); in Missouri, one was observed 11 Dec in St. Charles (BR). There was a strong showing of Rough-legged Hawks in n. and





This Black-chinned Hummingbird was in Farmington, Francois County, Missouri 9–19 (here 18) December 2004. Banded by the photographer, it was enjoyed by many during its stay. Photograph by Lanny Chambers.

cen. Iowa, but few made it to Missouri—the most southerly of six reports was one 15 Feb at P.S.P. (DW). Golden Eagles were reported from *Henry, Mississippi, Harrison, Shelby, and Lincoln, MO* and *Marshall, Clayton, Winneshick, and Allamakee, IA*. At Glendale Cemetery in Des Moines, Jay Gilliam concluded that, based upon photos, 9 Merlins were present at one time or another during the season—up to 6 were seen at one time (RC, m.ob.). There were 22 other reports from the Region, mostly from Iowa—overall, an excellent season. Unprecedented was a report of 4 Prairie Falcons—3 in view at once—on 14 Jan in *Buchanan, MO* (LL). Other Missouri reports were of singles: 5 Dec in *Lafayette* (KM), 12 Dec in *Clinton* (CV), 31 Dec at P.S.P. (CB), and 15 Feb in *Jasper* (DW); Iowa reports included singles 26 Feb in *Woodbury* (BH) and on the Westfield and Des Moines C.B.C.s.

### RAILS THROUGH OWLS

A Virginia Rail was heard 18 Dec at the Columbia S.T.P., MO (†PM). Unusual were mid-winter reports of single Sandhill Cranes on 7 Jan at Saylorville Res. (AB) and 1 Feb at Grand Pass C.A. *Saline, MO* (DW); migrants appeared on 17 Feb in *Cass, MO* (LR) and reached n. Iowa by late Feb (FL, JG). There were several very late or wintering Missouri shorebirds, such as 2 Greater Yellowlegs on 18 Dec at Four Rivers C.A., *Vernon* (†MR) and a Spotted Sandpiper on 18 Dec–30 Jan on the Mississippi R., *Lincoln* (†SS, ph. JU). Missouri Least Sandpipers lingered in unusual numbers, such as 21 on 17–18 Dec and 6 on 27–30 Jan at Wallace S.P., *Clinton* (†SS), 3 on 18 Dec at Four Rivers C.A., *Vernon* (†MR, †KM), and 6 on 27–30 Jan in *Lincoln* (CM, JU). Finally, there were 4 Dun-

lin on 7 Dec in *Linn, MO* (LL, SK). American Woodcocks returned early to s. Iowa, with one noted 26 Feb in *Jefferson* (DP).

The largest concentrations of Ring-billed Gulls were in Iowa: 7000 at Saylorville Res.



A female Lark Bunting photographed 4 December 2004 at Weldon Spring Conservation Area, St. Charles County, Missouri was perhaps second in winter for Missouri in winter. Photograph by Josh Uffman.

26 Feb (SJD) and 10,000 in *Scott* 27 Feb (CC). A California Gull at R.E.D.A 2–18 Dec (†JM, †CM, m.ob.) furnished about the 15th Missouri record; an Iowa report was referred to the records committee. Missouri Thayer's

Gulls were all from the St. Louis area and peaked at 3 first-winter birds 28 Dec at R.E.D.A. (MA, CM, JM); Iowa reports peaked at 6 during the season in the Davenport area (SF, CC, m.ob.) and 13 during early Jan at Des Moines (AB, m.ob.). At least one Lesser Black-backed Gull was present from 3 Dec through Jan at R.E.D.A.; overall, 2 first-winter, one second-winter, one third-winter, and 2 ads. were identified here (JE, CM, JM, KM, DR, MT, DW). Iowa birds peaked at 4 in *Scott* (SF), with singles at Saylorville Res. 11–20 Dec (JG, WO, SSP) and Iowa City 17–18 Jan (RD, CC, m.ob.). Two Glaucous Gulls made it to R.E.D.A. (MT, JU); among four Iowa reports, the most were up to 5 from late Dec through Jan at Des Moines (RC, AB, m.ob.) and up to 4 in Jan and Feb in *Scott* (SF). Great Black-backed Gulls made two appearances: an ad. 29 Dec at Pool 15 *Scott, IA* (SF) and a first-winter bird at R.E.D.A. 16 & 24 Jan (MT, DW). An unusual cen. Missouri Black-legged Kittiwake lingered from the fall season until 2 Dec at Bagnell Dam, *Miller* (†KM, MA); unusual for Iowa were three reports: one ad. on the Keokuk C.B.C., one first-winter bird at Red Rock Res. 26–27 Dec (†EW, ph. RS), and another first-winter 30 Dec in *Scott* (†CE).

The largest of the four Eurasian Collared-Dove reports from Missouri was of 18 birds 29 Dec in *St. Genevieve* (JE); Iowa had 1–8 birds reported from 10 locations. Barn Owls made a good showing in Missouri, with singles 18 Dec in *Nodaway* (DE), carrying food to a nest box on 15 Feb in *Vernon* (DW), and 22 Feb in *Greene* (DR). Snowy Owls made four Iowa appearances, all in Dec. Long-eared Owls appeared in average numbers, while Short-eareds were down in Iowa but up in Missouri.

### HUMMINGBIRDS THROUGH WAXWINGS

Remarkable was Missouri's first Black-chinned Hummingbird, an imm. or female in *St. Francois* 9–19 Dec (†LC, ph. JE, m.ob.), and almost as remarkable were 3 Rufous Hummingbirds: a female in *Jasper* mid-Nov–14 Jan (†LH) and 2 females in *Cape Girardeau* 11 Dec (†LC, †BE, LC), one of which remained through 13 Jan (BE). Only one Red-headed Woodpecker was reported

**S** Iowa's "invasion" of northern owls was less dramatic than Minnesota's but still produced nearly as much excitement among local birders. The biggest news was also the biggest disappointment—a belated report of a **Boreal Owl**, Iowa's first, photographed 14 Nov in George Wyth S.P., *Blackhawk*. It was found by Scott Garrett who, with a little help from his friends, identified it from his photographs. It was not relocated. Tipped off by the Minnesota invasion, Iowa birders searched for other owls and were rewarded with Iowa's 2nd **Northern Hawk Owl** 14 Feb in the surprised little town of Manly in *Worth* (ph., †PH, †RGo, †CF, m.ob.). Perhaps the most southerly of the continent's hawk owls this season, this one remained through the end of Feb. Not unexpected but also successful in getting birders moving were three reports of single **Great Gray Owls**: in *Boone* 16–18 Jan (ph., †JG, ph., †AJ), in *Buchanan* 14–15 Feb (ph., †SC), and in *Dickinson* 16–19 Feb (ph., †J&LK). Northern Saw-whet Owls, however, appeared in just normal numbers in Iowa; the most southerly were in Missouri: 2 on 7 Dec–30 Jan in *Knox* (KM) and one on 3 Feb in *Holt* (DW).

in Iowa after the C.B.C. period. Northern (Red-shafted) Flickers were found in *Clay* and *Barton*, MO and *Polk* and *Johnson*, IA. At the edge of its range was a Pileated Woodpecker in *Platte*, MO 22 Dec (DW). Eastern Phoebes are rare away from se. Missouri; unusual were up to 3 during the season in *Greene* (BB, DB, DTh) and a single 11 Jan in *Jasper* (DW). A Northern Shrike made it to *Harrison*, MO (DW, SK); Iowa had a normal season, with about 20 reports. A Blue-headed Vireo 17 Dec in *Mississippi* in extreme se. Missouri was quite late (BE).

Red-breasted Nuthatches were widespread throughout the Region all season. A Bewick's Wren in *Buchanan*, MO 3 Dec was a bit out of range (LL). Seventeen Sedge Wrens at P.S.P. 21 Dec (MR) and a Marsh Wren on the Keokuk, IA C.B.C. were noteworthy. An excellent find was a Mountain Bluebird in *Mississippi*, MO 17 Dec (ph., †BE). Presently casual in Iowa, there were about 10 Townsend's Solitaires there this season. The only Varied Thrush in either state was in Iowa City 30 Dec–4 Jan (CC, DPe). Missouri hosted 2 Gray Catbirds: 23–26 Dec at St. Louis (†KM, †MG) and 4 Jan in *Andrew* (†LG). A Northern Mockingbird in *Winneshiek*, IA 1 Feb (DC) was well n. of its expected range. An American Pipit on the Cedar Rapids C.B.C. furnished one of a handful of Iowa winter records; among four Missouri reports, exceptional were 25 on the C.B.C. in *Bates* (†KM) and 9 on 26 Dec in *Clay* (†DW). Casual in Iowa, single Bohemian Waxwings were noteworthy in *Dickinson* 6 Dec (†DPe) and in *Storv* 13 Feb (†SP, †KP).

### WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Missouri's balmy Dec was credited with keeping warblers around: in addition to the expected Yellow-rumped, there were single Orange-crowneds on 18 Dec in *Wayne* (†SD) and 13–28 Jan in *Stone* (ph., †KL); a Pine in *St. Charles* 27 Feb (CM); 2 Palms in *Mississippi* 17 Dec (†BE); a Black-and-white in *St. Genevieve* 9 Dec (†DW); and a Common Yellowthroat in *Clay* 1 Feb (DW). One Spotted Towhee was found in Iowa and 4 in Missouri. Wintering or extraordinarily early was a Chipping Sparrow on 27 Feb in *Winebago*, IA (†SP, †KP); a Missouri bird in Columbia was late 12–17 Dec (ph., †EW). A Lark Bunting brought out the troops to Weldon Springs C.A., *St. Charles* 4 Dec (†BR, m.ob.). Overall, lingering sparrows were scarce in Iowa this season but about normal for Missouri; the best was a Le Conte's 8 Dec in *Polk* (†JB), Iowa's first winter report in several years. Only 2 Oregon Junco were reported, both in Iowa. Smith's Longspur reports were from Missouri: 5 on 11 Dec in *Jasper* (KM) and one on 21 Dec at P.S.P. (MR). A male Rose-breasted Grosbeak brightened Thompson R. Wetland, *Liv-*

*ngston*, MO 29 Dec (†SK), while an ad. male Black-headed Grosbeak made a one-day appearance 29–30 Jan in *Clayton*, IA (ph., †DA, †CC)

The status of Eastern Meadowlarks in Iowa is unclear, but one was identified by call in *Poweshiek* 29 Jan (DK). A Yellow-headed Blackbird was at P.S.P. 11 Jan (ph., †DW). Iowa's only Brewer's Blackbird after the first week of Jan was a single 9 Jan in *Warren*, IA (JS): Missouri had two reports exceeding 100 birds: in *Stoddard* 18 Dec (†SD) in *Pike* 30 Dec (†BR, †SS). Small numbers of Great-tailed Grackles are wintering in cen. Iowa, e.g., 7 in *Tama* 10 Jan (PM) and 17 in *Warren* 29 Jan (RA, PA).

Purple Finches made a modest showing overall, two exceptions being 300 in *Columbia*, MO 24 Jan (PM) and 50 in *Greene*, MO 1 Feb (CB). Missouri yielded more Red Crossbill reports than Iowa; the high counts among eight total reports received were 18 in *St. Charles*, MO 1 Dec (CM), 10 in *Clay*, MO 5 Dec (KM), and 14 in *Poweshiek*, IA on 3 Feb (DK). White-winged Crossbill reports were limited to Iowa, with 4 in *O'Brien* 15 Jan (LS) and one in *Floyd* 12 Feb (PH, RG). The most southerly Common Redpolls were in Iowa, in *Polk* (DT) and *Dallas* (RA, PA); eight other reports totaling 13 birds were received. It was a pretty good year for Pine Siskins, with up to 3 making it to *Greene* in sw. Missouri (DB); high counts were 47 in *Clayton*, IA 13 Feb (DA) and 30 in *Buchanan*, MO 29 Dec (LL).

Corrigendum: A Feb 2004 Common Raven was not accepted by the Iowa Bird Records Committee.

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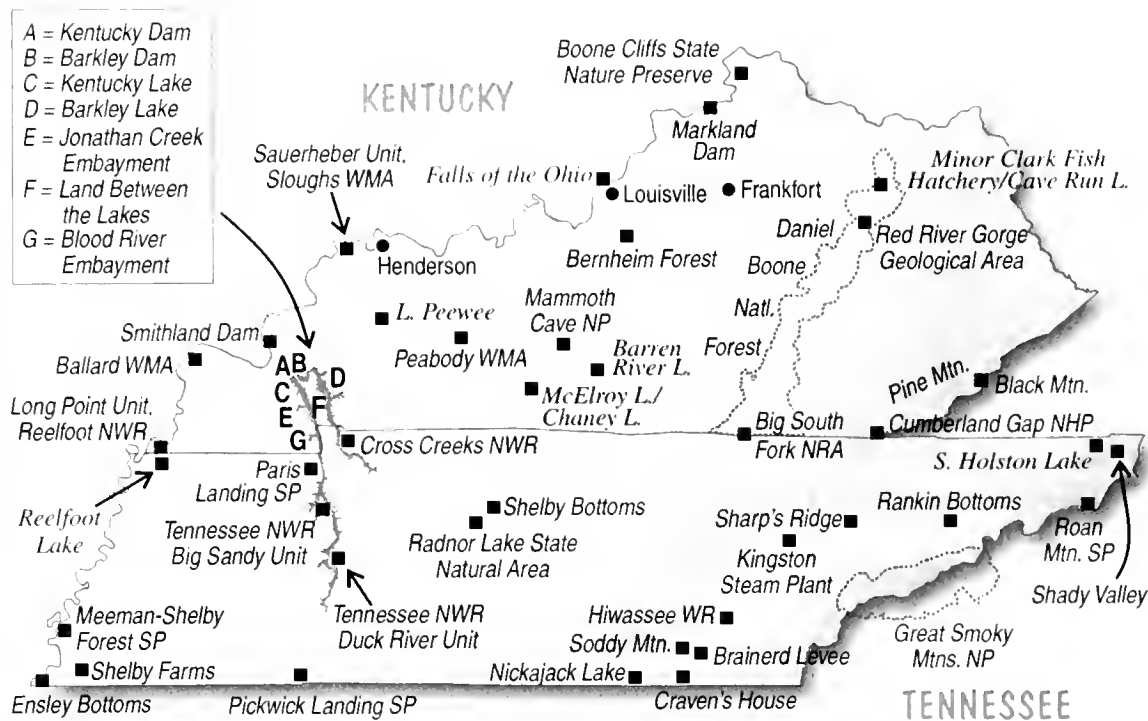
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# Tennessee & Kentucky



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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 × 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 *Selasphorus*, 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 (*vide* 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).

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Winter could be characterized as warm and dry. December was cool with rain early, while January and February seemed almost balmy. Temperatures reached near or above 70° F on several dates, while going below freezing on only a few dates.

## LOONS THROUGH RAPTORS

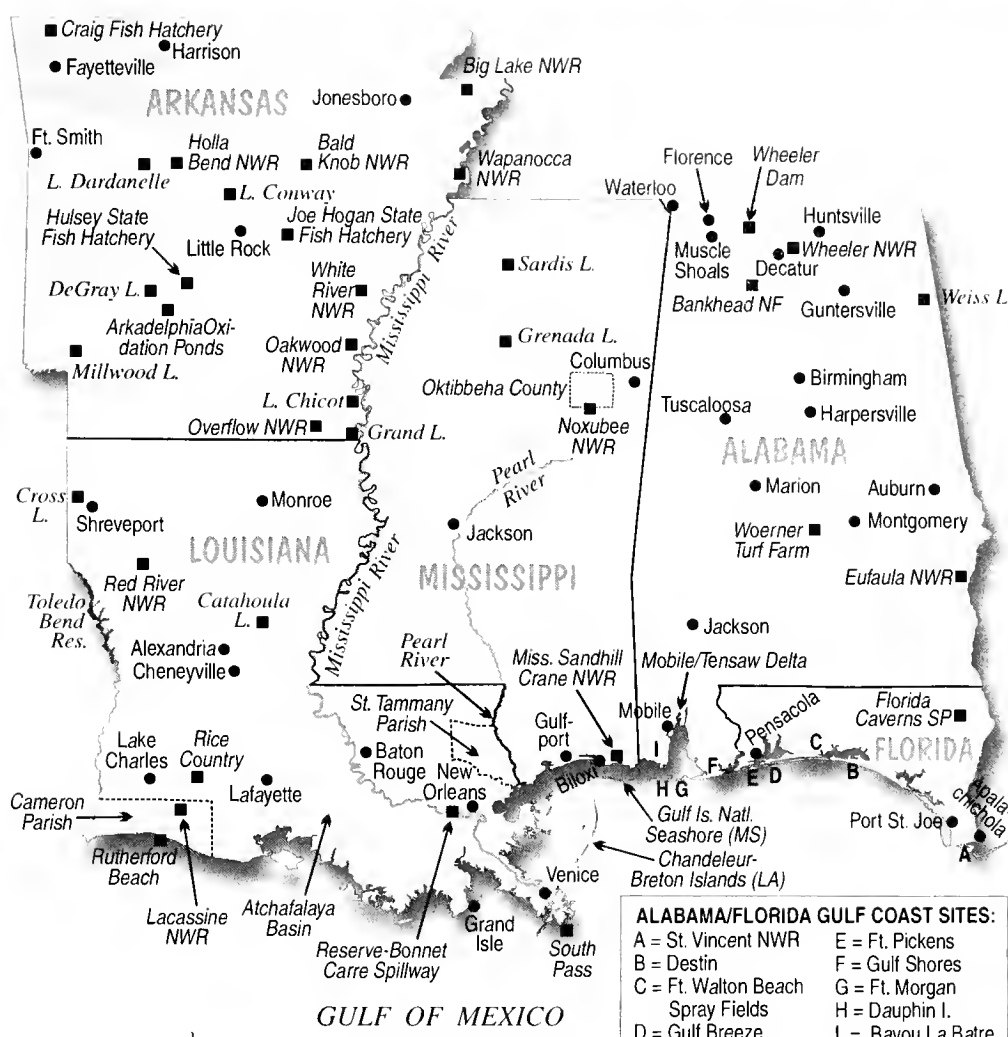
Red-throated and Pacific Loons, once difficult to find in the Region, are now almost commonplace. Single Red-throated Loons were reported from Guntersville, Marshall, AL 29 Dec (SWM, m.ob.), Choctawhatchee Bay, Okaloosa, FL 16 Dec (DWA), Grenada L., Grenada, MS 4 Dec (SJD), Bay Springs L., Tishimongo, MS 5 Dec–28 Feb+ (SJD, WP, PP), and Bayou Caddy, Hancock, MS 2 Jan (NB). Two Pacific Loons were at Guntersville, AL 23 Dec–13 Feb (SWM, m.ob.). Rare in Arkansas, 2 Pacifics were in the Caddo Bend area of DeGray L., Clark 23 Jan–20 Feb (GG, EG, DH, HR, LY, JM). Singles were seen at Gulf Breeze, Santa Rosa, FL 9–30 Jan (RAD, LRD) and Gulf Islands N.S., Santa Rosa, FL 22 Jan (JB, PM, RM). Up to 3 were on Bay Springs L., MS 5–28 Dec (SJD, WP, PP).

Single Red-necked Grebes were at Guntersville, AL 12 Dec–2 Jan (RAR, LBR, m.ob.) and in Tunica, MS 16 Jan (GK, SK, JRW), where the species is accidental. Eared Grebes put in a fair showing, with 5 on the Pine Bluff C.B.C., Jefferson, AR 29 Dec; 2 at the Fort Walton Beach Spray Fields, Okaloosa, FL 4 Dec–10 Feb (RAD, LRD, m.ob.); and up to 5 on Ross Barnett Res., Madison, MS 26–29 Dec (GK, SK, SJD). An accommodating Western Grebe, Alabama's 4th, was at Spring Cr., Lawrence 19 Jan–5 Feb (DJS, m.ob.).

A Masked Booby at Perdido Pass, Baldwin, AL 2 Jan (SWM) was most unexpected. As in recent years in the Region, American White Pelicans wintered far inland. In Alabama, 10 were at Spring Cr. 25 Dec (SWM); up to 34 were on Limestone Bay, Wheeler N.W.R., Limestone 9 Jan–4 Feb (SWM, GDJ, DGJ, CDC); 22 were at Bear Cr., Colbert 24–26 Jan (PDK); and 50 were near Birmingham, Jefferson 5 Feb (GJH). In Arkansas, 23 were found on the Conway C.B.C., Faulkner 18 Dec, and 77 were recorded on the Pine Bluff C.B.C. 29 Dec. Single Anhingas were near Gulf Shores, Baldwin, AL 4 Feb (CB) and at Noxubee N.W.R., Noxubee, MS 1 Dec–20 Jan, representing the 6th area winter record. Single Cattle Egrets, rare in Arkansas in winter, were seen near Clarendon 11 Dec and along Hwy. 165 between DeWitt and Stuttgart 23 Dec (JP).

Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks have been noted in modest numbers in Louisiana over the past few years. However, the report of "several thousand" (DBo, *fide* JHu) throughout the period in the rice field–crayfish complex between Gueydan and L. Arthur

# Central Southern



(Cameron/Jefferson) is phenomenal but should be verified carefully. Ross's Geese were found in 11 locations, with a maximum of 3000 in Humphreys, MS 16 Jan (SJD, PB). With the elevation of Cackling Goose to full specific status, a flood of records came in. In Alabama, up to 4 were present 20 Nov–30 Jan on Limestone Bay, Wheeler N.W.R. (m.ob.); 2 were near Lillian, Baldwin 30 Dec (RAD, LRD, HEH, LC, m.ob.); and 19 were at Fairhope, Baldwin 25 Jan (DPI, ALM). Two reports from Louisiana included 5 at E. Jetty, Cameron 18 Dec (DPM, PAW) and an amazing 1500–2000 near L. Arthur, Cameron/Jefferson (DPM, PAW, RDP, PC, JB). In Mississippi, up to 4 were at Browning Creek L., Oktibbeha 15 Dec–24 Feb (TLS, RW, LW); 1–3 were in Leflore 4 Dec–1 Jan (SJD); 2 were at Sardis State Refuge, Lafayette 18 Dec (GK, VT); 14 were in Humphreys 31 Dec (SJD); up to 9 were in Tunica 1 Jan–19 Feb (GK, SK, SJD, m.ob.); and 2 were in Quitman 15 Jan (SJD). Trumpeter Swans were reported from three locations in Arkansas. Two, including a neck-collared female released in Iowa in 2001, were at Mammoth Springs S.P., Fulton 24 Dec (GP); 2, with red neck-collars indicating release in Iowa, were found at Siloam Springs, Benton 2 Feb (AD); and an amazing 88 were at Magness L., Cleburne through 18

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Feb (JOG, SJG, KR). One on Ross Barnett Res., MS 25 Dec (SJD) was presumably the same bird that has been present there for more than a year. Up to 4 Tundra Swans were present in Lauderdale, AL 3–29 Dec (DJS, m.ob.).

Alabama's 11th Eurasian Wigeon was a male at Eufaula N.W.R., Barbour 12 Feb (GEH, TH). The 5105 Ring-necked Ducks reported on the C.B.C. at Wheeler N.W.R. 18 Dec was an Alabama maximum. A female-type Surf Scoter was at Guntersville, AL 29 Dec (LWe, SWM); 2 imms. were reported from fish farms in Prairie, AR 8 Dec (KN, LDN); and a juv. was on L. Caroline, Madison, MS 26 Dec (SJD). In Louisiana, up to 7 were recorded from L. Pontchartrain, Or-





A juvenile light-morph Ferruginous Hawk photographed 4 January 2005 in Tunica County, Mississippi represents the first confirmed state record and about the seventh state report overall. This cooperative bird was present for several weeks and seen by many. Photograph by Stephen J. Dinsmore.

icans 26 Jan–21 Feb (BMM, RDP, DPM, PAW). Single White-winged Scoters were on Browning Cr. L., MS 18 Nov–10 Dec (TLS, m.ob.) and L. Caroline, MS 26 Dec (SJD). A female Black Scoter was on Wheeler N.W.R., AL 7–8 Jan (JH, SS, PDK, m.ob.), while an imm. was on L. Dardanelle, Yell, AR 2 Jan (KN, LDN, DB, SDV). A female Long-tailed Duck was a good find near Leighton, Colbert, AL 23 Feb+ (DJS), as were a male and female on L. Pontchartrain, LA 11–24 Dec (PAW, DPM, BMM). The only Common Merganser reported was a female on Grenada L., MS 24 Dec (SJD). The 1300 Ruddy Ducks on Guntersville L., AL 20 Jan (GDJ, DGJ) was a good number.

The only White-tailed Kites reported were a pair near Lacassine N.W.R. Pool, Jefferson Davis, LA 30 Dec–7 Jan (LH, LD, THy, NH). Alabama's 5th Northern Goshawk was an imm. photographed and seen well in Birmingham 24–31 Jan (SWi, m.ob.). A Broad-winged Hawk near Tensaw L., Baldwin, AL 9 Jan (CK, KK) was unexpected. Singles were in Louisiana at Ft. Jackson, Plaquemines 2 Jan–28 Feb+ (CR, DPM, PAW) and near Galliano, Lafourche 27 Feb (PAW, DPM, RDP). Swainson's Hawks wintered at three locations in Louisiana, with an ad. at Bayou Sauvage N.W.R., Orleans 11–21 Dec (PAW, DPM), one at E. Jetty 18 Dec (DPM, PAW), and an imm. near Venice, Plaquemines 2–30 Jan (DPM, CE, MT, PAW). Mississippi's 2nd Ferruginous Hawk was a juv. near Robinsonville, Tunica 28 Dec–6 Jan (JRW, m.ob.). An ad. Rough-legged Hawk was in Tunica, MS 15 Jan–19 Feb (GK, SK, JRW, RB); an ad.

**SA** The 3 Whooping Cranes found near Belle Mina, Limestone on the Wheeler N.W.R. C.B.C. 18 Dec (RRS, MBS, m.ob.) were the first seen in Alabama since 1899. These Operation Migration Project birds (tag numbers 203, 215, and 216, from the 2002 cohort) frequented a flooded cornfield and were seen by hundred of birders over the next few days. Unfortunately, on 23 Dec, one of the three became separated from the group, and its transmitter's mortality signal was detected by Operation Migration personnel. On 10 Jan, after an exhaustive search, the scavenged body of the crane was found and forwarded for necropsy. In the mean time, the 2 remaining Whooping Cranes departed the area on 26 Dec and arrived at Chassahowitzka N.W.R. in Florida two days later, thus completing their fall migration. Results are still pending on the cause of death of the flockmate.

female was carefully studied along Hwy. 1 between St. Charles and DeWitt, Arkansas 23 Dec (JP). The only Crested Caracara report was of 2 at Goose I., Cameron, LA 7 Jan (LH, LD).

### CRANES THROUGH HUMMINGBIRDS

Sandhill Cranes were widely reported, with a maximum of 600 wintering at Wheeler N.W.R., AL 14 Nov–23 Feb (CDC, SWM, m.ob.). Five Piping Plovers, the only ones reported, were at E. Jetty Beach, LA 18 Dec (PAW, DPM). Two Black-necked Stilts were in Escambia, FL 31 Jan (CB), furnishing the first local Jan record. Rare in winter, Spotted Sandpiper was seen in Alabama, where one was at Guntersville 20 Jan (GDJ). In Arkansas, singles were at L. Pine Bluff, Jefferson, 26 Dec (RD) and in the White River N.W.R., Arkansas 12 Jan and 24 Feb (JP), while 2 were at Boyd Point Sewage Treat-



This juvenile female Broad-tailed Hummingbird at Port Gibson, Claiborne, Mississippi (here 29 December 2004) was confirmed by banders; the species is a casual winter visitor to Mississippi. Photograph by Stephen J. Dinsmore.

ment Ponds, Jefferson 29 Dec (RD, WS). The largest concentration of Dunlin reported was 2500 on Grand I., Jefferson, LA 27 Feb (PAW, DPM, RDP). Seventeen Stilt Sandpipers were recorded on the Mobile–Tensaw C.B.C., Mobile, AL 19 Dec (HEH). Over 3000 Short-billed Dowitchers were on Grand I., LA 27 Feb (PAW, DPM, RDP), while 1500 Long-billed Dowitchers were near Skene, Bolivar, MS 16 Dec (GK, SK).

Laughing Gulls continue to winter inland: single ads. were at Guntersville, AL 29 Dec (SWM) and L. Dardanelle Dam, AR 1 Dec–28 Feb+ (m.ob.). An ad. Franklin's Gull was at Wilson Dam, Colbert, AL 30 Nov–5 Dec (DJS, SWM). Little Gulls were in Vermilion, LA 19 Feb (SWC, DLD), on Enid L., MS 11 Dec (SJD), and Ross Barnett Res., MS 25 Dec (SJD, GK), all first-winter birds. Alabama's 7th California Gull was also a first-winter bird, at Guntersville 2 Feb (RAR); a second-winter California was at the Tunica Landfill, MS 30 Jan (GK, SK). Single Thayer's Gulls, all juv./first-winter, were reported from the Magnolia Springs Landfill, Baldwin, AL 30 Dec–13 Jan (RAD, LRD, m.ob.), Speigner, Elmore, AL 19–26 Feb (LFG, BCG), L. Dardanelle Dam, AR 28 Nov–20 Jan (KN, LDN), at the landfill near Abbeville, Vermilion, LA 19 Feb (SWC, DLD), and at the Tunica landfill, MS 15–16 Jan (GK, SK, JRW, RB). Alabama's 4th and 5th Iceland Gulls were first-winter birds at Wheeler Dam/Trinity, Lawrence/Morgan 15–30 Jan (GDJ, JRW, m.ob) and Magnolia Springs Landfill 15 Feb (BS, LC); another in Escambia, FL 20 Feb (LC) provided just the 3rd record for the nw. portion of the state. A reported Thayer's × Iceland Gull was at Guntersville, AL 2–4 Feb (RAR, LBR, m.ob.). Single first-winter Glaucous Gulls in Alabama were at the Magnolia Springs Landfill through 30 Dec (LC, LRD, RAD, m.ob.), along the Tennessee R. ranging widely in Colbert/Lauderdale/Lawrence/Morgan 16 Jan–28 Feb+ (LFG, m.ob.), and at Speigner 12–28 Feb+ (TRP, m.ob.). Lesser Black-backed Gulls put in an impressive showing. In Alabama, a first-winter Lesser was at Wilson Dam 30 Nov (DJS), an ad. was at Wheeler Dam 25 Dec–19 Jan (SWM, m.ob.), and 4 were at the Magnolia Springs Landfill 29 Dec–28 Feb+ (LC, RAD, m.ob.). Another was found on Millwood L., Little River, AR, 19 Dec (CM). Northwest Florida's 5th and 6th records were in Escambia: 2 ads. 30–31 Jan (LC, RAD, CB) and one imm. 20 Feb (LC). In Louisiana, 2 were near Abbeville 15 Jan–19 Feb (SWC, DLD, PC, m.ob.), and an ad. was at L. Pontchartrain 12 Feb (DPM). In Mississippi, 2 were at the Tunica Landfill 15–30 Jan (GK, SK, JRW, RB).

Up to 4 Inca Doves were near Thibodaux, LA 2 Jan (m.ob.), where they are becoming increasingly regular. Mississippi's first Ruddy Ground-Dove was a male near Skene 14–20 Dec (CS, DR, JM, m.ob.). A Yellow-billed Cuckoo in Columbus, Lowndes, MS 10 Dec (DP) was the latest area departure date by 42 days. A Lesser Nighthawk was found at E. Jetty, LA 18 Dec (PAW, DPM), while single nighthawks on the Gulf Shores C.B.C. in Alabama 2 Jan (RRR, EGR) and on St. George I., Franklin, FL 1 Dec (TEL) may have been Lessers. Two Vaux's Swifts in Baton Rouge, E.

Baton Rouge, LA 3 Feb (ELJ) continued the recent trend of winter sightings at this location. The sheer number of hummingbirds wintering in the Region has been well chronicled in these pages over the past decade. Preliminary reports indicate a surfeit of hummers in the Region this season: Broad-billed (2); Buff-bellied (54); Ruby-throated (64); Black-chinned (106); Anna's (2); Calliope (20); Broad-tailed (6); and Rufous/*Selasphorus* sp. (244); and Allen's (8).

## FLYCATCHERS THROUGH FINCHES

In Venice, LA, a Least Flycatcher was seen 30 Jan–28 Feb+, an unidentified *Empidonax* was present 30 Jan (both DPM, PAW), and a Pacific-slope/Cordilleran Flycatcher was documented 2 Jan (PAW, CR, JF, JS). A Brown-crested Flycatcher, rarely reported in the Region, was found in Orleans, LA 26 Dec–28 Feb+ (PAW, DPM). A Bell's Vireo was seen at the W. Jetty, LA 18 Dec (BMM, RDP). The Regional decline of Bewick's Wren has been well documented. The only reports received were of single birds on the Conway C.B.C., AR 18 Dec and near L. Claiborne, Claiborne, LA 8 Feb (BMM, PAW, m.ob.). Two Sprague's Pipits were reported without details from Eglin A.F.B., FL 5 Dec (LF). Single Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were found in the White River N.W.R., AR 13 Jan (JP) and 24 Jan (JP, CJ). Wintering vireos in that refuge included a White-eyed 26 Jan (CJ, JP) and single Blue-headed 17 Dec (JP) and 25 Jan (JP, CJ), and a Wood Thrush was videotaped there 24 Jan (JP, CJ), potentially a first state record in midwinter.

Northwest Florida's 2nd Dec Tennessee Warbler was in Pensacola 4 Dec (JL, FB). Single Nashville Warblers were at Ft. Walton Beach, FL 20 Dec (JK, VS) and in Cameron, LA 18 Dec (MW). A Yellow Warbler was present at Fort Walton Beach Spray Fields 10–20 Dec (DWa, RAD, JK, VS). A female Black-throated Gray Warbler was in Venice, LA 30 Jan (PAW, DPM). Single Black-throated Green Warblers were reported in Louisiana at Avery I., Iberville 2 Jan (DPa, PC), Venice 30 Jan (DPM, PAW), and Grand Isle 27 Feb (PAW, DPM). In Louisiana, individual Ovenbirds were at Triumph, Plaquemines (LE, RDP) and Avery I., (DPa, PC), both 2 Jan. Northern Waterthrushes were present at Venice 2–30 Jan (PAW, DPM, CR) and Grand Isle 27 Feb, both in Louisiana. A Yellow-breasted Chat was in E. Jetty Woods, Cameron, LA 18 Dec (PAW, DPM) and in Vermilion, LA 16 Jan (PAW, DPM, RDP, PC).

Casual in winter, ad. male Summer Tanagers were at Trinity, AL 25 Dec (KM) and Fayetteville, Pulaski, AR throughout the reporting period (SC, BC), while a female was at Pensacola, FL 10–24 Dec (BT, NN, DN). The only Scarlet Tanager reported was one near Point a la Heche, Plaquemines, LA 20 Dec

(JHu). A female Western Tanager was reported from Gulfport, MS, late Jan–25 Feb (JAT).

Single Lark Sparrows, rare in winter, were reported on the Fort Morgan C.B.C., Baldwin, AL 30 Dec; in E. Baton Rouge, LA 2 Jan (CW, SaW); at Raceland, LA 2 Jan (LAR, DS); and at the Mississippi State University South Farm, Oktibbeha, MS 30 Jan (RW, LW). Two Le Conte's Sparrows were near Waveland, Hancock, MS throughout the reporting period (NB), while 16 found at Sardis State Refuge, MS 18 Dec (GK, VT) was a good number. Harris's Sparrows are rather sporadic in the Region. Seven were in Maysville, Benton, AR 29 Jan (JN, MM); one was in Oak Grove, W. Carroll, LA 15 Dec–28 Feb+ (RO); and one was reported near Kosciusko, Attala, MS 3 Dec–28 Feb+ (FH, m.ob.). A Smith's Longspur was in nw. Arkansas in Washington 11 Dec (MM), where the species has not been seen in more than 10 years, and 2 were in Tunica, MS 6 Jan (WRP, VR).

An ad. male Rose-breasted Grosbeak was recorded at a feeder at Reserve, St. John, LA 26 Dec–4 Jan (TR, PR). Single Blue Grosbeaks were near Gulf Breeze, FL 22 Feb (RAD), where an ad. male provided nw. Florida's 2nd Feb record; near St. Martinville, St. Martin, LA 10 Dec (JHu); and near St. Gabriel, LA 27 Dec–2 Jan (SWC, DLD). The only Painted Bunting reported was an ad.



A species casual in Mississippi, this hatch-year male Spotted Towhee in Bolivar County (here 24 December 2004) showed no obvious signs of hybridization with Eastern Towhee; note especially the thin white stripes on the mantle and the lack of a distinct white patch at the base of the outer primaries. Photograph by Stephen J. Dinsmore.

male on the Gulf Shores C.B.C. in Foley, Baldwin, AL 2 Jan (HEH, TS). Dickcissels probably occur in the Region much more often than reported. An ad. male was found at Thibodaux, LA 30 Dec (SM, BM). A young male was near Port Gibson 29 Dec (SJD), and an ad. female was recorded near Sidon, Leflore 1 Jan (SJD, PB, KB), both in Mississippi.

Western Meadowlark is an enigmatic species, underreported because of the difficulty in separating it from Eastern. Three were on the White River C.B.C., Arkansas, AR 28 Dec (JRW), while singles were reported from Mississippi at the Indianola Airport, Sunflower 30 Dec (SJD, PB, DM) and in Tuni-

ca 1 Jan (GK, SK). Alabama's 10th Bronzed Cowbird was an ad. male on the e. end of Dauphin I. 29 Jan–9 Feb (HEH, m.ob.). Some 3–5 Bullock's Orioles were in one yard at New Orleans, LA 24 Feb. Baltimore Orioles continue to be widely reported, with 17 individuals from 11 locations recorded. A Common Redpoll was present 13–18 Jan near Danville, Yell, AR (GH, m.ob.). Mississippi's 2nd Lesser Goldfinch was a female at Vicksburg, Warren 24 Dec–22 Feb (SW, DW, SSo, m.ob.).

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# Northern Canada



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Northern Canada experienced typical weather conditions through the season—which meant bone-chilling cold spells for most areas. In the Yukon, record snow falls were recorded in the Whitehorse and Watson Lake areas, and Mayo reported the most severe cold conditions in the Region, with prolonged temperatures of  $-50^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Weather in the Northwest Territories was not remarkably cold but stayed fairly constant throughout the winter season, with few if any significant thaws. Snowfall was generally below average for early winter, but January and February made up for that deficit, and deep late-winter accumulations were reported over much of the territory.

### WATERFOWL THROUGH RAPTORS

A pair of Green-winged Teal at McIntyre Cr. wetland in Whitehorse 26 Dec (CE) provided the Yukon's first winter record in 70 years. Eight male Mallards, a female Long-tailed Duck, 25 Common Goldeneyes, and 5 Common Mergansers were at L. Laberge, s. Yukon 2 Dec (BD, CE). Two female Barrow's Gold-

eneyes were present on the Yukon R. at Whitehorse through the winter (BD, CE, HG, PS). Willow Ptarmigan were present in low numbers in the Ft. Simpson area, but the population appears to be on the increase there (DT) as well as at Norman Wells (RP); good numbers were reported on the C.B.C. at Yellowknife, NWT, with 158 on 2 Jan (*vide* RB); the Yukon's highest count was 27 at Haines Junction 28 Dec (*vide* DH). Four Sharp-tailed Grouse on the C.B.C. at Norman Wells, NWT 27 Dec (*vide* RP) provided the Region's only winter report. A Bald Eagle was seen on the C.B.C. at Marsh L., s. Yukon 19 Dec (*vide* HG), and 2 were noted at McIntyre Cr. on the Whitehorse count 26 Dec (CE).

### SHRIKES THROUGH HOUSE SPARROW

A few Northern Shrikes were noted in s. Yukon, including an ad. at Porter Creek in Whitehorse 26 Dec (CE, PS), one at Haines Junction 15 Jan (MH), and one (likely an early spring arrival) at Haines Junction 26–27 Feb (LF). A pair of Great Horned Owls was reported 2 km e. of Mush L., Kluane N. P., sw. Yukon 27 Feb (JB), and a Great Gray Owl was seen near Haines Junction 20 Feb (JB). In the Northwest Territories, single Great Gray Owls were reported from Norman Wells 4 (DF) & 22 Jan (DW) and from Ptarmigan Mine near Yellowknife in late Feb (TH). Northern Hawk Owls seemed scarce this winter; singles were reported at Haines Junction, sw. Yukon during C.B.C. count week (*vide* DH) and on the Norman Wells, NWT 27

Dec count (GS). A Northern Pygmy-Owl hunting at a feeder near Carcross in mid-Jan (ph. AB) established the Yukon's 2nd documented record for the species. Five American Three-toed Woodpeckers on 4 Jan provided a new high count for that species on the Ft. Simpson C.B.C. (DT). A dead female Black-backed Woodpecker (cause of death not known) was found at Haines Junction, sw. Yukon 3 Dec (JB).

The Nunavut winter is a harsh season for both birds and birders; Common Raven was the only species reported on the territory's two C.B.C.s: 17 at Rankin Inlet 29 Dec (BZ) and 17 at Arviat 1 Jan (MS). One observer from Iqaluit, Nunavut summarized the season's birdlife as "ravens, ravens, and more ravens" (MM)! Yellowknife, NWT remains the Common Raven capital of the world, with 1860 recorded on the 2 Jan count (*vide* RB)—just 92 short of setting a new record. A single Black-billed Magpie wintered in Norman Wells for the 4th consecutive year (RP), while Yellowknife's C.B.C. reported a new high of 26 magpies on 2 Jan (*vide* RB). The big fall movement of Red-breasted Nuthatches through s. Yukon likely accounted for a high count of 9 on the Haines Junction C.B.C. 28 Dec (*vide* DH). A tardy American Robin was at L. Laberge, s. Yukon 2 Dec (BD, CE). A Horned Lark, casual in winter, lingered at the Whitehorse dump at least through 26 Dec (ph. CE) to establish the Yukon's first Christmas Bird Count record. Flocks of Bohemian Wawings were seen in the Whitehorse area through early winter; a large flock was noted at Haines Junction, sw. Yukon 15 Jan (CD), and 19 were recorded on the Yellowknife, NWT 2 Jan count (*vide* RB).

The White-throated Sparrow first seen in late Nov at Whitehorse survived through 22 Jan to provide the Yukon's first winter record but subsequently disappeared (RE). Small numbers of Dark-eyed Juncos usually winter in s. Yukon and sw. Northwest Territories; 2 wintering at a Norman Wells feeder were a highlight of the 27 Dec C.B.C. (RP), and 2 seen on the Mayo, Yukon C.B.C. 29 Dec at temperatures of  $-50^{\circ}\text{C}$  (*vide* MOD) were certainly testing the limits of survival. Four Snow Buntings were unusually late at Ft. Simpson 2 Jan (DT); despite much searching, observers could not relocate them for the local C.B.C. two days later. In sw. Yukon, flocks of Snow Buntings were reported in mid-Jan from Haines Junction (CD) and Destruction Bay (MF); one was noted at the Takhini Hotsprings Rd. near Whitehorse 22 Feb (DVW).

The ad. male Brewer's Blackbird that spent much of the fall feeding on the compost pile at the Whitehorse dump was last seen 23 Dec (ph. CE), just narrowly missing Christmas count day. Small numbers of Red Crossbills were seen at Whitehorse feeders through the winter; an observation of an ad.



female feeding a fledged juv. at a Granger feeder 15 Feb (TMK) left little doubt as to the species' hardiness. Four White-winged Crossbills at Yellowknife 2 Jan (*fide* RB) represented the only Northwest Territories C.B.C. record this year. In the Yukon, Pine Grosbeaks' health raised concerns in Haines Junction and Whitehorse, where reports came in of sickly-looking birds and low numbers later in winter; Christmas counts found normal numbers; e.g., 119 at Teslin 16 Dec (*fide* CA), 200 at Marsh L. 19 Dec (*fide* HG), 163 at Haines Junction 28 Dec (*fide* DH), and 68 at Mayo 29 Dec (*fide* MOD). Both Pine and Evening Grosbeaks were present at Ft.

Simpson, NWT in typical numbers this season (DT), while the one Evening Grosbeak on the 2 Jan Yellowknife C.B.C. furnished only the 2nd record for that count (*fide* RB). Redpoll (mostly Common, some Hoary) numbers were fairly typical in the Yukon, with low numbers seen in Dec, increasing through Jan, with good-sized flocks present at most feeders by late Feb. Redpolls were noted in slightly above-average numbers at both Norman Wells (RP) and Ft. Simpson (DT). While House Sparrows have yet to gain any kind of foothold in the Yukon or Nunavut, small populations persist in Northwest Territories, as evidenced by counts of 38

at Ft. Simpson 2 Jan (*fide* DT) and 368 at Yellowknife the same day (*fide* RB).

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**A** bitterly cold January was flanked by milder weather in December and February; Alberta in particular enjoyed spring-like conditions late in the season, resulting in the arrival of some very early migrants. Manitoba and parts of eastern and central Saskatchewan endured heavy snows in late December, which interfered with a number of Christmas Bird Counts. Elsewhere accumulations were generally light, and much of the snow cover in southern Alberta and Saskatchewan had disappeared by the end of the period. A Region-wide influx of northern owls provided the major highlight of the season.

### LOONS THROUGH FALCONS

Single Yellow-billed Loons lingered at Wabamun L., AB 3 Dec (FW, m.ob.) and near Innisfail, AB 7 Dec–7 Jan (RKL, FW, m.ob.). Notable late waterfowl in Alberta included a Wood Duck at Medicine Hat 15+ Dec (BV), and several groups of late American Wigeon: 46 at Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, Calgary 2 Dec (RW), 10 at Little Bow River Dam 6 Dec, and 4 at Pine Coulee 12 Dec (both TK). Manitoba's first winter Blue-winged Teal was at Oak Hammock Marsh 1 Dec (RK), and 4 Northern Shovelers lingered at Frank L., AB 12 Dec (BW). Two imm. Trumpeter Swans wintered at Wyndham-Carseland P.P., AB (RW, m.ob.). Extremely early at Taber, AB were 3 Snow Geese 26 Feb and 11 Tundra Swans 28 Feb (LB), a Northern Shoveler 28 Feb (LB), and 6 Redheads 26 Feb (LB). A Eurasian Wigeon at Frank L. 25 Feb (JMM, BE, JP) was the only one reported and was also early.

Between 17 Dec and 1 Mar there were an unprecedented 10 reports of Sharp-shinned Hawks in s. Manitoba (m.ob.), plus one at Swift Current, SK 5 Jan (*fide* TH), while a Cooper's Hawk was noted at Kleefeld, MB 29 Jan (DF). A Ferruginous Hawk at Maple Creek, SK 24 Feb may have been an early migrant (AH). Alberta reported fair numbers of Gyrfalcons, whereas only 3 were not-

# Prairie Provinces



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ed in Saskatchewan and 2 in Manitoba. Saskatchewan had 8 Prairie Falcons; the lone bird in Manitoba was near Pipestone 21 Dec (1M).

### CRANES THROUGH WOODPECKERS

A Sandhill Crane near Powerview 15 Dec was Manitoba's latest ever (RTa, JA). Also notably tardy were a Killdeer at Swift Current, SK 7 Dec (RDu), a Wilson's Snipe on the Ft. Walsh, SK C.B.C. 18 Dec (GW et al.), a Mew Gull at Cold L. 2 Dec (RKL), and a

Ring-billed Gull at Winnipeg, MB 20 Dec (DN). Six California Gulls arrived at Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, Calgary, AB on the early date of 28 Feb (RS). A Glaucous Gull at Wabamun L. 26 Feb had apparently wintered locally (RKn, RK, RT). Eurasian Collared-Dove reports came from Pierson, MB; from Delisle, Maple Creek, Swift Current (14 on 21 Feb), and Weyburn, SK; and from Nanton (up to 11) and Grassy Lake, AB (m.ob.).

Snowy Owls were common around Ed-

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## PRAIRIE PROVINCES



Sharp-shinned Hawks are increasingly spending the winter in the Prairie Provinces. In Manitoba alone, there were ten reports of the species December–February. This bird terrorized a Winnipeg feeder through the season (here 1 February 2005). Photograph by Brian Huebert.

montan, AB and Winnipeg and were reported as “numerous” in Saskatchewan, where 22+ were tallied near Eston 14 Dec (DZ). Similarly, Northern Hawk Owls were widespread throughout the Region: 87 were banded in Feb alone in a band across cen. Saskatchewan from Lcoville to Hudson Bay (BT, MB), and one bird popularly known as the St. Vital Bandit spent the entire winter in that area of Winnipeg. Several Northern Pygmy-Owls moved eastward out of the mountains in cen. and n. Alberta (m.ob.). Like hawk owls, Great Gray Owls were present in large numbers at the edge of the boreal forest in all three provinces. Seventy-four were banded in cen. Saskatchewan in Feb (BT, MB). A Long-eared Owl at Kleefeld 10 Dec was a winter rarity (CP, DF). Up to 11 Short-eared Owls were tallied e. of Calgary late Dec–late Jan (KJ, TK), while an amazing 39 were at Eston, SK 3 Jan (DZ). Boreal Owls staged a minor incursion into s. Manitoba, with about half a dozen one-day wonders reported (m.ob.).

A Belted Kingfisher at La Barrière Park near Winnipeg survived until at least 17 Dec (AA, FB, AC, m.ob.). The only Red-bellied Woodpecker report came from the Pilot Mound, MB area 9 Jan (DNn). An American Three-toed Woodpecker (JC, m.ob.) and 2 Black-backed Woodpeckers (m.ob.) wintered in Wascana Park, Regina, SK, well s. of their usual range.

### PASSERINES

A Loggerhead Shrike on the Ft. Walsh C.B.C. 18 Dec provided a rare winter record for this species (R&CG et al.). Lone American Dippers at Eastend, SK 4 Jan (HJ) and at Okotoks, AB 12 Jan (TK) were e. of normal range. A Hermit Thrush at Delisle 15 Dec was tardy (TL). Rare at any time in Alberta, a Northern Mockingbird lingered at Fish

Creek PP. until late Jan (m.ob.). A Brown Thrasher was at Estevan, SK 13 Dec (BD), while another present through the season at Calgary was believed to have been the city's first successful winterer (FD, m.ob.).

Bohemian Waxwings were plentiful at Mt. Lorette (PS) and in good numbers elsewhere in the Region (GK, m.ob.). An Orange-crowned Warbler at Biggar, SK 1 Dec was very late (GW). The only other warbler was the previously reported Hooded Warbler at

Calgary, Alberta's 3rd, last seen 7 Dec (m.ob.). A Spotted Towhee seen intermittently at Winnipeg 17 Dec–13 Feb and possibly later was the province's first ever in winter (SB, RI, PH et al.). Another was at Cayley, AB 6 Dec–9 Jan (JS, m.ob.), and one at Ft. McMurray, AB lasted through the winter (LE, m.ob.). Other noteworthy lingerers included single Chipping Sparrows at Winnipeg 18 Dec–9 Jan (M, B, & AHu) and 2 Jan (CA, AW et al.), a Clay-colored Sparrow on the Brandon C.B.C. 24 Dec (CC), a Vesper Sparrow on the Yorkton, SK C.B.C. 18 Dec (B&JA), a Song Sparrow through the winter at Eden, MB (RD), and an exceptionally late McCown's Longspur on the Coronach, SK C.B.C. 2 Jan (GW). Winter finches were generally scarce, particularly in the west. Crossbills were almost absent. Common Redpolls were present in fair numbers in s. Manitoba, but very few Hoary Redpolls were reported anywhere. Feeders in s. Manitoba hosted small flocks of American Goldfinches, e.g., up to 14 birds until 11 Jan at Grosse Isle (KG).

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# Northern Great Plains

Even in a land where weather extremes are the norm, this winter season was notable for its weather extremes. Temperatures across the Region were well above average most of the season; however, late December and the first half of January saw temperatures well below average. During this three-week stretch, many days had high temperatures below zero. Most of the Region recorded snowfall totals well below average, and migration was evident by late February. Open water well into December produced numbers of lingering and wintering waterfowl. Several species of shorebirds made record late appearances in South Dakota. Notable movements of Townsend's Solitaires, Varied Thrushes, and Pine Grosbeaks were recorded. Owls made the biggest splash of all the irruptives, with Great Gray Owls and Boreal Owls making memorable appearances.

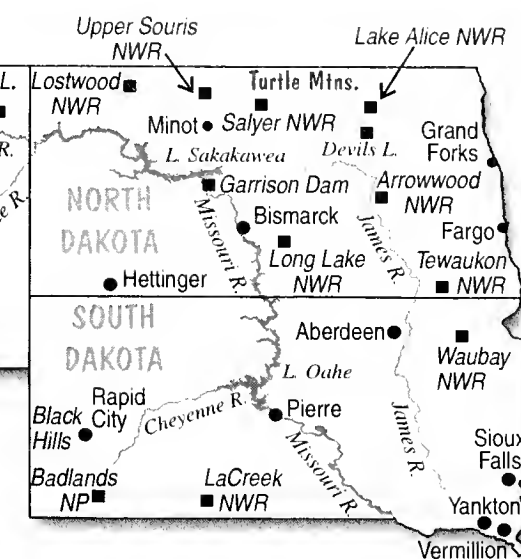
## GEESE THROUGH DOVES

A single Greater White-fronted Goose and 2 Snow Geese spent the season with a large flock of Canada Geese in *Morton*, ND. These represent the first wintering records for each species in the state (CDE). Unusual in mid-winter, a Trumpeter Swan was at Ft. Peck, MT 23 Jan (CC). Two Eurasian Wigeons had returned to Freezeout L., MT by 27 Feb (MS). Casual in winter in South Dakota, a Surf Scoter was in *Lyman* 11 Dec (JSP). Two Surf Scoters 14 Jan at Great Falls provided the first mid-winter record for e. Montana (GS). Very rare in winter in Montana, a single White-winged Scoter was at Yellowtail Afterbay 8 Feb (SD).

Bald Eagles were numerous across the Region this winter, and a pair was nesting in *Minnehaha*, SD by 26 Feb (MZ). A Sora below Garrison Dam, *McLean*, ND 10 Dec furnished the first winter season record for the state (p. a., REM). Two American Coots 16 Dec at Nelson L., *Oliver* provided the latest record for North Dakota (HCT). A single

American Coot at Freezeout L., MT 27 Feb furnished the earliest spring arrival date for the refuge (MS). Wintering Virginia Rails were found again this year on the edge of the Black Hills, SD. Birds were located at two *Fall River* marshes 28 Feb (JLB). A Wilson's Snipe remained at Garrison Dam, ND through 26 Dec (DNS). Providing the first winter season records for South Dakota were a single Lesser Yellowlegs in *Day* 20 Dec (LH), 2 Dunlin 11 Dec in *Buffalo* (JSP), and an American Woodcock 6 Dec in *Clay* (JC).

An ad. Little Gull was at Big Bend Dam, *Lyman* 11 Dec, the same location where the 7th South Dakota record was found in Oct (p. a., JSP). About the 18th report for North Dakota, an Iceland Gull was at Garrison



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Dam 26 Dec–2 Jan (p. a., DNS, REM). Black-legged Kittiwakes were at Garrison Dam, ND 11–16 Dec (p. a., REM, CDE) and at Pierre, SD 18–19 Dec (p. a., RDO, KM). Eurasian Collared-Doves continued their expansion across the Region, and a new high for Montana was recorded 5 Jan, when 28 were noted at Ballantine (HC, BH).



Casual in North Dakota, this unfortunate road-killed Boreal Owl was found in Fargo 5 (here 9) December 2004. Photograph by Paul Ode.



Providing the fifth C.B.C. record for North Dakota, this Northern Mockingbird was photographed on the Mayville–Portland count on 19 December 2004. Photograph by Dave Lambeth.





One of seven reported this winter in North Dakota, this Varied Thrush was photographed in Minot 2 January 2005. Photograph by Ron Martin.

### OWLS THROUGH WAXWINGS

Rare in North Dakota, a red-morph Eastern Screech-Owl was at Jamestown 19 Jan (MS). On the heels of a sighting in the fall season, another Northern Hawk Owl was in North Dakota 19 Dec in *Grand Forks* (RC). Barred Owls were noted w. of their usual ranges in the Dakotas, with a single 17 Feb at Jamestown, ND (TS, JS) and one 16 Dec in *Day*, SD (LH). In Montana, a Barred Owl was seen at Ballantine 1–3 Jan (p. a., HC, BH, GM). This provided only the 2nd report of this species in the e. half of the state. Great Gray Owl was certainly the bird of the winter in North Dakota. An individual was photographed and seen by many 22–29 Dec in *Grand Forks* (p. a., TD, DOL), and another



One of two documented in North Dakota this winter, this Great Gray Owl was near *Grand Forks* 22–29 (here 25) December 2004. The last report for North Dakota previous to these sightings was in 1966. Photograph by Dean Riemer.

er was documented 12 Feb in *Steele* (p. a., DLK). There were also two undocumented reports. Prior to these sightings, there were only eight previous reports for North Dakota, the most recent in 1966. Two Boreal Owls were recorded: a road kill at Fargo, ND 5 Dec (p. a., PO) and a live bird 14 Jan n. of Ft. Peck, MT (p. a., NP). There are no previous records of this retiring species for the e. half of Montana. Fifty-one Northern Saw-whet Owls were found during the season in the Pierre, SD area (KM). In North Dakota, seven Feb reports was well above average for winter.

A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was late in *Lake*, SD 4 Dec (p. a., JSP), and a Red-naped Sapsucker was in the Little Rockies, MT 14 Dec (p. a., DP). There are no accepted winter records for this species in e. Montana. The Clark's Nutcracker reported in the fall in *Pembina*, ND remained through the season (*vide* DOL). A Brown Creeper wintered at a Ft. Peck feeder, the first wintering record for the species in ne. Montana (CC). Migrant Mountain Bluebirds were noted in all three states by late Feb. Townsend's Solitaires made a strong showing, with 40 on seven C.B.C.s in North Dakota and an additional 20 individuals reported. In South Dakota, the species was reported in 11 counties away from the Black Hills. Varied Thrushes made an above-average showing in North Dakota, with seven reports. One South Dakota report came from *Brookings* 15 Jan (BH).

A Northern Mockingbird was photographed 18 Dec on the Mayville–Portland C.B.C., ND (p. a., DOL), a 5th C.B.C. record for the state. Bohemian Waxwings peaked at 5000 in *Pennington*, SD 5 Jan (TJ) and at Ft. Peck, MT 6 Feb (SD).

A Northern Mockingbird was photographed 18 Dec on the Mayville–Portland C.B.C., ND (p. a., DOL), a 5th C.B.C. record for the state. Bohemian Waxwings peaked at 5000 in *Pennington*, SD 5 Jan (TJ) and at Ft. Peck, MT 6 Feb (SD).

### TOWHEES THROUGH EVENING GROSBEAK

Accidental in winter in North Dakota, an East-

ern Towhee spent the season at Fargo (p. a., *vide* DPW). A Chipping Sparrow was noted on the Mayville–Portland, ND C.B.C. 18 Dec (p. a., DOL). This was the 4th year in the last five that the species has been reported in the winter season. A Savannah Sparrow in *Grand Forks*, ND 6 Dec provided the 2nd Dec report for the state (p. a., EEF).

Accidental in cen. South Dakota, a Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch was in *Stanley* 4 Dec (p. a., KM). Pine Grosbeaks made their strongest showing in years, with reports from six South Dakota counties. In North Dakota, the species was noted at eight locations in six counties, and a single 1 Dec ne. of Malta, MT was unexpected (DP). Common Redpolls were unusually numerous for an "off" year, with single flock reports in the



Casual in North Dakota, this Clark's Nutcracker passed the season in Pembina County (here 18 December 2004). Photograph by Dean Riemer.

hundreds in the Dakotas. As usual, a few Hoary Redpolls were also noted. Pine Siskin numbers were the strongest in some years, with peaks of 300 at Pierre, SD 30 Jan (DB) and 1164 on the Minot, ND C.B.C. 19 Dec. Now very rare in winter away from the Black Hills, 4 Evening Grosbeaks wintered at *New Town*, ND (RS).

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# Southern Great Plains

Perhaps the most notable pattern of this winter season was the increasing number of half-hardies and what appear to be northward range extensions of many species. Whether Winter Wrens and Gray Catbirds, Least Sandpipers and Vesper Sparrows, or Sandhill Cranes and Soras—individuals of these species are clearly wintering farther north in recent years.

With this winter came a few irruptions—unexceptional except for their infrequency: the early 1970s saw the last winter with multiple records of Pine Grosbeak, while Bohemian Waxwings had not been seen in numbers since the early 1960s. Purple Finches were widespread, and local appearances of Clark's Nutcracker and Pygmy Nuthatch represented micro-irruptions, perhaps.

**Abbreviations:** Hackberry (Hackberry Flats W.M.A., Tillman, OK); Harlan (Harlan Res., Harlan, NE); McConaughy (L. McConaughy, Keith, NE); Quivira (Quivira N.W.R., Stafford, KS); Rainwater Basin (playa wetlands of s.-cen. Nebraska); Red Slough (Red Slough W.M.A., McCurtain, OK); Tenkiller (L. Tenkiller, Sequoyah, OK).

## LOONS THROUGH FALCONS

Quite rare away from ne. Oklahoma, single Pacific Loons in Murray and Carter 14 Jan (DT) were unexpected; the 2–5 at Tenkiller through the period (JWA, m.ob.) were merely rare. About as rare as Pacifics in Oklahoma, a Red-throated Loon was at Tenkiller 21 Jan (CC) through 5 Feb (JWA, m.ob.), with another in Tulsa, OK 4 Jan–6 Feb (CC, m.ob.). The rarest of the loons in the Region, a Yellow-billed at Tenkiller 21 & 26 Jan (JWA, m.ob.) continued a string of annual appearances there. With few state records, a Brown Pelican in Wagoner and Cherokee, OK 1–26 Dec (JWA, m.ob.) was cause for excitement. Lingering Oklahoma ardeids were an American Bittern in Woods 11 Dec (RG), single Great Egrets in Washington 18 Dec (DW, SB) and at Red Slough 6–13 Dec (DA), and single Cattle Egrets in Tillman 2 Dec (PW) and at Red Slough 4 Jan (DA); also lingering were 3 White-faced Ibis in Johnston, OK 19 Dec (CB).

Incredible numbers of Snow Geese appeared in Feb in cen. Nebraska, including a Corps of Engineers count of 1,161,608 at Harlan (*vide* G&WH), and estimates from the cen. Platte Valley and Rainwater Basin of 500,000–1,000,000 (LB, RE, LRB, PAJ). Brant, quite rare in Oklahoma, were found in Texas 2–28 Dec (BH, SW) and Caddo 11 Dec (TD), the latter taken by a hunter.

The provenance of Mute Swans in the Region is conjectural, and some individuals may be from the Great Lakes populations; one was in Alfalfa, OK 11 Jan–13 Feb (AW, BH). Trumpeter Swans continue to appear in good numbers in Nebraska, where 58 were

reported; marked birds among them were mostly from Iowa and Minnesota. Rare southward, 5 Trumpeters were in Kansas during the period (*vide* LM), and 3–6 were in Alfalfa, OK 26 Dec–13 Feb (AW, PV). Tundra Swans, also a rare fall migrant in the Region, made a better-than-average showing, with 14 reported from Kansas and Oklahoma 3 Dec–8 Jan, including 5 on a Kansas farm pond in Douglas 8 Jan (RBe). Unexpected during winter were the 7 Wood Ducks in Scotts Bluff 1–17 Jan (KD). Regional rarities were an American Black Duck in Mitchell, KS 15 Dec (MR, SS, MT, RP) and a Mottled Duck at Red Slough 17 Jan–1 Feb (DA). Two Blue-winged Teal at Red Slough 11 Jan (DA, BS) may have wintered.

The 100 or so Greater Scaup reported in the Region included 40 in Douglas, KS 23 Dec (DG) and 36 at McConaughy 12 Feb (JGJ). There were 3 Surf Scoters reported, an imm. female 31 Dec in Johnson, KS (MM), one in Creek, OK 9 Jan (BC), and an ad. male in Johnson, KS 17 Feb (ML). Rather late were



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One of two Harris' Hawks wintering near Optima Reservoir, Texas County Oklahoma, this bird was photographed there 2 December 2004. Both birds were considerably beyond normal zones for winter dispersal. Photograph by Berlin Heck.

3 White-winged Scoters at McConaughy 19 Dec (*fide* SJD), one of which stayed through 31 Dec (B&JS), and another in *Cedar*, NE 3–8 Jan (MB, DH, JJ). Some 15–20 Long-tailed Ducks were reported, 11 in Kansas and the others in Oklahoma. A male hybrid Common Goldeneye × Hooded Merganser at McConaughy 12 (HA) & 31 Dec (B&JS) has wintered there for a few years now. Another was in *Scotts Bluff*, NE 17 Jan and 18 Feb (KD). Regular but rare in winter in Nebraska's North Platte Valley, 4 Barrow's Goldeneyes were reported: up to 3 in *Scotts Bluff* 11 Dec–18 Feb (KD) and one at McConaughy 19 Dec (*fide* SJD). The only other was a Kansas "zootie" in *Riley* 28 Feb (LJ). Impressive were the 16,000 Common Mergansers at *L. Waconda*, *Mitchell*, KS 15 Dec (MR, SS, MT, RP).

Osprey reports included moribund bird 18 Dec in *Hall*, NE (*fide* EV) and singles in *Oklahoma* 8 Jan (JW) and *Alfalfa* 17 Feb (GK). Bald Eagles had started nesting in *Thomas*, NE 15 Feb (RGr) and in *Nemaha*, NE 25 Feb (CCa). Of the 8 Northern Goshawks reported, 3 were in Nebraska and 5 in Kansas, the most southerly in *Barber*, KS 2 Jan (PJ). Harris's Hawk occasionally winters far n. of its usual range; this winter, 2 were in *Texas*, OK 2 Dec–12 Feb (BH, JM, m.ob.), the first for the Oklahoma Panhan-

dle. Golden Eagles were reported throughout the Region, indeed to its se. corner at *Red Slough* 16 Dec and 17 Feb (DA, BH, KM). Although fall migration for Peregrine Falcons normally ends by mid-Nov in Nebraska and spring migration starts in late Mar, nesting by residents in Omaha began early, with 3 eggs present 28 Feb (*fide* CNK). Similarly, 3 birds were noted around the State Capitol in Lincoln, NE 18 Feb (JCM). This, along with previous winter sightings in Omaha and Lincoln, suggests that breeding birds are resident in the vicinity.

### GROUSE THROUGH WOODPECKERS

Good numbers of Greater Prairie-Chickens were noted in n.-cen. and se. Nebraska, including 100 at an irrigated corn-stubble field in sw. *Custer* 23 Jan (TJW) and 51 in *Johnson* 9 Dec (TEL). Yellow Rails, thought to be only migrants in the Region, were located at *Red Slough*, where an unprecedented 22 were flushed as late as 20 Dec, with one lingering until 28 Dec (DA). Rare was a very late King Rail there 7 Dec (DA). Virginia Rails may winter throughout the Region, as 4 birds were found at seeps in the Niobrara River Valley in *Cherry* in Dec and Feb (JED). Soras also seem to be extending their winter range northward, with one in *Blaine*, OK 28 Jan (DT) and 2 at *Red Slough* 7 Feb (TS).

Again at *Red Slough* (do they heat the water?) were as many as 6 Common Moorhens 6 Feb, with one there the next day (DA).

Adding to the list of lingering or wintering species, a Sandhill Crane was found in *Osage*, OK 18 Dec (SH, RPo, MP), with 2 at *Red Slough* 27 Dec (DA, MW, BH) and an amazing 2015 in *Barber*, KS 2 Jan (PJ). A Black-bellied Plover at *Hackberry* 4 Dec (LT) was late, but a pair of Killdeer with 2 downy young 15 Dec in *McCurtain*, OK (BHK) was tempting fate. Adding to the winter records of American Avocets for Oklahoma were one at *Red Slough* 6–7 Dec (DA, TS) and 1–3 at *Hackberry* 13–27 Feb (KM, LT, MTr). As many as 29 Greater Yellowlegs were still at *Quivira* 14 Dec (MR). The 50+ Greater Yellowlegs wintering at *Hackberry* 13–27 Feb (LT, MTr, JAG) were accompanied by 1–3 Lesser Yellowlegs 12–21 Feb, 14–15 Dunlin 12–21 Feb, and 17–29 Long-billed Dowitchers 12–27 Feb (JAG, DE, LT, MTr). An excellent count of late fall migrant Long-billed Dowitchers was the 140 at *Hackberry* 4 Dec (LT). A surprising 8 Spotted Sandpipers were found in Oklahoma 2–29 Dec (*fide* JWA); normally, few are reported after Oct.

Rare anywhere in the Region, a Laughing Gull was in *Sequoyah*, OK 21–23 Dec (SBE, DT). Also rare in winter away from McConaughy, single California Gulls were in *Douglas*, NE 4 Dec (JGJ), *Hitchcock*, NE 20 Dec (TJW), *Johnson*, KS 30 Dec (ML), *Douglas*, KS 16 Jan (DS, GP, MM, RA), and *Wagoner*, OK 27 Feb (JWA). Southernmost Thayer's Gulls were in Oklahoma, where the species is only casual; 1–2 were in *Oklahoma* 12–23 Feb (PV, JWA), with one in *Sequoyah* 4 Feb (BH). Somewhat rare in Kansas, 6 Thayer's were identified 15 Dec–16 Jan (*fide* LM). A gull in Oklahoma 22 Jan–12 Feb was carefully scrutinized and reported as a Thayer's/Kumlien's intergrade (JL, BH, PV, m.ob.), while a bird identified as a second-winter Iceland Gull was at McConaughy 12 Dec–2 Jan (HA, m.ob.), apparently the same bird that was there last year. Now regular, but still rare in the Region, no fewer than 8 Lesser Black-backed Gulls were reported, including 4 in *Oklahoma* 13 Feb (JWA). Regionally, 12 Glaucous were reported, with singles south to *Tulsa*, OK 18–26 Dec (DHo, TM) and *Mayes*, OK 1 Jan (JD). The only Great Black-backed Gull reported was the continuing imm. at McConaughy 19 Dec (*fide* SJD).

Nebraska's first mid-winter record of White-winged Dove was one in *Scotts Bluff* 9 Feb (ECT). Ten Inca Doves made a high count in *Johnston*, OK 19 Dec (CB), where it is still a rare species. Most unexpected were the 2 Common Ground-Doves wintering at *Red Slough* through 17 Feb (DA, MW, BH, m.ob.); this species is still only of casual oc-



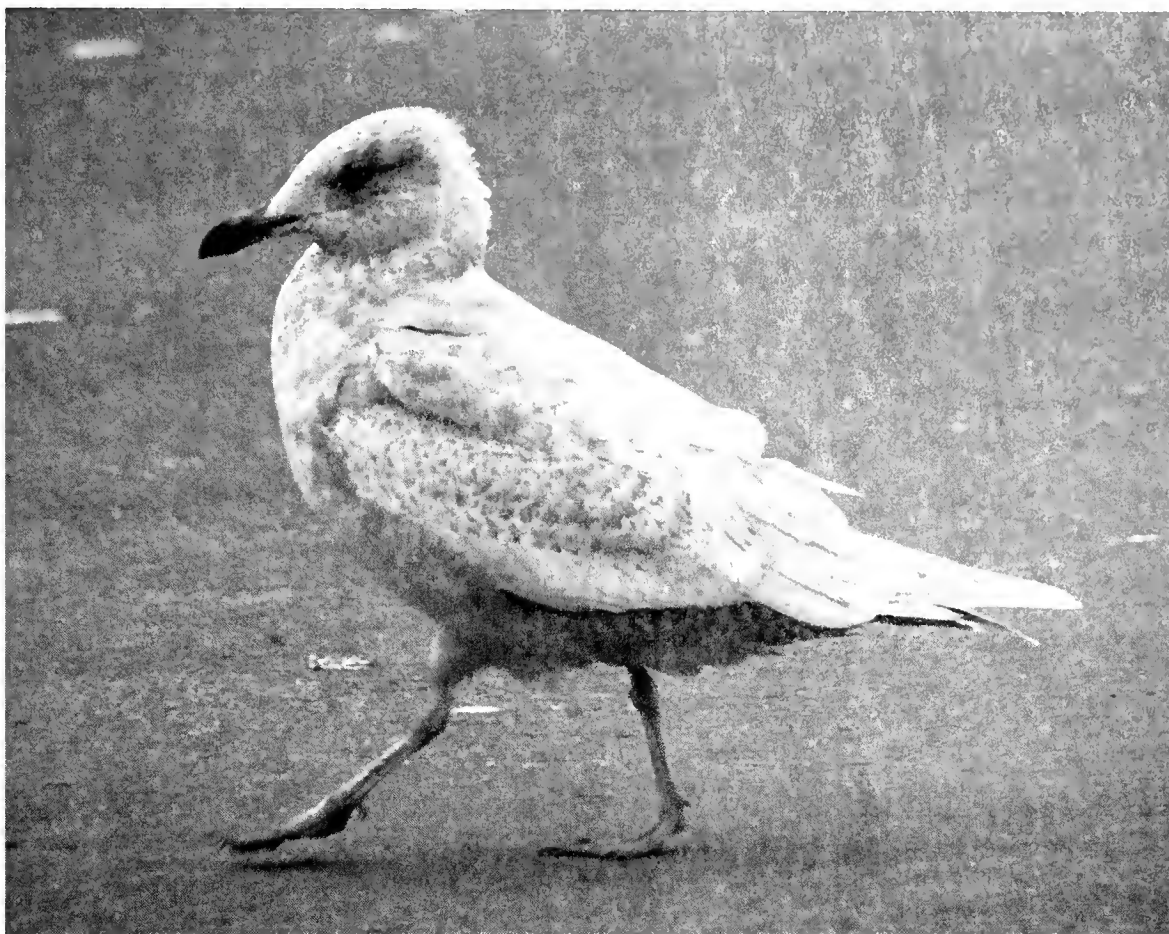
currence in the Region. Another species creeping northward is Greater Roadrunner: one apparently wintering in Cowley, KS was exceptional (MT, *fide* LM). Of few Snowy Owls reported, 3 were in Kansas: one found dead 13 Dec in *Hodgeman* had apparently hit a tower support-wire (*fide* BSa); one was in *Sumner* 8–25 Jan (DS, m.ob.); and one was in *Coffey* 28 Feb (LF, RM). The only Northern Saw-whet Owl reported was in *Chase*, NE 20 Dec (SJD).

Unprecedented was a very late Common Nighthawk in *Tulsa*, OK 5 Dec (JC). Of 3 Rufous Hummingbirds braving Dec weather, one continued its stay in *Johnson*, KS from 27 Nov until 29 Dec (*fide* MM); the others were in more friendly climes in *Tulsa*, OK 4 Dec (P&JE, MK) and *Oklahoma*, OK 5–12 Dec (BHn). Lewis's Woodpeckers sometimes appear in winter far to the e. of their usual range; one such bird was in *Cleveland*, OK 27 Dec–17 Jan (PF, m.ob.). Far more than the usual number of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, about 21, were in se. Nebraska, n. to *Dixon* 8 Jan (BFH); one in *Cimarron*, OK 15 Dec (JAG) was a rare occurrence so far to the west.

### FLYCATCHERS THROUGH WAXWINGS

A Regional "zootie" at any time, a Black Phoebe wintered at Red Slough 29 Dec–22 Feb (JS, BH, DA, m.ob.). Phoebes hanging north were an Eastern in *Sedgwick*, KS 18 Dec (PJ) and 2 Say's in *Cimarron*, OK 15 Dec (JAG). Clark's Nutcracker, noted several times out of range in fall 2004, appeared in nw. Nebraska in invasion numbers, with 40–50 in the Sowbelly Canyon area of *Sioux* 5 Feb (KD) and other counts in that area of up to 30 birds 21 Dec–25 Jan (EB, B&DW, HKH). The last such irruption was in 1996–1997. Normally early in spring, 3 Purple Martins in *Cleveland*, OK 21 Feb (SH) were pushing the envelope, but not as much as the 3 Tree Swallows in *Washington*, OK 27 Feb (DR, JL, BG).

Black-capped Chickadees continue to be very scarce in s.-cen. Nebraska e. to *Lancaster* (LE, JG). The only reports of Mountain Chickadee were of two widely-separated singles in *Scotts Bluff*, NE through the period (*fide* AK, P&DD). Bushtits staged a minor incursion into sw. Kansas and w. Oklahoma, with 5 as far n. as *Wichita*, KS 4–15 Dec (SS, DB, HA), as many as 34 in *Morton*, KS 1 Jan (SP, m.ob.) and 10–15 in *Stevens*, KS 5 Dec (HA); 3 were on the plains in *Cimarron*, OK 15 Dec (JAG). Good numbers of Red-breasted Nuthatches, significantly more than usual, were reported in Nebraska and Kansas, with best being the C.B.C. count of an amazing 105 at *Wichita* 18 Dec (PJ). Three White-breasted Nuthatches in Sowbelly Canyon, *Sioux*, NE 21 Dec were of the expected resident subspecies *nelsoni*, but one



Described to science in 1883, *kumlieni* Iceland Gull has been a taxonomic puzzle almost ever since. This bird (photographed 12 February 2005 at Lake Hefner, Oklahoma City) has a rather flattened head and squared nape (more typical of Thayer's Gull), though the mostly unmarked pale tertials and overall paleness suggest Kumlien's. Photograph by Pat Velte.

in nearby Harrison was of the e. subspecies *cookei* (EB); the latter occurs during winter in areas of the state where the species does not breed. The extent of movement of *nelsoni* in winter in Nebraska is not well known. Pygmy Nuthatch numbers in the canyons of *Sioux*, NE were exceptional, described as "amazing" on 28 Dec (B&DW), and 75 were estimated in Monroe and Sowbelly Canyons 21 Dec (EB).

Winter Wrens apparently wintered n. to *Cherry*, NE, where 3 were found along the Niobrara River 15–18 Dec and another 19 Feb (JED). Winter Wrens also put on a surprising show at the w. edge of the winter range in nw. Oklahoma; one to 2 were found on various dates between 16 Dec and 24 Jan in *Woods*, *Grant*, *Woodward*, *Ellis*, and *Dewey* (DT). Unprecedented for the location and date were 2 Sedge Wrens at *Quivira* 8 Dec (SS). Another wren making an appearance outside its usual winter range was Marsh Wren, 4–5 of which were rather far n. along the Niobrara River in *Cherry*, NE 15–18 Dec and 18–19 Feb (JED). Rare as far nw. as w. Nebraska in Dec, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet in *Scotts Bluff* 18 Dec (*fide* AK), one at *McConaughy* 19 Dec (*fide* SJD), and another in *Dundy* 29 Dec (TJW) were unexpected. Also

very late were 2 Blue-gray Gnatcatchers in *Johnston*, OK 19 Dec (CB).

Townsend's Solitaires were widely reported e. to *Lancaster*, NE (*fide* JG), *Geary*, KS (RA, GP), *Sedgwick*, KS (PJ), and *Cleveland*, OK (JAG, CBy, B&SD). Another quite northerly half-hardy was a Hermit Thrush in *Cherry*, NE 15 Dec (JED). Remarkable numbers of American Robins occur in the extensive cedar areas of cen. Nebraska in late fall: 10,216 were tallied on the Calamus C.B.C. 1 Jan (*fide* DH) and "thousands" were in se. *Lincoln* cedar canyons 25 Jan (TJW). The only Varied Thrushes reported were in Kansas: singles in *Sedgwick* 18 Dec–18 Jan (PJ, m.ob.) and *Pottawatomie* 18–29 Jan (GR, m.ob.). Five Gray Catbirds lingered into winter; northernmost were singles in Nebraska at *McConaughy* 2 Jan (HA) and in *Furnas* 22 Jan (LO). A late Sage Thrasher was in *Kiowa*, OK 21 Dec (JAG), and Brown Thrashers tarried far to the n. in *Lincoln*, NE 10 Jan (*fide* TJW) and *Morrill*, NE 1 Feb (*fide* AK). A Sprague's Pipit was late in *Kiowa*, OK 21 Dec (JAG).

### WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Lingering warblers included an Orange-crowned in *Riley*, KS 14 Jan (DM), a Prairie

**SA** For the first time in many years, **Bohemian Waxwings** staged an invasion into the Region, although sightings were limited to the w. portions of the Region. The largest numbers were in Nebraska, where best C.B.C. totals were 237 at *McConaughy* 19 Dec (*fide* SJD) and 225 at *Crawford* 20 Dec (B&DW). Kansas reported a total of 10–15, with one e. to *Sumner* 18 Dec (TH). Some 4–5 Bohemians made it to Oklahoma, where extremely rare: 2–3 in *Texas* 2 Dec (DA, BH, KM, JS) and 2 e. as far as *Carter* 25 Dec (BF).



Furnishing a second Regional record in the Southern Great Plains was this Black Phoebe (here 31 December 2004) at Beaver's Bend State Park, McCurtain County, Oklahoma, where it apparently spent the winter. Photograph by Matt White.

Warbler in *Sedgwick*, KS 30 Oct–15 Dec (PG, m.ob.), and an American Redstart through 14 Dec in *Oklahoma*, OK (JSh). Also unexpected, despite their relative hardiness, were 3 Pine Warblers in Kansas in Jan: singles in *Sedgwick* 23 Dec–18 Jan (RB), *Harvey* 5–15 Jan (GF), and *Geary* 30 Jan (RA, GP); somewhat westerly were 2 in *Oklahoma/Lincoln*, OK 19 Dec (MH) and one in *Comanche*, OK 29 Dec (JAG, SG). A Summer Tanager present through the period in *Cherokee*, OK (BD, MWa) attended a feeding station.

Green-tailed Towhees occasionally winter e. of the usual range; one was in *Kingfisher*, OK 9–16 Jan (N&JV, PV, m.ob.), and a Canyon Towhee was a bit farther e. than expected in *Morton*, KS 1 Jan (SP). Nebraska's 4th documented winter Savannah Sparrow was in *Washington* 10 Jan (JT), and a Chipping Sparrow was a rare winter find in *Barber*, KS 2 Jan (PJ). Furnishing one of only about a dozen Regional records was a Golden-crowned Sparrow at a *Douglas*, KS feeder 18 Dec (GP). Southernmost Snow Buntings were one at *Quivira* 14 Dec (MR) and 9 in *Mitchell*, KS 15 Dec (MR, SS, MT, RP). Rusty Blackbirds and Brown-headed Cowbirds were more in evidence in midwinter than usual in se. Nebraska, and cowbirds arrived earlier than usual, with one in *Richardson* 15 Feb (CCa).

**SA** Perhaps the biggest event of the season was a limited influx of Pine Grosbeaks onto the w. Great Plains. This species has been essentially unrecorded from the Region for about 35 years. About 18 birds appeared in the Region this winter, most in Kansas, where one was in *Sedgwick* 6 Nov (RB), another was in *Morton* 13 Nov (SP, CH, MR, JSi), up to 6 were in *Grant* 4 Dec+ (SS, KH, m.ob.), 2 were in *Wichita* 4–11 Dec (SS, DB, HA), and 3 were in *Russell* 19 Dec (MR). Previously only hypothetical in *Oklahoma*, singles were found in *Cimarron* 11–12 Dec (JW, NH, MF, EBo) and 5 Jan (MT, MR) and in *Texas* 31 Dec–25 Jan (JW, NH, SM, BH). Singles were also in *Perkins*, NE 20 Dec (SJD) and far to the e. in *Lancaster*, NE 19 Dec (LE). The latter record and the *Sedgwick*, KS report may suggest that these birds were not all derived from the Rocky Mountain populations.

Other fringillids were not to be outdone in the Region this winter. Counts of Purple Finch were excellent this year, with many found into the cen. and w. stretches of the Region, including about 129 in *Scotts Bluff*, NE



Among the array of half-hardies braving potential catastrophe this season was a Green-tailed Towhee in *Kingfisher* County, Oklahoma, here photographed 5 January 2005. This represents one of few state records of this rather secretive species away from the Oklahoma Panhandle. Photograph by Pat Velte.

(fide AK), 62 in *Geary*, KS 19 Dec (CO, m.ob.), and 3 as far w. as *Rogers Mills* 11 Jan

(DGi). However, the only Cassin's Finches reported were 2 at *McConaughy* 19 Dec (fide SJD) and one in *Morton*, KS 1 Jan (SP). Good numbers of Red Crossbills were also reported throughout the Region, with the exception of s. Oklahoma. The only reports of White-winged Crossbill were of singles in *Platte*, NE 30 Jan (LR, RH) and *Rooks*, KS 31 Jan (MZ, MS). Common Redpolls were reported 4 Dec–7 Feb in low numbers, about 40 in all, s. to *Grant* (SS, DB, HA) and *Sedgwick* (TH) in Kansas. Pine Siskins were present in very good numbers, particularly westward.

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# Texas



The winter produced events that under more normal circumstances would be headliners in this column. Examples include the largest incursion of Purple Finches into the state in 20 years, outstanding grassland bird diversity in the Trans-Pecos (including numerous Baird's Sparrows), and outstanding numbers of Mountains Plovers found in many locations. However, these very noteworthy events went almost unremarked, as all eyes focused on the Lower Rio Grande Valley, where the invasion of vagrants from northeastern Mexico was unprecedented in our experience. Like kids in a candy store, birders were treated to 3 Roadside Hawks, an Elegant Trogon, a Social Flycatcher, 9 Rose-throated Becards, 7 White-throated Robins, 3 Golden-crowned Warblers, at least 15 Crimson-collared Grosbeaks, and 8 Blue Buntings. For some of the species, the numbers of individuals present this winter exceeded the number of sightings previously documented in the United States! Spectacular rarities were also found in many other areas of the state, including a state first Streak-backed Oriole on the upper coast, an American Dipper at Dallas, and an apparent male Lawrence's Goldfinch at Rockport, to name a few.

This winter's wave of rarities brought with it a large influx of birders from around the country and elsewhere. It is hard to quantify the number of people visiting the Lower Rio Grande Valley, but we can look at one very popular stop on the tour: the Frontera Audubon Sanctuary in Weslaco. The previous winter, the visitation during the winter (December through February) was about 600 people—a sharp contrast to the 6782 visitors during the same period this season. The economic impact of birding in this area is truly impressive, particularly when Mexican vagrants are present.

Abbreviations: L.R.G.V. (Lower Rio Grande Valley); T.B.R.C. (Texas B.R.C.); U.T.C. (Upper Texas Coast). The following are shortened names for the respective local, county, state, or national parks, and wildlife refuges, etc.: Anahuac, Bentsen, Big Bend, Big Bend Ranch, Buescher, Buffalo Lake, Caprock Canyons, San Bernard, Santa Ana, Sea Rim, and Trinity River.

## LOONS THROUGH STORKS

Single Red-throated and Pacific Loons were found in *Calhoun* 19 Dec (BFr, PHo). Additional Pacific Loons included 3 each in *Rockwall* 16 Dec (BG et al.) and *Llano* 8–15 Jan (SAs, †TFe) and a single in *Comal* 28 Dec (BD). Rare for the Panhandle were 2–3 Common Loons in *Hutchinson* 4–19 Dec (*vide* BPi) and one in *Donley* 2 Jan (IO). Least Grebe was much in evidence on the U.T.C. after another wet year. A pair remained through 16 Jan in *Freestone*, where they

nested the previous summer (PBa). As was much in evidence this season, *Aechmophorus* grebes can breed through the winter, with many pairs with dependent young present at Balmorhea L., *Reeves*. Two Western Grebes at L. Tyler, *Smith* 19 Dec (A&CB) were very rare for the Pineywoods. Up to 18 Western Grebes were present on L. Buchanan, *Llano* 27 Feb (RBa).

An estimated 2000+ American White Pelicans on L. Livingston, *Polk* 28 Dec was impressive (TFe). A subad. Brown Booby located in Port Aransas, *Nueces* 26 Feb–4 Mar (JSi, CTA, †m.ob., ph.) furnished just the 4th winter record for the state. A very early Masked Booby was in *Nueces* 28 Feb (BFr, PHo). A Neotropic Cormorant in *Lubbock* 6–21 Feb (AH) represented the first Feb record for the High Plains. An American Bittern at Rio Grande Village 16 Dec–7 Feb (JHi, MF) represented a first winter record for Big Bend; others of note were 2 in *Reeves* 19 Dec (ML) and one in *Lubbock* 18 Dec–13 Feb (AH et al.). Two Least Bitterns were

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This second-winter gull found at Corpus Christi, Nueces County, Texas 8 (here) through 22 February 2005 appears to have characteristics of Yellow-legged Gull. If the identification can be confirmed, it would mark a second consecutive winter for the species in Texas. Photograph by Martin Reid.

found in *Brazoria* 19 Dec (JWi, EH et al.). A Great Egret lingered in *Lubbock* throughout the season (AH), while single Snowy Egrets lingered in *Dallas* through 18 Dec (KC) and *Tarrant* until 28 Jan (SJe, DPo). Cattle Egrets lingered at scattered inland locales, most notably about 100 in *Smith* 15 Jan (*fide* JPu). Green Herons were unexpected in *Collin* 4 Dec (PA), *Wilson* 16 Dec (WS), and *Bexar* 8 Jan (RHi, GS). Single White Ibis at Nacogdoches and at Longview, both 18 Dec, were C.B.C. firsts there. Seven Wood Storks in *Cameron* 8 Dec (BMc) and 3 in *Chambers* 8 Jan (ph. AWo) provided unexpected winter records.

### WATERFOWL THROUGH FALCONS

As noted by Wolf, the season appeared to be an "off" winter for most waterfowl. Three Ross's Geese lingered in *Bell* through 6 Jan (RPi). The distribution of Cackling Goose is of great interest due to the recent split. Notable counts of Cackling Goose included 23 in *Bell* 13 Dec (RPi), 100 (compared to 200 Canadas) from *Carson* 4 Dec (BPi), 6202 (compared to 11,895 Canadas and 19,339 unidentified) in *Lubbock* 18 Dec (*fide* AH), and 28 (compared to 3499 Canadas) in *Hemphill* 29 Dec (*fide* SP). A Cackling Goose was also documented at Tornillo Res. 1 Dec (BZ), the 2nd *El Paso* record. A Eurasian Wigeon found in *Starr* 22 Feb represented a rare s. Texas record (†D&BF). Greater Scaup made a good showing in cen. Texas, with multiple sightings 30 Dec–19 Feb in *Bell*

(Rko, RPi) and *Williamson* (TFe, ByS). More than 100 Greater Scaup on L. Bob Sandlin, *Camp* was noteworthy for the Pineywoods (DBr). A Surf Scoter in *Bexar* lingered until 8 Dec (SCo, MRe); a White-winged Scoter in *Kleberg* 5 Jan was rare there (TL). Long-tailed Ducks were scattered statewide, with reports from *Bexar* through early Dec (MRe), *Aransas* 9 Dec (MM), *McLennan* 28 Nov–2 Dec (FB), *Travis* late Nov–21 Jan and possibly later (EC, m.ob.), *Rains* 11–21 Feb (RoB et al.), *Galveston* 28 Feb (CR), and *Hudspeth* 28 Dec–27 Jan (DaB, BPe). Single Masked Ducks were found in *Matagorda* 20–24 Dec (L&RS, ph. HS) and *San Patricio* 20–30 Dec (GB, †MRe).

Extralimital White-tailed Kites appeared near the *Presidio/Jeff Davis* line 2 Dec (ph. CMi) and in *Hardeman* 7 Jan (BBo et al.), *Brewster* 30 Jan (DEI), and *Kent* 26 Feb (AH et al.). Intriguing was an ad. Northern Goshawk from *Hardeman* 30 Dec–12 Jan (†SW, m.ob.). Common Black-Hawks were reported from *Bastrop* 24 Dec (JC) and at El Canelo, *Kenedy* 14 Feb (KE, ph. RT). The Harris's Hawk at Hermann Park, *Harris* continued through the winter period. Roadside Hawks made an unprecedented incursion into the state. Single individuals were at San Ygnacio, *Zapata* 30 Jan–1 Mar (†D&E, †RT, m.ob.), near Cannon Road, *Cameron* 5–16 Feb (†JA et al.), and Santa Ana, *Hidalgo* 9 Feb+ (†BFI, †PiH, m.ob.). A Red-shouldered Hawk in Big Bend 20–27 Feb (BBe, AH, Rko, ML) provided possibly the first winter

record for the park. Another Red-shouldered in *Crosby* 1 Jan (PK) was notable. Rare in winter, Broad-winged Hawks were reported from *Galveston* 15 Dec (TC), *Brazoria* 17 Dec (BLi, ph. WSt), and *Starr* 5 Feb (BMc). There were sporadic reports of other Broad-wingeds in conservation lands in the L.R.G.V. Lingering or wintering Swainson's Hawks were noted in *Galveston* 11 Dec (SLc), *Chambers* 13 Dec (ph. JSt), *Jefferson* 25 Dec (ph. EC), *Bexar* 5 Jan and 21 Feb (SH, MRe, SCo), *Jefferson* 15–16 Jan (GD, SM), and *Frio* 21 Feb (WS). A juv. Swainson's Hawk spent Dec–Jan terrorizing gulls at Elliott Landfill, *Nueces* (MRe, WS). A Rough-legged Hawk was found in *Medina* 22 Jan (MHe). A Golden Eagle was a great find for the Pineywoods and a new species for the Longview C.B.C. 18 Dec (ERa). Crested Caracara was a significant find in *Gregg* 11 Feb (DBr). A Prairie Falcon in *Williamson* 31 Jan (ph. TFe) was rare for the Blackland Prairies.

### RAILS THROUGH TERNS

A Black Rail surprised Corpus Christi (West) C.B.C. participants in *Nueces* 20 Dec (JSi). Two King Rails at Balmorhea L., *Reeves* 19 Dec (JGe) represented a first area winter report. A King Rail in *Gregg* 18 Dec (PHa, DMe) was also regionally quite rare. A Whooping Crane near Plainview, *Hale* 2 Dec (KMo) was unexpected but well described by an experienced wildlife biologist.

It was a banner year for wintering Mountain Plovers in the state. The mother lode was apparently located sw. of San Antonio, with a seasonal total of nearly 900 birds: 100 in *Bexar* 4 Dec (BD), 152 near Uvalde 11 Jan (BH), 315 in *Dimmit* 30 Jan (BH), and 219 near Pearsall, *Frio* (MRe). Holliday reported 325 birds wintering near Dell City and nearby salt flats, *Hudspeth* and three groups totaling 162 birds in *Reeves*, *Midland*, and *Upton* 18 Feb. In addition, 90 were found n. of Balmorhea, *Reeves* 1 Jan (DaB, BPe). Fennell remarked that Mountain Plovers were generally hard to find in *Williamson*, with a high count of 34 birds 22 Jan. A Snowy Plover in *Denton* 27 Dec was notable (BG). Five Black-necked Stilts were in *El Paso* 16 Dec (BZ), and one was in Big Bend 18 Jan (SLi), the latter thought to afford a first winter record for the park. Three American Avocets at McNary Res., *Hudspeth* 19 Dec (BZ) were unexpected; one in *Williamson* 30 Jan, and presumably the same bird in *Bell* 27 Feb (TFe), provided even rarer winter records. Two Lesser Yellowlegs in *Donley* 5 Dec (BPi) and 4 in *Crosby* 29 Jan (BBe et al.) were considered late, but the latter could have been early "spring" migrants. A Solitary Sandpiper in *Denton* 27 Dec was notable (BG, PBi). An Upland Sandpiper was well described from *Fort Bend* on the extremely late date of 26

Dec (†SLe). Holliday reported 2 Whimbrels with Mountain Plovers in *Zavala* 30 Jan and 8 Feb. Seven Least Sandpipers in *Donley* 11 Dec (BPi) and 4 in *Randall* 18 Dec (*fide* LSA) were notable for the Panhandle. Two Pectoral Sandpipers in *Nueces* 5 Dec were very late (LJo). A Pectoral Sandpiper seen in *Brazoria* 19 Dec (BLy, VE) provided one of very few winter records for the U.T.C. A Pectoral Sandpiper in *Waller* 27 Feb was early (TE). Long-billed Dowitchers were unexpected in *Titus/Camp* 12 Dec (MWh) and 23 Jan (DBr), as was one in *Rains* 4 Feb (RKi).

A breeding-plumaged Franklin's Gull at Hornsby Bend, *Travis* 2 Jan was a real shock for Carpenter. Three first-winter Little Gulls showed up in the state this season: Quintana Jetty, *Brazoria* 6–18 Jan (ph., †RW et al.), the spillway of L. Livingston, *Polk* 21–27 Dec (CMe, m.ob.), and L. Tawakoni, *Rains* 4 Dec (†MWh). In addition, a second-winter bird was found on L. Ray Hubbard, *Dallas* 16 Dec (†DH, †BG). An ad. Black-headed Gull on South Padre I., *Cameron* 12 Dec (†G&SC, ph. BMC) provided a new record for the L.R.G.V. A Heermann's Gull at Crystal Beach, *Galveston* 25 Feb (†DT) would be the 3rd for the state, if accepted. Up to 8 California Gulls were scattered throughout the state this season. A first-winter gull thought to be a California Gull × Ring-billed Gull hybrid spent the season at Elliott Landfill, Corpus Christi, *Nueces* (ph. MRe, WS). A Herring Gull with plumage characteristics of the Asian subspecies *vegae* was present along Bryan Beach, *Brazoria* 13 Jan–25 Feb (ph. RW). A second-winter gull identified as a Yellow-legged Gull was at Corpus Christi's Elliott Landfill 8–22 Feb (ph. MRe, WS); European experts concurred with the identification after reviewing photographs. Seven Thayer's Gulls were in the state this winter. Up to 3 Lesser Black-backed Gulls were seen in n.-cen. Texas in Dec. A first-winter Great Black-backed Gull was found in *Aransas* 28 Dec (ph., †JJ), while another first-winter bird was present near the Boca Chica jetty, *Cameron* 25 Jan+ (RT, †BMc et al.). An apparent ad. Kelp Gull × Herring Gull hybrid or backcross was studied at the Brownsville Dump, *Cameron* on 18 Feb (MJ1). Two first-winter Black-legged Kittiwakes were found along the coast; one at Boca Chica jetty, *Cameron* 30–31 Dec (GCh;

ph. BMe) and another at Quintana Jetty, *Brazoria* 1 Jan (JO).

### PIGEONS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

The pair of Ruddy Ground-Doves present from the fall continued at Cottonwood Campground, Big Bend through the season (m.ob.). Groove-billed Anis made a good showing on five of the C.B.C.s on the U.T.C., with Freeport tallying a high of 12 individuals. A Burrowing Owl at Cement Creek L., *Tarrant* on 21 Feb was a good find (DPo). A Long-eared Owl was flushed near the Rio Grande in Laredo, *Webb* 16 Jan (WS, SCo, DMu). Short-eared Owls made a good showing in South Texas, where up to 9 were present on a ranch near Kenedy, *Karnes* (WS) and up to 6 were found near Granjeno, *Hidalgo* 25 Jan+ (BMc, m.ob.). Two *Chaetura* swifts observed in Houston 21 Feb (JMu) were thought to be early Chimney Swifts, but the date is more in line with Vaux's Swift, which has still not been documented in the state.



This adult Black-headed Gull discovered on 12 December 2004 (here) at South Padre Island, Cameron County, Texas was the southernmost ever found in the state and the United States (except for Puerto Rico, a commonwealth dependency!). Photograph by Brad McKinney.

A male Green-breasted Mango present since fall remained faithful to its favored feeder at McAllen, *Hidalgo* until 25 Jan; it was reportedly briefly joined by another male in early Dec (*fide* JA). The male Broad-billed Hummingbird at Houston present since fall remained through the season. A female Broad-billed Hummingbird was banded at another Houston location 15 Feb (SP); it had apparently been present since mid-Nov. The 2 Broad-billeds present in the Davis Mts., *Jeff Davis* remained until 19 Oct (M&ME). An amazing record for the Pineywoods was a Buff-bellied Hummingbird that has been present sporadically at Ratcliff, *Houston* since May 2003 (ph. BBa). Zimmer

did a careful count of the birds in his El Paso yard in early Dec and tallied up to 3 Anna's, one Calliope, 4 Rufous/Allen's, and 3 Broad-tailed. By the end of the period, only one Broad-tailed remained, with most birds departing in Jan and/or Feb. An imm. male Anna's Hummingbird frequented feeders at Ft. Worth, *Tarrant* 11 Jan–8 Feb (LB), and another visited a *Brazos* feeder 1 Dec–22 Jan (KA). A male Broad-tailed Hummingbird was at Lubbock 18 Nov–18 Dec (BW et al.). Seven Allen's Hummingbirds were documented along the coastal prairies, but more unexpected was a first-winter female at Austin 28 Feb (SP). Lingered Allen's Hummingbirds included the male present in the fall in *Hays* through 11 Dec (SP) and the male in the Davis Mts. remaining until 10 Dec (M&ME).

An imm. male Elegant Trogon appeared at Weslaco, *Hidalgo* 14 Jan (STh, †m.ob.). The bird wowed hundreds of birders as it stayed through the season in Frontera Audubon's sanctuary. A Red-headed Woodpecker in a Muleshoe yard, *Bailey* 23 Dec (MD) and a Red-bellied Woodpecker at Rita Blanca National Grassland, *Dallam* 15 Jan (BFr, PS) were well w. of their respective normal ranges. A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at El Paso 27 Dec (DBr, BPe) was a little farther w. than expected. Two Red-naped Sapsuckers were found on the Balcones Canyonland C.B.C. 20 Dec (CS et al.), while a male was found near Pearsall, *Frio* 12 Dec (SCo, WS, MRe). A Ladder-backed Woodpecker was seen along Beard Road, *Fort Bend* 18 Dec (TK), adding to the mounting records of this species on the w. U.T.C. A female Downy Woodpecker in w. El Paso 1 Jan (ph. MS, JZ) was a local rarity. A Hairy Woodpecker at the mouth of the San Bernard R., *Brazoria* 18 Dec (SAl, GCa et al.) was noteworthy. A westerly Pileated Woodpecker was reported near Katy L., *Montague* 4 Feb (JHo et al.).

### FLYCATCHERS THROUGH JAYS

Up to 3 Hammond's Flycatchers were present through the period near Pearsall, *Frio* (ph. MRe, WS). One to 3 Gray Flycatchers were at Cottonwood Campground, Big Bend, where they are more expected, but one at the Chihuahuan Desert Research Institute near Ft. Davis, *Jeff Davis* 28 Dec (JGe,

MHa) provided a very good record for the cen. Davis Mts. A calling and tape-responsive Dusky Flycatcher at Ft. Bliss 28 Dec (BZ) was a winter first for El Paso. A Cordilleran Flycatcher spent the season along the Frio R. near Pearsall, *Frio* (MRe et al.). The Frontera Audubon Sanctuary hosted a Dusky-capped Flycatcher (subspecies *lawrenceii*) 18 Dec–1 Jan (†BMc, †DJ, m.ob.), while another was along Cannon Road, *Cameron* 22 Jan+ (†TFu, m.ob.). Arvin heard a calling Social Flycatcher just outside Bentsen, *Hidalgo* 7 Jan. The bird subsequently took up residence within the state park through 14 Jan, where it was documented with voice recordings and photographs, provided the first fully documented record for the state and the United States. There is a documented sight record from nearby Anzalduas County Park from 1990. An excellent find on the Dallas C.B.C. was a Tropical/Couch's Kingbird 18 Dec (ph. J&MK). The Thick-billed Kingbird returned for the 3rd consecutive winter to Selkirk I., *Matagorda* 20–31 Dec (†MAu et al.). A very late migrant Western Kingbird was seen in Panna Maria, *Karnes* 11 Dec (WS).

Rose-throated Becards staged an invasion into the state, with a total of 9 individuals seen at various L.R.G.V. locations. Up to 8 Northern Shrikes were seen at seven Panhandle locations this winter. Two White-eyed Vireos at L. Ray Hubbard, *Dallas* 19 (ph. BG, GCo, BoS) provided a first winter record for n.-cen. Texas. A Yellow-throated Vireo was found on the Guadalupe Delta C.B.C., *Calhoun* 15 Dec (BFR, PHo). The status of the various "Solitary" Vireo taxa is still being worked out in the state. Single Plumbeous Vireos were at Rosehill Cemetery in Corpus Christi, *Nueces* 11 Dec (MCo), Oyster Creek, *Brazoria* (NB, HT et al.), McAllen, *Hidalgo* 12 Feb (†RHo), and Davis Mts. S.P. 10 Jan (BS). Notable Cassin's Vireos were singles at Big Bend Ranch 7 Dec (ML) and Rosehill Cemetery, Corpus Christi 23 Dec (ph. MRe et al.), plus a wintering individual along the Frio R. near Pearsall, *Frio* (MRe, SCo, WS). Essentially accidental in winter in the South Plains, a Blue-headed Vireo was seen and heard on the White River Lake C.B.C., *Crosby* 1 Jan (TM, RKO). A Chihuahuan Raven was reported from Wimberley, *Hays* 5 Dec (SY). Common Ravens are increasingly being sighted below the Caprock Escarpment. This winter, up to 21 birds were reported from four different South Plain locations (AH et al.).

### SWALLOWS THROUGH WARBLERS

Lingering Northern Rough-winged Swallows were in *Denton* on 1 Dec (GG) and at Greenbelt Res., *Donley* 5 Dec (BPi). Cave Swallows wintered in large numbers in the Central Brazos Valley, with 80 at College Sta-

tion, *Brazos* (ElR) and 89 in *Grimes* (DVo). Farther n., 6 Cave Swallows were discovered in *Clay* 8 Jan+ (BG, RR), providing a first winter record for n.-cen. Texas. A White-breasted Nuthatch wandcred westward to Henrietta, *Clay* 3 Dec (DMc). Out-of-place wrens included a Rock Wren near Olney, *Young* 3 Dec (JHo) and Canyon Wrens at Dickens Springs, *Dickens* 29 Jan (AH) and San Ygnacio, *Zapata* 16 Jan+ (DMu, MI). A Sedge Wren was found near Buffalo Springs L., *Lubbock* 1 Dec–28 Jan (AH); a single individual wintered at the same location last year. A well-described American Dipper was at Prairie Creek Park, *Dallas* 23 Dec (†SAs). A pair of Black-tailed Gnatcatchers was e. of the known range near Choke Canyon, *Live Oak* 1 Jan (WS, MRe, SCo).

Five Western Bluebirds in *Hemphill* 29 Dec (SP) and one near White River L., *Crosby* 31 Dec (BBe, RKO et al.) were noteworthy. Mountain Bluebirds wandered eastward to *Bastrop*, where one was seen 21 Dec (PR) and 7 on 18 Jan (BFR). A first for the Trans-Pecos was a Clay-colored Robin at Big Bend's Sam Nail Ranch 27 Dec+ (CKe, KMc, ph. CLy). Other out-of-range Clay-colored Robins included singles on the King Ranch, *Kleberg* 15 Dec (TL), at Victoria, *Victoria* 18 Dec (DMu), and at Uvalde, *Uvalde* 4 Feb (ph. MHe). Single White-throated Robins were near Bentsen, *Hidalgo* 30 Dec (†JA), Weslaco 2 Jan+ (†FB, JoM, m.ob.), Inn at Chachalaca Bend, *Cameron* 24 Jan (†MRO), Cannon Road, *Cameron* 28 Jan–4 Feb (†DEN, †TFu et al.), Santa Ana 28 Jan–19 Feb (†m.ob.), Sabal Palm, *Cameron* 28–31 Jan (†JiP, et al.), and Bentsen, *Hidalgo* 10 Feb (JGo, †MP). There were only three previous records for the United States. The Blue Mockingbird present in Pharr, *Hidalgo* continued to appear sporadically. Four Bohemian Waxwings were found at Humble, *Harris* 11 Feb (†JWa), and although there were rumors of other sightings from around the state, no documentation was provided from other sites.

Lingering Blue-winged Warblers were at Galveston 10 Dec (BE) and Freeport, *Brazoria* 19 Dec (MAu). An outstanding record was furnished by a Tennessee Warbler at Austin, *Travis* mid-Jan–7 Mar (ph. KF). A Nashville Warbler at Cottonwood Campground, *Brewster* 12 Dec (ML) provided a first winter record for Big Bend. Two Northern Parulas wintered along the Frio R. near Pearsall, *Frio* (MRe, WS, SCo). Tropical Parula sightings of interest included singles at Utopia, *Uvalde* 29 Jan (MHe) and Green

Lake, *Calhoun* 15 Dec (ph. WS, DMu). Two lingering Yellow Warblers were at Choke Canyon Res., *McMullen* 1 Jan (ph. WS, MRe, SCo). A Magnolia Warbler was at Sabine Woods, *Jefferson* through at least 5 Feb (EC, SM). Black-throated Gray Warblers wintered at Big Bend, with singles at Cottonwood Campground, Rio Grande Village, and Campground Canyon (m.ob.). Providing first area winter records were single Black-throated Green Warblers in n.-cen. Texas at L. Tawakoni 2 Jan+ (RKi, m.ob.) and in the Hill Country at Utopia, *Uvalde* 7 Jan (MHe). A Yellow-throated Warbler at Nacogdoches, *Nacogdoches* 6–8 Jan (CMo) provided a rare winter record for the Pineywoods. Two Black-and-white Warblers lingered through the season at White Rock L., *Dallas* (m.ob.). A Worm-eating Warbler at High I., *Galveston* 27 Dec (†L&BF) furnished the first winter record for the U.T.C. A Northern Waterthrush at Brazos Bend, *Fort Bend* 13 Feb (CTL) was a nice find; a Louisiana Waterthrush banded at Humble, *Harris* 8 Jan+ (LO, ph. DVo et al.) provided a first winter record for the U.T.C. The male Gray-crowned Yellowthroat present during much of 2004 at Sabal Palm, *Cameron* returned 8 Dec (†BMc, m.ob.). Lingering Wilson's Warblers in the Trans-Pecos included singles at McNary, *Hudspeth* 19 Dec (BZ) and Balmorhea S.P., *Reeves* 22–27 Dec (TJ). Single Golden-crowned Warblers were documented at three *Cameron* locations: the Los Ebanos Preserve 9 Jan–1 Feb (†TFu, m.ob.), Brownsville 18 Jan–4 Mar (†PW, m.ob.), and the Inn at Chachalaca Bend 23 Jan–17 Feb (†KHa). The male Rufous-capped Warbler reported in the fall from *Frio* remained through the season (MRe, m.ob.) Yellow-breasted Chats were noted near Damon, *Brazoria* 31 Dec+ (RW, C&OB) and Fort Travis, *Galveston* 7 Jan (CTL).

### TANAGERS THROUGH FINCHES

Summer Tanagers at separate *Harrison* locations 12 Dec (ERa) and 17 Dec (GLu) provided rare winter records for the Pineywoods. Similarly unexpected was a Summer Tanager in *Grayson* 28 Dec (BG, BoS). A Scarlet Tanager near Cibolo, *Guadalupe* 10 Dec (ph. SS) was very unexpected. A first-winter male Flame-colored Tanager at Pharr, *Hidalgo* 28 Feb (†MCA, ph. ScJ) represents the 6th record for the state. Two Rufous-crowned Sparrows made a surprising appearance at L. Worth, *Tarrant* 25 Jan (DPo et al.). Far s. of where they are expected, sin-

**SA** The Colleys' continuing investigations of mangrove stands surrounding South Bay of the Laguna Madre, *Cameron* have uncovered what appears to be a sizeable population of **Mangrove Warblers**. Up to 4, including 2 males, were found 2 Jan+. Subsequent searches revealed at least 8 individuals in the area. By the end of the season, males appeared to be on territory. This strongly suggests a resident population, and there are many miles of additional habitat extending from South Padre I. to Boca Chica that has not been surveyed.



gle American Tree Sparrows were found at North Padre I., *Nueces* 19 Dec (ph. MCo), *Bastrop* 2–10 Feb (BFr), and *Falls* 5 Feb (JR). Brewer's Sparrows at Whitsett, *Atascosa* 5 Dec (WS) and White River L., *Crosby* 31 Dec (DDC, DL) were notable. A Black-throated Sparrow was near Post, *Garza* 26 Feb (AH). It appears that Baird's Sparrows are regular winterers on the Marfa Plateau: up to 5 were near Marfa, *Presidio* until 6 Jan (†m.ob.), and 3 were in w. *Jeff Davis* 12 Dec–23 Jan (†MAu, †ML et al.). A Golden-crowned Sparrow was at Lubbock, *Lubbock* 18 Dec (†RL, TM). Wandering Harris's Sparrows included one at Laguna Atascosa, *Cameron* 19 Dec (MaH), 2 at Seminole Canyon, *Val Verde* 22 Dec–6 Jan (BS), and one on w. Galveston I. 16 Feb (JSt). A Slate-colored Fox Sparrow was well described at Sam Nail Ranch, Big Bend, *Brewster* 19 Feb (†Rko, BBe, AH); this form has not been fully documented in the state to date. A Gray-headed Junco near Kerrville, *Kerr* 26 Dec (TSc) provided a rare Hill Country record. A Smith's Longspur at Galveston Island S.P., *Galveston* 5 Dec (†DPe et al.) provided a first for the U.T.C. An extraordinarily large flock of 750–1000 Smith's Longspurs was noted near L. Tawakoni, *Rains* 16 Jan (MWh, DA).

Continuing the trend noted in the fall, **Crimson-collared Grosbeaks** showed up in unprecedented numbers in the Lower Rio Grande Valley, with least 4 during the season at Weslaco (m.ob.), up to 3 at Pharr, *Hidalgo* through the period (AWi, †m.ob.), a window-kill at Brownsville, *Cameron* 10 Dec (†PBu, †JiP), at least 3 at Sabal Palm, *Cameron* 16 Dec+ (†BMc, m.ob.), one at the Inn at Chachalaca Bend, *Cameron* 30 Dec–23 Jan (†ABr et al.), and one at Laredo, *Webb* 16 Jan (†SCo). A male Northern Cardinal provided a rare *El Paso* record; it stayed through the period (BZ). Also of particular interest was a nesting record for Northern Cardinal from Santa Fe, *Galveston* (*fide* JSt), where the young fledged on the incredibly early date of 16 Feb. **Blue Buntings** were found in five locations, with 2 at Laredo, *Webb* 2–29 Jan (WP, †m.ob.), a female at Pharr, *Hidalgo* 6 Jan (AWi, †DBe), a male at Zapata, *Zapata* 16–20 Jan (†MRe et al.), 2 at Santa Ana 17 Jan+ (†m.ob.), and one at Bentsen, *Hidalgo* 28–29 Jan (RPe, †MP). Two female-plumaged Painted Buntings at Big Bend's Cottonwood Campground, *Brewster* 12 Dec (ML) provided a first winter record for the park. Lingering Dickcissels included singles in *Bexar* 3 Dec (HR) and San Bernard, *Brazoria* 11 Dec (JSt).

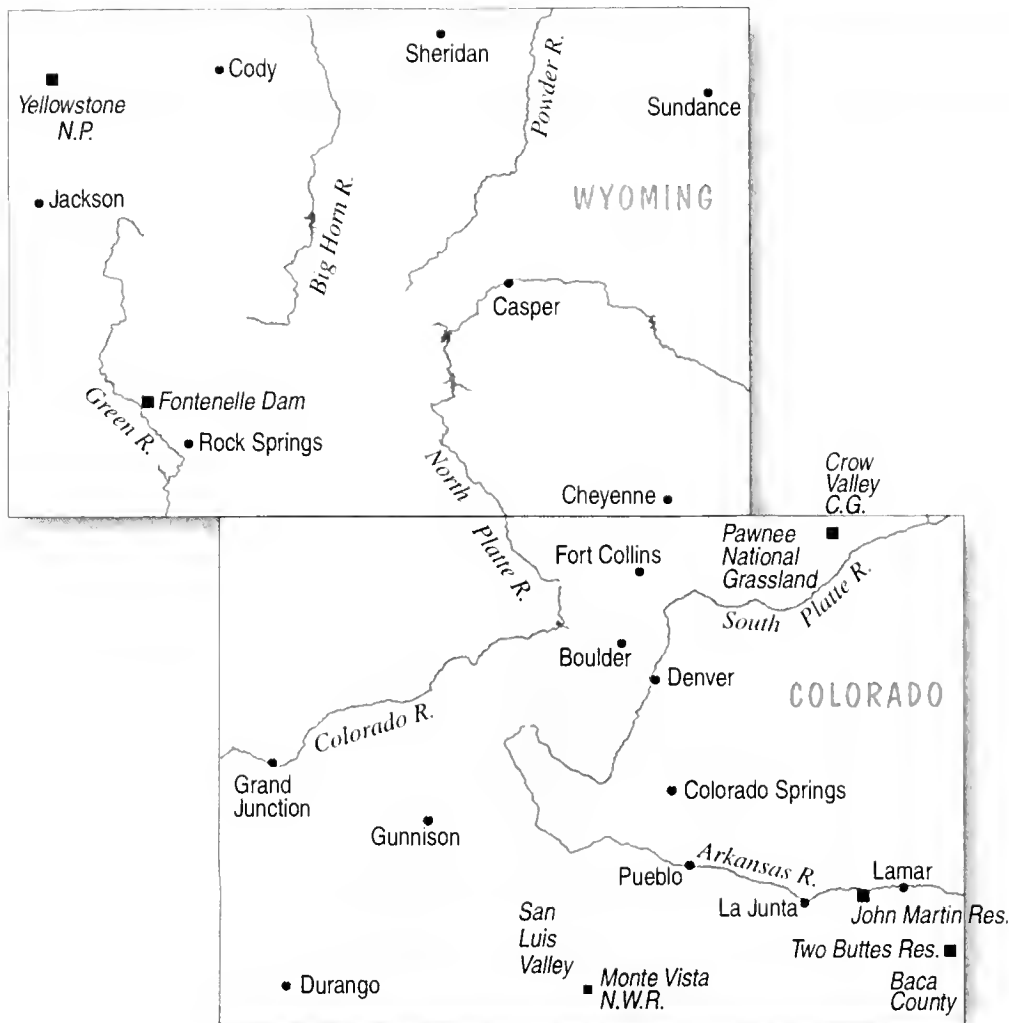
A Rusty Blackbird wandered westward to El Paso 2 Jan (ph. JPa). A Common Grackle in Ft. Hancock 7 Jan (BZ) was an overdue *Hudspeth* first. An Orchard Oriole at Rio Grande Village, *Brewster* 22 Feb (MF) and a Hooded at the same location 28 Jan (DPa)

furnished first winter records for Big Bend. The same was true for a male Hooded Oriole at Port O'Connor, *Calhoun* 30 Jan–23 Feb (BFr, PHo). Providing a state first, a Streak-backed Oriole was at Brazos Bend, *Fort Bend* 12 Dec+ (BGo, ph. BA, ph. †GLa, m.ob.). A Bullock's Oriole at Midland 12 Jan–3 Feb (D&JM) was unexpected. A lingering Baltimore Oriole was at L. Ray Hubbard, *Dallas* 19 Dec (DH, BG). Following an appearance in the same yard two winters ago, a male Scott's Oriole was in s. *Tarrant* 28 Jan (ph. EW). The invasion of Purple Finches into the state this winter was the largest in 20 years. The species showed up as far w. as Lubbock and Dalhart, *Dallam* and as far s. as Corpus Christi, *Nueces*. Apparent male Cassin's Finches were reported from near Canyon L., *Comal* 22 Jan (DPu, ph. CH) and L. Worth 20 Feb (DPo). Red Crossbills were reported in small numbers in the Trans-Pecos and High Plains, but a few wandered farther into the state to n.-cen. Texas and se. to *Bastrop* 1–25 Dec (MG, PR). An imm. male White-winged Crossbill was near Utley, *Bastrop* 1 Dec (†BFr), providing only the 8th record for the state. One of the most astounding finds of the season was a Lawrence's Goldfinch at Rockport, *Aransas* 21–22 Feb (ph., †D&REd). Single Evening Grosbeaks were noted at Camp Wood, *Real* 11 Dec (ph. MHe), Lubbock 28 Jan (STo), and Timbercreek, *Randall* 17 Feb (KHo).

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# Colorado & Wyoming



pected numbers. Especially unusual were the record numbers of Purple Finches that found their way into our Region.

**Abbreviations:** Cañon (Cañon City, *Fremont*); Chatfield (Chatfield S.P., *Jefferson/Douglas*); C.V.C.G. (Crow Valley Campground, Pawnee National Grasslands, *Weld*); E.K.W. (Edness Kimball Wilkins S.P., *Natrona, WY*); J.M.R. (John Martin Res., *Bent*); Union (Union Res./Calkin's L., *Weld*); Valmont (Valmont Res. complex, *Boulder*). "West Slope" denotes locations west of the Rockies. Due to reporting biases, all locations can be assumed to be in Colorado except that each Wyoming location is noted as such the *first time* it appears in the text.

## LOONS THROUGH DUCKS

The juv. Red-throated and Pacific Loons present at Pueblo Res., *Pueblo* from the fall continued throughout the winter season (BKP, m.ob.), though the Red-throated was something of a will-o'-the-wisp. As many as 9 Common Loons also wintered at Pueblo Res. (m.ob.). Two Red-necked Grebes put in one-day appearances in Colorado this winter, one at Lathrop S.P., *Huerfano* 8 Dec (R. Miller) and the other at Pueblo Res. 15 Jan (BKP, K. Lewantowicz et al.). Though Western Grebes typically winter at Pueblo Res., one on the w. side of Colorado at Fruitgrowers Res., *Delta* throughout the season (D. Galinat, m.ob.) was not typical. Quite rare in Wyoming were 7 American White Pelicans that wintered in *Natrona* (*fide* DF). The species also lingered into mid-Dec at three Arkansas River valley locations on the Colorado plains. Double-crested Cormorants wintered at the typical Valmont location (m.ob.) and at Pueblo Res., with up to 4 at the latter site (BKP, m.ob.).

American Bitterns are almost unheard of in winter in the Region, so individuals in e. Colorado in *Boulder* 6 Dec (D. Williams) and *Bent* 29 Jan (DN) are noteworthy, but the 2 in a marsh in *Delta* 18–22 Dec provided the first West Slope winter record. The Green Heron found by Nelson below John Martin 12 Dec was quite late. Black-crowned Night-Herons were found this winter at six Front Range sites and at one site in *Mesa*; this is a typical winter pattern in Colorado. The ad. Turkey Vulture at Ft. Carson Army Base, *El Paso* 3 Jan (RB) provided the first Regional winter record; the 2nd was provided by a juv. at John Martin 13–15 Jan (DN). We also received two undocumented Feb reports from Colorado.

After a good fall for Greater White-front-

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Although bitterly cold the first week of December, the rest of the season was marked by above-average temperatures. One correspondent from Wyoming even commented on the "lack of winter" this year, as the state remained nearly 4–5° F above its 110-year average. Precipitation in both states was near normal throughout the period, with the exception of a wet January in Colorado, continuing our hiatus from the multi-year drought fresh in everyone's memories. Pleasant surprises on regional Christmas Bird Counts included Gyrfalcon, American Woodcock, Anna's and Costa's Hummingbirds, and Sedge Wren; the Pueblo Reservoir count set a new Colorado record with 129 species. The highlight of our winter gull scene was a cooperative Iceland Gull that lingered in the Denver area for at least a week. The occupation force of Bohemian Waxwings remained strong, and unusual sparrows (e.g. Green-tailed Towhee, Chipping, Lincoln's, Swamp, Sage, and Golden-crowned Sparrows) rewarded diligent searchers. Rosy-finches made good showings at several locations, despite the loss of one of the most reliable feeders for these high-elevation specialists, while Pine Grosbeaks, Pine Siskins, and Evening Grosbeaks made their way down to lower elevations in unex-



In four-year gulls, third-year ("third-cycle") plumages are the rarest, so, though the species is not a rarity in Colorado, this Thayer's Gull provided a rare opportunity to document this uncommonly seen plumage. Photograph by Tony Leukering.

ed Geese, the numbers wintering in Colorado this year were higher than usual, with the highest count of individuals known to have wintered being the returning flock at Cañon numbering 13 (m.ob.). The 26 and 14 at Jumbo Res., Logan/Sedgwick and Haxtun, Phillips, respectively, on 25 Feb were probably early spring migrants (JK, R. Olson, GW). Counts of wintering *Chen* in the Arkansas River valley seemed lower than usual, though spring migrants were noted early, with 5000 passing northward over Yuma 5 Feb (G. Goodrich) and 1900 Snow Geese and 100 Ross's Geese at Haxtun 20 Feb (TL). The large fall flight of (and observers' intense attention to) Cackling Geese this fall carried over into winter, as the species was found widely on Christmas Bird Counts in Colorado, with many birds staying throughout the winter. The goose highlight of the winter was a first-winter Black Brant found at Inverness on the Arapahoe/Douglas line 18 Feb; it stayed into



Delighting Denver-area larophiles, this second-winter Iceland Gull found by Glenn Walbek on 11 (here 12) February 2005 at Cherry Creek Reservoir lingered for about a week, providing Colorado's fourth record. Photograph by Bill Schmoker.

the the spring period (B. Torbert, m.ob.) and provided possibly the southernmost record in the Region. What were probably 4 of the previous winter's 5 Trumpeter Swans returning for their 2nd winter at Loveland, Larimer were present until at least 18 Feb (m.ob.). Other Colorado winter reports came from Arapahoe, Boulder, and Jefferson. Among six Regional reports of Tundra Swans were a wintering ad. in Natrona (fide DF), one at Bull L., Fremont, WY

25 Jan (SP), 2 ads. and a juv. near Pawnee 12-13 Dec (E. Albright), and returning birds (2 ads., 1 juv.) at the CF&I Lakes s. of Pueblo, Pueblo 1 Jan-19 Feb (P. Sandstrom-Smith, m.ob.); perhaps the latter two records refer to the same family.

A male Wood Duck at Totten Res., Montezuma 20 Jan (JBt, S. Allerton) was locally unseasonable. A male Eurasian Wigeon posed for birders and photographers at Pueblo 19 Feb+ (BKP, m.ob.). Almost missing their typical Feb arrival schedule, the spring's first Cinnamon Teal were found in Fremont 26 Feb (MP et al.). Odd for a mountain location, one to 2 Greater Scaup wintered at Sands L., Salida, Chaffee after being

found 2 Dec (TL et al.); an additional 22 Colorado sites hosted the species at some point during the season, all but one on the e. side. Two imm. White-winged Scoters loafed at Sands L. 2-6 Dec (TL, R. Levad, S. York). A female Black Scoter at Valco Ponds, Pueblo 2 Dec (JBt, P. Derven) provided the only seasonal record. Rare on the West Slope was a female Long-tailed Duck at the Clifton sewage ponds, Mesa 1 Jan-21 Feb (FL, m.ob.); another was at Gray Reef Res., Natrona, WY 25 Jan (B. Rickman). Six female-type Ruddy

Ducks at Totten Res. 20 Jan (JBt) were either quite late, quite early, or wintering. Ruddy Ducks that definitely wintered were a male at Cherry Creek Res., Arapahoe (GW, m.ob.) and up to 4 at Big Johnson (MP).

## HAWKS THROUGH GULLS

Northern Goshawks on the plains, where rare, were ads. in Pueblo 18 Dec-10 Jan (CLW, MP) and Bent (MP, LE) 31 Dec and juvs. in Phillips 12-20 Feb (MP, ph. TL et al.) and Adams 22 Feb (DE). A bird described as a white-morph Gyrfalcon sw. of Casper, Natrona, WY 9-19 Dec (CM) was of uncertain origin; that morph is quite rare in the continent's interior. A juv. gray-morph Gyrfalcon was found on the Pueblo Res. C.B.C. 18 Dec and seen by three parties (P. Hurtado, CLW et al.). Michelson reported another Gyrfalcon, an unaged gray bird, at Aleova Res., Natrona, WY 10 Feb, and a juv. gray was found in sw. Weld 30 Jan (B. & I. Prather); what may have been the same bird was on the

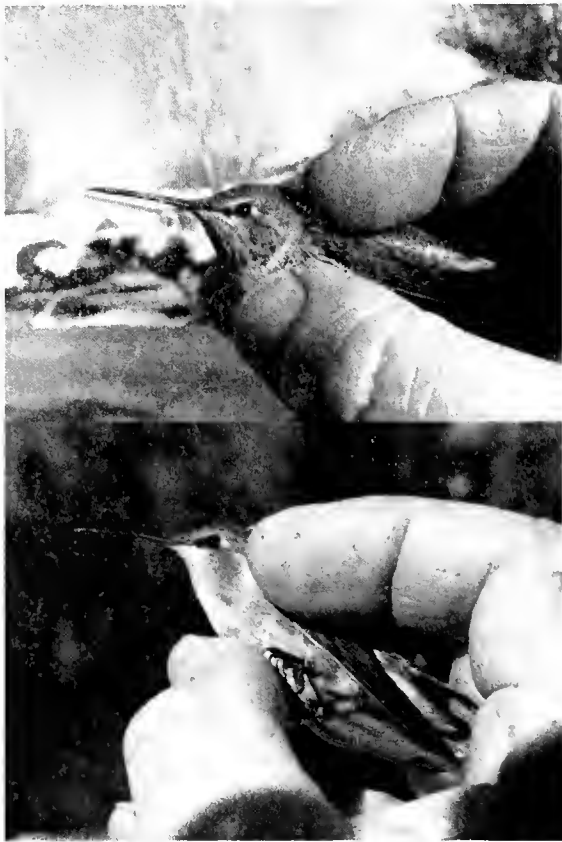


Great Black-backed Gulls made a record ten appearances this winter in Colorado, including this second-winter bird at Cherry Creek Reservoir 12 February 2005. Photograph by Glenn Walbek.

Adams/Denver line 28 Feb (DE).

In recent years, Sora has been found annually in winter in the Arkansas River valley on the Colorado plains. Three were detected in the Ft. Lyon, Bent marshes 15 Dec (BKP et al.), and one was at Lamar, Prowers 14 Jan (JT). Though Sandhill Cranes winter regularly on the West Slope in Delta, cranes elsewhere at this season are unexpected. Thus, 4 at John Martin 13 Jan (DN), 14 at Zink's Pond, La Plata 24 Jan (JBt), and one in Boulder, Boulder 1 Feb (D. Pratt) were of interest. Two Spotted Sandpipers along the Arkansas River in Pueblo 2 Jan+ (GW, m.ob.) provided one of few Regional winter records. If correctly identified, a Western Sandpiper at Wilson, Teton, WY 17 Jan (R. Sievers) would be Regionally unprecedented for the season. The Least Sandpiper at Highline Res., Mesa 25 Feb (L. Arnold) was unique this season. A Dunlin wintered (28 Dec-10 Feb) near the





A dynamic duo of hummingbirds anytime in Colorado, these adult female Anna's (upper) and Costa's (lower) Hummingbirds enchanted viewers near Grand Junction from early December 2004 well into the winter season. Both were banded on 4 December (here). Photographs by Deb and Steve Bouricius.

Spotted Sandpipers in Pueblo (DS, m.ob.). The shorebird prize of the winter was an American Woodcock in s. Adams 31 Dec–18 Jan (R. Lentz et al.).

Though the numbers of gulls this winter in Colorado were not spectacular, various rare species made spectacular to unprecedented showings, particularly Mew, Glaucous, and Great Black-backed. As many as 10 Mew Gulls were reported, all on the Front Range edge and the plains. The most observed was an obliging ad. at Crown Hill L., Jefferson, present 3 Feb+ (P. Plage, ph. BS, m.ob.). California Gulls seemed scarce in Colorado this winter, with the 2 ads. at Bonny Res., Yuma 20 Jan (TL) being the most noteworthy. An ad. darker-mantled Herring Gull at Valmont 21–29 Jan (TE, BS, TL) was quite interesting but could not be precisely identified. At least 17 Thayer's Gulls were found this winter (m.ob.), the vast majority along the foothill edge in e. Colorado, as is typical. Walbek found Colorado's 4th Iceland Gull, a second-cycle bird, at Cherry Creek 11 Feb. This year's bird was the longest staying, with many birders catching up with the species until at least 18 Feb. After this date, all reports of Iceland Gull from Cherry Creek probably pertained either to a leucistic ad. Ring-billed Gull with entirely white plumage or to the small first-winter Glaucous Gull also present. Ten years ago, who would have thought that the 20+ Lesser Black-backed Gulls found this winter in Colorado would be considered "average"? This was the best winter in recent memory

for Glaucous Gull in Colorado, with at least 15 reported. Included among these were up to 5 at Cherry Creek (m.ob.), with single ads. at Cherry Creek, Pueblo Res., and Bonny Res., and 2 ads. at L. Loveland, Larimer 13 Jan–18 Feb (R. Halpin, m.ob.). The 10 Great Black-backed Gulls reported, including a good number of imm. birds, made for the best-ever showing in Colorado. An ad. Black-legged Kittiwake at Chatfield, Douglas 1 Dec (JK) and a juv. at Cherry Creek 5 Dec (GW) were late-fall migrants.

### DOVES THROUGH WOODPECKERS

Recent years have seen numerous reports of wintering Band-tailed Pigeons, and the 12 in Green Mountain Falls, El Paso throughout the period (RB) and the 40 in Trinidad, Las Animas 4 Feb (MP, BKP) continued this new tradition. Triple-digit winter counts of Eurasian Collared-Doves are now expected in many e. Colorado towns. White-winged Doves continue to consolidate their range expansion into Colorado by wintering, or attempting to, at numerous e. plains locations. High counts were of 66 at Pueblo 18 Dec (MP) and 21 at Rocky Ford, Otero 16 Dec (SO). Other reports of note included the northernmost reports: singles at Boulder 19 Dec (R. Linfield) and 6 Feb (L. Griffin, S. Riffe) and the easternmost report (and first Kit Carson record) at Burlington 20 Feb (ph. TL). Though Inca Doves have wintered previously at Rocky Ford and Lamar, and did so again this year, more noteworthy were the single at Florence 19 Dec (ph. MP) that provided a first Fremont record and the individual that wintered in Fowler, Otero (M. Favior).

Adams scored the lion's share of wintering

Barn Owls, with 7 and 6 on the Barr Lake (TL et al.) and Denver (Urban) C.B.C.s (fide HK), respectively. Winter records of Burrowing Owl in the Region are not particularly numerous, so the single bird in Baca 28 Dec (J. Jones) was of interest. An incredible 42 Long-eared Owls were counted on the Rocky Mountain Arsenal N.W.R., Adams on the Denver (Urban) C.B.C. (fide HK), making the record-high count of 15 on the Bonny Res. C.B.C. seen minor in comparison. Seven Short-eared Owls at five locations was a bit better than average for a Colorado winter. An ad. female Anna's Hummingbird first reported on 1 Dec and captured and banded on 4 Dec (D&SB) remained in Orchard Mesa, Mesa until 1 Mar and provided the first record of a successfully wintering hummingbird in Colorado. Interestingly, not far away in Clifton, Mesa, an ad. female Costa's Hummingbird reported first in early Dec and banded on 4 Dec (D&SB) was present until 19 Jan and provided only the 4th or 5th Colorado record.

The small colony of Acorn Woodpeckers in Durango, La Plata continues. In recent years, extensive efforts by some, particularly Moss and Peterson, in Fremont, Pueblo, and Huerfano have turned up numerous wintering Williamson's and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers. This winter, Fremont hogged all the Williamson's with 4 at three sites (all found by SM). Yellow-bellieds were more widespread, with individuals noted in four counties, with Pueblo hosting 7 of the 11 reported. In a continuation of the fall phenomenon, a mountain-race Downy Woodpecker (*leucurus*) was photographed on the plains at Barr L., Adams 12 Feb (TL). An apparently pure Yellow-shafted Flicker



This male Pine Warbler provided welcome winter color at a feeder in Golden, Colorado 7 January–19 (here 12) February 2005. Photograph by Bill Schmoker.

was in The Redlands, Mesa 9 Jan (ph. TL, MP) for a rare West Slope record.

### FLYCATCHERS THROUGH FINCHES

The Region's 2nd winter Black Phoebe was found at Cañon 24 Jan (SM)—the same location where the first winter record of this species was established in 1995. Say's Phoebe made a strong showing, with at least 9 in se. Colorado. The species is very rare in midwinter away from the West Slope and se. Colorado; this winter one was at Hygiene, Boulder 25 Jan (S. Roederer). Equally unseasonable was a Loggerhead Shrike at White Rocks, Boulder 24 Jan (TF). Seven Northern Shrikes on the John Martin C.B.C. 15 Dec was a rather high count for the southeast. Little mention was made of corvids this season, perhaps surprising after last fall's eclectic mix. Exceptions were single Clark's Nutcrackers in the Denver Metro area at Lakewood 4 Feb (M. Chavez) and Broomfield 18 Jan (LS), the latter likely establishing a first for that small sprawling suburban county. The only unexpected West Slope Blue Jay reported was a bird at Craig, Moffat 24 Dec (FL).

A Sedge Wren at Fort Lyon 2 Dec (DN) may have been the passerine of the season were it not for an even more unexpected Sedge Wren found on the Grand Junction C.B.C. 19 Dec (RL). This bird remained all winter and furnished not only a first for Mesa but a first for the West Slope and a first wintering record for the Region. A wintering Carolina Wren visited feeders at Clark, Routt through at least 21 Jan (S. Berry, T. Litteral, FL), when the homeowners retreated to sunny Florida; the only previous West Slope Record was from Grand Junction (May 2000). The Carolina Wren found last fall at Lamar remained all winter, while another briefly lingered at John Martin 7–13 Jan (DN). House Wrens are overreported in winter and rarely documented. An exception was one at John Martin 15 Dec (DN, BKP, MP, SO et al.). Current data suggest that e. Winter Wrens are much more expected in the Region during winter and migration than are w. Winter Wrens. Of the 10 reported this season, it is quite surprising that 2 were w. taxa: one along Boulder Creek 29 Dec–8 Jan (TF m.ob.) and the other at Two Buttes 31 Dec–21 Jan (CLW, ph. TL, m.ob.). Photographs of the latter may be the first taken in the state of an individual of this subspecies group.

The situation for Hermit Thrush subspecies groups is apparently the reverse of that for Winter Wren, with most records referring to w. taxa and only one record (a specimen) of the e. subspecies group (*C. g. faxoni*) of Hermit Thrush. Eight Hermit Thrushes this season continued the trend of increasing numbers in the winter, with one

of the e. subspecies group along Boulder Creek 29 Dec–12 Jan (TF; ph. CLW). Small numbers of Eastern Bluebirds are now expected on the w. side of Grand Junction, but the species is very rare elsewhere on the West Slope. Three Eastern Bluebirds in the nw. corner of Colorado at Craig 2–15 Jan (FL) established the first record for Moffat. At least 4 Varied Thrushes were found in the Region, including a female in Cheyenne, WY early Jan–2 Mar. One at Broomfield 3 Dec (E. Zorawowicz, ph. L. Kilpatrick) established a first for that county.

On the heels of a terrific fall, Bohemian Waxwings remained in most of the Region this winter. Reports stretched as far s. as Durango and Walsenberg. In all, over 10,000 were found in Colorado; the paucity of coverage in Wyoming makes it difficult to determine their abundance in that state. Several unusual warblers were recorded this winter, highlighted by the first winter record of Black-throated Green Warbler at Rock Canyon/Valeo Ponds, Pueblo 11 Nov–18 Dec (BKP). Up to 2 male Pine Warblers were in Pueblo 11–18 Dec (L. Lilly), and another was in Golden, Jefferson 7 Jan–19 Feb (K. Schofield). Very rare in Dec, an Ovenbird was in Denver 1–14 Dec (B. Santangelo, DF). Somewhat tardy was a Common Yellowthroat eating suet at a Denver feeder 4–6 Dec (J. & M. A. Roller).

Continuing recent winter trends, several sparrows wintered in rather high numbers. Three Green-tailed Towhees were in Colorado, and one was at Jackson, WY 12 Jan (B. Raynes). Most winter Chipping Sparrow reports in the Region are erroneous, so the total of at least 7 this winter was quite high, with birds photographed at Lamar and Pueblo Res. Six Lincoln's and 27 Swamp Sparrows were found this winter in Colorado, totals on par with recent winters. Completely unexpected was a Sage Sparrow at Red Rocks Trading Post 7–8 Jan (BS, W. Finch). A returning Golden-crowned Sparrow wintered near Fruitgrower's Res. (D. Galinat).

We received notice of several high counts of rosy-finehes this winter, including 280

Brown-capped Rosy-Finches wintering at Crystal Park, El Paso (B. Steger) and 250 Black Rosy-Finches wintering in Teller (MP). Rather depressing was the decision by the Arapaho N.F. to bar the ski patrol from filling bird feeders at the Loveland Basin Ski Area (located on the Arapaho N.F.). Many birders from throughout the world had enjoyed studying all three species of rosy-finches at this location, which had become the most accessible and reliable location along the Front Range to observe these species. The initiative to preserve natural conditions would be laudable, if not entirely hypocritical: Loveland Ski Area has nine lifts and over 70 runs with thousands of skiers visiting each winter. Pine Grosbeaks were noted in several locations in the piñon-juniper zone in sw. Colorado, including up to 11 at Ft. Lewis College 18 Dec–6 Jan. Other lowland Pine Grosbeaks were 3 s. of Lamar 1–2 Jan (DAL) and up to 5 near Ft. Collins 21–22 Dec (NK, B. Miller, K. Keirn). Three Common Redpolls were found, one at Jackson 22 Jan (J. Lucas), one at Allenspark, Boulder 31 Dec–1 Feb (RS), and one e. of Colorado City, Pueblo 25 Jan–5 Feb (B. B. Hahn).

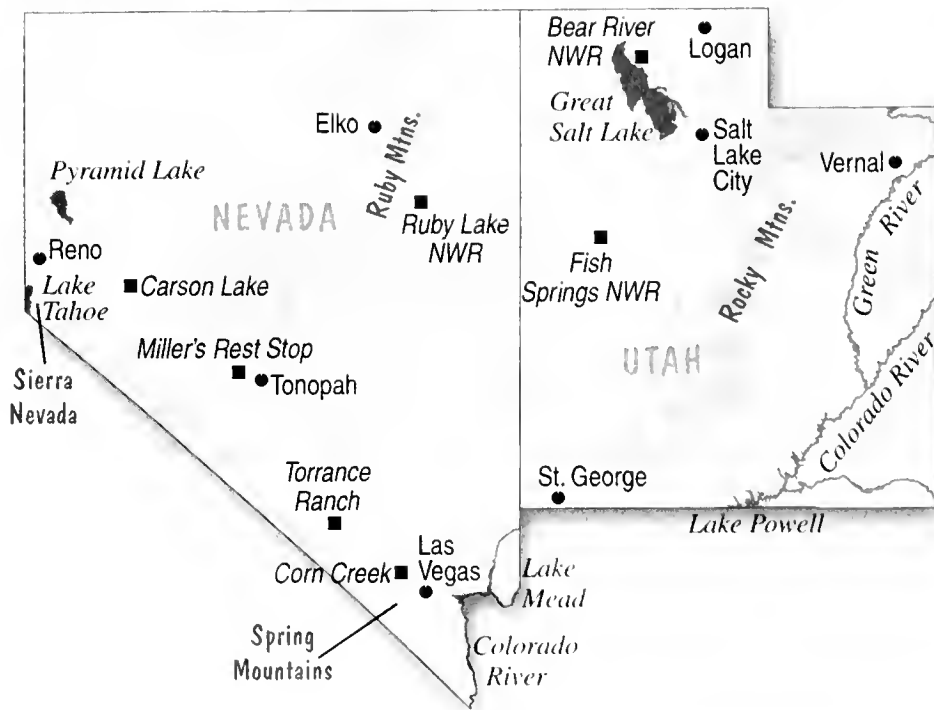
Cited observers (subregional editors in boldface): Jim Beatty (sw. Colorado), Susan Berry, Deb & Steve Bouricius (D&SB), Richard Bunn, Coen Dexter (w.-cen. Colorado), David Ely, Doug Faulkner, Ted Floyd, Hugh Kingery, Niek Komar, Jim & Gloria Lawrence (J&GL) (statewide RBA, Wyoming), David A. Leatherman, Tony Leukering, Forrest Luke (nw. Colorado), Terry McEneaney (Yellowstone), Chris Michelson (Casper, WY), SeEtta Moss, Duane Nelson, Stan Oswald, Susan Patla (Jackson, WY), Brandon K. Pereival (se. Colorado), Mark Peterson (cen. Colorado), Bert Raynes (Jackson, WY), Scott Roederer, Bill Schmoker, Larry Semo (ne. Colorado), Janeal Thompson, Glenn Walbek (n.-cen. Colorado), Christopher L. Wood. Many other individual observers contributed information to this report but could not be personally acknowledged here; they all have our thanks and appreciation. ☺

**SA** An unprecedented invasion of Purple Finches was detected in Colorado, with at least 18 individuals reported. Most birds were reported along the Arkansas River Valley, particularly from Lamar and Las Animas. Even Wyoming had one, on the Crowhart C.B.C. 1 Jan (A. Moscinski). However, the most interesting facet of the flight was the brown-plumaged individual apparently of the w. race *californicus* found at Lamar (in easternmost Colorado) 7 Dec (ph. TL, MP). There are no previous Regional records of this taxon. In fact, we know of no records of the subspecies e. of Utah. The bird frequented a feeder that up to 4 nominate Purple Finches (ph. JT) visited sporadically Nov–Jan. Photographs have been circulated to California experts, who concur with the identification.



This Purple Finch at Lamar, Colorado 7 December 2004 was one of a record-high 18 reported in the Colorado & Wyoming region in winter 2004–2005. Photograph by Tony Leukering.

# Great Basin



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The winter season finally brought some welcome relief to several consecutive years of drought in the Great Basin. Winter storms brought significant precipitation throughout most of the Region, and snowpack levels were well above normal. These conditions will provide much-needed flow to streams and rivers, increase depleted water levels in lakes and reservoirs, and replenish water tables. The winter season also brought some significant bird sightings as well. Highlights include a Common Ground-Dove and a Red-headed Woodpecker near Hurricane and Utah's first Rufous-backed Robin near Springdale.

We note with great sadness the death of Jack Walters, a fixture of Nevada birding. Jack's passion for pursuing, promoting, and conserving Nevada's birdlife was contagious, and his warm smile and companionship are irreplaceable and will be deeply missed.

Abbreviations: Antelope I. (Antelope I. S.P. and Causeway, Davis, UT); Bear River (Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge, Box Elder, UT); Corn Cr. (Corn Creek Unit, Desert N.W.R., Clark, NV); H.B.V.P. (Henderson Bird View-

ing Preserve, Clark, NV); Lake Mead (Lake Mead N.R.A., Clark, NV); Lytle (Lytle Ranch Preserve, Washington, UT); Miller's R.A. (Miller's Rest Area, Esmeralda, NV); Ouray (Ouray N.W.R., Uintah, UT); Pyramid L. (Washoe, NV); Red Hills (Red Hills G.C., St. George, Washington, UT); Sand Hollow (Sand Hollow S.P., Washington, UT); Zion (Zion N.P., Washington, UT).

## LOONS THROUGH TERNS

American White Pelicans are seldom found during the winter in the Region, so an individual observed 3 Jan on the Walker Lake C.B.C., Mineral, NV was unexpected (DS et al.). Two California Condors observed 28 Feb flying along I-15 near Hurricane, Washington, UT made a pleasant surprise (DR).

A Greater White-fronted Goose graced the Spring's Pond in St. George, Washington, UT this winter. The goose was first reported 27 Sep (KC, RF) and was still present 25 Apr (KW). A Common (Eurasian Green-winged) Teal was observed at Lemmon Valley, Washoe, NV 2-11 Feb (MM, GS et al.); a drake was at the same location in Feb 2003. A Eurasian Wigeon was also at Lemmon Valley 11 Nov-12 Dec (SAM, MM et al.). Additional Eurasian Wigeons reported this winter included drakes at Lakeridge G.C., Washoe, NV 12 Dec (GS) and Utah Lake, Utah, UT 26 Feb (DSh). A few Long-tailed Ducks are usually found wintering at Antelope I., so 2 observed 2 Dec-28 Feb+ (Kpu et al.) were expected. More surprising were Long-tailed Ducks reported from Mountain Dell Res., Salt Lake, UT 1 Dec (PF), H.B.V.P. 3-19 Dec (JAB et al.), and Pyramid L. 5 Jan

(CNI). The only scoters reported during the season were 2 imm. White-wingeds wintering at Sand Hollow 11 Nov-15 Jan (RF, SS et al.).

Red-shouldered Hawks were reported from six locations in three Nevada counties (Clark, Mineral, and Washoe); however, the only report from Utah was of an imm. 21 Jan-5 Feb at Virgin, Washington (PL, KW, GB, ph. RF). Snowy Plovers are a rare sight in winter in the Region, so one observed at Antelope I. 2 Dec (Kpu) and 5 at Walker L. 3 Jan (GS et al.) were notable. A Spotted Sandpiper, also observed 3 Jan at Walker L., was equally unexpected (GS et al.). A Sanderling seen 5 Dec at Antelope I. was late (J&KB). Rounding out the winter shorebirds were Dunlin observed at Antelope I. 5 Dec (J&KB) and at H.B.V.P. 12 Dec-14 Feb (JAB et al.).

A first-winter Franklin's Gull was very late at Virginia L., Washoe, NV 30 Nov-21 Dec (FP et al.). An ad. Mew Gull was a great find at Lemmon Valley, Washoe, NV 12-19 Dec (FP, GP, DM). Thayer's Gulls were observed at two Davis, UT locations: Farmington Bay W.M.A. 7 Jan (TA) and the Bountiful Landfill 23 Jan-5 Feb (J&KB, CW). The Bountiful Landfill is one of the premier locations for rare wintering gulls in the Region, and this winter was no exception, with several exciting finds there. Lesser Black-backed Gulls were well represented at the landfill: a third-winter Lesser was documented 21 Dec (p.a., CN), and a first-winter bird was there 3-14 Jan (†TA, KB). An ad. Glaucous-winged Gull was also observed at the Bountiful Landfill 3 Jan (TA, KB). Up to 3 Glaucous-winged Gulls were at Pyramid L. 6 Dec-13 Feb (JW et al.), and a first-winter bird was photographed at Las Vegas Bay, Lake Mead 23 Jan (LT). Two Glaucous Gulls were reported from the Bountiful Landfill 23 Jan-5 Feb (J&KB, CW), and another was observed 24 Jan at Farmington Bay W.M.A. (JB, BHu).

## DOVES THROUGH WARBLERS

One of the biggest surprises of the season was Utah's 2nd Common Ground-Dove, found 30 Dec at a pecan orchard near Hurricane, Washington, UT (†DW, LW). The bird remained through 6 Jan and was observed and photographed by numerous birders. It was discovered by birders chasing another major Utah rarity wintering in the same pecan orchard—Utah's 2nd confirmed Red-headed Woodpecker, first found 27 Dec (†MW et al.) during the Silver Reef C.B.C. and remaining through 3 Feb (ph. TA, RF, CR). A Red-breasted Sapsucker reported near Virgin, Washington 31 Dec (KS, MTh) would also be one of only a few Utah records, if accepted. Rare wintering Williamson's Sapsuckers were observed at Alum Canyon, Washoe, NV 5 Dec-20 Feb





Utah's second confirmed Red-headed Woodpecker was one of many exceptional vagrants found this winter in Washington County. This bird was located in a pecan orchard near Hurricane, Washington County, during the Silver Reef C.B.C. on 27 December 2004 and remained through at least 3 February 2005 (here 15 January). Photograph by Cameron Rognan.

(RB) and at Virgin, Washington, UT 6–15 Jan (LG, DSh, MW et al.). An Anna's Hummingbird observed 18 Dec in Reno, Washoe, NV (GS) was out of season and n. of expected range.

A Cassin's Kingbird was an early arrival at the H.B.V.P. (21 Jan–6 Mar; JAB) for the 2nd straight year. Far fewer than typical numbers of Northern Shrikes wintered in the Region, with only two reports; an ad. at Echo Res., Summit, UT 5 Dec (J&KB) and an imm. at Swan L., Washoe, NV 2–5 Feb (JE, JT, DT). After an exceptional fall for Blue Jays in the Great Basin, a few individuals lingered through the winter, including singles in Nevada: 27 Nov–25 Dec at Lovelock, Pershing (SM, D&RP) and 19–30 Jan at Ely, White Pine (DM, BH et al.). Up to 3 Blue Jays spent the winter visiting feeders at Clarkston, Cache, UT 20 Oct–22 Feb (TG, SP et al.).

The highlight of the season was certainly Utah's first Rufous-backed Robin, found in an apple orchard in Springdale, Washington on 18 Dec during the Zion C.B.C. (MT, ST, †K&DH) and fortunately remaining through 31 Dec to be enjoyed by several observers (ph. RF, †TA). The only Varied Thrush reported during the season was from Fernley, Lyon, NV 7 Dec (DT). A Brown Thrasher was an unexpected visitor at Lytle (26 Dec; PF), and a Crissal Thrasher at New Harmony, Washington, UT was n. of expected range (6 Dec; JJ). It was strong winter for Bohemi-

an Waxwings in Utah, with flocks of up to 100 individuals reported from several n. counties (Cache, Daggett, Summit, and Utah); however, the only report from Nevada was a flock of approximately 70 in Ely, White Pine 12 Dec (JW).

### SPARROWS THROUGH FINCHES

Chipping Sparrows are seldom observed in the Region during winter, so a flock of over 20 near Hurricane, Washington, UT 1 Jan–19 Feb was very unusual (SS et al.). There were several Utah reports of wintering White-throated Sparrows, including 2 in Washington 22 Jan (JJ) and 5 Feb (LT, RF) and single individuals in Francis, Summit 22 Jan (TR et al.) and Provo, Utah 25 Jan (DSh). It was an exceptional winter for Harris's Sparrows in the Great Basin, with 3 individuals reported from two Nevada counties (Lyon and Washoe) and 8 reported from five Utah counties (Box Elder, Davis, Salt

Lake, Washington, and Weber). A Golden-crowned Sparrow found at the Provo Airport Dike, Utah 16 Feb (RS) was rare in n. Utah in winter. Another surprising winter visitor was a female Bullock's Oriole observed 22 Dec–3 Jan in Springdale, Washington, UT (RF, LT, J&KB).

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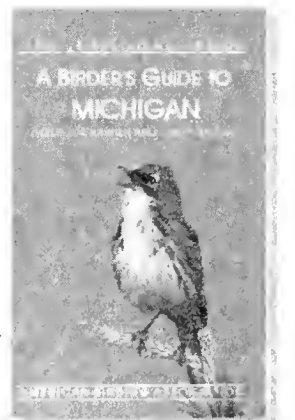


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# New Mexico



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Widespread and abundant rain and snow made winter 2004–2005 the wettest on record for New Mexico; following plentiful summer-fall rains, this resulted in excellent cover, especially for grassland species in the south. As in previous winters, the theme of this birding season continued to be species lingering late, wintering north of expected, and/or returning early, and with early onset of breeding activity by many species.

Abbreviations: B.L.N.W.R. (Bitter Lake N.W.R.); Bosque (Bosque del Apache N.W.R.); C.C.N.P. (Carlsbad Caverns N.P.); E.B.L. (Elephant Butte L.); L.V.N.W.R. (Las Vegas N.W.R.); Maxwell (Maxwell N.W.R. and vicinity); P.O. Canyon (Post Office Canyon, Peloncillo Mts.); R.G.N.C. (Rio Grande Nature Center, Albuquerque); R.G.V. (Rio Grande Valley).

## GREBES THROUGH DUCKS

A Red-necked Grebe at Conchas L. 2 Jan–1 Feb (WW, m.ob., ph. JO) provided the 5th photographically documented New Mexico record. The few Horned Grebe reports were restricted to large ne. lakes; high count was 8 at Conchas L. 15 Jan (JO, JP). Noteworthy for the far nw. were 120 *Aechmophorus* grebes at Morgan L. 10 Jan (MW); early were 6 Westerns and 2 Clark's at Cochiti L. 30 Jan (WH). A Western Grebe pair was courting at L. Avalon on the auspicious and early date of 14 Feb (SW). The imm. Brown Pelican present at E.B.L. since Aug continued in evidence through Jan (m.ob., ph. JO) and was actively fishing 21 Feb (WW). A Neotropic Cormorant was n. to Albuquerque 26 Feb (CR).

An American Bittern provided a local first at Luis Lopez 15 Dec (JO); one at B.L.N.W.R. 1 & 29 Dec and 6 Jan (GW) furnished the only additional report. Far n. were single Great Egrets at Peña Blanca 26 Dec (WH) and near Cochiti 16 Feb (MW); Greats again wintered in the lower R.G.V. and the Pecos Valley, including 4 at B.L.N.W.R. 12 Jan (GW) and 9 at L. Avalon 30 Jan (SW). Apparently increasing in winter in the lower R.G.V., 12 Cattle Egrets were at Las Cruces 18 Dec (S. & W. Hill, *vide* GE), one was at Mesilla 11 Jan (J. Douglas), and 3 were at Las Cruces 11 Feb (GE). Traditionally unexpected in winter, a White-faced Ibis was at Belen's Taco Bell

marsh 15 Jan–27 Feb (CR, RB, JO, BN, MB) and up to 2 were at Bosque 7 Dec–21 Jan (PB, SC, JP). Turkey Vulture is a species historically unknown in winter in New Mexico, but this season, several were reported (but not detailed) in the lower Pecos Valley, including 2 at Roswell 18 Dec (*vide* SB), 8 s. of Roswell 15 Jan (JB), about 10 at Roswell 17 Jan (T. Bemis, *vide* SW), plus one at Carlsbad 30 Jan (SW); earliest elsewhere were one at E.B.L. Dam 21 Feb (WW) and 2 at Mangas Springs 24 Feb (LM).

A Black Brant at Cherry Valley L. 4–5 Dec (JP, MB, CB) furnished a *Mora* first and the 7th overall for New Mexico. Both enthusiasm and confusion were evident as birders attempted to distinguish Cackling Geese from Canada Geese; available evidence suggests Cackling Geese are relatively numerous in the ne. and in the middle R. G. V. Four ad. Trumpeter Swans put in a brief appearance, with 5 Tundras at Stubblefield L. 2 Dec (ph. DC), while 2 ad. Trumpeters at Clabber Hill Ranch below Conchas Dam were present 2 Jan–1 Feb (WW, m.ob., ph. JO). Tundra Swans were much in evidence, including 4 at Maxwell 2 Dec–7 Jan (m.ob.), 2 at Ute L. 3 Jan (JB), 5 at B.L.N.W.R. 29 Dec–23 Feb (GW), 3 at L. Avalon 10 Dec–18 Feb (SW, m.ob., ph. JO), and singles at Farmington 18 Dec (AN) and E.B.L. 8 & 12 Dec (MW, J&MH). A male Eurasian Wigeon at Albuquerque split its time between R.G.N.C. and Mariposa Park 4 Dec–6 Feb (m.ob., ph. DK, ph. GF). An aerial survey estimated 15,675 Green-winged Teal at E.B.L. 6 Jan (MW), a remarkable concentration for New Mexico. Lingering from Nov was a White-winged Scoter at Clayton L. 15 Dec–29 Jan (DK, CB, JP, JB, ph. JO), while 2 were at Holloman L. 6 Jan (GE). Single Long-tailed Ducks were at Santa Rosa L. 19 Dec (J. Black) and L.V.N.W.R. 9–17 Jan (m.ob., ph. JO). An unprecedented "invasion" of Barrow's Goldeneyes found up to 4 on the Chama R. below El Vado Dam 8–15 Feb (WW, JB), a male and female in the Maxwell–Stubblefield area 3 Dec–28 Feb (m.ob., ph. WH, ph. JO, ph. DC), and singles on the Rio Grande near Orilla Verde 13 Feb (CR, BN) and at Conchas L. 9 Jan (CR, BN, RB).

## RAPTORS THROUGH NIGHTJARS

Noteworthy for winter was an Osprey in the E.B.L. area 14 Jan–12 Feb (JP et al.). An aerial survey of the E.B.L.–Caballo L. area 25 Jan found only 15 Bald Eagles, down from 94 on a similar survey there Jan 2001 (RD, D. Ahlers). Merlins were noted nearly statewide Dec–Feb, including 2 at Chaco Canyon 20 Dec (BS) and 3 at Bosque 18 Dec (SC). Lesser Prairie-Chickens were "booming" near Pep as early as 6 Feb (CR). At least 7 Virginia Rails were vocal in upper E.B.L. 26 Jan (RD). Noteworthy for the sw. was a Common Moorhen near Cliff 7 Feb (D. Beatty); high count was 5 at Mesilla 12 Feb (JP). Two ad. Whooping

Cranes were among some 40,000 Sandhills at Grulla N.W.R. near Portales 1 Dec (J. Smith) but could not be relocated; although no photographs were obtained, U.S.F.&W.S. considered this a "confirmed" record. A bright, fully white albino Sandhill Crane was photographed near Hermanas 21 Jan (ph. JO), demonstrating the value of photographically documenting all "white cranes."

Unexpected in winter, up to 5 Black-bellied Plovers lingered at B.L.N.W.R. until 18 Dec, and one persisted through Jan until 16 Feb (GW). Very late was a Mountain Plover at B.L.N.W.R. 20 Dec (CB). Surprising for mid-winter were 13 Black-necked Stilts at Sunland Park 1 Jan (MS, JZ); earliest spring migrants were 3 at Belen 24 Feb (JO). Late was an American Avocet at E.B.L. 12 Dec (J&MH); earliest returnees were 2 at B.L.N.W.R. 26 Jan (GW) and one at Lordsburg Playa 30 Jan (JO). North for the season was a Spotted Sandpiper at Española 2 Jan (BF). Late were 73 Long-billed Curlews at Loving 19 Dec (*fide* CC); unusual was one near Hermanas 21 Jan (JO); notably early were 20 near Loving 18 Feb (JP). Late for the n. were 8 Bonaparte's Gulls at Springer L. 1 Dec (ph. DC), with 4 lingering there 5 Dec (MB); high count was 30 at L. Avalon 11 Dec (SW). A Mew Gull visited Brantley L. 17–21 Jan (ph. JO, SW). Nicely documented were single first-winter Thayer's Gulls at Cochiti L. 26–27 Dec (ph. WH, MB) and E.B.L. 18 & 21 Jan (ph. JO, JP). Late was a Forster's Tern at L. Avalon 14 Dec (JO).

Ever-increasing numbers of Eurasian Collared-Doves were found statewide, including on 23 C.B.C.s, and with highs of 469 at Roswell 18 Dec (SB) and 203 at Clayton 15 Dec (CR); it was judged the most common and conspicuous bird species in the village of Elida 14 Feb, where only 2 Mourning Doves were noted (WH). White-winged Doves wintered as far n. as Farmington, where up to 2 were noted Dec–Feb (AN); others in the n. included one at Cochiti 5 Dec (WH), 18 at Santa Fe 26 Dec (DE), and several at Madrid 23 Jan (C. Perez); at Albuquerque, where now resident, White-wingeds were singing by 20–22 Jan (SOW, PS). Inca Doves were copulating at Radium Springs 15 Dec (MS, JZ), and the species continued in evidence n. in the R.G.V. to Albuquerque. Common Ground-Dove reports were restricted to *Hidalgo*, with one in the middle Animas Valley 2 Jan (CR, MB, RB) and up to 2 at Rodeo 1 Jan–23 Feb (AM, m.ob., ph. JO). Another strong showing by Ruddy Ground-Doves found 6 at Rodeo 1 Jan (AM), where 2–7 were seen almost daily through mid-Feb (m.ob., ph. JO, ph. PH, ph. RS) and vocal birds were noted 23 Feb (NM-C); elsewhere, a single Ruddy was at Radium Springs 15 Dec–7 Jan (MS, JZ, MB).

Late for the n. was a Barn Owl at Maxwell 28 Dec (P. Hoban). A Barn Owl nest with 2 small nestlings and 4 eggs was discovered at

B.L.N.W.R. 23 Feb (GW); such early nesting is unprecedented in New Mexico. The Eastern Screech-Owl found at Portales in Nov 2003 was still present 3 Jan (ph. JB) and was vocal 19 Feb (JO). Noteworthy were up to 4 Short-eared Owls in the Salt Creek area of B.L.N.W.R. 16 Dec (GW) and 3 s. of Whites City 18 Dec and 1 Jan (SW); undetailed was one below Conchas Dam 2 Jan (*fide* WW). Very late was a Common Poorwill seen in Walnut Canyon, C.C.N.P. 18 Dec (SW).

### HUMMINGBIRDS THROUGH WRENS

On the hummingbird front, a male Magnificent banded at L. Roberts 2 Dec remained there until 31 Jan (JD-M), and a female Anna's was n. to Albuquerque 24 Dec–11 Jan (S. Norris). Early-blooming manzanita shrubs in the Peloncillo Mts. may have assisted some hummers, notably single male Broad-tailed in P.O. Canyon 15 Feb (CL) and the Animas Valley 21 Feb (NM-C). A late male Rufous Hummingbird was banded at Las Cruces 8 Dec (JD-M), while the last Rufous at P.O. Canyon was seen (at a frozen feeder) 12 Dec (CL); undetailed was one in the Avalon–Brantley area 26 Dec (*fide* TH). A male Red-bellied Woodpecker was at Conchas Dam 2–15 Jan (m.ob., ph. JO), where one had been seen in Nov; another Red-bellied was in the Atarque Cr. area s. of Mosquero, e. *San Miguel* 3 Dec (M. Mac-Roberts). Yellow-bellied Sapsucker reports with useful details were single imms. at Dawson, *Colfax* 16 Dec (WH), Conchas L. 2–9 Jan (m.ob.), and Villanueva 22 Jan (JO), plus an ad. male at Percha 9 Jan (BZ) and 2 Feb (JB) and an imm. there 30 Jan (BZ). A Red-naped Sapsucker was e. to Lovington 22 Jan (CR). Unusually high numbers of Downy Woodpeckers were reported at low elevations in *San Juan*, including a record 14 at Farmington 18 Dec (AN). An American Three-toed Woodpecker was in the Sandia Mts. 30 Jan (J. Joseph), where the species has been scarce or absent in recent years; one was drumming at Bandelier N.M. 27 Feb (JO).

An apparent Cordilleran Flycatcher lingered at Rattlesnake Springs 18 Dec (ph. CC); single *Empidonax* were at Silver City 18 Dec and near Cliff 1 Jan (both *fide* R. Shook). Unusually late were 2 Black Phoebes n. to Zuni 18 Dec (JO). Far w. was an Eastern Phoebe in the Animas Valley 2 Jan (CR, RB). Say's Phoebes pushing the envelope were 3 at Farmington 18 Dec (AN) and singles at Santa Fe 26 Dec (DE) and Maxwell 6 Jan (DC). A Great Kiskadee at Las Cruces, first reported 14 Feb (M. Rivera) and well documented through 28 Feb (m.ob., ph. JZ), reportedly had been present since late Nov; it provided New Mexico's 6th credible report and the first for *Doña Ana*. Single Northern Shrikes were at seven n. sites during the period, including a vocal one at L.V.N.W.R. 17 Jan (RB); s. was an ad. at Bosque 12 Feb (M. Ristow). A late

Cassin's Vireo was on the Ladder Ranch w. of Caballo L. 7 Dec (WW), where there was also a Plumbeous the same day (WW); another Plumbeous was at Mesilla 12 Feb (JP). Noteworthy was a Hutton's Vireo at Mesilla 18 Jan (JZ) and 12 Feb (JP); Hutton's returned to P.O. Canyon 28 Jan and were much in evidence there by 7 Feb (CL).

Mexican Jays were carrying nest material in P.O. Canyon by 17 Feb (CL). Western Scrub-Jays were notably scarce in the middle and lower R.G.V. and were absent from some regularly occupied areas, such as near Socorro (PB). A Steller's Jay strayed to Farmington 10 Dec (JP). American Crow numbers continued unusually low in several areas, including at Albuquerque (WH, HS) and Socorro (PB). Late was a Tree Swallow at Bosque 5 Dec (D. Pellegrini); Trees may have wintered at L. Avalon, where there were 20 on 5 Jan (*fide* SW), 4 on 17 Jan (JO), and 40 on 23 Jan (SW). An early Barn Swallow was with 200 Trees at L. Avalon 18 Feb (JP). In the Peloncillo Mts., Bushtit pairs began segregating from winter flocks by 10 Jan (CL). Red-breasted Nuthatches staged a noticeable lowland invasion, including e. to Clayton, near Mosquero, and Roswell and s. to Deming, Mesilla, and Carlsbad. Two Pygmy Nuthatches were in the middle R.G.V. near Los Lunas 1 Dec (DH). Ten Cactus Wrens and numerous old nest structures were seen on San Juan Mesa n. of Elida, *Roosevelt* 14 Feb (WH). Nicely described was a Carolina Wren at Cedar Crest 26 Dec (AR), which represented the 3rd record there; there have been multiple New Mexico reports each year since 1998. Late was a mid-Dec House Wren at Zuni (JT). A good season for Winter Wrens produced singles at Farmington 18 Dec (AN), Santa Fe 26 Dec (*fide* DE), Pecos R. near San Jose 11 Jan (WW), Clayton L. 15 Dec (DK), Albuquerque 26 Feb (CR), and Rattlesnake Springs 15 & 29 Jan (JB, MB, SW). High counts for wintering Marsh Wrens were 38 at Conchas L. 2 Jan (WW) and 22 in upper E.B.L. 26 Jan (RD).

### KINGLETS THROUGH WARBLERS

Two Golden-crowned Kinglets strayed to the Florida Mts. 28 Jan (JO). Nicely described were 2 late Blue-gray Gnatcatchers near San Acacia 14 Dec (DH); undetailed C.B.C. reports were 3 at Bosque 18 Dec (*fide* SC) and singles at C.C.N.P. 18 Dec (*fide* SW) and Loving 19 Dec (*fide* CC), all areas where Black-tailed is likely. Black-tailed Gnatcatcher reports increased n. in the R.G.V., including one at Bosque 11 Dec and 2 at a different locale there 18 Dec (JP), plus one there 7 Jan (CB), one at the Ladder Ranch 7 Dec (WW), another at Truth or Consequences 12 Feb (JP), and 2 w. of Caballo L. 14 Jan (JP). Seven Black-tailed on the Peloncillo Mts. C.B.C. included 4 in the middle Animas Valley 2 Jan (CR, MB,



RB), while one was n. to Carlisle Canyon, Grant 24 Jan (RS). Eastern Bluebirds were well represented, with reports from 29 locales (and including 13 C.B.C.s) from the R.G.V. eastward, including a high 171 at Santa Rosa 19 Dec (WW); w. was a male in P.O. Canyon 7 Dec (CL). American Robins were singing at Albuquerque by 22 Jan (PS).

Surprising were single Gray Catbirds n. to Abiquiu 12 Feb (CR) and Clayton 15 Dec (RB). Northern Mockingbirds lingered at Clayton 15 Dec (DK) and Maxwell 16 Dec (DK); noteworthy for the season were 4 at Conchas L. 2 Jan (WW) and one there 9 Jan (RB). Sage Thrashers wintering n. of usual included 12 at Española 2 Jan (BF), 5 at Santa Fe 26 Dec (DE), one near Bernal, San Miguel 15 Jan (JP), and up to 2 at Conchas L. 2 & 17 Jan (WW, RB). Brown Thrashers w. of usual were singles at Zuni's Blackrock Dam 18 Dec (JO) and P.O. Canyon 10 Jan (CL). Crissal Thrashers were singing in the Sandia Mts. foothills by 9 Jan (JP). Sprague's Pipits are irregular in winter, with Jan records particularly scarce; this season, 6 were found near Hope, Eddy 15 Dec, but only singles were noted there 26 & 27 Dec and 20 Jan (RM); on Otero Mesa, 5 were found 2 Feb and 10 on 6 Feb (RM); farther w., 8 were s. of Deming 11 Dec (RM), and one was in the s. Animas Valley 8 Feb (EL). Cedar Waxwings were unusually numerous and widespread Dec-Feb, including reports on 21 C.B.C.s statewide. Among some 400 Cedar Waxwings at Farmington was a Bohemian Waxwing 7 & 10 Dec (C. Black, JP), and 2 Bohemians were among Cedars near Abiquiu 8-9 Feb (WW, ph. S. Brayshaw); these provided the first Bohemian records in four years. Unusual for the elevation and date was a Phainopepla near Cloudcroft 21 Feb (SW).

Late for the n. were single Orange-crowned Warblers at Albuquerque 12 & 19 Dec (RB), Santa Rosa 19 Dec (WW), and Bosque 18 Dec (SC); several lingering Orange-crowneds were found in the lower R.G.V. and the lower Pecos Valley, but there were no Jan reports; presumably early were singles at Mesilla 12 Feb (JP) and Deming 16 Feb (LM). Unexpected in winter, a Black-throated Gray Warbler first reported at Mesilla in mid-Dec was still there 18 Jan (BZ), 29 Jan (BZ), 6 Feb (JO), and 12 Feb (JP), a wintering first for *Doña Ana*. Also surprising for winter were single well-documented Townsend's Warblers at Albuquerque 12 & 19 Dec (RB) and Owl Canyon, Peloncillo Mts. 2 Jan (D. Danforth); undetailed was another at Mesilla 9 & 12 Dec (*fide* PS). Yet another winter surprise was a Pine Warbler at Kirtland A.E.B. 14 Jan-16 Feb (GF, JP). An American Redstart lingered at Radium Springs 11-22 Dec (MS, JZ).

## SPARROWS THROUGH FINCHES

Cassin's Sparrows, typically scarce or absent

in winter, included 18 in the middle Animas Valley 2 Jan (CR, MB, RB), one near Hermanas 5 Feb (JO), small numbers on Otero Mesa all winter (RM), 3 in s. Lea 22 Jan (CR), and one n. to Sevilleta N.W.R. 23 Dec (AR); early singing by Cassin's was noted at B.L.N.W.R. 19 Feb (GW), Hope 21 Feb (SW), Brantley L. 25 Feb (RD), and Carlsbad 28 Feb (SW). South of expected were single American Tree Sparrows at Zuni 18 Dec (JT) and Dripping Springs, *Doña Ana* 18 Dec (GE); noteworthy for an elevation of 2520 m were 7 at Eagle Nest 13 Dec (ph. DC). Chipping Sparrows n. for the season included 2 at Corrales 19 Dec (DK), 2 at Albuquerque 6 Jan (BN), and a remarkable 99 in the Conchas L. area 2 Jan (WW). Noteworthy were 2 Field Sparrows w. to Conchas Dam 2 & 4 Jan (WW, JO, MB). Late for the n. were 13 Sage Sparrows at Chaco Canyon 20 Dec (BS); surprising were 2 singing near Taos 26 Feb (JP). The 22 Grasshopper Sparrows in the middle Animas Valley 2 Jan (CR, MB, RB) represented a very high winter count. Grassland sparrow surveys found Baird's Sparrows, including some apparently wintering, in *Eddy*, *Otero*, and *Luna*, including 10 near Hope 15 Dec (RM), 3 on Otero Mesa 18 Jan (RM), and a high 16 there 6 Feb (RM). Very rare in New Mexico, single Le Conte's Sparrows were n. of B.L.N.W.R. 15 Jan (ph. JB) and on the McGregor Range portion of Otero Mesa 8 Feb (RM). A good season for Fox Sparrows found one to 3 at Maxwell (ph. DC), in the Conchas L. area (WW, JO), at Zuni (JT), at Ladder Ranch (WW), in the Peloncillo Mts. (RW), in the Organ Mts. (MS, JZ), at C.C.N.P. (m.ob.), and at Maddox L. (CR) Dec-Jan. In the rare-but-regular category were an ad. Golden-crowned Sparrow at Albuquerque 13 Dec-14 Jan (DM, m.ob.) and Harris's Sparrows near Cimarron 24 & 26 Feb (2 birds, ph. DC), at Farmington 18 Dec (AN), at Albuquerque 13 Dec-14 Jan (DM, m.ob.), at Belen 20-21 Jan (RB, JP), and near Cliff 16 Dec and 1 Jan (C. Fugagli).

Reports of White-winged Junco included 2 each at Clayton L. 4 Dec (BN) and Dawson 16 Dec (WH) and one at Valmora 14 Dec (DK). Of the three longspur species in New Mexico, Lapland is the rarest, but this season produced multiple reports from eight ne. locales in *Colfax*, *Union*, *Mora*, and *San Miguel* Dec-Feb, including highs of 30 at Stubblefield L. 29 Jan (JP) and 45 there 19 Feb (DC), 27 at Clayton 15 Dec (CR), 36 at L.V.N.W.R. 9 Jan (CR), and 15 at Conchas L. 1 Feb (WW); one was s. to Sevilleta N.W.R. 23 Dec (DK). High count for McCown's Longspur was 400 at a prairie dog town on Otero Mesa 18 Feb (RM); high for Chestnut-collared was 1015 in the s. Animas Valley 21 Feb (AC, NM-C). Northern Cardinals are now regular along the Canadian R. below Conchas Dam, where there were 2 on 2 Jan (WW) and sin-

gles 3 Jan (JO) and 1 Feb (WW); on the Pecos R., 2 were n. to Santa Rosa 19 Dec (WW).

Eastern Meadowlarks were singing on Albuquerque's West Mesa by 28 Jan (JP). Noteworthy Common Grackles were singles at Maxwell 4-26 Dec (ph. DC), near R.G.N.C. 25 Dec (SOW, P. Mehlhop), and Sandia Heights 5 Feb (F&RS), plus 3 at Virden 5 Feb (ph. JO) and up to 3 at Rodeo 1 Jan-4 Feb (m.ob.). Up to 6 Bronzed Cowbirds wintered at New Mexico State University stock pens 18 Dec (T. Lawton) through 20 Feb (m.ob.). Banding studies of wintering rosy-finches at Sandia Crest provided interesting insights, including recaptures of 4 Blacks banded there last winter; this season, from a flock of over 100, 89 were banded—48 Brown-capped, 28 Blacks, and 13 Gray-crowneds (NC, SC et al.). Elsewhere, a three-species rosy-finch flock of some 60 (primarily Brown-capped) was at Eagle Nest Dec-Feb (DC), a three-species flock of up to 100 (primarily Brown-capped) was at the Taos ski area 25-26 Feb (JO, JP), and about 60 were at Red River 25 Feb (JO). Noteworthy for the Sandia Mts. was a Pine Grosbeak at Sandia Crest 16 Jan (NC), with 11 there 5 Feb (RB, NC). Well described was a female Purple Finch at Santa Fe 2 Dec (MH). Moderate numbers of Cassin's Finches were widespread in the n. and sw. and were reported on 17 C.B.C.s. Red Crossbills were less numerous and largely confined to the n., but a few ventured into the s. and se., including 11 at Radium Springs 20 Dec (MS, JZ), 3 in the Avalon-Brantley area 26 Dec (*fide* TH), and 14 at Clovis 9 Feb (JO). A possible White-winged Crossbill was at Farmington 22 Feb (F. Bowman, *fide* AN). A Lawrence's Goldfinch near Rodeo 4 Dec (PH) and 3 there 6 Jan (RW) provided the only reports. Evening Grosbeaks were conspicuous in the n. half of the state, including up to 400 in Russian Olive trees at Abiquiu 12 Feb (JB et al.).

Initialed observers: Pat Basham, Jonathan Batkin, Matt Baumann, Ryan Beaulieu, Sherry Bixler, Celestyn Brozek, David Cleary, Nancy Cox, Steve Cox, Alan Craig, Craig Cranston, Joan Day-Martin, Robert Doster, Deanna Einspahr, Gordon Ewing, Bernard Foy, Gary Froehlich, David Hawksworth, Tom Hines, John & Marty Hirth, William Howe, P. D. Hulce, David Krueper, Eugene Lewis, Carroll Littlefield, Larry Malone, David Mehlman, Ray Meyer, Narca Moore-Craig, Arnold Moorhouse, Alan Nelson, Bruce Neville, Jerry Oldenettel, John Parmeter, Andrew Rominger, Christopher Rustay, Hart Schwarz, Marcy Scott, Robert Shantz, Brad Shattuck, Frank & Rita Slownen, Patricia Snider, John Trochet, Gordon Warrick, Mark Watson, Richard Webster, Steve West, William West, S. O. Williams, James Zabriskie, Barry Zimmer. 🐦

The season was marked by two state firsts, Ruby-throated Hummingbird and Tufted Flycatcher, along with a state-second Le Conte's Sparrow. Ample rainfall in most areas raised reservoir levels and moderated the effects of prolonged drought.

Abbreviations: A.B.C. (Arizona Bird Committee); A.V.S.T.P. (Avra Valley S.T.P.); B.T.A. (Boyce Thompson Arboretum); H.R.P. (Hassayampa River Preserve); L.C.R.V. (lower Colorado River Valley); P.A.P. (Pinal Airpark Pecan grove); P.L.S.P. (Patagonia Lake S.P.); S.C.L. (San Carlos L.); S.P.R. (San Pedro R.); Sweetwater (Sweetwater Wetlands, Tucson); Whitewater (Whitewater Draw Wildlife Area).

### LOONS THROUGH CARACARA

Rare in Arizona, one to 2 Pacific Loons were on L. Havasu 8 Dec–27 Feb (RP, TC). Rare away from the L.C.R.V., single Common Loons were reported at Sedona S.T.P. 5 Dec (T. Fry), Peña Blanca L. 8 Dec (R. Brookner), and Phoenix 17 Dec (*fide* TC). At Sweetwater, the Least Grebe vanished again after 11 Jan (m.ob.). Casual in winter, 3 Brown Pelicans were seen at scattered locations in s. Arizona following the summer invasion (J. Truan, *fide* TC, R. Magill). Far more unusual was one n. to Prescott 14 Feb (*fide* CST). In residential Chandler, the Neotropic Cormorant rookery found last winter had active nests 5 Feb. Several hundred Neotropics seen nearby the same day were far beyond any expectations of just a few years ago (both TC). At their old stronghold of P.L.S.P., numbers rose from one on 1 Dec to 21 by 26 Feb (SH, m.ob.). Hundreds of Double-crested Cormorants were also in Chandler 5 Feb (TC). The White Ibis in Palo Verde was seen through 11 Jan (ph. HD).

The identity of a small *Branta* goose at A.V.S.T.P. 16 Dec–5 Apr (PK, ph. MMS et al.) was avidly debated but eventually considered likely to be a small *parvipes* Canada Goose. Following the recent split of Canada and Cackling Geese, the A.B.C. would like to review documentation for all suspected Cackling Geese in Arizona. Tundra Swans were more widely reported than usual: 3 at Fool Hollow L. 18 Dec–19 Jan (J. Videle), one in Chino Valley 19 Dec–6 Jan (CST), one at Willow L. 20 Dec (CST), one at Sullivan L. 30 Dec–21 Jan (J. Saar et al.), and 12 wintering at Havasu N.W.R. (K. Blair). Most Arizona records of Eurasian Wigeon pertain to males, making a female n. of Mittry L. 18 Dec–8 Feb an exceptional find (A. Borgardt, †J. Coker, ph. HD). Up to 3 males wintered in Scottsdale (J. Allen, ph. M. Weber; RB; ph. J. Woodley), and another was at Page 3 Jan (J. Spence). A Surf Scoter at Willcox 11 Dec (ph. R. Fray) was a late migrant. A White-winged Scoter at Parker Dam 4 Dec (C. Bab-

# Arizona



bitt) may have lingered from the fall. Single Long-tailed Ducks appeared at P.L.S.P. 4–5 Dec (P. Walsh, ph. SH) and the Parker Strip 20–28 Dec (D. Pearson); the species is casual in Arizona. At Glen Canyon Dam, 59 Barrow's Goldeneyes 3 Jan (*fide* J. Spence) was a high count. The only others reported were 4 at Parker Dam (m.ob.). Casual along the upper S.P.R., 2 Hooded Mergansers were near Hereford 2 Dec+ (M. Marsden); 2 at Pinetop 19 Jan were also notable (J. Videle). Two Red-breasted Mergansers in Palo Verde 8 Dec (RP) and one in Tucson 29 Dec–7 Jan (MMS) were casual.

White-tailed Kites were more widely reported, with 2 near Buckeye 12–28 Dec (J. McCabe) and singles near Tres Rios 17 Dec (*fide* TC), at Yuma 26 Dec–7 Feb (HD), along the upper S.P.R. 27 Dec (EW), in the San Rafael Valley 18 Feb (M. Kehl), at Robbins Butte 19 Feb (T. Hildebrandt), at P.A.P. 27 Feb+ (J. Scheibe), and at Red Rock 5 Feb (MMS, MP). A report of a Common Black-Hawk at Page Springs 13 Feb (R. Radd) elicited an undocumented report that it had

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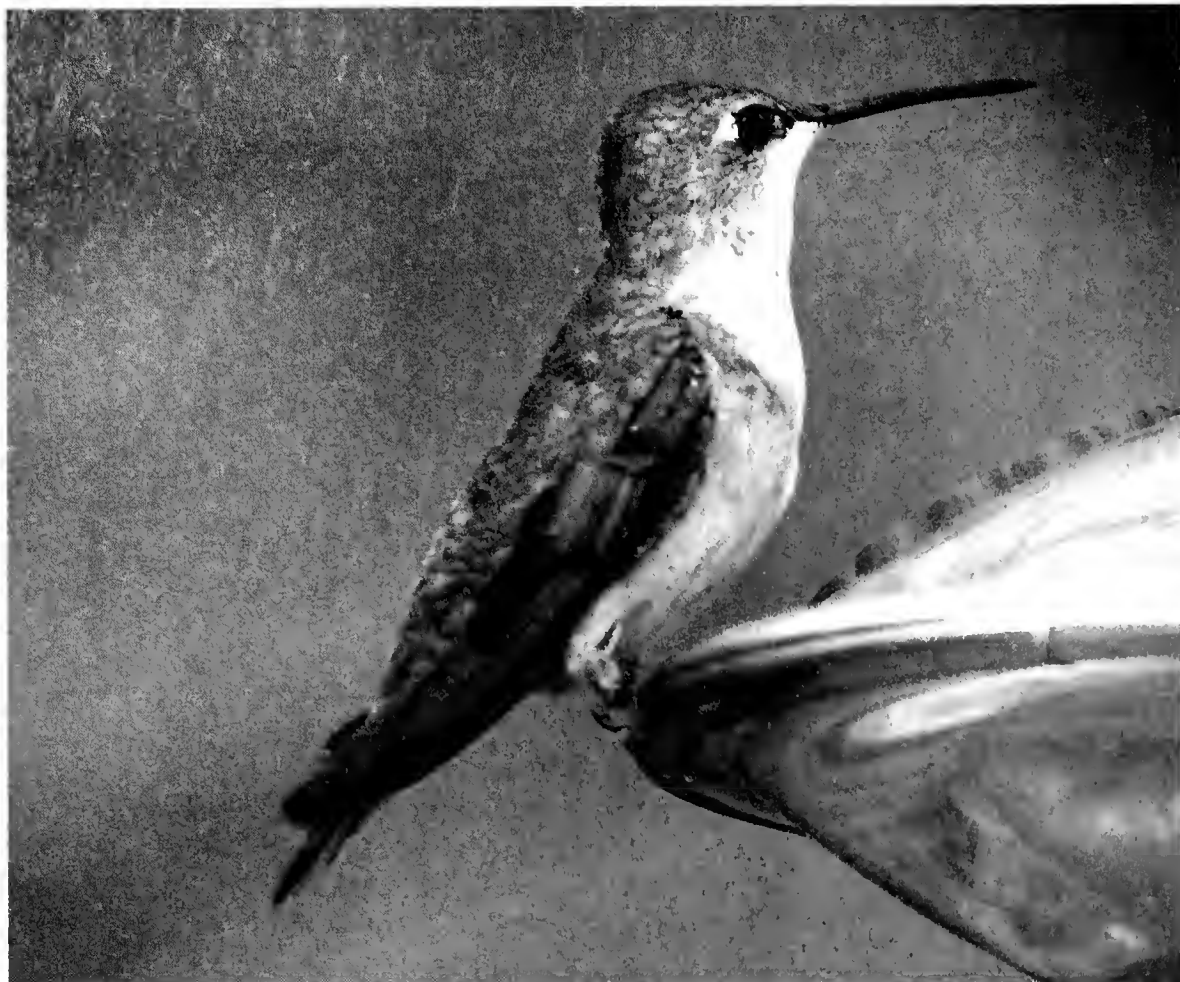
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This female *Archilochus* hummingbird—first detected 20 December 2004 and studied carefully 1 January 2005, then later netted, measured, and identified as a female Ruby-throated—was present at a Tucson feeder all winter, providing a first Arizona record. Photograph by Rich Hoyer.

wintered (D. Greer). This species is all but unknown during the winter in Arizona. More regular in recent years, but still very rare, Red-shouldered Hawks were reported as follows: one continuing along Granite Cr., Prescott through 13 Dec (†CST), 2 continuing at H.R.P. 18 Dec (*vide* V. Montgomery), and one in Patagonia 18 Dec–17 Feb (EW, †P. & D. Nagle). In Tucson, one or more Zone-tailed Hawks wintered again (PK, MP, DS). Harlan's Hawk is a sparse winter visitor; reports came from Marana 5 Dec (GHR), Santa Cruz Flats 5–15 Dec (GHR), and Phoenix 17 Dec (TC). Crested Caracaras are wont to wander in winter, and singles showed up s. of Tucson 10 Dec (RP) and w. of Red Rock 28 Jan+ (DJ).

### CRANES THROUGH WOODPECKERS

Near Cottonwood, 2 Sandhill Cranes on 19 Dec (JP) were a rare sight, as they are not expected to winter in the Verde Valley. There was a single report of Snowy Plover at S.C.L. 26 Dec (KK). The rising reservoir level there has substantially decreased shorebird habitat. There are very few winter reports of Semipalmated Plover in Arizona; one in Scottsdale 19 Feb (C. Ross) follows two previous *Maricopa* records. Mountain Plovers were sparse early in the winter, but numbers eventually peaked at 30+ near McNeal 20 Jan (SH) and 175 in the Santa Cruz Flats on 5 Feb (MMS, MP). In Yuma, one was reported 22 Jan (HD). A Greater Yellowlegs in Chino Valley 19 Dec–16 Jan (CST) was far n. for

winter. At Palo Verde, up to 6 Dunlin were present 4 Dec–21 Jan (PD, R. Widner et al.), while one was at Green Valley S.T.P. 12 Dec–16 Jan (G. Crandall). Wilson's Phalarope is casual in Arizona in winter; singles were near Tres Rios 17 Dec (†W. Thurber) and at A.V.S.T.P. 18 Feb (PK). Likewise, single Red Phalaropes were at S.C.L. 26 Dec (†KK) and Willcox 6 Jan (ph. D. Fenn).

The only Bonaparte's Gulls reported were singles at P.L.S.P. 4 Dec (P. Walsh) and Somerton 25 Feb (HD). A few White-winged Doves were reported in n. Arizona: one in Kayenta all winter (Chaz LaRue), 2 near Willow L. all winter (CST), and one to 2 at three separate Flagstaff feeders (E. Morral, R. Balda, J. Logan). Ruddy Ground-Doves continued at Red Rock, with up to 5 reported (m.ob., ph. MMS), with a mention of breeding behavior on 26 Feb (M. Kehl). Elsewhere, 2 were along the S.P.R. at San Pedro House 22 Nov–26 Dec (SH, ph. C. Bradshaw), 6 were just inside Arizona on the Portal C.B.C. 1 Jan (DJa), 2 were in Hereford 6–27 Jan (ph. RB), 2 were at Tacna 13 Jan (PEL), and one was at Willcox 16 Jan (B. Grossi)—an above-average total (18) for the season. Only a 2nd local record, a Greater Roadrunner was at Cow Springs L. 10 Dec (CL). Common Poorwills are casual in winter; 4 were seen in Portal late Dec–early Jan (DJa, RW), and one was in Bisbee 10 Jan (J. Whetstone).

At the n. edge of the species' range, a Broad-billed Hummingbird again wintered at B.T.A. (R. Wright). There were scattered

reports of Violet-crowned Hummingbirds in sc. up to mid-Dec (m.ob.); additionally, one wintered in lower Ramsey Canyon (J. Hirth) and 2 wintered in Portal (RW). Spring arrivals showed at Patagonia 25 Jan+ (R. Baxter) and the Mule Mts. 26 Jan+ (S. Williamson). Overshooting birds were seen in Green Valley (*vide* MMS) and Marana, both 26 Feb (*vide* R. Grohman). On 1 Jan, Rich Hoyer heard and photographed a female *Archilochus* hummingbird in active primary molt at his Tucson feeder. Careful study by Hoyer and others suggested that it was a Ruby-throated. On 11 Jan, it was captured, measured, and confirmed as an ASY female Ruby-throated Hummingbird (ph. R. Hoyer, ph., †S. Williamson), an Arizona first and the 18th hummingbird species for the state. It remained through 14 Apr.

Reflecting mild weather, Elegant Trogons were more numerous than usual, with one at P.L.S.P. (m.ob.), up to 2 in Madera Canyon (P. Johnson, L. Calvo), and one in Huachuca Canyon (EW) all winter, plus one at Tubac 8 Jan (ph. E. DeKoker). A lone Green Kingfisher was reported along the upper S.P.R. through 30 Dec (m.ob.). The species remains at a population ebb in Arizona. Single Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were at B.T.A. 20 Jan+ (†PEL) and Mitty L. 18 Dec (†J. Coker). Apparent hybrid Red-breasted × Red-naped Sapsuckers were at B.T.A. 20–29 Jan (PEL, ph. M. Vandewater) and the Santa Catalina Mts. 20 Jan (MMS). A relatively clear-cut Red-breasted Sapsucker was at Peña Blanca L. 20–27 Jan (C. Morely, ph., †C. Lundblad). Two likely Red-breasted Sapsuckers at Mitty L. 14 Nov+ (ph. HD) and a "possible" from P.L.S.P. 1–5 Dec (D. Tourret, ph. MMS) will also be reviewed by the A.B.C. A small movement of Downy Woodpeckers was seen, with singles in Overgaard 5 Dec (K. Penland), Granite Dells 12–19 Dec (G. Burford, CST), near Flagstaff 26 Dec (JC), and Cow Springs L. 20–27 Dec (CL). Rare winter visitors, Yellow-shafted Flickers were reported at Phoenix 17 Dec (TC), near Flagstaff 26 Dec (JC), at San Bernardino N.W.R. 6 Jan (RW), and in Scottsdale 7 Jan+ (J. Bartley).

### FLYCATCHERS THROUGH THRASHERS

Without question, one of the more amazing discoveries from Arizona in recent years was a Tufted Flycatcher found by out-of-state birders along the Colorado R. on L. Mohave at White Rock Canyon near Willow Springs 24 Feb (ph., †J. & S. Servantez); excellent photographs confirm the presence of one individual (2 were reported), which will represent a first state (and 3rd U.S.) record of this species. A Greater Pewee found late in the fall along the S.P.R. near Kingfisher Pond remained until at least 6 Dec (P. Sockness, M. Pretti), while another was found singing along the Santa Cruz R. near Tubac 6–23



Dec (GHR et al.); this species is casual in riparian areas in s. Arizona during winter. A Gray Flycatcher along Granite Cr. near Prescott 27 Nov–20 Feb (CST) was well n. of normal wintering areas and represented one of only a few local winter reports. A calling Pacific-slope Flycatcher, also casual in winter, remained at Sweetwater 11 Nov–4 Dec (MMS). A report of a Buff-breasted Flycatcher at Walker Canyon w. of Nogales 12 Jan (D. Touret) would represent an Arizona winter first, but it went undocumented. Five Eastern Phoebes were found in s. Arizona between 24 Nov and 1 Jan, about average for a winter season. A late Dusky-capped Flycatcher was at P.L.S.P. 8 Dec (SH). A Thick-billed Kingbird returned to Yuma for the 3rd consecutive winter 30 Jan+ (HD).

The only Northern Shrikes reported were from the usual (irregular) winter areas in n. Arizona, with one on Black Mesa 10 Feb (CL) and another at Twin Arrows, 32 km e. of Flagstaff, 25 Feb (CL). A Hutton's Vireo at Bill Williams N.W.R. 27 Dec (M. J. Iliff) represented one of fewer than 10 winter reports ever from the L.C.R.V. A very late Warbling Vireo was in Gilbert 11 Dec (PD). It is always odd when corvids only semi-invade s. Arizona, and this winter this seemed to be the case for several species: Pinyon Jay: a single flock of nearly 50 near Oracle 29 Dec (DJ)—but no further reports; Clark's Nutcracker: 3 were s. to the Santa Catalina Mts., with reports from scattered sites there 12 Dec+ (S. Birky et al.)—but no further reports; and American Crow: present in a couple of odd localities, with 2 seen at Jeddito, w. of Keams Canyon 4 Feb (CL) and 20 reported from Roper Lake S.P. 9 Feb (P. Walsh)—but again, no sign of a more widespread movement.

A late Violet-green Swallow was at A.V.S.T.P. 5 Dec (J. Higgins), whereas singles there 21 Jan (PK) and at B.T.A. 5 Feb (PM, CD) were likely early northbound migrants. Barn Swallows, rare in the state during winter, were scattered around s. Arizona in late Dec and early Jan, but more unusual were 20 at Yuma 13 Jan (PEL). A count of 15 Mountain Chickadees on the Glen Canyon C.B.C. (*vide* J. Spence) was higher than usual for areas away from breeding sites. There was a small push of Red-breasted Nuthatches into lowland areas during late Dec and early Jan, with at least five separate reports across s. Arizona but few after that. Always nice in s. Arizona, an American Dipper was found in upper Ramsey Canyon 10 Jan (J. Hirth).

Black-capped Gnatcatchers continued all winter at P.L.S.P., but the exact number present remains uncertain; there appear to have been at least two different pairs (with reports of as many as three more pairs up Sonoita Cr.), which would not be surprising given recent breeding success in the area (SH, M.

Brown, m.ob.). Away from P.L.S.P., one male was reported from Montosa Canyon, Santa Rita Mts. 22 Feb (RH), while one to 2 were seen in Rock Corral Canyon, Tumacacori Mts. 27 Nov and 22 Jan (R. Klotz, M. Kehl), both locations of prior sightings during the past few years. It was an excellent winter for Varied Thrush in Arizona, with 2 at Oak Flat Campground, Gila 19 Nov–24 Dec (E. Strong et al.) and singles at Granite Basin 21–24 Dec (E. Moore, CST et al.), Portal 1 Jan (T. & L. Gates), Paulden, Yavapai 8 Jan (J. Saar), and Huachuca Canyon 24 Feb–8 Mar (A. Miller). This species is normally a casual fall and winter visitor to s. Arizona. The Brown Thrasher found at B.T.A. during the fall was seen through mid-Jan (CD). Another was at Buenos Aires N.W.R. 17 Dec (RP), and another was reported from the Village of Oak Creek in mid-Jan (*vide* R. Radd); this species remains a rare but regular winter visitor in the state. A Curve-billed Thrasher at Prescott 8–31 Dec (ph. J. Morgan et al.) was away from known breeding areas and represented a first local record.

### WARBLERS THROUGH GOLDFINCHES

An Olive Warbler was present at B.T.A. for the 2nd straight winter 5 Dec–7 Jan (PM, CD); this species is casual in winter n. of the Santa Catalina Mts. The only Northern Parula of the season was found on the Gila River C.B.C. 27 Dec (*vide* TC). Similarly, the only Yellow Warbler of the winter was on the Phoenix–Tres Rios C.B.C. 17 Dec (TC). A Pine Warbler at Tolleson 19 Dec (ph. BG) provided only a 4th *Maricopa* record. Five Black-and-white Warblers and 2 American Redstarts were reported, about average for a winter. The Louisiana Waterthrush found along Sonoita Cr. above P.L.S.P. during Oct was reported through Mar (m.ob.); another was found near Hwy 90 along the S.P.R. 9 Dec–7 Jan (GHR et al.). More unusual in winter was a male Hooded Warbler in a Scottsdale yard 15 Nov–21 Dec (J. Bartley), representing a 4th winter *Maricopa* record. Scarce in winter, a Wilson's Warbler was reported from Sweetwater 30 Nov+ (L. Liese); one at Chandler 22 Feb (L. Long) was likely a northbound migrant.

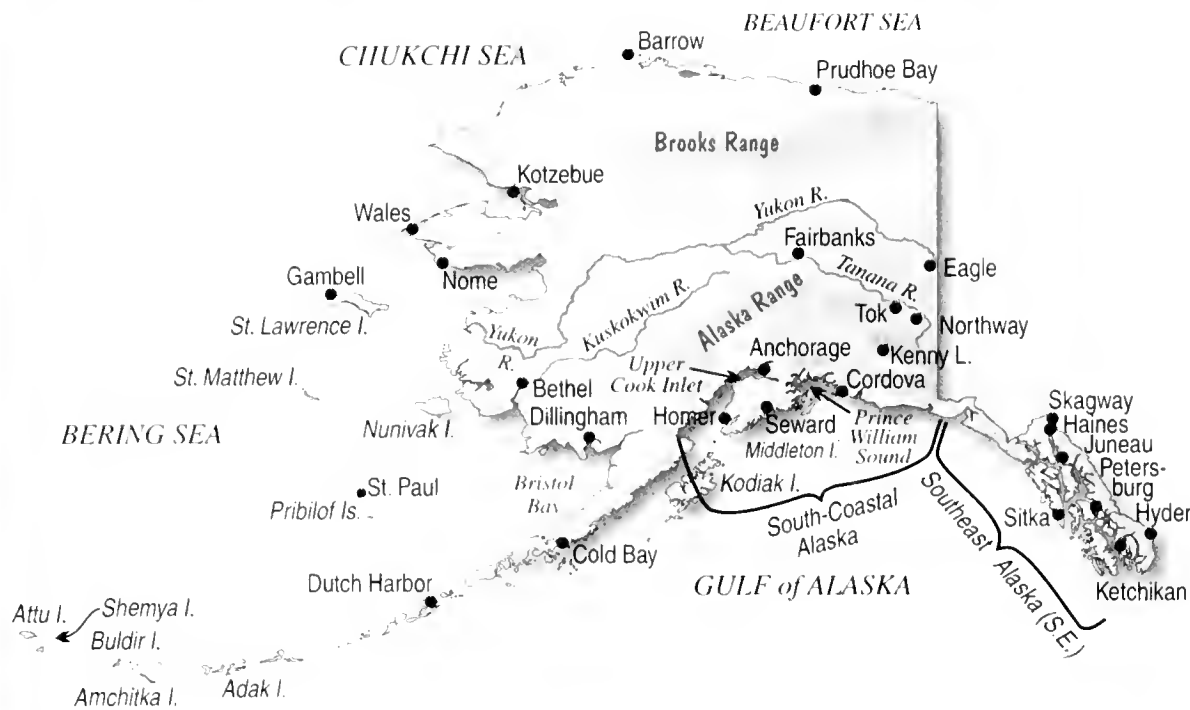
Hepatic Tanagers were more prevalent than usual during Dec and early Jan at several se. canyon locations, with at least 7 reported. The only Clay-colored Sparrow of the season was in Tucson 16–17 Feb (MMS), an indication of the generally poor winter sparrow numbers in s. Arizona. Ironically, one of the best birds of the year was a well-documented Le Conte's Sparrow found along the Santa Cruz R. in Marana 19 Dec–9 Feb (P. Salomon, †, ph. KK; ph. CDB, GB, GHR, DS), providing only a 2nd Arizona record. There was the usual scattering of 4–5 Slate-colored Fox Sparrows, while a Fox Sparrow at

Madera Canyon 13–17 Feb (S. Finnegan) was identified as a Red, likely *zaboria* from the w. Arctic. Whereas grassland sparrows were down in numbers this winter, several rarer species were found in higher-than-normal numbers. No fewer than 15 White-throated and 7 Golden-crowned Sparrows were reported statewide, both above normal. Harris's Sparrows also were reported in greater numbers, with singles reported during the fall at Oak Flat Campground remaining until at least 12 Dec (E. Strong et al.), in a Portal yard 1 Dec+ (RW), at Marana 19 Dec (S. Olmstead), at Continental 10 Dec+ (ph. SH), and in the Avra Valley 23 Feb (R. Wright, ph. RH). Still surprisingly scarce anywhere in Arizona, 3 Lapland Longspurs were located in a flock of McCown's in the Sulphur Springs Valley 9 Jan (†JLD).

A Common Grackle, casual anywhere in the state, was reported from P.L.S.P. 7 Jan (†P. Walsh). The male Orchard Oriole that returned to a Tucson yard for the 2nd straight winter, first reported 13 Nov, remained into Mar (J. Ogden, †MMS). This winter was perhaps the largest flight year in memory for Pine Grosbeaks in Arizona. After several were found in the White Mts. and the Grand Canyon region during the fall, large groups were detected in the mountains n. and w. of Flagstaff beginning with 14 at Slate Mt., 48 km nw. of Flagstaff, 22 Dec (S. & E. Clark), then possibly as many as 40–50 there 28 Dec (JC, CL). Beginning 1 Jan, small groups of up to 15 were found at various points along the South Rim of the Grand Canyon, with reports through 15 Jan (B. Gatlin, R. Rogers, ph. JC, ph. MMS). Historically, Pine Grosbeak has been an irregular breeding species in the White Mts. of e. Arizona, with other scattered reports from Black Mesa, but never have so many been found in the state in one year. Both Cassin's Finches and Red Crossbills were found in lowland areas in s. Arizona during the winter, but numbers of both were relatively low and did not signify a major flight year. It was a moderate invasion year for Lawrence's Goldfinch in s. Arizona this winter, with the largest concentration of 60+ found along the Santa Cruz R. in Tucson throughout the season (m.ob.). One n. to Overgaard 24–25 Feb (ph. K. Penland) was unexpected.

Observers: Robert Behrstock, Chris D. Benesh, Gavin Bieber, John Coons, Troy Corman, Henry Detwiler, Pierre Deviche, Cynthia Donald, Jon L. Dunn, Bill Grossi, Stuart Healy, Rich Hoyer, Dave Jasper (Portal), Doug Jenness, Keith Kamper (Tucson RBA), Philip Kline, Chuck LaRue, Paul E. Lehman, Pete Moulton, Richard Palmer, Molly Pollock, John Prather, Gary H. Rosenberg, Will Russell, Dave Stejskal, Mark M. Stevenson, Carl S. Tomoff (Prescott), Richard Webster, Erika Wilson, Janet Witzeman (*Maricopa*). ☉

# Alaska



## The de Tobish

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Given the relatively mild and protracted fall season, freeze-up was irregular south of the Alaska Range and fairly late across the North Gulf. Winter 2004–2005 was otherwise punctuated with discrete freeze-thaw sessions, which included at least four strong southerly-flow anticyclones. These periodically warmed much of the Region and diminished what would have otherwise been a heavy snowpack.

This season produced optimal conditions to showcase a wealth of semi-hardy forms that have come to be known as irregular winter visitors. Most of these irregular species were found in the winter “hot zone” bounded by Kodiak, the Anchorage Bowl, across the southern and eastern Kenai Peninsula, and around the coastal fringe through Prince William Sound to Ketchikan. Ephemeral open water, stocked feeders, fruiting exotic plantings, and limited deep-freeze periods provided classic conditions for noteworthy birds all season long. Most C.B.C. tallies were at or above long-term averages, while lingering species created an exciting early-season flurry into

December. Excellent coverage in the Fairbanks area exemplified this trend, and even mid-season highlights there were impressive. Coverage in other coastal areas and in the Aleutians, where winter potentials remain poorly known and/or documented, was typically sparse to none. It's these areas—including the Bering Sea ice edges, the Pribilofs, the south side of the Seward Peninsula, and the riparian sections along the Mainland Southeast watersheds—where the Region's remaining winter pioneering needs to happen. If you have read this column over the past twenty-odd years, you will recognize the amazing strides that Alaskans have made with status and distribution of winter bird species in that timeframe. This season's report reads like a summary of that new information.

Abbreviation: North Gulf (n. Gulf of Alaska). Referenced details (†), specimens (\*), photographs (ph.), and videotape (vt.) are on file at the University of Alaska Museum. Italics indicate unusual locations or dates.

## LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

Few loon highlights came in, but a feeding aggregation of 45 Red-throated Loons near Gustavus was a highlight, if not an unexpected behavior for the species. Only a single Pied-billed Grebe wintered, at Juneau 13 Jan+ (GVV, MM). Ketchikan produced the season's peak Western Grebe numbers, with a maximum 310 in Clover Passage 24 Dec (AWP). Northernmost this winter was a single at Juneau 15 Jan (GVV). As usual,

Great Blue Herons were concentrated at the w. edge of their North Gulf winter range, with the season's peak of about 12+ birds from two sections of Kodiak in Jan (EW, RAM, RB). A flyover near Girdwood 30 Jan (RLS, TT) was the latest ever in winter in Upper Cook Inlet, where they are sporadic in fall, with few reports beyond Nov.

Several hardy Cackling Geese lingered in South-Coastal areas into Dec, notably singles in Kodiak with Emperor Geese through 18 Dec (RAM) and near Palmer with *parvipes* Canada Geese through 19 Dec or later (ph. BW, *fide* RLS). Any Canadas away from the immediate North Gulf interface after mid-Nov are significant. Getting late for the Mainland and n. of usual areas was a single Greater White-fronted Goose in Gustavus through at least 1 Dec (ND). Predictable in a mildish winter are good numbers of dabblers and less common *Aythya*, and this year provided notables of each. Eurasian Wigeons appeared at several coastal sites, highlighted by 9 at Kodiak 30 Jan+ (RAM). At least 4 Northern Shovelers were scattered around Kodiak, a single 18 Dec and 3 there 16–28 Feb (RAM), and 2 were in Juneau through 29 Dec (MS, PS). Green-winged Teal were equally tardy, with 151 still staging 17 Dec at Juneau (PS), where at least 20 wintered, while a single remained on fresh water at Sitka through at least 5 Jan (MET, MLW).

A few Redheads were noted in Dec but more unusual were: 2 near Petersburg 12–29 Feb (RL) and one in Gustavus 12 Jan (ND). Four Ring-necked Ducks wintered 18 Dec+ at Kodiak (RAM), where they are nearly annual in similar numbers. Curiously, few Lesser Scaup were noted, and only a group of 13 wintered, in Juneau (GVV, PS). Attesting to an unprecedented late southward pack-ice advance in the Bering Sea (where new ice was only barely forming and moving southward by the end of Dec), counts of 76 Common Eiders and 302 Long-tailed Ducks at Gambell 18 Dec were both late and high (BT); both species are known in winter from the pack ice edges and polynyas.

## EAGLES THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

An ad. Bald Eagle braved Fairbanks conditions and hunted *through 21 Jan* along the Chena R. (LD), where there are very few mid-season reports. Bald Eagles were otherwise widespread and more common at the edges of winter range, with dozens around Upper Cook Inlet all season (m.ob.). Surprisingly, the season's only Northern Harrier observations came from the Kodiak grasslands, where up to 3 were studied 16 Dec–12 Feb (BP, RAM, JBA). With good numbers of carduelines concentrating along the North Gulf spruce/hemlock fringe, winter Sharp-shinned

Hawk observations were correspondingly plentiful, especially in Juneau, where the species was "widespread" (*vide* GVV); elsewhere were 2 at the boreal periphery in Dillingham 3 Jan and 26 Feb (*vide* RM), 4 around Ketchikan, and 2 in Sitka, all wintering (SCH). Extremely late for the Region was a single Sandhill Crane that lingered through 1 Dec near Ketchikan (PD).

This season's shorebirds of note included above-average numbers of most of the standard semi-hardy forms, several extremely late lingerers, and excellent calidrid numbers from the North Gulf coast. A peak of 12 Killdeer in Juneau

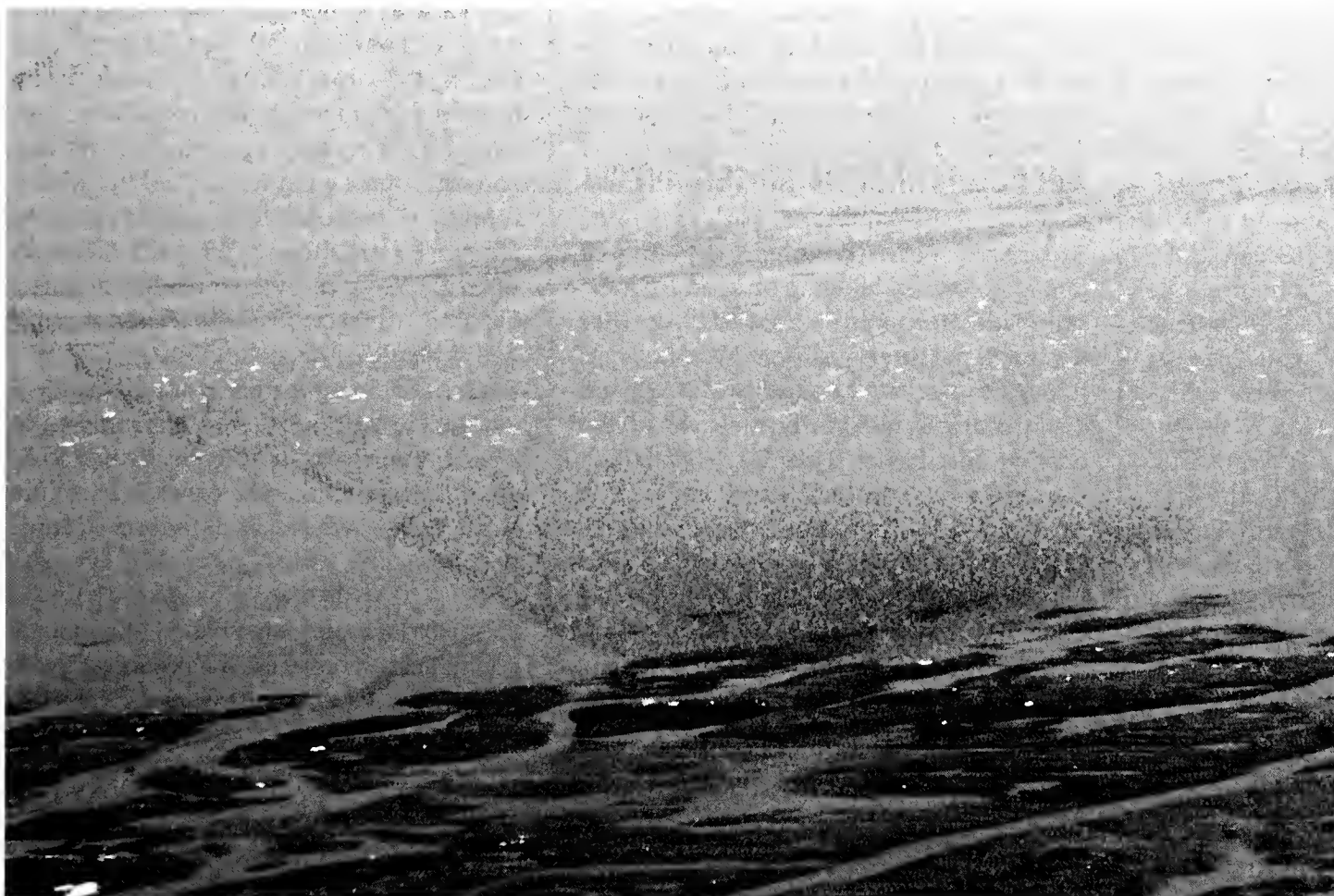
ter, numbers were noted on the Inlet's e. side, off Anchorage, in Dec (*vide* RLS, REG). Most of the Region's wintering Dunlin were concentrated in the Gustavus–Glacier Bay area, with the winter's high count of 1515 noted there 18 Dec (ND). Some 1100 were still in the area through most of Feb (ND).

Gulls made an above-average showing, especially given the season's mild conditions. Light ice conditions in Cook Inlet no doubt allowed gulls to linger farther n. than usual, with several Glaucous-winged Gulls reported from Anchorage through 18 Dec (*vide* RLS). Unheard of in Upper Cook Inlet

Fairbanks, where a new winter road allowed access s. onto the Tanana flats. Peak Feb tallies included what seemed like unusually high numbers of most resident forms, highlighted by 29 Great Horned Owls, 16 Boreal Owls, 20 Northern Hawk Owls per day, and 15 Great Gray Owls per day (*vide* LD). Systematic owl surveys are rare from the Interior, but these provide a window into what may be regular counts from ideal habitats. Elsewhere, a single Western Screech-Owl spent Dec vocalizing near downtown Sitka (MLW, MET), and another was located near Gustavus 3–8 Feb (ND). Only one Short-eared Owl report came in, submitted from Kodiak from 25 Dec (LW).

Hummingbirds made big news, no doubt surviving at feeders in the mild conditions. A male Anna's Hummingbird spent the entire season at a Ketchikan feeder (DC, AWP, SCH), while a male Costa's Hummingbird tried to do likewise in Cordova, confirmed at least from 16 Dec–6 Jan (HJ, ph. PM), a 2nd local record. An imm. Rufous Hummingbird hung on at a Sitka feeder into "mid-Dec" (ph. MLW, MET, *vide* RLS, DWS). For whatever reason, woodpeckers made a coastal push into parts of the Southeast in early Jan, and small numbers of rarer, mostly Interior forms were located into Feb. While a few Red-

breasted Sapsuckers are known in winter at most Southeast locales within its range, this year's numbers and distribution were atypical. Birds were noted at their winter periphery, including singles from Kodiak until at least 11 Dec (TH) and farther around the North Gulf coast at Gustavus on 20 Jan (ND). Elsewhere, they seemed to amass in Jan in unprecedented numbers in the Ketchikan area, where 14 were noted on the immediate coast 9 Jan and numbers grew to at least 30 individuals by 15 Jan (AWP, SCH). Two Hairy Woodpeckers were rare in Ketchikan 9 Jan and 19 Feb (AWP, SCH), while American Three-toed Woodpeckers were equally unusual along the coasts in the Southeast, with 5 around Gustavus 2 Jan (ND) and 3 near Juneau 20 Feb (PS). Northern Flickers, including Red-shafted/Yellow-shafted intergrades, were



This photograph, taken in early March 2005, shows nearly the entire known population of nominate-race Rock Sandpipers, which winter each year in the intertidal habitats of Upper Cook Inlet, Alaska. Typically these birds feed in freshly exposed tideflats with receding tides and in grooves gouged by icebergs moved about with extreme tidal actions. Photograph by Bob Gill.

through 15 Feb (MB) and another 6 farther n. at Gustavus through 14 Dec (ND, PV) were slightly above the mid-winter norms. Casual after early Dec, one or 2 Greater Yellowlegs wintered in Gustavus; singles were seen at separate sites 1 Dec–31 Jan and 15 Feb (ND, BP). Significant Sanderling observations included 3 near Kodiak 2 Feb (IB), only the 2nd ever there in winter, and a peak of 35+ from the Gustavus–Glacier Bay shores 9 Dec–Feb (ND, BP). This year's surveys of nominate Rock Sandpiper flocks wintering in Cook Inlet were "book-ended" by totals of just over 14,000 birds in late Nov and early Mar, but perhaps milder conditions allowed more than the usual dispersal through mid-season, as the next highest aerial survey tallies produced fewer than 10,000 in both late Dec and late Feb (REG). For only the 2nd time in win-

ter, numbers were noted on the Inlet's e. side, off Anchorage, in Dec (*vide* RLS, REG). Most of the Region's wintering Dunlin were concentrated in the Gustavus–Glacier Bay area, with the winter's high count of 1515 noted there 18 Dec (ND). Some 1100 were still in the area through most of Feb (ND). Gulls made an above-average showing, especially given the season's mild conditions. Light ice conditions in Cook Inlet no doubt allowed gulls to linger farther n. than usual, with several Glaucous-winged Gulls reported from Anchorage through 18 Dec (*vide* RLS). Unheard of in Upper Cook Inlet Fairbanks, where a new winter road allowed access s. onto the Tanana flats. Peak Feb tallies included what seemed like unusually high numbers of most resident forms, highlighted by 29 Great Horned Owls, 16 Boreal Owls, 20 Northern Hawk Owls per day, and 15 Great Gray Owls per day (*vide* LD). Systematic owl surveys are rare from the Interior, but these provide a window into what may be regular counts from ideal habitats. Elsewhere, a single Western Screech-Owl spent Dec vocalizing near downtown Sitka (MLW, MET), and another was located near Gustavus 3–8 Feb (ND). Only one Short-eared Owl report came in, submitted from Kodiak from 25 Dec (LW). Hummingbirds made big news, no doubt surviving at feeders in the mild conditions. A male Anna's Hummingbird spent the entire season at a Ketchikan feeder (DC, AWP, SCH), while a male Costa's Hummingbird tried to do likewise in Cordova, confirmed at least from 16 Dec–6 Jan (HJ, ph. PM), a 2nd local record. An imm. Rufous Hummingbird hung on at a Sitka feeder into "mid-Dec" (ph. MLW, MET, *vide* RLS, DWS). For whatever reason, woodpeckers made a coastal push into parts of the Southeast in early Jan, and small numbers of rarer, mostly Interior forms were located into Feb. While a few Red-breasted Sapsuckers are known in winter at most Southeast locales within its range, this year's numbers and distribution were atypical. Birds were noted at their winter periphery, including singles from Kodiak until at least 11 Dec (TH) and farther around the North Gulf coast at Gustavus on 20 Jan (ND). Elsewhere, they seemed to amass in Jan in unprecedented numbers in the Ketchikan area, where 14 were noted on the immediate coast 9 Jan and numbers grew to at least 30 individuals by 15 Jan (AWP, SCH). Two Hairy Woodpeckers were rare in Ketchikan 9 Jan and 19 Feb (AWP, SCH), while American Three-toed Woodpeckers were equally unusual along the coasts in the Southeast, with 5 around Gustavus 2 Jan (ND) and 3 near Juneau 20 Feb (PS). Northern Flickers, including Red-shafted/Yellow-shafted intergrades, were

### OWLS THROUGH SWALLOWS

Aside from a few mid-season reports of local residents in the Southeast, owls made major news in the Interior, at least around



noted in Juneau 30 Dec–18 Jan (one bird; PS), Ketchikan 9 Jan–19 Feb (8; AWP, SCH), and Gustavus 18 Dec–16 Jan (2; ND). The only noteworthy Northern Shrike sighting was one s. to Ketchikan 15 Jan–11 Feb (TLG).

### NUTHATCHES THROUGH WAXWINGS

Following a fall coastal irruption, Red-breasted Nuthatches continued to make news at sites where they are traditionally uncommon. Peak summaries included 45 on the Gustavus C.B.C. 18 Dec (*fide* BP, ND), where the previous high had been 5, and up to 4 on 2 Jan in Fairbanks (LD), where the species is casual. It was a banner thrush season, with probably the winter's highest ever species total and with large numbers noted well into Jan. Mountain Bluebird highlights included one in Seward 18–31 Dec (ph. CG, *fide* RLS), which was probably a first there, and up to 3 in the Gustavus area 18 Dec–18 Jan (ND, PV). At least 3 Townsend's Solitaires survived on exotic berry bushes in Anchorage all season (TT, SS et al.), while one in Homer 18 Jan (DWS), which was accompanied by 4 others by 5 Feb (LD, NH), represented one of few mid-winter North Gulf coast reports. Anchorage remains the only regular locality for solitaires in winter, probably only because of the abundance of exotic fruit-bearing plantings. Only a decade ago, Hermit Thrush was considered a winter accidental, when an occasional bird lingered to an early-date C.B.C. This year, multiples remained well into the season, including singles in Juneau 7 & 25 Dec (PS), Seward 31 Dec–17 Jan (RLS, DWS), and Ketchikan 9 Jan (AWP, SCH), only the 2nd in winter there. Weather conditions certainly benefited American Robins, which can be hard to locate in most winters after the first few C.B.C.s. Representative high counts included 25+ wandering around Anchorage all season (RLS, SS, TT), another peak count of 33 in Juneau 6 Jan (GVV), and an amazing group of 120 feeding on fruiting bushes in Homer 19 Jan (DWS), which has to be the Region's all-time winter maximum. At least 5 managed to hang on in Fairbanks through 16 Feb (LD), where they are distinctly rare by mid-Nov.

European Starlings wandered offshore to Kodiak 30 Jan (SS, RAM), where occasional in winter; numbers in Anchorage continue to increase slowly. Several scattered groups of up to 15 at a time were located through the season (SS, TT). American Pipits made their best winter showing ever, with quite a few noted at most coastal sites checked by birders. Like Hermit Thrush, historic winter records are few and concentrated in Dec. Multiple ac-

counts were received from Seward, Kodiak, Gustavus, and s. to Ketchikan. Significant sightings included one in Seward through 1 Jan (CG, RLS), a peak of 40 on 31 Dec, dwindling to 2 on 12 Feb (SS, RAM, JM, JBA) at Kodiak, at least one in Juneau through 15 Jan (MB), a high count of 14 in Gustavus 3 Feb (BP), and 3 around Ketchikan 5 Jan+ (AWP, SCH). These numbers and mid-season dates genuinely dwarf all previous winter reports. Rare in winter on the North Gulf coast, where most records come from late fall, Cedar Waxwing was again reported from the w. edge of known occurrences, with a single lingering at Kodiak through 14 Dec (JD) and a tally of 20 in Homer 20 Jan (DWS), which represented a South-Coastal record count.

### WARBLERS THROUGH HOUSE SPARROW

It was an above-average warbler winter, with three species reported, including an Orange-crowned hanging on at an Anchorage feeder through at least 18 Dec (*fide* DFD), 2 Yellow-rumped Warblers in Juneau 26 Dec and 10 Jan (GVV, NM), and a hardy Townsend's Warbler, also at an Anchorage suet feeder, 1–19 Dec (*fide* DFD). The Anchorage warblers were Upper Cook Inlet's latest for each species. Although the Region often holds a few scattered warblers into early Nov, individual reports past that time remain rare.

Winter sparrows, especially *Zonotrichia*, were widely represented, and a few pockets of unusually large numbers were noted at a few coastal sites. Uncommon and irregular in winter, American Tree Sparrows were at several coastal sites, with atypically large peaks of 18 in Juneau 7–8 Jan (GVV, PS, LE) and 40+ in Gustavus 3–15 Jan (BP), which may be the Region's highest winter one-day tally. Rare for winter was a Chipping Sparrow in Ketchikan all season (JFK), a first local winter record. A Savannah Sparrow, present from 14 Nov–Mar at a Ketchikan feeder (SCH, AWP), also became that locale's first and one of few winter records in the Region. Red Fox Sparrows (probably *zaboria* or intergrades) were widely represented and documented from across the coastal "hot zone," with at least 4 in Kodiak all season (ph. RAM) and singles in the Southeast near Petersburg through 18 Dec (ph. BP, *fide* RLS) and Gustavus 1 Dec–8 Feb (ND). For a mild season, it was surprising that only one Lincoln's Sparrow was reported, from Homer 18 Jan (DWS). A single White-throated Sparrow, probably a late migrant, was detected offshore at Sitka 8 Dec (MLW, MET). Other *Zonotrichia* numbers were above average from all coastal sites. Single Harris's Sparrows were in

Juneau 13 Dec and 5–6 Feb (RJG, MS, DM), the source of all historic fall/winter reports, and others in Gustavus 21 Dec (ND) and Petersburg through 7 Jan (ph. BP, *fide* RLS) were notable. A record one-day winter total of 35 White-crowned Sparrows in one flock at Homer 18–20 Jan (DWS) and a brave single in the Interior at Fairbanks through 16 Jan (LD) were noteworthy. A Golden-crowned Sparrow was seen 8–20 Dec (SG) at Unalaska I. in the Aleutians, where casual.

Typically sporadic or even occasionally missing from coastal sites in most winters, Lapland Longspurs and Snow Buntings were also distributed across the breadth of most coastal sites through the season (m.ob.). Twenty Snow Buntings hung around the University of Alaska/Fairbanks campus, where they are casual in mid-season, through 13 Jan (LD). Two Brambling reports were submitted, singles each at Homer 18 Jan–6 Feb (DWS, LD, NH) and in Eagle River n. of Anchorage, the latter arriving with redpolls at a feeder in "late Feb" (*fide* RLS). Female-plumaged Purple Finches again appeared at Southeast feeders, including a single at Petersburg mid-Dec through year's end (ph. BP, *fide* RLS) and 2 in Ketchikan 2 Jan–10 Feb (ph. AWP, SCH), where most winter records occur.

**Contributors and observers** (subregional compilers in boldface): Alaska Bird Observatory (N. DeWitt et al.), B. Alger, J. B. Allen, R. Armstrong, A. M. Benson, R. Berns, A. Berry, M. Brooks, E. Clark, D. Coates, D. & K. Cornelius, P. Davis, J. Dearborn, L. DeCicco (Interior), D. F. Delap, J. Dearbon, B. Dinneford, J. & S. Doyle, M. Druckery, N. Drumheller, L. Edfelt, T. Eskelin, T. Evans, R. M. Fowler, R. Fritz, C. Fultz, D. D. Gibson, R. E. Gill, S. Golodoff, R. J. Gordon, T. L. Goucher, H. Griese, C. Griswold, R. Hadley, N. Hajdukovich, C. Harwood, S. C. Heintz, J. Helmericks, T. Heyerdahl, O. Holm, P. Hunt, B. Hunter, T. Hurley, H. Jensen, R. Knight, J. F. Koerner, W. Lamb, A. Lang, J. Levison, T. & R. Lohse, R. MacDonald, M. & R. A. MacIntosh, D. MacPhail, J. Maley, P. D. Martin, J. Mason, J. McCabe, M. McCafferty, J. Metzler, R. Meyers, E. Myers, N. Mollett, R. Neterer, L. J. Oakley, B. Paige, A. Palmer, W. Pawuk, A. W. Piston, P. Pourchot, B. Pyle, B. Quaccia, B. Rehmer, D. Rudis, K. Russell, J. Sauer, S. Savage, R. L. Scher, M. A. Schultz, W. Schuster, M. Schwan, L. M. Sheffield, S. Senner, D. Shaw, G. Smith, D. W. Sonneborn, S. Studebaker, P. Suchanek, A. Swingley, M. E. Tedin, T. Tobish, B. Trotter, R. Uhl, G. Van Vliet, P. Vanselow, M. L. Ward, B. Wincker, M. A. Wood, S. Zimmerman. 🐦

# British Columbia

Yet another mild winter passed, with the only icy winter interlude worth mentioning coming in the first two weeks of January. As in the past few winters, the transition to mild conditions was sudden; indeed, coastal regions received a record hosing for a week or so. Snowfall was light everywhere, and many valley bottom locations were snow-free by the end of the period, even in the far northeastern corner, where they experienced their warmest February in nearly 40 years!

## LOONS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

Casual in winter, an imm. American White Pelican was in White Rock 2 & 5 Jan (ph. VO et al.); an astounding flock of 15 was seen flying low over nearshore waters into a strong headwind at the Iona Jetty 17 Jan (CCo, SA, †JT); and yet another group of 3 was seen along the Vancouver Waterfront 3 Feb (†EW). Following an impressive autumn invasion, a few Cattle Egrets lingered into winter, with 2 at Castlegar 5 Dec (GL) and a single at Creston 24 Dec (LVD). The latter location had a flock of 22 that had dwindled down, with several reported dead (*vide* GSD). Tundra Swans showed early signs of movement, with 10 appearing on the lake in front of Vernon Creek 28 Jan (DGC). Open water attracted 2 imm. Trumpeter Swans well n. to Dawson Creek 2 & 14 Feb (MP), and a few Mallards managed to remain n., with a male in Dawson Creek 2 Jan (MP) and a female 2 & 14 Feb on Swan L. (MP). Red-breasted Mergansers were early, with 3 at the mouth of Vernon Creek 6 Feb (CS). A single Ruddy Duck furnished a first winter record for the

Williams Lake area 19 Dec (PR).

Remarkably early were 6 Turkey Vultures feeding on after-birth of newborn calves in Salmon Arm 10 Feb (TH). A juvenile/first-winter eagle of undetermined species was found in the Goldstream estuary near Victoria 8 Dec (vt. DCo) and seen irregularly through at least 21 Dec (m.ob.). Numerous worldwide raptor experts who have viewed the videotape suggest that this may be a Steller's Sea-Eagle × Bald Eagle hybrid. Enough features of the bird are not right for either species, but its large size and bright yellow bill were striking and also perplexing. It is hoped that the bird may return in subsequent years for further study. Some have speculated that this bird may be the offspring of an Alaskan Steller's Sea-Eagle that has taken up with local Bald Eagles. Small numbers of Gyrfalcons were reported from scattered locations around the province, with the most noteworthy a dark-morph bird found dead near Tofino, for a 4th local record, 13 Dec (*vide* AD).

Wild Turkey is expanding in range and increasing in number. Well established in the East Kootenays, in Creston, and up the e. side of Kootenay L., birds are now moving farther westward, with reports from Pend Oreille Valley near Trail; the Slocan and Arrow Lakes valleys (*vide* GSD); Kaslo, with 6 on their C.B.C.; and the West Kootenay winter bird count, which recorded 78. Casual in



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winter along the s. coast, a Marbled Godwit was discovered during the Victoria C.B.C. 18 Dec (m.ob.)

## GULLS THROUGH FINCHES

Rare in the province, an ad. Little Gull was seen from the tip of the Iona Island South Jetty 23 Dec (†RTo). A first-winter Heermann's Gull continued along the Victoria waterfront for the entire winter count period yet was strangely absent during the record-breaking Victoria C.B.C. 18 Dec. Iceland Gulls were found in the s. interior and from the Vancouver area, with singles in Delta 2 Jan & 6 Feb (†MT); Brunswick Point 10 Feb (†BS et al.); Iona 13-19 Feb (ph. TP); Vernon 3 Feb (DGC); and Shannon Lake, Westbank 7 Feb (MF). The ad. Lesser Black-backed Gull present in Vernon during Nov made an appearance at Shannon Lake, Westbank 10 Dec (†MF). An annual winter visitor to the Vancouver area, an ad. Slaty-backed Gull was in Delta 8 Jan (†RTo, CI). Great Gray Owls and Northern Hawk Owls were reported from widely scattered locations around the province, suggesting a widespread movement, although they were not present in large numbers. Northern Pygmy-Owls, on the other hand, were relatively scarce this winter. Boreal Owls made unprecedented movements into lowland locations, with



This *Plegadis ibis*, which appears to be an immature and is likely a White-faced Ibis, marks the first record of the genus for the Queen Charlotte Islands 13 (here)-14 October 2004. Photograph by Brian Charman.



singles at Reifel 1 Dec (ph. JI et. al.), at Johnson's Landing 17 Jan (GS), and at a Vernon tree farm 5 Dec (TF, RM, ph. DGC et al.).

An ad. Sky Lark (subspecies unknown) was discovered near the mouth of the Serpentine R., Surrey 10–13 Jan (ph. BS et al.) for a 2nd Vancouver record since 1975. Horned Larks were found in areas where they are very scarce in winter: a single was in Lardeau 21–26 Jan (MJ), and 4 were at Dawson Creek 2 Jan (MP). As has been the case in recent years, there was a late-winter influx of Barn Swallows. The vast majority are found along the s. coast, with very few finding their way into the s. interior. Very late were 2 birds in Kamloops 19 Dec (RH); other noteworthy interior records included 2 at Gellatly Bay, Westbank 20 Jan (BC et al.); a single at 100 Mile House 28 Jan (TG); 2 near Oliver 5 Feb (ED et al.); 2 in Penticton 17 Feb (FW); and 2 at Vaseux L. 26 Feb (TF, RM). By far this is the most widespread invasion the interior has ever seen during winter. Coastal areas furnished 118 records from late Jan into early Mar, with a high count of 18 on Sea I. 2 Feb (PC, MT).

Rarely found in winter, a Rock Wren was near Vernon 9 Jan (TF). A holdover from the fall, a single Cape May Warbler re-

mained at Williams Lake through 11 Dec (ph. AR) for a first provincial winter record. Lingering Yellow-rumped Warblers included singles in Nelson 8 Jan (JA) and Creston 27 Dec (m.ob.). Casual in winter, a Wilson's Warbler and a Western Tanager remained in the Fernwood area of Victoria 1 Dec–1 Jan (CSh); this represents the 5th winter record of Western Tanager for the province. An ad. male McKay's Bunting was periodically found along the Iona Island South Jetty 4–8 & 14–29 Dec (†KL et al.), furnishing a 2nd record for the province and the first Canadian C.B.C. record. This male was traveling with a small flock of Snow Buntings, one of them thought by many to be a female McKay's Bunting—which naturally produced much controversy and careful study. Rose-breasted Grosbeaks are rare at anytime of year away from the Peace R. area; amazingly, 2 were found along the s. coast this winter: an ad. male in Coquitlam 20 Dec–1 Jan (SV et al.), for a first Vancouver winter record, and a second-year male in Tofino at a feeder 8 Feb (ph. LS, PL). There is only one previous winter record for the island.

Pine Grosbeaks were more prevalent this winter at lower elevations, and nowhere was this more evident than in Victoria, where a flock of 30 were on Jocelyn Hill 16 Dec

(MMG). Very rare in winter, a Chipping Sparrow was a first for Kelowna's C.B.C. 18–22 Dec (†DGC et al.). A Golden-crowned Sparrow furnished a first winter record for the West Kootenays in Castlegar 16 Feb (PMc). Casual in winter, 3 Yellow-headed Blackbirds were just n. of Vernon 2 Jan (JQ et al.).

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This first-winter eagle at Goldstream estuary near Victoria, British Columbia 8 December 2004 was large enough and showed such a large bill that observers were led to suspect a hybrid, possibly a Steller's Sea-Eagle × Bald Eagle. Photographs from videotape by Darren Copley.

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# Oregon & Washington

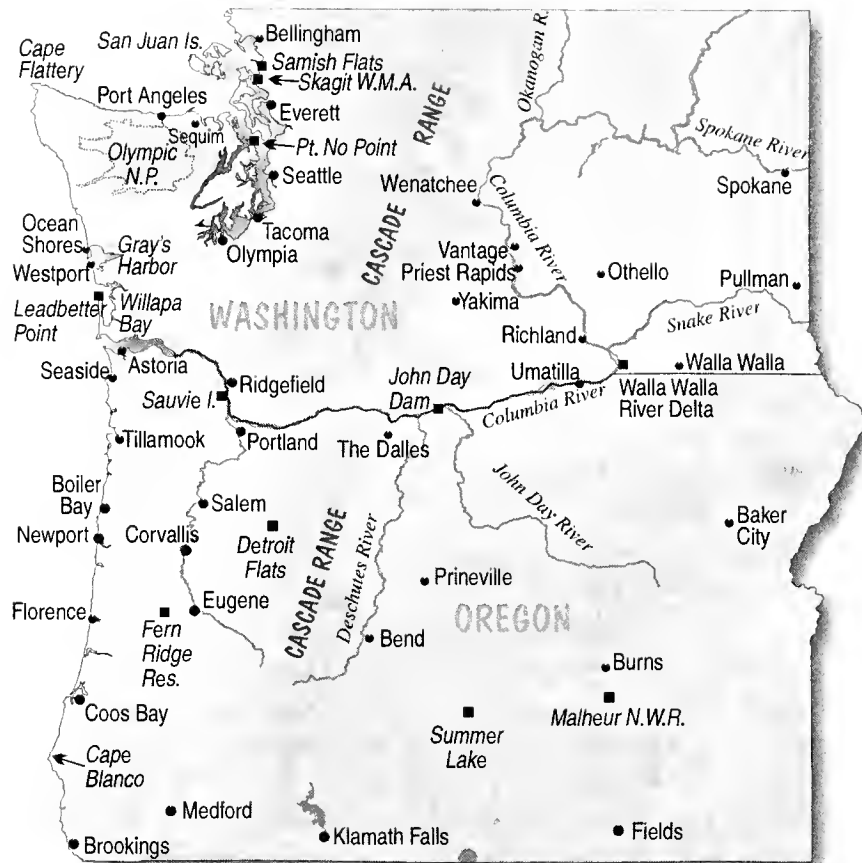
Headlines were dominated by waterfowl and larids, with a strong Siberian flavor. A scattering of vagrant warblers, bunches of beached Horned Puffins, and lingering montane invaders were also recorded. The continued increase in semi-hardy and even non-hardy species, an ongoing theme in recent winter seasons, has become so routine as to escape attention, or nearly so. An entire suite of shorebirds, formerly very rare on the eastside, has become annual winterers. Species such as Sora, Lesser Yellowlegs, and Western Tanager, once accidental, are now regular winter visitors to Washington, and Barn Swallow "spring" migration begins in late January. Red-shouldered Hawks, Anna's Hummingbirds, Eurasian Collared-Doves, Black Phoebes, and Western Scrub-Jays continue their expansion northward and eastward. As Mlodinow's wife quipped: "We won't have to retire to California, California will retire to us."

Indeed, this winter's weather was almost California-like. December averaged about 5° F above normal. January and February both had "average" temperatures, but this is deceiving, because the lack of cloud cover led to remarkable daytime highs as witnessed by 64° F in Olympia on 18 January and 68° F in Astoria on 23 February. December and January's precipitation was about 75% of normal, and February's was only about 30% of normal.

**Abbreviations:** F.R.R. (Fern Ridge Res., Lane, OR); N.S.C.B. (N. Spit Coos Bay, Coos, OR); O.S. (Ocean Shores, Grays Harbor, WA); Ridgefield (Ridgefield N.W.R., Clark, WA); W.W.R.D. (Walla Walla R. delta, Walla Walla, WA). "Eastside" and "westside" indicate locations east and west of the Cascade crest, respectively.

## LOONS THROUGH RAILS

Yellow-billed Loons again were present in good numbers, with 5 in Washington and 3 in Oregon. Most unusual, 13 Pacific Loons lingered on the eastside into early Jan, and one at Brewster, Douglas 15 Feb provided a very rare late-winter eastside record (R. Koppendray). A tally of 122 Eared Grebes at Birch Bay, Whatcom 5 Feb was w. Washington's 2nd highest ever (SM, JB, CCx). Clark's Grebe numbers were above average, with 6 each in w. Washington and w. Oregon. There were two pelagic trips, 2 Jan off Newport and 19 Feb off Westport, both yielding low numbers of usual winter tubenoses: there were no albatrosses and only 64 Northern Fulmars in total (BT, GG). A Pink-footed Shearwater, extremely rare during winter, was at Cape Meares, Tillamook 18 Dec (PP). A Sooty/Short-tailed Shearwater passed Anacortes, Skagit 2 Jan (H. Armstrong); both species are rare in the Puget Trough, especially at such a late date. Manx Shearwaters



67 km and 30 km off Westport 19 Feb provided the Region's first winter records (D. Ward, B. Shelmerdine, †SM). A Leach's Storm-Petrel, very rare in winter, visited O.S. 4 Dec (PtS, RS).

Per usual, several American White Pelicans were found on the westside, with singles at Bellingham 17 Dec (G. Bletsch, B. Kuntz) and Kirkland, King 10 Jan (C. Park, MFM). There were 5 Brown Pelicans this winter, including an extremely rare late-winter bird near Florence, Lane 20 Feb (S. Wright). A count of 1000 Double-crested Cormorants at F.R.R. 12 Jan far exceeded any prior Willamette Valley winter tally (S. McDonald). For the 6th consecutive winter, Great Egrets visited e. Washington, with 11 along Hanford Reach, Benton 3 Feb (H. Newsome) and one near Union Gap, Yakima 28 Jan (M. Roper). Another was in e. Oregon at Wickiup Res., Deschutes 17 Dec (C&MM); e. Washington had its first winter record merely 16 years ago. Equally inconceivable a decade ago would have been the 145 Greats at Ridgefield 6 Dec (JE). Thirteen Cattle Egrets were scattered among four Washington and two Oregon locations into early Jan, the best winter tally in more than

## Steven Mlodinow

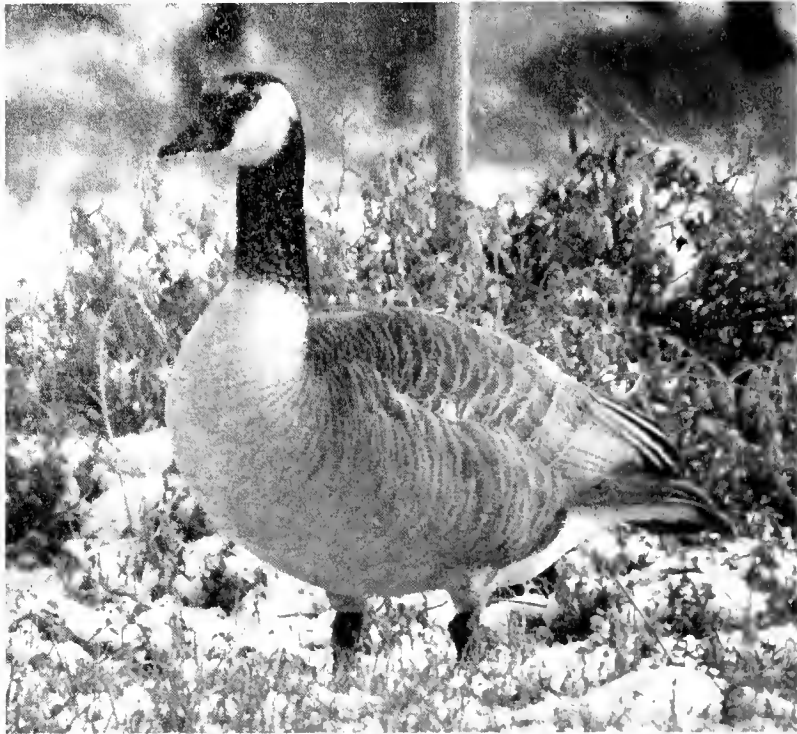
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This Giant Canada Goose (subspecies *maxima*) was Washington's first record of a non-introduced individual; it was photographed in Yakima 4 December 2004. Another was seen in Walla Walla County later during the winter, and there is evidence that this subspecies may be a regular-but-rare migrant in the state's eastern half. Photograph by Denny Granstrand.

a decade. Turkey Vultures, very rare in Washington before mid-Feb, flew over Poulsbo, *Kitsap* 15 Dec (BSW) and Longview, *Cowlitz* 8 Jan (Mark Miller).

The season's sole Emperor Goose wintered at Creswell, *Lane* (DDW). A Blue Goose at Fir I., *Skagit* 2 Feb (BS) and 2 others in *Skagit/Snohomish* 5–27 Feb (E. Casey, SM, DP) added to about 20 prior Washington records. A Snow Goose × Ross's Goose hybrid visited the Kent Ponds, *King* late Dec–early Jan (G. Toffic, DD, KA). Ross's Geese had another good winter, with 14 in Oregon and 3 in Washington, including a gaggle of 10 at Sauvie I. 25 Feb (DMa, IT). Three interior westside Brant, all from the Willamette Valley, was fairly typical. A congregation of 1515 Trumpeter Swans near Clear L., *Skagit* 15 Feb eclipsed previous Regional tallies (SM, JB, J. Starfire); just 30 years ago, only 100 wintered in all of W. Washington (A.B. 29: 731). Echoing this increase, the Airlie, *Polk* Trumpeter Swan flock grew to an Oregon record 54 birds (J. Geier). Washington's 2nd Bewick's Swan returned to Fir I., *Skagit* 13–16 Jan (†SM), and what appeared to be a different individual was near Allen, *Skagit* 5 Feb (CCx, vt. SM, ph.

JB). The Whooper Swan that wintered the past two years on the California side of Stateline Rd., *Klamath/Siskiyou* made a rare Oregon appearance 27 Feb (C. Kisting).

A Falcated Duck at Coburg, *Lane* 2 Jan+ may have been the bird seen last winter at ER.R., which was Oregon's first (D. Stone). Another Falcated appeared at the Samish Flats, *Skagit* 27 Feb, exactly where Washington's 3rd had been found three years ago (†DP). A Gadwall × Mallard hybrid was also present 18 Dec–18 Jan at the Kent Ponds (vt. SM, ph. KB). Eleven eastside Eurasian Wigeons was better than average. A swarm of 90,000 Mallards near Edison, *Skagit*

15 Feb was exceptional for the westside (SM, JB, J. Starfire) and highlighted a shift of dabblers from eastside to west over the last few years (BF). A Mallard × Northern Pintail, nearly annual in the Region, visited Crockett L., *Island* 12 Dec (DD, SM), and another wintered at Wenatchee/E. Wenatchee (D. Beaudette). Wintering Cinnamon Teal are increasing, as evidenced by an Oregon seasonal record 70 wintering at Svenson I., *Clatsop* (MP, D. Bailey). The star of the Kent Pond waterfowl extravaganza was a Baikal Teal 12 Dec–1 Feb (vt. CW, ph. KB). Washington had two previous reports of this species, one likely valid (Dungeness, Jan 1920) and one likely not (Anacortes, Jun 1979). Importantly, Alaska has enjoyed a surge of Baikal Teal, with 7 in the Aleutians over the last three falls/winters (D. Gibson), paralleling a dramatic rebound in this species' world population (Delaney and Scott 2002, *Waterbird Population Estimates*). An exceptional 16 Common (Eurasian Green-winged) Teal were detected, including a rare eastside bird at Moses L., *Grant* 10–21 Jan (ph. DSc). Equally impressive were 10 Common Teal × American Green-winged Teal hybrids, including one on at

Moses L. 10 Jan (DSc).

A Washington record 3900 Greater Scaup rested on the Columbia R. at Priest Rapids Pool, *Grant/Kittitas* 4 Dec (SM, BF, ST), and 6790 scaup were counted there via aerial survey 13 Dec (RH, J. Tabor); assuming a similar proportion of Greaters, that flock contained over 6000. The total number of Greater Scaup wintering along the Columbia R. likely exceeds 12,000, or about 2.5% of the North American population. This is even more amazing when one considers that as recently as 1984–1985, an eastside tally of 150 Greater Scaup was noteworthy (A.B. 39: 189). The Tufted Duck × scaup hybrid returned to the Columbia R. near near Maryhill, *Klickitat* 1–5 Jan (AS, ES, SJ). Three Tufted Ducks this winter included eastside singles at Potholes Res., *Grant* 13 Feb (ph. DSc) and Vantage, *Kittitas* 20 Feb+ (ph. DG); there are nine previous e. Washington records. Harlequin Ducks, very rare e. of the Cascades, were near Vantage, *Kittitas* 20–25 Feb (DG) and McNary Dam 18–21 Feb (CC, JC). Surf and White-winged Scoters are very rare in winter on the eastside. A White-winged was at Vantage 5 Dec (SS, MF), and a Surf was at Pelton Dam, *Jefferson* 28 Dec (M. Roening). A Surf Scoter, rare in the Willamette Valley, visited Corvallis 10 Jan (J. Simmons). Long-tailed Ducks again showed well on the eastside, with 7 detected; much more surprising was one high in the Cascades at Trail Creek Res., *Linn* 11 Dec (C&MM). A Bufflehead × goldeneye hybrid returned for its 4th consecutive winter to Wenatchee, *Chelan* (EH), while an equally unusual Barrow's Goldeneye × Common Goldeneye hybrid graced Kingston, *Kitsap* 15 Jan (M. Hobbs, B. Bell). A single Barrow's Goldeneye spent its 4th consecutive winter at Willamina, *Yamhill*, where quite rare (Q. Nice). A stunning 10,000 California Quail were tallied in Burns 26 Dec (*vide* HN).

Three Osprey, very rare during winter in Washington, were found on the westside in Feb. Red-shouldered Hawks are becoming regular during winter in e. Oregon, where singles visited Powell Butte, *Crook* 22–26 Jan (CG) and Terrebonne, *Deschutes* 26 Feb (KO); 3 in sw. Washington was typical of recent years. Washington's 3rd winter Swainson's Hawk was near Eltopia, *Franklin* 18

**SA** The recent split of Canada and Cackling Goose dramatically increased interest in "white-cheeked geese." Observers went beyond identification to species and often reported subspecies of both Canada and Cackling Geese. This has already caused much confusion, but in the long term, such careful attention promises to shed much light. Single *maxima* Canada Geese near Yakima 4 Dec (ph. DG) and Ice Harbor Dam, *Walla Walla* 15 Jan (†DG) provided Washington's first records since a failed introduction program in the early 1970s. Though kept in captivity, this species has potential as a genuine vagrant. Indeed, an observant hunter harvested 11 very large Canada Geese in the Columbia Basin between 1985 and 2001, mostly from family groups numbering up to 6 birds (DSc). Details noted on these birds strongly suggest they were *maxima*, and this race may well be a somewhat regular vagrant to e. Washington. A collection of 215+ *occidentalis* Canada Geese at Brady, *Grays Harbor* 19 Feb was quite unusual n. of Willapa Bay and were probably migrants (SM). Seven *fulva* Canada Geese, rarely reported in Washington, overwintered again at Warm Beach, *Snohomish* (SM). Surprising were 2 apparent nominate-race **Cackling Geese**, which would be the Region's first, at Brady 19 Feb (vt. SM); the identification was supported by several outside sources (P. Bannon, B. Deuel, CCx). Finally, the Cackling Goose race *minima* has been variously labeled "rare" and "uncommon" on the eastside. This winter, 17 were recorded in *Grant* and *Yakima*, with a maximum of 8 at Selah, *Yakima* 15 Dec (DSc, DG).

Feb (BF); the 2nd was last year in nearby *Benton*. Two Ferruginous Hawks near Ewan, *Whitman* 12 Feb were about three weeks early (G. Sheridan), while one found dead at Baskett Slough, *Polk* 27 Feb yielded a very rare westside record (RG, B. Tice). Ten Washington and 2 Oregon Gyrfalcons was about average, but one wintering as far s. as N.S.C.B. was rather unusual (TR), and one at Owyhee Res. 12 Jan was *Malheur's* first (C. Weisse). W. Washington had but one Prairie Falcon, and numbers were subpar in w. Oregon as well. For the 4th consecutive winter, Soras were detected in w. Washington, with singles at Kirkland, *King* 27 Jan (MFM) and Belfair, *Pierce* 19 Feb (K. & S. Graham); much rarer was one in e. Washington at Toppenish N.W.R., *Yakima* 19 Dec (D. Brown).

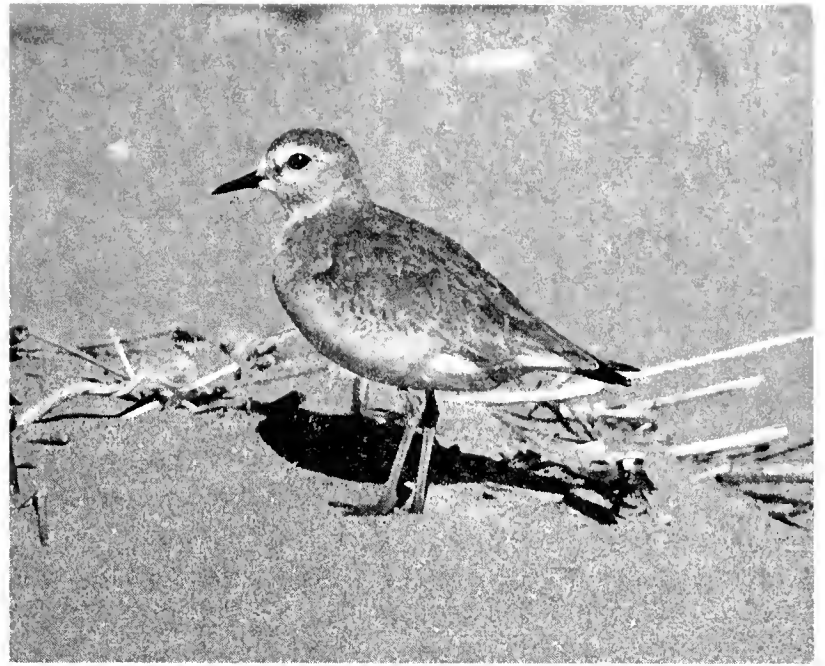
### SHOREBIRDS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

Pacific Golden-Plovers, not annual during winter, visited F.R.R. 2 Jan (DI, NS), Tillamook Bay 21 Feb (E. Scattaregia), and, for the 4th consecutive year, wintered at Tangent, *Linn* (RG). Fifty Snowy Plovers were counted on Midway Beach, *Pacific* 31 Jan, tying the Washington record set last winter at the same location (CW); also notable were 38 at Siltcoos Beach, *Lane* 1 Feb (D. Lauten, K. Castelein). A Washington winter record 100 Semipalmated Plovers gathered at O.S. 3 Feb (DD). Washington's 4th Mountain Plover visited Oysterville, *Pacific* 24–27 Feb (ph. K. Brennan, †J. Buchanan); most Regional records have been Nov–Feb from the outer coast. Washington's 2nd winter American Avocet was at Blaine, *Whatcom* 5 Jan (J. A. & H. MacKenzie). A Lesser Yellowlegs visited Stanwood, *Snohomish* 8 Jan (SM), making it five consecutive winters for Washington, which had only one record during the 1990s; in Oregon, where more regular, 2 overwintered at F.R.R. (LM, DI). Marbled Godwits are increasing Regionwide. An Oregon winter-record 64 were at Coos Bay 19 Dec (TR). Rare away from the outer coast during winter, 4 Marbled Godwits wintered at Port Susan Bay, *Snohomish* (SM, TA), while 2 others visited Port Townsend 16 Dec (R. Sikes). A Spotted Sandpiper inhabited Bennington L., *Walla Walla* 2–12 Dec (M&MLD) and Bingen, *Klickitat* 4 Jan (SJ); formerly considered casual during winter on the eastside, they have been recorded there four of the last five winters. Least Sandpipers are also increasing as eastside winterers; this year, 18+ were found, with a maximum of 7 at W.W.R.D. 31 Dec (SM, BF, CB); on the westside, 300 at Westport 31 Jan set a Washington winter record (CW), and nearly as unusual were 300 at F.R.R. 5 Jan (LM). Dunlin now also winter annually on the eastside, but this winter's maximum of 30 at Moses L., *Grant* 2 Jan was poor by recent standards (DSc). Two Long-billed Dowitchers, a species still not

annual e. of the Cascades, were at Moses L. 10 Dec–2 Jan (DSc).

Seven Pomarine Jaegers off Westport 19 Feb provided a high count for mid-winter (BT). Washington's 9th winter Franklin's Gull appeared near Carnation, *King* 6 Jan (EH). A tally of 18 Mew Gulls at Hood R. 9 Jan likely set an eastside record (SJ). Exceptional eastside winter concentrations of California Gulls included 620 at Lower Monumental Dam 22 Jan (M&MLD) and 525 at McNary Dam 31 Dec (SM, BF, CB). There were four Iceland Gulls this winter in Washington, bringing that state's total to 13! Singles visited Renton, *King* 8 Dec (vt. S. Pink, †DD, J. Flynn), Tacoma 23 Dec (†SM, DD), W.W.R.D. 31 Dec (vt. SM, BF, CB), and the Elwha R. mouth, *Clallam* 8 Feb (†BS, B. Mulrooney); the *Clallam* bird looked like a classic ad. of the nominate race—can Kumlien's ever be such an exact match? The W.W.R.D. Lesser Black-backed Gull returned for its 5th consecutive winter 6 Feb (M&MLD). Single Slaty-backed Gulls at Renton 11 Dec (vt. SM, ph. JB, †KA) and Port Gardner Bay, *Snohomish* 18 Dec (†DD) added to six prior Washington records, all but one of which was 30 Dec–11 Mar. The Western Gull at Moses L., *Grant* lingered through 4 Dec (DSc). Glaucous Gull numbers continue to rebound, with 22 in Washington and 12 in Oregon. The count of 221 Black-legged Kittiwakes off Westport 19 Feb was above normal (BT), but only 4 were off Newport 2 Jan (GG). Washington's 6th Red-legged Kittiwake flew past Ft. Canby S.P., *Pacific* 10 Jan (†T. Guy).

The assemblage of 128,000 Common Murres at Cape Meares, *Tillamook* 18 Dec was among the largest ever during winter (PP). Washington's 12th Thick-billed Murre flew past Port Townsend 23 Dec (†S. Mills); after a 12-year hiatus, Washington has had 4



Washington's fourth Mountain Plover was found 24 (hear 26) February 2005 near Oysterville by Kirsten Brennan while she was surveying shorebirds on Willapa Bay. Surprisingly, most of the Region's records are from November through February on the outer coast. Photograph by Aaron Martin.

Thick-billeds in the past three years. A stunning 2460 Ancient Murrelets were counted between Protection I. and Dungeness Spit, *Clallam* 20 Dec (CW, BLB). Perhaps related to the Horned Puffin influx, a Parakeet Auklet was inshore at Tillamook Bay 21 Feb (†M. Scattargia, C. & A. Hinkle); there are only about 20 records from Oregon during the past 30 years, mostly of beached dead birds. From early Jan onward, dozens of dead and dying Horned Puffins appeared on Oregon beaches. Apparently healthy birds were at Fogarty Creek S.P., *Lincoln* 12 Jan (R. Bjerre) and near Florence, *Lane* 25 Jan (P. Sherrell) and 20 Feb (DI, J. Brown); oddly, only one appeared in Washington, a dead bird near Surfside, *Pacific* 24 Jan (L. Bierma, S. Clark). The cause of this influx remains mysterious, and excess mortality was not noted in other alcids.

The Eurasian Collared-Dove takeover of Oregon continued, with 2 wintering at Pilot Rock, *Umatilla* (CC) and singles at Tigard, *Washington* 13 Feb (J. Wrinn) and Merrill, *Klamath* 24 Feb (J. Van Moorhem). Ten Snowy Owls was fairly typical for a non-invasion year, with a peak of 5 near Moses L., *Grant* 27 Dec (DSc). Oregon's 3rd Northern Hawk Owl, and first in 22 years, was near

**SA** The Puget Sound region is infamous for its hybrid gulls; nonetheless, they have received little scrutiny. Glaucous-winged Gulls are the dominant large gull there. Herring and Western Gulls are typically scarce. Indeed "pure" Glaucous-wingeds outnumber "pure" Westerns by about 500:1. On 8 Feb, a careful examination of 1500–2000 large gulls in Renton, *King* revealed that apparent hybrids or backcrosses constituted 25% of the flock, including 10% Glaucous-winged Gull × Herring Gull, 10% Glaucous-winged Gull × Western Gull, and another 5% that defied labeling (CCx). A similar survey in Tacoma 21 Feb consisted of approximately 20% apparent hybrids, but Glaucous-winged Gull × Western Gull hybrids clearly predominated (CCx, JB, SM, DD). To what degree these proportions apply elsewhere in the Puget Trough is unknown. Otherwise, a few Glaucous-winged Gull × Glaucous Gull hybrids were detected in w. Washington, and a rare Glaucous Gull × Herring Gull hybrid visited Renton 8 Feb (CCx).

Elsewhere, the eastside's first Glaucous-winged Gull × Herring Gull hybrid was near Cold Springs, *Umatilla* 31 Dec (SM, BF, CB); the lack of earlier records was most likely due to lack of observer attention to large gulls there.



Bend 3 Feb+ (C. Vaughn). Single Burrowing Owls near Othello, Adams 7 Jan (BF) and W. Richland, Benton 23 Jan (T. Clarke) were the only ones detected in e. Washington, while 5 in w. Oregon was better than average. Rare in e. Washington away from Klickitat, an Anna's Hummingbird wintered in Cowiche Canyon, Yakima (DG). Five Costa's Hummingbirds visited Oregon; of Oregon's approximately 20 winter records, nine were during the last two years. A Rufous/Allen's Hummingbird visited Seattle 11 Dec (D. Harville), and 4 more were noted in w. Oregon during Dec/Jan; mid-winter *Selasphorus* are casual in Washington and very rare in Oregon. Single Rufous Hummingbirds at Dungeness, Clallam 30 Jan (K. Wiersma) and Ocean Park, Pacific 31 Jan were six weeks early (*vide* MP) and were followed by 6 more scattered through w. Washington in mid-Feb (*vide* MP). Williamson's Sapsuckers, very rare during winter, were at Walla Walla mid-Nov–19 Jan (M&MLD), Kennewick, Benton 28 Jan–1 Feb (DR), and Klamath Falls 8 Jan+ (J. Van Moorhem). A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, now virtually annual in Oregon, was at John Day, Grant 4 Nov–4 Jan (ph. C. & M. O'Leary).

Rare w. of the Cascades, a Red-naped Sapsucker visited Silverton, Marion 6 Jan (J. Reid). Three Red-breasted Sapsuckers were found e. of the Cascades, where barely annual, including one far e. in N. Richland, Benton 24 Feb (M. Lilga).

### FLYCATCHERS THROUGH FINCHES

Washington's first winter *Empidonax* was a Least Flycatcher at Kent, King 5 Jan (+KA); the Region's previous winter record was from Tillamook in Dec 1992. Washington's 7th Black Phoebe was at Vancouver L., Clark 12–21 Feb (K. Perrilo, ph. E. Bjorkman); most of Washington's records have been from the sw. during winter. This species continues to expand its range in w. Oregon, where singles wintered as far n. as Yamhill and Polk. More than 10 Say's Phoebes lingered into Dec and Jan on the eastside, at least double the norm, while one at Kent 6 Dec+ furnished only the 4th true winter record for w. Washington (CW); in w. Oregon, 4 Say's was fairly typical. A Tropical Kingbird lingered in Astoria through 17 Dec (MP); there are only seven prior winter records, five of which came from the preceding four years. A Hutton's Vireo near Walla Walla 18–22 Dec furnished Washington's



Oregon's third Northern Hawk Owl, a most cooperative bird, spent much of the winter near Bend, Deschutes County, delighting throngs of Oregonians (and a few folks from Washington and California as well). This image was taken on 23 February 2005. The last Oregon record was in 1983. Photograph by Steve Berliner.

easternmost record (ph. M&MLD). Loggerhead Shrikes were unusually prevalent in e. Washington, with at least 8 detected, more than twice the norm; the only westside bird was near Lebanon, Linn 29 Dec (RG). After their strong showing this fall, Blue Jays remained numerous, with 37 in Washington and 17 in Oregon, including maxima of 7 at Cheney, Whitman 29 Dec (M. Moskwik) and 5 at Pullman, Whitman 28 Feb (D&TW); surprisingly, only 3 were detected on the westside. In Washington, flocks of 30 Clark's Nutcrackers at Kettle Falls, Ferry 13 Dec (L. Dubbels) and 60 at Rose Cr., Whitman 29 Jan (D&TW) were away from their normal haunts. In w. Oregon, wayward nutcrackers were at Brownsmead, Clatsop 5 Dec (MP) and St. Helens, Columbia 6 Dec (I. Larson). A long-staying Black-billed Magpie, very rare on the westside, wintered at Monmouth, Polk (RG).

Two Tree Swallows near Tenino, Thurston 1 Jan provided a very rare mid-winter Washington record (BS); even rarer were up to 30 at F.R.R. 22 Dec–2 Jan (D. Arendt, LM). Prior to 2001, Barn Swallows were rare winter visitors, mainly in Dec. During the ensuing three years, there were early to mid-Jan incursions involving dozens of birds. This

winter, Barn Swallows were present throughout the season, with Washington totals of 66 in Dec, 58 in Jan, and 148 in Feb; maxima included 50 at Vancouver L., Clark 21 Feb (J. Gatchet) and 45 at Tenant L., Whatcom 5 Feb (H. Flores). On the eastside, 3 were in Washington and 4 were in Oregon; e. Washington had only two winter records prior to 2003. Two Black-capped Chickadees made a most unusual mid-Columbia Basin appearance at Potholes S.P., Grant 1 Jan+ (SM, RH, DSc, BF, BSc). The Mountain Chickadee irruption quickly subsided in Dec, though a few remained in the lowlands through the season, with a maximum of 20 at Potholes 6 Feb (G. Sheridan). Two Chestnut-backed there 1 Jan+ were a first for Grant (RH, BSc, BF, DSc, SM), while 2 Chestnut-backed at Bridgeport 12–13 Feb were the 3rd and 4th for Douglas (PtS, RS). At least 4 White-breasted Nuthatches lingered in the Tri-Cities/Walla Walla area, where they are normally very rare, and the 2 on Vashon I. remained until mid-Feb (E. Swan). Three Rock Wrens, rare on the outer coast, were at Port Orford, Curry 22 Dec, with at least one wintering (L. Miller).

As has become the case with other semi-hardy eastside birds, an unusual number of Western Bluebirds lingered into Jan, including 15 near Lyle, Klickitat 9 Jan (AS, ES) and a Washington winter-record 24, near Dixie, Walla Walla 25 Dec (M&MLD). Western North America's first Redwing graced Olympia 21 Dec+ (G. Revelas); Redwings breed into e. Siberia and have a strong westerly component to their fall migration, making them a prime candidate for vagrancy to w. North America via 180° misorientation. The Region's 3rd winter Gray Catbird visited Lost Creek Res., Jackson 4–6 Dec (N. Barrett, J. Houle); catbirds are extremely rare on the westside at any season. The Sage Thrasher at Lummi Flats, Whatcom lingered until 13 Dec, providing Washington's 3rd winter record (J. Duemmel). Remarkably, a Northern Mockingbird at Edmonds, Snohomish 28–29 Dec yielded the season's sole sighting (A. Winkie). As American Pipits are rare during winter in e. Washington, a tally of 30 near Walla Walla 12 Dec was noteworthy (M&MLD), but even more so was a Washington winter record 250 near Wishram, Klickitat 9 Jan (AS, ES). No longer annual on the westside, 4 Bohemian Waxwings visited Seattle 26 Dec (EH).

Now virtually annual during winter, a

Nashville Warbler visited Eugene 14 Dec (NS). Washington's 2nd Cape May Warbler graced a Spokane feeder early Jan+ (†C. McCormack, ph. T. Munson, ph. G. MacDonald), 30 years after the first was recorded in Bellingham. The Black-throated Blue Warbler near Bonneville Dam, *Multnomah* lingered until at least 27 Dec (SJ), and another attended a Portland feeder 8 Jan+ (S. Sterne), furnishing Oregon's 3rd and 4th winter records. Not annual during winter, single Black-throated Gray Warblers visited Vancouver, *Clark* 28 Dec (S. Hagen) and Tillamook 18 Dec (*fide* O. Schmidt). A Yellow-throated Warbler at Seaside, *Clatsop* 29 Jan+ (S. Warner) was the Region's 2nd to winter and Oregon's 6th overall. Rare away from the outer coast, a Palm Warbler lingered through 22 Jan at Edmonds, *Snohomish* (DD), and another visited Skagit W.M.A. 2 Feb (TA); 22 on the Port Orford C.B.C. 26 Dec set an Oregon C.B.C. record (*fide* J. Rogers). Very rare during winter, a Black-and-white Warbler appeared in Richland, *Benton* 1 Jan (†R. Johnson); there are approximately 45 Washington records. Washington's 2nd winter MacGillivray's Warbler appeared near Bayview, *Skagit* 2 Jan (†K. Kemper). Common Yellowthroats, not annual after Dec in Washington, were at Skagit W.M.A. (SS, MF) and Seattle, both 16 Jan (J. Bragg); only 3 were reported this winter from Oregon. Single Wilson's Warblers at Lyon's Ferry, *Franklin* 4 Dec (M&MLD) and Bridgeport, *Douglas* 11 Dec (M. Spencer) yielded e. Washington's first winter records. Westside Wilson's included individuals near Edison, *Skagit* 2 Jan (P. DeBruyn, G. Walker) and N. Portland 11 Dec–2 Jan (J. Rakestraw); of Washington's 19 winter records, 12 were from the last seven years. A Western Tanager at Richland, *Benton* 9 Dec furnished e. Washington's 2nd winter record (BW, NL), while in w. Oregon, singles visited McMinnville, *Yamhill* 9–25 Dec (F. Schrock), Salem 16 Feb (P. Swenson), and Milwaukie, *Clackamas* throughout the winter (D. Hopp); Oregon had but six prior winter records and Washington 10.

An American Tree Sparrow, rare in w. Oregon, stopped at Baskett Slough, *Polk* 13 Dec (RG). Four Chipping Sparrows, rare during winter in Oregon, were at Baskett Slough 2 Jan (RG). Single Clay-colored Sparrows at Finley N.W.R., *Benton* 23 Jan (R. Robb) and near Snohomish 31 Jan–8 Feb (CCx) were the only ones detected. Fifteen Savannah Sparrows at Columbia N.W.R., *Grant* 4 Feb highlighted an excellent winter for this species on the eastside (RH). A Red Fox Sparrow at Nisqually, *Thurston* 4 Feb added to about 17 prior Washington records (†B. Shelmerdine); almost as rare was one at Corvallis 31 Jan (HH). Three Slate-colored Fox Sparrows in w. Washington added to the ev-

idence that they winter annually in the Region. Utterly unexpected was a Thick-billed Fox Sparrow of one of the larger-billed races (i.e., not *fulva*) near Snohomish 26–28 Feb (†SM, DD); as this subspecies group migrates early, this bird may have been a "spring overshoot" rather than a winterer. Sixteen Swamp Sparrows was better than average for Washington and included 2 in e. Washington, where now annual. Harris's Sparrow numbers were up a tad, with 8 on the westside and 13 on the east. Slate-colored Juncos were unusually prevalent, with record tallies of 7 (plus 2 *cismontanus*) at Wahluke Slope, *Franklin* 4 Dec (SM, BF, ST) and 6 on the Lummi Flats, *Whatcom* 14 Jan (CW). Oregon's 8th record of McCown's Longspur was provided by one at Lower Klamath N.W.R. 1 Jan–15 Feb (J. Fairchild, C&MM); all but two of Oregon's records are from *Klamath*. Single Rose-breasted Grosbeaks lingered at Newport, *Lincoln* through 12 Dec (L. Osis) and Coos Bay through 19 Dec (L. Topits), while another visited Cape Meares, *Tillamook* 28 Dec (M. Tweelinckx); there were approximately seven previous Oregon winter records. Equally rare during winter, a Black-headed Grosbeak graced Roseburg, *Douglas* 2 Feb (D. Worsley).

The feedlots at Othello, *Adams* provided record tallies of 15,000 Red-winged and 3000 Yellow-headed Blackbirds 8 Jan (RH) and 800 Brown-headed Cowbirds 20 Feb (BF), plus a near-record 69 Tricolored Blackbirds 21 Feb (BF); these were not just winter records, but top counts for any time of year, demonstrating the importance of feedlots and dairies to wintering blackbirds throughout the Region. A Tricolored near Sundale 11 Feb was *Klickitat's* 2nd (†SJ, †D. Gadway, C. Flick). Per usual, single Rusty Blackbirds were near Conway, *Skagit* 1–29 Jan (R. Merrill) and in *Kittitas* 28 Jan (S. Downes). A tally of 375 Brown-headed Cowbirds near Sylvania, *Snohomish* 27 Feb furnished a w. Washington winter record (SM); this species' winter numbers are rapidly increasing. This winter's Bullock's Oriole lingered through 21 Dec at Astoria, *Clatsop* (MP). A swarm of 3000 Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches was near Heppner, *Morrow* 8 Jan (CC, JC). Not annual w. of the Cascades, a Gray-crowned remained at Marrowstone Pt., *Jefferson* through 4 Dec (BN), and one visited the Lummi Flats, *Whatcom* 1 Dec (W. Weber). More Purple Finches than normal wandered into the Columbia Basin, with a maximum of 7 at Selah, *Yakima* 18 Dec (D. Brown). Pine Grosbeaks pushed far s. and w. of their usual Oregon haunts. Flocks of 15+ at Santiam Pass in the Cascades 1 Jan (D. Tracy) and near Paulina, *Deschutes* 4 Feb (M. Feiger) were at locations where this species is quite rare, and 6 at Hart Mt., *Lake* 19 Dec were at a spot where the species is not de-

tected annually (C&MM). Common Redpoll numbers were up, with 915 in n.-cen. *Okanogan* in late Dec (K. Kemper) and 65 at Newhalem, *Skagit* 17 Dec (G. Bletsch, B. Kuntz), providing castside and westside maxima, respectively; the most southerly was one at Burns, *Harney* 24 Dec (J. Carlson). A Washington record 150 Lesser Goldfinches were along Cherry Orchard Trail, *Klickitat* 9 Jan (AS, ES).

**Addenda & corrigenda:** Washington's first Blue Goose was found at University of Washington's Burke Museum, having been collected in Bothell, *King* 9 Sep 1936; it also furnishes the earliest fall record. The hybrid goose that appeared in *N.A.B.* 58: 423 was erroneously identified as a Greater White-fronted Goose × Canada Goose. More detailed evaluations by authorities led to three suggestions: Emperor × Cackling/Canada, Snow × Cackling/Canada, and Snow × Greater White-fronted (B. Deuel, H. Lehto, M. O'Brien, M. Ogilvie, D. Sibley). The orange legs and pink-and-black mottled bill made Emperor Goose × Cackling/Canada Goose the leading candidate, and Emperor × *B. h. minima* is a hybrid known to have occurred in the wild. A male Costa's Hummingbird × Anna's Hummingbird hybrid appeared in Bend, *Deschutes* 12 May 2004 (T. Janzen, DMA, J. Withgott). Outside review of the Red Fox Sparrow reported near Monroe 14 Feb–4 Mar 2004 revealed that it was erroneously identified, and the bird was most likely an intergrade between Red Fox Sparrow and Sooty Fox Sparrow, a cross that is not rare in parts of s. Alaska (T. Tobish).

**Initialed observers** (subregional editors in boldface): Kevin Aanerud, Tom Aversa (Washington), Jessie Barry, Casey Beachell, Keith Brady, Wilson Cady, Craig Corder, Judy Corder, Cameron Cox (CCx), Mike & Merry Lynn Denny, Don DeWitt (DDW), Dennis Duffy, Joe Engler (*Clark*), Bob Flores, Chuck Gates (*Crook*), Greg Gillson, Denny Granstrand (*Yakima*), Hendrik Herlyn, Randy Hill, Eugene Hunn, Stuart Johnston, Bruce LaBar (BLB), Bill LaFranboise (lower Columbia Basin), Nancy LaFranboise, David Mandell (DMA), Mary Francis Mathis (MFM), Larry McQueen, Tom Mickel (*Lane*), Craig & Marilyn Miller, Harry Nehls (Oregon), Bob Norton (Olympic Pen.), Kimdel Owen, Michael Patterson (*Clatsop*), Dennis Paulson, Phil Pickering, Dennis Rockwell, Tim Rodenkirk (Coos), Steven Schlick, Barbara Schonewald (BSe), Doug Schonewald (DSe), Andy & Ellen Stepniewski, Noah Strycker, Patrick Sullivan (PtS), Ruth Sullivan, Bob Sundstrom, Sam Terry, Iain Tomlinson, Dennis Vroman (*Josephine*), Brad Wagonner (BSW), Diane & Tom Weber, Bob Woodley, Charlie Wright. 🍷

# Northern California



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The winter season featured mild temperatures with no extended cold snaps, but rain fell in copious amounts throughout the period, resulting in rainfall totals as high as 200% of normal in some areas. Unusual wintering warblers, usually a staple of the Region's winter column, were notably scarce. This absence was more than made up for, however, by numerous outstanding rarities, including the continuing Common Black-Hawk, multiple wintering Iceland Gulls, and the Region's second wintering Sedge Wren. By far the highlight of the season, however, was Jaramillo's discovery of at least three Slaty-backed Gulls.

Abbreviations: C.B.R.C. (California B.R.C.); C.R.P. (Cosumnes R. Preserve, Sacramento); C.V. (Central Valley); FI. (Southeast Farallon I., San Francisco); P.R.B.O. (Pt. Reyes B.O.); S.F. (San Francisco). Reports of exceptional vagrants submitted without documentation are not published. Documentation for C.B.R.C. review species will be forwarded to Guy McCaskie, Secretary, P.O. Box 275, Imperial Beach, California 91933. Birds banded on FI. should be credited to Point Reyes B.O. and those banded at Big Sur R. mouth to the Big Sur Ornithology Lab of the Ventana Wilderness Society.

## LOONS THROUGH CORMORANTS

Rare inland, but very rare in the C.V., a Pacific

Loon was at L. Natomas, Sacramento 2–15 Jan (Craig Swolgaard, m.ob.). A Yellow-billed Loon at Fields Landing, Humboldt 9 Feb was seen by multiple observers but only briefly described (*vide* DFX), and another was reported, without details, off Pacific Grove, Monterey 6 Feb+ (*vide* DR). This species remains a C.B.R.C. review species and requires documentation. A Pied-billed Grebe with 2 fledglings at Briones Res., Contra Costa 19 Feb (DSW) indicated quite early nesting. Mid-winter Horned Grebes are rare in the C.V., so one 3 Jan at L. Natomas, Sacramento was noteworthy (EG). Even rarer in the C.V., a Red-necked Grebe was in n. Davis, Yolo 28 Jan–21 Feb (Jim White, m.ob.). The Laysan Albatross wintering at Pt. Arena Cove, Mendocino was last reported 28 Feb (*vide* RJK). Flesh-footed Shearwater occurs in small numbers in winter: one was reported on Monterey Bay, Monterey 14 Dec (RgW et al.), and 2 were off Monterey/Santa Cruz 30 Jan (ShJ). A Manx Shearwater was off Pt. Sur, Monterey 19 Dec (ph. DR). A Brown Booby was reported without details from FI. 22 Feb (P.R.B.O.), the location with the most observations of this species in the Region. Pelagic Cormorants are very rare away from the immediate coast, and inland stays are usually quite brief, so one at Shoreline L. 20 Dec–20 Feb (WGB, m.ob.), possibly the same as a bird here 19–21 Sep (first in Santa Clara since 1997; MDo, MJM et al.), was exceptional.

## HERONS THROUGH DUCKS

A Least Bittern was last noted at C.R.P. 11 Dec (JTr). Cattle Egret reports continue to dwindle, with only five received this season. A group of 24 tallied at Hallwood, Yuba 14 Dec (BED, PBS) was the only inland report and the only one of more than 2 birds. We encourage submission of all reports of this species to better understand its possibly changing status. High numbers of White-faced Ibis were tallied in the C.V., with 1378 reported on the Marysville C.B.C., Yuba 14 Dec and 7666 on the Peace Valley C.B.C., Sutter 21 Dec (*vide* BED). Coastal reports were much more limited, with up to 2 at Hudemann Slough, Sonoma 15 Jan–5 Feb (KWi, BDP), 2 at Kennedy Park, Napa 22 Feb (JRow, Carmen Oliver, FrO), and up to 5 in the vicinity of Zmudowski S.B., Monterey 24 Dec–17 Feb (RF, Jim & Anne Williams, BGE).

Wintering geese were well reported again this season. Particularly large groups of birds showed up coastally, with 133 Greater White-fronted Geese over the Palo Alto Baylands 11 Dec (MMR, Dean Manley) and 120



birds about equally split between Snow Goose and Ross's Goose over the Alviso Marina 15 Jan (MDO; both *Santa Clara*) being the highest coastal counts reported this season. A Greater White-fronted Goose near Hornitos 16 Feb+ (EP, m.ob.) was apparently the first for *Mariposa*. Cackling Geese are receiving more attention now that they are a full species. A now-annual occurrence, flocks of up to 5000 *leucopareia* were reported from coastal *Humboldt* 2 Jan–13 Feb (m.ob.). This subspecies was also widely reported in small numbers from many coastal locations, with counts of 26 at Hayward R.S., *Alameda* 19 Dec (RJR), 21 at L. Cunningham in San Jose, *Santa Clara* 16 Jan (SCR), and 19 at San Felipe L., *San Benito* 29 Jan (LLu, CLu) being the only reports in double-digits. Flocks of up to 50 Cackling Geese in coastal *Mendocino* 31 Jan–13 Feb (DT) and 100+ over Younger Lagoon, *Santa Cruz* 12 Jan (JLL) were not identified to race but were likely also *leucopareia*. Numerous reports of up to 5 *minima* were also received from various coastal locations. More notable was *Tuolumne's* first Cackling Goose, a *minima* 15 km sw. of Sonora 17 Jan (ph. SAG); 4 *minima* were there 5–6 Feb (DR, RC). The only report of another race was a probable *taverneri* in Redding, *Shasta* 11 Jan (BED, Rob Santry). There was only one other report of truly inland Cackling Geese. As we have little information on this new species in our notebooks, we welcome additional reports from the state's interior. An Emperor Goose at the Eel River W.A., *Humboldt* met an early demise when shot 15 Jan (Dave Kyle, *fide* RbF). Another surprise was a Barnacle Goose at the San Joaquin River N.W.R., *Stanislaus* 16–18 Jan (vt. Dave Malia, †JM). The three previous state records of this species have all been regarded by the C.B.R.C. as being of "questionable natural occurrence," but the recent sharp increase in e. North American records suggests that natural vagrants are conceivable in the West. Of more dubious origin was a returning Barnacle Goose × Cackling Goose hybrid at Hayward R.S., *Alameda* 19–25 Dec, thought to be at least 16 years old (RJR).

If accepted by the C.B.R.C., 3 Trumpeter Swans (2 ads. and an imm.) at Nicasio Res., *Marin* 6–26 Feb (LLu, CLu, m.ob.) would constitute a very unusual coastal appearance. Coastal Tundra Swans were widely reported this season, with the highlight being an ad. Bewick's Swan reported from the Eel R. delta, *Humboldt* 12 Jan (BS). Eurasian Wigeon continued to be found in impressive numbers, with well over 100 reported from 17 counties. Particularly remarkable were 24+ at Kutras L. in Redding 13 Dec (B&CY), about five times the previous *Shasta* high count! Also notable were 3 ad. males in *Lake* 26 Dec–18 Feb and another at San Felipe L., *San Benito* 29 Jan

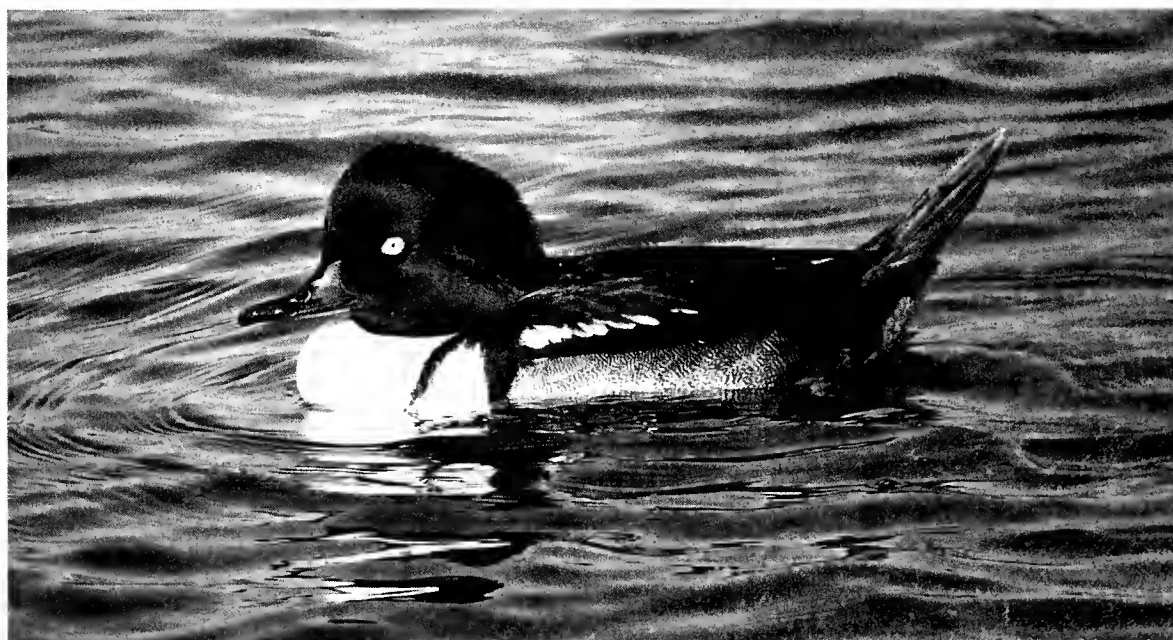
(RJA, LLu, CLu). Given these numbers, it is perhaps surprising that only 2 Eurasian Wigeon × American Wigeon hybrids were reported. A bonanza of 10,000–15,000 ducks at Redding's Kutras L., *Shasta* 13 Dec contained an estimated 3000–5000 each of American Wigeon and Northern Pintail and 2000+ Common Goldeneyes; remarkably, by the next day tallies of the first two species dropped to only 50 and 5–10, respectively. A male Mallard × Northern Pintail hybrid was at the Garcia R. flats, *Mendocino* 12 Jan (DT). Twelve Common (Eurasian Green-winged) Teal were found in eight counties, with *Humboldt* and *Santa Clara* hosting 3 each. Additionally, 4 hybrids with American Green-winged Teal were found in *Humboldt*, *San Mateo*, and *Santa Clara*.

South Humboldt Bay, *Humboldt* often harbors our highest Redhead counts, but 478 in "one tight flock" 2 Jan (RbF) is one of the highest counts in our notebooks. Nine Tufted Ducks from seven counties included *Mariposa's* first, a female below the L. McSwain Dam 17 Jan that spent most of her time in nearby *Merced* 17 Jan–12 Feb (SAG, m.ob.). An inland male Greater Scaup at the Sacramento N.W.R. 5 Dec (BED) was one of very few records for *Glenn*. An imm. male Harlequin Duck at the w. end of the San Mateo Bridge in Foster City, *San Mateo* 1 Jan–30 Mar (RSTh, KO, Ken Burton) was the south-

27 Long-tailed Ducks included inland birds at *Butte's* Sacramento N.W.R. 8 Jan (ph. John Lewis, Mike Skram) and Oroville W.A. 17 Feb–3 Mar (*fide* BED, Paul & Rita Rosso) and the female continuing at the O'Neill Forebay, *Merced* through 29 Dec (m.ob.). Barrow's Goldeneye × Common Goldeneye hybrids were found at Shoreline L., *Santa Clara* 4 Dec–19 Feb (MMR, MJM, m.ob.) and in Redding, *Shasta* 13 Jan (RBr, Rob Santry). Less expected was a Hooded Merganser × Barrow's Goldeneye hybrid at L. Merritt, *Alameda* 8 Jan–6 Feb (Ron Thompson, ph. Steve Look, ph. JM, m.ob.), presumably the same bird as the imm. present last year (*N.A.B.* 58: 428). Inland Red-breasted Mergansers included up to 4 at Redding, *Shasta* 10 Dec–10 Feb (RBr, BED, Rob Santry, B&CY) and one at L. Success, *Tulare* 25 Feb (Steve Summers).

### RAPTORS THROUGH RAILS

At least one White-tailed Kite near Honey Lake W.A. 4–12 Jan constituted only the 2nd winter record for *Lassen* since 1980 (Robert Hill, JLx, FrO, EP, JRa). The returning Common Black-Hawk, first refound last season, became more dependable while visiting North L. in Stockton, *San Joaquin* 17 Jan–12 Mar (DGY, ph. †MMR, ph. †JM, m.ob.). As was true last year, this bird was attracted to the easy fishing when this lake was drawn



This striking duck—apparently a Hooded Merganser × Barrow's Goldeneye hybrid—spent 8 (here 22) January–6 February 2005 at Oakland's Lake Merritt, Alameda County. Quite possibly the same individual, then in its first winter, was noted there briefly in March 2004. This hybrid combination is previously unknown. Photograph by Joe Morlan.

ernmost ever in S.F. Bay, beating out the ad. male continuing at Coyote Pt. 11 Jan–26 Feb (m.ob.). A inland male in *Merced* R. rapids below El Portal, *Mariposa* 26 Feb (Jared Verner) continued the string of sightings in this area but was upstaged by *Yolo's* first, a male shot by a hunter at the Yolo Bypass W.A. 23 Jan (*fide* CCo). Inland White-winged Scoters included *Trinity's* 2nd, a first-winter male at Lewiston L. 18 Feb (FrO), and a male at the O'Neil Forebay, *Merced* 21 Jan–10 Feb (Gary Woods, m.ob.). Reports of

down. A Broad-winged Hawk was reported at L. Merced, *S.F.* 6–15 Jan (DPM, ASH, m.ob.). A late dark-morph ad. Swainson's Hawk was at Madera, *Madera* 1 Dec (JND). Returning Harlan's Hawks were found n. of the San Jose Airport, *Santa Clara* 19 Dec (ADeM, GHt, DJK) and n. of Devil's Den in s. *Kings* 2 Dec (JSy). Another wintered n. of Eureka, *Humboldt* 21 Dec–14 Feb (RbF, ScC). Second-hand reports of last season's Crested Caracara continued, with a rancher in the Eel R. delta, *Humboldt* apparently

hosting the bird with road kills through Jan (*fide* SWH). A Gyrfalcon n. of Honey L. 7 Feb (BMS, Frank Hall) would be the first for *Lassen* and the 11th for the state if accepted by the C.B.R.C.

Wild Turkeys continue their expansion into *Santa Cruz*, where 121 were tallied on the Santa Cruz C.B.C. 18 Dec, a year after being first recorded on this count! They are



After irregular appearances in the fall, this returning Common Black-Hawk finally became somewhat predictable when it regularly visited North Lake in Stockton, San Joaquin County during the second half of (here 18) January 2005. After month's end, it once again wandered unpredictably around western Stockton until at least 12 March. Photograph by Todd Easterla.

now being reported in suburban backyards within a few blocks of the coast. A Yellow Rail was seen by a throng of observers at Tomales Bay, *Marin* during the 10 Jan high tide (EDG, WEH, m.ob.). Several Black Rails were seen here 12 Dec and 10 Jan as well, with most being eaten by Great Blue Herons and Great Egrets (EDG, m.ob.).

## SHOREBIRDS

Wintering Pacific Golden-Plovers included one at Merced N.W.R., *Merced* 30 Dec–16 Feb (JHG, EP, JRa, FrO), another at the Fresno W.T.P., *Fresno* 14 Dec (JND), and 3 at the Modesto W.T.P., *Stanislaus* 2 Jan (JHG). A Mountain Plover at Hartson L. 4 Jan (CPD) was only the 3rd *Lassen* record. The previous two records, involving 8 birds 25–30 Jan 2002 (Tom Rickman et al.) and 2 birds 7 Feb 2003 (DS, PJM, †FrT et al.), were found in the same vicinity, suggesting that this may be a new regular location for the species. Up to 244 Mountain Plovers w. of Madera 22–27 Feb (Gary Woods, MiF, KVV, JND) constituted only the 3rd record for *Madera*, although the species may prove regular with increased coverage of the county lowlands. The same area hosted up to 1500 Long-billed Curlews 27 Feb (Gary Woods, JND), about 7.5% of the estimated global population. Rock Sandpipers at southerly locations included one at Fl. 15 Dec (P.R.B.O.) and the returnee along West Cliff Drive in *Santa Cruz* continuing through 2 Apr (SGe, DLSu, RgW, m.ob.). The only Stilt Sandpiper reported was at Merced

N.W.R., *Merced* 6–14 Feb (LCh, SAG, JHG). For the 2nd winter in a row, a Wilson's Phalarope was found at the Yolo Bypass W.A., *Yolo*, again on 26 Dec (TCO). Red Phalaropes were scarce; besides 100+ off Bodega Head, *Sonoma* 2 Jan (BDP) the only reports were of a single bird at Shoreline L., *Santa Clara* 1 Jan (Roland Kenner, Pat Kenny, RWR et al.) and 3 on Monterey Bay 30 Jan (ShJ).

## LARIDS THROUGH ALCIDS

An ad. Laughing Gull was off Ocean Beach, *S.F.* 31 Dec (†PSar). An ad. Mew Gull at the Fresno W.T.P. 29 Jan (GWPo, m.ob.) represented the 6th for *Fresno* since Jan 2004; there were only three records prior to that. The increase in detections is likely due to recent, increased scrutiny of gull flocks in this area. Elsewhere inland, Mew Gulls made an exceptional showing in *Shasta*, where 25–30 were

found during the period (BED et al.). Likewise, Thayer's Gulls have been considered quite rare in the San Joaquin Valley, but increased scrutiny of large gull flocks produced 8 during the period. In *Fresno*, 5 were at the American Avenue Landfill 14 Dec (JND, Lowell Young), and another was at Clovis 18 Jan (GWPo, Jack Guffey); in *Kings*, one was at the Nevada Ave. ponds 4 Dec (SAG), and another was s. of Corcoran 17 Jan (JCS). A second-winter Iceland Gull was well documented at Hidden L. Park, Milpitas, *Santa Clara* 22 Feb–7 Mar (ph., †AJ, ph., †m.ob.). Gulls showing characteristics of Iceland Gulls have been documented in the Region, but observations of a number of morphological "intergrades" between Iceland (*kumlieni*) and Thayer's have complicated the issue. The Hidden L. bird appears to be solidly within the Iceland group, but evaluation by the C.B.R.C. is pending. Another bird, apparently an ad.

*kumlieni*, was at the Yolo County Landfill, *Yolo* 20 Jan (ph. JKn, Richard Millington). There were only 6 Western Gulls reported from inland locations, where they are scarce and local, and one at Delevan N.W.R. 19 Feb (ph. LLu, CLu) was the first for *Colusa*. Glaucous Gulls were found in average numbers, with 20–25 in the Region. The highest concentration was in coastal *San Mateo*, where at least 6 were present (AJ, m.ob.).

A Caspian Tern at the Holland Tract 10–22 Dec, joined by another bird 22 Dec, evidently represented the first winter record for *Contra Costa* (DSW, SAG et al.). A first-winter Common Tern at Capitola, *Santa Cruz* 17–18 Dec (DLSu) was likely a late migrant. Rare in the Region in winter, 2 Xantus's Murrelets were just off Pt. Sur, *Monterey* 19 Dec (DR). Erratic and rare in the Region at any time of year, 3 Horned Puffins were in *Humboldt*: one (dead) at Centerville Beach 14 Jan (Shail Pec-Crouse, *fide* EE), one near Trinidad 8 Feb (Michael Morris), and one at Samoa Beach 20 Feb (Amanda Austin).

## DOVES THROUGH THRUSHES

First county records of Eurasian Collared-Dove were recorded near Corralitos, *Santa Cruz* 1 Jan (DLSu) and Susanville, *Lassen* 27 Feb (PJM, DS). Rare *Mono* winter doves included a White-winged at Paradise 8 Jan (DHo) and a Mourning at Thompson Ranch 19 Dec (Don Banta). *Santa Clara's* urban Greater Roadrunner at Alviso was present through at least 5 Mar (m.ob.). Six White-throated Swifts at Buckingham Bluffs 18 Dec provided a very rare winter record for *Lake* (BJMcI). A female Costa's Hummingbird at Bayside 7 Dec–14 Jan represented a rare *Humboldt* record (†DFx et al.). Allen's Hummingbirds at Año Nuevo S.R. (AdW) and L. Lucerne 2 Jan (ADeM) were the earliest ever found in *San Mateo*; one at La Selva, *Santa Cruz* (Jennifer Green) beat them by a day. The inland status of Allen's e. of Coast Range breeding sites is muddled, so an ad. male found dead at Rancho Cordova, *Sacramento* 7 Feb was noteworthy (*fide* AEn).

Vagrant Williamson's Sapsuckers were at *San Mateo* 18 Dec–15 Jan (*San Mateo's* 4th; Eric Goodill, m.ob.), L. Cunningham, *San*

**SA** A highly coastal species of ne. Asia, Slaty-backed Gull occurs regularly in North America only in coastal and insular Alaska. Vagrants, however, have been recorded widely across the Continent, even to the East Coast. Given that, the relative dearth of records on the West Coast s. of Alaska (there are as yet no accepted records for California) is perplexing. This season (and into Mar), Jaramillo repeatedly searched through the gull concentrations at Venice Beach, *San Mateo*, where he found 3 Slaty-backed Gulls: a first-winter (13 Jan–20 Feb), a third-winter (20 Jan–19 Feb), and a fourth-winter or older (21 Mar). All were well documented, including excellent photographs, and have been approved in C.B.R.C. review. The fact that there were three at a single location is astonishing and raises some fundamental questions. Is this species regular in small numbers along the coast but largely missed in the masses of wintering gulls? Was this an invasion year, but with birds only detected at this location? Or was this a unique occurrence? With increased understanding of the identification of all age classes of this species, especially relative to hybrids, and increased coverage of gull concentrations along the West Coast, we may obtain answers to these questions.



Jose 11 Feb–30 Mar (*Santa Clara's* 3rd; Kim Blythe, m.ob.), and Boggs Mt. S.F. 24–26 Feb (*Lake's* first; Jeanette Knight, Darlene Heccomovich, JRW, ph. DvW); a bird at Lee Vining Canyon 19 Dec was one of few ever found in winter in *Mono* (Paul McFarland). A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was at Woodside, *San Mateo* 18 Dec (Sue Cossins); holdovers from fall were at Los Altos Hills, *Santa Clara* through 17 Mar (GHa, m.ob.) and Quail Hollow Ranch C.P., *Santa Cruz* through 22 Dec (JCS, DLSu). Red-naped Sapsuckers were near Soquel, *Santa Cruz* 5–29 Dec (Henry Harrelson); Monterey, *Monterey* 11–18 Dec (BJW, ph. BHL, AB et al.); Orinda, *Contra Costa* 19 Dec (Meg Paulitich et al.); and Bass L., *Madera* 18 Jan (GWPo, Jaek Guffey).

A Least Flycatcher at Arcata 18 Dec+ was just the 2nd to winter in *Humboldt* (EE, JTz, ph. RbF, ph. KGR, m.ob.). Wintering Hammond's Flycatchers were at Pt. Reyes, *Marin* 7 Jan (MtB, RyT, DVP) and L. Solano, *Solano* 6 Feb–6 Mar (2 on the last date; ph. SAG, FrO, ph. DR, RC). Rarer still in winter was a continuing Dusky Flycatcher at Antonelli Pond through 28 Mar, the 3rd known to winter in *Santa Cruz* (SGe, DLSu, m.ob.). Single Pacific-slope/Cordilleran Flycatchers at Sacramento 20 Dec (DCo, Dan Kopp) and Caswell Memorial S.P., *San Joaquin* 2 Jan (ph. HMR) were the only ones reported. Eastern Phoebes were at Putah Cr., *Yolo & Solano* 2 Dec (Irene Torres) and at Lemoore 15 Jan (first for Kings; †Mark Stacy, Christy Uhor); the *Sacramento* bird found in Nov was present through at least 15 Mar (m.ob.). A male Vermilion Flycatcher near Kerman 14 Dec–9 Feb was a nice find for *Fresno* (Gary Woods, ph. Alan Birnbaum, m.ob.). Two returning male Vermilion Flycatchers were at the Los Banos W.A., *Merced* through at least 26 Feb (Gary Gerstenberg, KVV, Lara Sparks). A Tropical Kingbird at Walnut Creek 21 Dec was just the 2nd ever found in *Contra Costa* (COG); 4 other Tropicals were reported, all coastal. The only bird reported after Dec was at Monterey, *Monterey* through 14 Feb (BJW, m.ob.).

A Northern Shrike in High Valley 16–18 Dec was the 4th to be found in *Lake* (JRW, DvW, Cliff Johnson); 4 other Northern Shrikes were at expected n. coast or Great Basin locations. A Blue Jay at Redwood Valley 23 Jan–9 Apr was the 6th for *Humboldt* (Cathy & Tom Hinz, ph. RbF, m.ob.). A wayward Yellow-billed Magpie 18 Dec at Bay Point was a first for *Contra Costa's* C.B.C. (Kent Fickett, Joel Summerhill). Thirty-five Tree Swallows at Ukiah 30 Jan were the earliest ever recorded in *Mendocino* (CEV). A Northern Rough-

winged Swallow at C.R.P. 2 Dec (JTr) may have been the same bird found there 15 Jan (CCo, Kimya Lambert); this species is still very rare in the Region in winter. The northward push of Barn Swallows in mid-Dec–Jan was detected once again this season, though numbers were slightly less than in previous years. Some 92 were detected, many of them heading northward and along the immediate



This apparent juvenile Vega Gull was photographed in the gull flock on Half Moon Bay, San Mateo County, California 7 January 2005. The white tail base, and banded greater coverts suggest this is not a *smithsonianus*. Recent reports of Herring Gulls (*smithsonianus*?) with white-based tails in the lower 48 states, however, put into question how valuable the tail pattern is in differentiating *smithsonianus* from Palearctic Herring Gulls. The range of variation in the various "Herring Gull" taxa has yet to be clearly defined. Photograph by Alvaro Jaramillo.

coast. Two at Bay Point 18 Dec were the first for *Contra Costa's* C.B.C. (Kent Fickett, Joel Summerhill). Three Cliff Swallows at the Sacramento Bufferlands, *Sacramento* 27 Jan were likely very early returnees (CCo).

### WRENS THROUGH TOWHEES

A Winter Wren of the *c.* subspecies group was an extreme rarity for the Region 19 Dec, especially at 2100 m in Lundy Canyon, *Mono* (BrtM). A Sedge Wren at South S.F. 9–26 Jan (†RSTh, ph. DVP, m.ob.) was just the 2nd to winter in the Region. Amazingly, the first record was from *San Mateo* in 2002–2003. A pair of Western Bluebirds at Presidio Hills 9 Feb+ was just the 3rd record for S.F. (Matt Zlatunich, m.ob.). Five Westerns in Lee Vining Canyon 19 Dec provided

a first winter record for *Mono* (Paul McFarland, Blake Babaree). Swamson's Thrushes are very rare in the United States in winter, so a fresh road-kill picked up at Stinson Beach, *Marin* 1 Jan was a significant find (ph. Bob Battagin, Deborah Fitzpatrick). A Gray Catbird was at Salmon Cr., *Humboldt* 7 Feb (Bryon Cariss). Sage Thrashers were one-day wonders at Chowchilla, *Madera* 3 Dec (Frank Gibson) and Moss Landing, *Monterey* 12 Feb (ph. MDo, ph. DR, RC). One Bohemian Waxwing was at Susanville, *Lassen* 26 Dec (MtB, DVP, DCo), and 2 were in Oakmont, *Sonoma* 25 Jan (†Ken Ackerman, Gloria Markowitz).

It was a quiet winter for vagrant and unusual w. warblers. A male Magnolia Warbler 12 Dec at Bodega Bay, *Sonoma* (DWM) may have been a late migrant; one wintered at Pine L. Park, S.F. 28 Dec+ (DPM, m.ob.). A Townsend's Warbler × Hermit Warbler hybrid was reported in Pacific Grove, *Monterey* 27 Dec (DVP). Seven Black-and-white and 27 Palm Warblers wintered along the coast. A Northern Waterthrush spent the period at Charleston Road marsh, *Santa Clara* (RGJ, SCR, m.ob.), while another wintered at Arcata Marsh, *Humboldt* 9 Dec+ (PLo, EE, m.ob.).

A Summer Tanager continued at Natural Bridges S.B., *Santa Cruz* until 5 Dec (SGe); another stayed in Golden Gate Park, S.F. from the fall until 28 Dec (ASH), and a yet another was in Sacramento, *Sacramento* 30 Jan (ph. Riek Soehren). Fifteen Western Tanagers were scattered along the coast; notable was *Trinity's* first winter record, at Salyer 24 Dec (GSL). Out-of-place Green-tailed Towhees turned up in Orinda, *Contra Costa* 19–26 Dec (Sean O'Brien, ph. Jane Larkin); Zmudowski S.B., *Monterey* 7 Dec–11 Feb (BMth, DR, Betty Cost); and near Lincoln 22 Jan–3 Feb, providing *Placer's* first winter and valley floor records (Dennis Bowcut, EP, John Lewis, m.ob.).

### SPARROWS THROUGH BUNTINGS

American Tree Sparrows were at Tule Lake N.W.R., *Siskiyou* 17 Dec (RyT) and at Dechambeau ponds, *Mono* 19 Dec (KNN). *Humboldt* had 3 Clay-colored Sparrows: one 9 Dec at Eureka (Jeff Dayton) and 2 on 12 Jan at Ferndale (RbF). A Grasshopper Sparrow found 3 Dec at Monte Bello Open Space Preserve, *Santa Clara* was unusual, one 3 Jan at Santa Teresa C.P. furnished the first Jan record for *Santa Clara* (both GHa). *Alameda* had the only reported Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrows: singles at Arrowhead Marsh 12 Dec–8 Feb (Bob Battagin, ES, m.ob.) and at



Hayward R.S. 25 Dec (RJR).

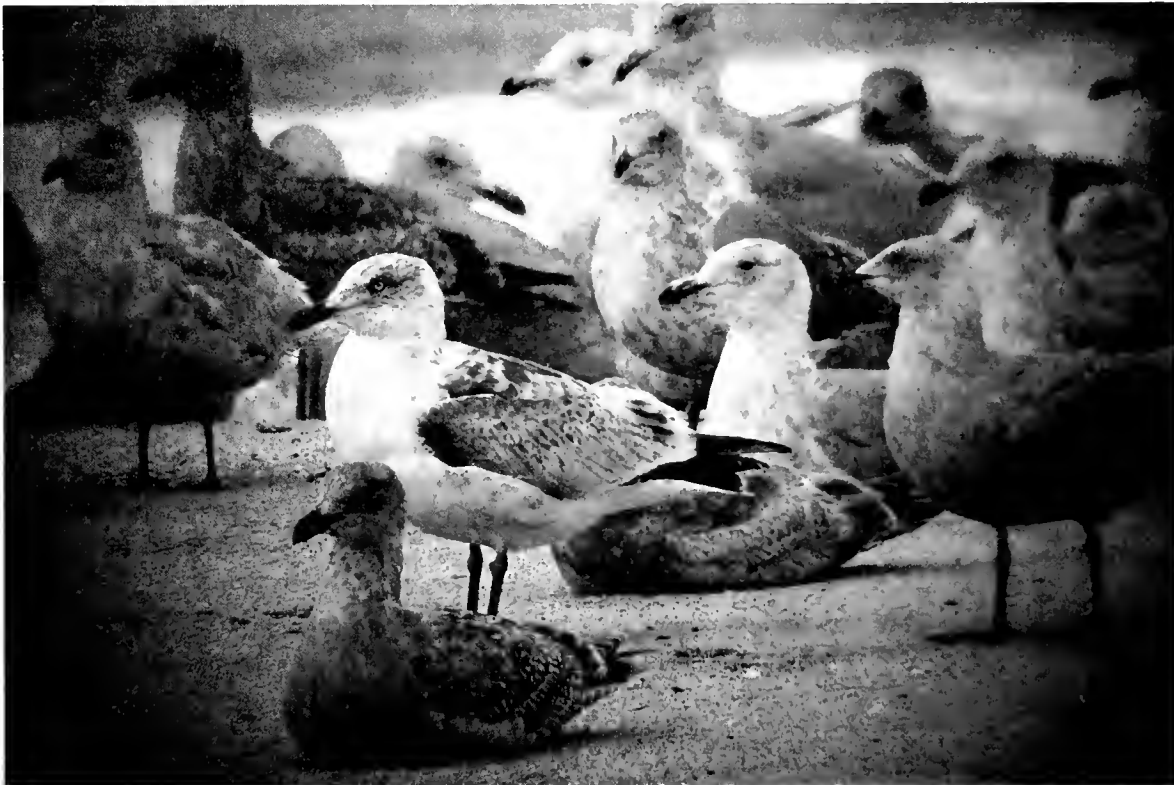
Thirty-one Swamp Sparrows were along the coast (including 10 at Arcata Marsh, *Humboldt*); inland, singles were at Livermore, *Alameda* for the period (ALE, ph. SAG); at Dechambeau ponds, *Mono* 19 Dec (KNN); and at C.R.P. 18 Nov–4 Jan (HG, Mike Green, JTr, CCo, m.ob.). The 49 White-throated Sparrows reported was a significant drop-off from normal winters; for comparison, last winter there were 51 reported in *Santa Cruz* alone. The *Zonotrichia* of the season was Harris's Sparrow, which staged a remarkable inva-

## BLACKBIRDS THROUGH FINCHES

The count of 160 Tricolored Blackbirds found on the *Santa Cruz* C.B.C. 18 Dec was only 16% of that C.B.C.'s 10-year average, marking the steady and alarming decline in this species in the area (*fide* DLSu). An Orchard Oriole at Manteca, *San Joaquin* 5 Feb+ (ph. Tiny Gehrke, m.ob.) was apparently the first to be documented for the C.V. Additional Orchards graced Arcata, *Humboldt* 12 Dec (GAB) and L. Merced, *S.F.* 21 Dec–2 Feb (PJM, HuC, m.ob.). A Hooded Oriole was at Sunnyvale, *Santa Clara* 19 Dec (SEM, Chris

flock of up to 20 at the U.C. Hopland Research & Extension Center, *Mendocino* (CEV). The irruption did not include Evening Grosbeaks: the only reports were of 4 at Eureka, *Humboldt* Jan 2 (TWL) and 6 at Inverness, *Marin* Jan 8 (Alan Wight).

Cited observers (county coordinators in boldface): R. J. Adams, Alan Baldridge, Gary A. Bloomfield, William G. Bousman (*Santa Clara*), Matthew Brady, Adam Brown (*FL.*), Ray Bruun, Scott Carey, Rita Carratello, Les Chibana, Terry Colborn, Daryl Coldren, Luke W. Cole (*Kings*), Chris Conard (*Sacramento* and *Yolo*), Hugh Cotter, Jeff N. Davis (*Madera*), Al DeMartini, Bruce E. Deuel (*n. C.V. counties*), Colin P. Dillingham, Matthew Dodder, Mark W. Eaton (*San Francisco*), Arthur L. Edwards, Ray Ekstrom (*Siskiyou*), Elias Elias, Bruce G. Elliot, Andrew Engilis, Mike Feighner, David Fix (*Humboldt*), Rick Fournier (RF), Rob Fowler (RbF), James H. Gain (*Stanislaus*), Steve Gerow, Steve A. Glover (*Contra Costa*), Edward D. Greaves, Helen Green, W. Edward Harper, Stanley W. Harris, Garth Harwood, Bill Hill, Craig Hohenberger, Alan S. Hopkins, Debbie House, Grant Hoyt, John E. Hunter (*Trinity*), Alvaro Jaramillo, Richard G. Jeffers, Shearwater Journeys, Robert J. Keiffer (*Mendocino*), Dan J. Keller, Jon King, Robin L. C. Leong (*Napa* and *Solano*), Tom W. Leskiw, Gary S. Lester, Cindy Lieurance, Leslie Lieurance, Janet L. Linthicum, Paul Lohse, Jim Lomax, John S. Luther, Michael J. Mammoser, Timothy D. Manolis (*Lassen*), Blake Matheson, J. Mac McCormick (*Plumas* and *Sierra*), Bryan J. McIntosh, Peter J. Metropulos (*San Mateo*), Bartshe Miller, Steve E. Miller, Joseph Morlan, Dan P. Murphy, Kristie N. Nelson (*Mono*), Chet Ogan, Frances Oliver, Ed Pandolfino (*Placer*), Benjamin D. Parmeter, Jude C. Power (*Humboldt*), John Ranlett, Harold M. Reeve, Robert W. Reiling, Robert J. Richmond (*Alameda*), Don Roberson (*Monterey*), Michael M. Rogers, Kerry G. Ross, Stephen C. Rottenborn, James Rowth, Ruth A. Rudesill (*Sonoma*), Peter B. Sands, Paul Saraceni, Barry Sauppe, Jeff Seay, David Shuford, John C. Sterling (*Alpine*, *Calaveras*, and *Modoc*), Bradley M. Stovall, Emilie Strauss, David L. Suddjian (*Santa Cruz*), Robert B. Sutherland, Ryan Terrill, Ronald S. Thorn, Jim Tietz, Dorothy Tobkin, Francis Toldi, John Trochet, Steve Umland (*Tuolumne*), Kent Van Vuren (*Merced* and *San Benito*), David Vander Pluym (*Mariposa*), Chuck E. Vaughn, Brian J. Weed, Jerry R. White (*Lake*), Denise S. Wight, Brian Williams (*Nevada*), David Wimpfheimer, Ken Wilson, Adam Winer, Roger Wolfe, Dave Woodward, David G. Yee, Bob & Carol Yutzy (*Shasta*). Many more observers are not specifically cited; all are appreciated. ☉



First discovered by the photographer 13 January 2005 (here 20 February), this Slaty-backed Gull in its second winter (or second plumage "cycle") at Half Moon Bay, San Mateo County, California was accepted as a first state record. An additional two, perhaps three, Slaty-backed Gulls were photographed at the same location this winter. Photograph by Alvaro Jaramillo.

sion with 15 reported, including 3 in *Humboldt*, 2 in *Sonoma*, and singles in *Mono*, *Monterey*, *Napa*, *Santa Clara* (first record since 1988, *fide* WGB), *Shasta*, *Siskiyou*, and *Solano*. The three others were first county records: at Colusa N.W.R., *Colusa* 26 Nov–5 Dec (ph. RbF, †BED, m.ob.); at Oakhurst R. Parkway, *Madera* 26 Dec–5 Feb (Bob Power, †JND, m.ob.); and at San Joaquin River N.W.R., *Stanislaus* 4 Jan+ (HMR, m.ob.). Small flocks of wintering Lapland Longspurs in *Humboldt* and *Monterey* were joined by Chestnut-collareds: 2–3 e. of Gonzales were the first known to winter in *Monterey* (BMth, ph. DR, RC, J Hoeksema, m.ob.), and a single was at Bear R. Ridge, *Humboldt* 8 Feb (BS). Two Snow Buntings were in *Humboldt* 31 Jan: one at Centerville Beach (RBS) and one at Redwood Cr. mouth (BS). Nine Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were reported. The only Black-headed was at Carmel Valley, *Monterey* 29 Nov–10 Dec (CHo). A female Indigo Bunting frequented a feeder at Capitola, *Santa Cruz* 26 Dec–21 Jan (DLSu). A first-fall male Painted Bunting—perhaps *Humboldt's* 3rd "wild" record—was at Freshwater 10–15 Dec (Cary Frazee, ph. TWL, †DFx).

Wolfe); one w. of Sheridan 29 Dec provided *Placer's* first winter record (CCo). Several "Orchard/Hooded" Orioles were also reported from a variety of locations.

Winter finches had a strong showing, though numbers of many species dropped precipitously in the new year. Red Crossbills staged a coastal invasion, with flocks of up to 53 in *San Mateo* and 76 in *Santa Clara*. One or 2 Cassin's Finches were at Moss Beach, *San Mateo* 1 Dec (RSTh), and one was at Elk Grove, *Sacramento* 2–4 Jan (AEn). As part of the winter finch invasion, an unprecedented 2 widely separated Common Redpolls were found: one in mid-Dec in Eureka, *Humboldt's* 2nd (Darrel Olsen, *fide* EE, PLo), and one 4 Jan near the Honey Lake W.A., *Lassen* (†TDM). Pine Siskins irrupted in numbers throughout the Region, particularly along the coast. The 1242 in the *Santa Cruz* C.B.C. circle was over 400% of the average over the last 10 years (*fide* DLSu). Lawrence's Goldfinches were also found in numbers, some in unexpected locations: first county winter records were provided by one at a feeder in Chalfant Valley, *Mono* 28 Nov–28 Feb (Andy Zdon) and a wintering

# Southern California

This winter saw record rainfall totals in many parts of the Region, with major Pacific storms slamming into the area from late December through mid-February. Impacts on the Region's birdlife may be manifested during the upcoming breeding season and beyond, but for now we can only report inconveniences to birders, some rearrangements of lowland and canyon habitats, and a profusion of annual growth (both native and exotic) as spring begins. Irruptions of Red-breasted Nuthatches, siskins, and crossbills from the fall continued through the winter season, but the winter was rather lackluster for rarities. Highlights included a well-documented Crested Caracara in the Imperial Valley, an apparent Common Black-Hawk along the Colorado River, and yet another Manx Shearwater among the large flocks of Black-vented Shearwaters just off the Los Angeles coast.

**Abbreviations:** F.C.R. (Furnace Creek Ranch, Death Valley N.P., Inyo); N.E.S.S. (n. end of the Salton Sea, Riverside); S.E.S.S. (s. end of the Salton Sea, Imperial); V.A.F.B. (Vandenberg A.F.B., nw. Santa Barbara). Because virtually all rarities in s. California are seen by many observers, only the names of observer(s) initially finding and identifying the bird are indexed. Documentation for species on the California B.R.C. review list is forwarded to the Secretary and archived at the Western Foundation of Vertebrate Zoology in Camarillo.

## LOONS THROUGH DUCKS

The only Pacific Loon found inland was one on L. Perris, *Riverside* 13 Jan (CMcG). A Red-necked Grebe off Montana de Oro S.P., *San Luis Obispo* 11 Dec (MDS), one on Morro Bay, *San Luis Obispo* 18–20 Dec (AFS), up to 2 in Goleta, *Santa Barbara* 13 Dec–16 Mar (WTF), another near Pt. Mugu, *Ventura* 14–25 Jan (RMm), and a 6th at Pt. Dume, *Los Angeles* 13 Feb (KLG) were more than normally reported. Single Flesh-footed Shearwaters, scarce in s. California waters, were seen off *San Luis Obispo* 13 Dec (BKS) and 16 Jan (BKS). A Buller's Shearwater off Port San Luis 16 Jan (TME) was the first off *San Luis Obispo* in winter. A Manx Shearwater photographed off Redondo Beach, *Los Angeles* 26 Feb (WW) adds one more to the ever-increasing number found in s. California waters.

A Brown Pelican near Blythe, *Riverside* 21 Jan (RH) was unexpected considering the location and time of the year. A white-headed imm. Magnificent Frigatebird over Pt. Loma, *San Diego* 11 Feb (JDa) provides one



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of less than half-a-dozen records for mid-winter. The Little Blue Heron found in Carpinteria, *Santa Barbara* 11 Jul remained through the winter (EM). A Reddish Egret inland at S.E.S.S. 7–31 Dec (NM), 2 there 14 Dec (MJI), and another on the Colorado R. near Blythe 6 Jan (RH) were the only ones reported.

Single imm. Trumpeter Swans photographed in Goleta 8–12 Dec (DMC; found dead 17 Dec) and Hansen Dam near Lake View Terrace, *Los Angeles* 23–24 Dec (SSo) had been captured at a breeding location in se. Idaho, marked with yellow neck collars, and released at a different location in Idaho as part of an effort to encourage these birds to find new wintering areas; both were seen together in Utah on 20 Nov. The 2 blue-morph Ross's Geese found with the wintering Snow and Ross's Geese at S.E.S.S. in Nov

remained through Feb (GMeC). Some 700 Brant counted flying northwestward from Blythe up the McCoy Valley during a period of inclement weather between 12 and 19 Feb (RH) were undoubtedly spring migrants from the Gulf of California that had been pushed much farther to the east than normal. A male Common (Eurasian Green-winged) Teal was on Morro Bay 20 Dec–28 Feb (AFS); another in Goleta 12 Dec–9 Feb (WTF) was the same bird present there the last two winters; and another was on Upper Newport Bay 13 Dec–26 Feb (MJI). The long-staying Harlequin Duck on San Diego Bay remained through the winter (MJB), and 2–3 were present on the coast of *San Luis Obispo* during the period (TME, GPS). Five Surf Scoters near Blythe 19 Feb (RH) were early migrants moving northward with Brant from the Gulf of California. A White-winged



This Manx Shearwater was found with Black-vented Shearwaters off Redondo Beach, Los Angeles County, California 26 February 2005. Note that the white on the face curls upward behind the auriculars and that the undertail coverts are entirely white. Photograph by Walter Wehtje.

Scoter at Parker Dam, *San Bernardino* 4 Dec (CB) and another at Saticoy, *Ventura* 8 Dec (GF) were inland. Along the coast, White-winged Scoters went virtually unreported, and fewer than 10 Black Scoters appeared to be present. A Long-tailed Duck on the Colorado R. below Parker Dam 27 Dec (MJI) was the only one reported inland, and only 5 were found along the coast. Up to 4 Barrow's Goldeneyes at Parker Dam through the period and one near Blythe 6 Jan (RH) were on the Colorado R., where small numbers winter annually. A male Common Goldeneye × Barrow's Goldeneye hybrid at Parker Dam 27 Dec (MJI) was probably the same bird that was present there last winter.

### RAPTORS THROUGH MURRELETS

A White-tailed Kite near Blythe 8 Jan (RH) was along the Colorado R., where the species is considered rare. A Northern Goshawk at China Lake 19 Dec (PW) was believed to be the same bird present there the previous three winters. What appeared to be a Common Black-Hawk near Blythe 22–25 Jan (RH) was elusive and unapproachable but was observed hunting crayfish in shallow canals. A Red-shouldered Hawk near Blythe 19 Dec–3 Jan (RH) was in an area where considered rare and irregular. Twenty-five Swainson's Hawks at Borrego Springs, *San Diego* 5 Feb were early spring migrants, and 384 had been counted moving northward through there by 28 Feb (HC); however, one around Blythe through the period (RH), another near Lancaster, *Los Angeles* 8 Jan (MH), and one photographed at Saticoy 15 Jan (RMcM) appeared to be wintering locally. Known wintering Zone-tailed Hawks remained around Goleta through 24 Feb (DMC), Blythe through 28 Feb (RH), Brawley, *Imperial* through 7 Mar (BM), and around Escondido, *San Diego* through most of the period (DaF, DH); in addition, individuals were noted at Cañada Larga, *Ventura* 23 Dec (BL), Laguna Beach, *Orange* 29

Nov–3 Dec (JW), Fallbrook, *San Diego* 14 Feb (DH), and National City, *San Diego* 27 Feb (DWA). Single Harlan's Hawks, rare in California, were near Carpinteria 3 Dec (WTF) and near Devils Den, *Kern* 2 Dec (JS). A Rough-legged Hawk at Laws 5 Feb (J&DP) was the only one found in *Inyo*, an indication that very few reached s. California this winter. An imm. Crested Caracara at Finney L., *Imperial* 1 Jan (TEW) was undoubtedly a genuine vagrant from Arizona or Mexico.

A Sandhill Crane near Bishop, *Inyo* 18 Dec–26 Feb (M&NP) and 2 at N.E.S.S. 2 Jan (HBK) were away from known wintering locations. Wintering Pacific Golden-Plovers included one in Long Beach, *Los Angeles* 10–13 Dec (JL, KSG), 5 at Seal Beach, *Orange* 20 Mar (BDa), up to 5 near Imperial Beach through the period (RTP), and one inland near Brawley 23 Jan–27 Mar (JDe, GMcC). Mountain Plovers appeared to be scarcer than normal in the Imperial Valley but were found more widely elsewhere, as illustrated by the presence of 12 on V.A.EB. 19 Dec (AA) and up to 16 at Seal Beach, *Orange* in Dec (BDa) on the coast, along with up to 160 on the Carrizo Plain, *San Luis Obispo* 1 Dec–2 Feb (TME), up to 60 near Lakeview, *Riverside* 29 Dec–13 Feb (HBK), and 3 around Blythe 24 Dec–6 Jan (RH). A Black Oystercatcher × American Oystercatcher hybrid was at Laguna Beach 31 Jan–6 Feb (KLP). Three Whimbrels near

Blythe 19 Feb (RH) were probably early spring migrants, as this species is exceptionally rare inland in winter. A Ruddy Turnstone was at N.E.S.S. 26 Dec (PEG), and up to 11 remained around Obsidian Butte/Red Hill at S.E.S.S. 6 Feb–31 Mar (MTH, BM, GMcC); a Black Turnstone with them 6 Feb (T&JH) was probably the same bird that had been present in the fall through 22 Oct.

A Laughing Gull, rare at the Salton Sea in winter, was at N.E.S.S. 2–26 Jan (RMcK, CMcG), and single birds were on the coast in Long Beach, *Los Angeles* 26 Dec (KGL) and near Imperial Beach, *San Diego* 16 Jan (MJB). An ad. Franklin's Gull at Los Osos 29 Jan (RB) was the first to be found in *San Luis Obispo* in winter. The ad. Little Gull found in Nov remained on L. Perris through 24 Feb (HBK), a first-winter bird was in Riverside 24 Dec (C-TL), and an ad. was at Marina del Rey, *Los Angeles* 29 Jan (TEW). The only Mew Gulls found well inland were single birds at Buena Vista L., *Kern* 23 Jan–3 Feb (LS) and Riverside 19 Dec (DG), and at least 3 around S.E.S.S. through the period (GMcC). A Western Gull at Prado Regional Park, *San Bernardino* 25 Jan (HBK) was believed to be the same bird here last winter. The only Glaucous Gulls reported were single birds on the coast at the Santa Ynez R. mouth, *Santa Barbara* 11 Dec (WTF), in Goleta 3 Jan (GC), and Imperial Beach 19 Mar (GMcC), and a first-winter bird inland near Imperial, *Imperial* 13 Dec (JL). The only Black-legged Kittiwakes reported were single imms. at San Clemente I. 5 Feb (JMCM) and Imperial Beach 18 Nov–4 Feb (MS), suggesting the species was scarcer than normal in s. California. An Elegant Tern in Cayucos,



One of the two blue-morph Ross's Geese that wintered at the south end of the Salton Sea, Imperial County, California, this bird was photographed there 6 February 2005. Note that this bird has the same small bill as the accompanying Ross's Geese and is much darker than a blue-morph Snow Goose, with the white on the head restricted to the face. Photograph by Kelli Levinson.



*San Luis Obispo* 12 Dec (TME) was a late fall migrant, but another photographed at La Jolla, *San Diego* 15–16 Jan (LC) was one of a very few ever to be found in California in midwinter.

Thirteen Ancient Murrelets off *San Diego* 1 Jan (SW) was a large number for this far s., but up to 4 were off *Montana de Oro S.P.* 1–6 Dec (TME), at least 4 were found along the coast of *Los Angeles* between 19 Dec and 10 Feb (KLG, KGL, MSanM), and another was off *Cardiff, San Diego* 14 Feb (RTP).

## DOVES THROUGH WOODPECKERS

For reasons still unknown, numbers of the introduced Spotted Dove have declined dramatically in recent years, and it is now gone from many formerly occupied areas in California; 2 in *Santa Barbara* 2 Jan (DiF), 3 in *Arcadia, Los Angeles* 2 Feb (TEW), 3 in *Riverside* 26 Dec+ (JFG), one near *Mecca, Riverside* 2 Jan+ (DG), and one at *Rancho Santa Fe, San Diego* 30 Jan–6 Mar (KZ) were all that were reported in these areas, where recently considered common. Small numbers of White-winged Doves remained through the winter in the se. portion of the Region, as indicated by up to 5 in *Blythe* through the period (RH) and 3 in *Brawley* 5 Feb (GMeC); one in *Santa Barbara* 30 Jan (PMcN) was on the coast w. of the species' normal range. Noteworthy was the discovery of resident Common Ground-Doves in the s. *San Joaquin Valley, Kern* 25 Feb (JCW); these birds may have been present, but not publicized, for at least 10 years. Up to 15 Ruddy Ground-Doves were present near *Calipatria, Imperial* through the period (GMeC), but single birds near *Blythe* 28 Dec–4 Jan (RH) and *El Centro, Imperial* through the period (KZK) were the only ones found elsewhere.

A calling Northern Pygmy-Owl near *Angelus Oaks* in the *San Bernardino Mts.* 23 Jan (BA) was near the s. limit of this species' range in California (*Western Birds* 35: 175–177). Up to 20 Vaux's Swifts in *Willowbrook, Los Angeles* 4 Dec–19 Feb (KGL) were clearly wintering locally. An ad. male Broad-tailed Hummingbird visiting a feeder in *Westchester, Los Angeles* 7 Dec (BE) was one of a very few found on the coastal slope of California, particularly so at this time of the year. A Rufous Hummingbird in *Nipomo, San Luis Obispo* 24 Jan (JA) was an early spring migrant, and an Allen's Hummingbird in *San Luis Obispo* 14 Jan (MDS) was the first of the spring migrants.



This Pacific Golden-Plover, presumed to be wintering locally, was at *El Dorado Park* in *Long Beach, Los Angeles County, California*, 10 (here) through 13 December 2004. This is the only golden-plover species known to winter in California. Photograph by Mike San Miguel.

A Williamson's Sapsucker in *Big Pine, Inyo* 9 Feb (T&JH) was unexpected in that location. A near-average 14 Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were reported at various localities throughout the Region. A Nuttall's Woodpecker near *Mecca* 2 Jan (CMcG) was only the 2nd to be found in the *Salton Sink*. A Hairy Woodpecker near *Inyokern, Kern* 18 Dec–9 Jan (SSi) and another on the *Palos Verdes Pen., Los Angeles* 26 Dec (DB) were in areas where the species is considered casual. Greater-than-expected numbers of White-headed Woodpeckers were found away from areas of normal occurrence, including 8 at various locations in the *Owens Valley, Inyo*, and 6 around *Santa Barbara* through the period (T&JH; DMC), along with one at *Yucaipa, San Bernardino* 14 Dec (SH).

## FLYCATCHERS THROUGH PIPITS

A Least Flycatcher, casual in winter, was in *Long Beach* 14 Feb–1 Mar (KSG, MJS). Among w. North American *Empidonax*, "Western Flycatchers" (most or all are Pacific-slope) and especially Gray Flycatchers occur most regularly in the Region in winter, but this season 11 Hammond's Flycatchers,

including 8 in *Orange*, suggest that this may be another "expected" species. A Hammond's in *Bishop* 18 Dec (JLD) did not winter but was the latest for *Inyo* by nearly two months. Additionally, a Dusky Flycatcher was in *Lemon Heights, Orange* 19–24 Dec (DRW), and another was in *Rolling Hills, Los Angeles* 23 Jan (KGL). The only wintering Eastern Phoebe were in *San Luis Obispo, San Luis Obispo* 3–24 Dec (AFS) and near *Lakeview, Riverside* 30 Jan–14 Feb (M&JS), along with single presumed returning birds in *Los Angeles* and *Imperial*. The only well-documented Ash-throated Flycatchers away from the s. deserts were up to 4 in *Long Beach* 2 Jan–3 Mar (KSG, RAH) and one at *Prado Regional Park, San Bernardino* on 5 Feb (BDe). Seven wintering Tropical Kingbirds along the coast was about average; most or all were heard giving calls that ruled out Couch's Kingbird. A Cassin's Kingbird near *Blythe* 26 Feb (TC) was along the *Colorado R.*, where very rare. The Scissor-tailed Flycatcher present in *Irwindale, Los Angeles* since Nov continued through the winter season.

An ad. Northern Shrike in *Wofford Heights, Kern* 13–18 Dec (JS) was probably the same bird as the imm. that spent last winter here. Wintering Plumbeous Vireos outnumbered Cassin's Vireos 13 to 4 in

the coastal counties; the only desert bird was a Cassin's in *El Centro* 12 Dec (KZK). Most reporters felt that mid-winter Barn Swallow numbers were lower than in the past three years but still quite high by historical standards. A Cliff Swallow at *Wister, S.E.S.S.* 14 Dec was the first to be found in midwinter in the *Salton Sink* (TMeG, MRo); 6 over *Torrance, Los Angeles* 12 Jan (DM) were part of an exceptionally early movement of four swallow species. Corvid movements were generally insubstantial this winter, though 2 Woodhouse's Western Scrub-Jays in *Silver Lakes, San Bernardino* (SJM) were out of range. Also, 15+ Pinyon Jays near *Mt. Palomar* 15 Jan–6 Feb (MJB) and another 6 near *Woods L. in the Laguna Mts.* 27 Feb (DP) were among the few to be found in recent years in *San Diego*. An estimated 12,000–15,000 American Crows roosting in *Mission Viejo, Orange* 18 Dec (PC) shows that at least some mega-roosts are intact after the first big West Nile virus year in the Region. Mountain Chickadees and Red-breasted Nuthatches remained widespread in the lowlands of the Region after the fall's irruption. Pygmy Nuthatches continued



This Tropical Kingbird at Ramer Lake, Imperial County, California (here 4 December 2004) was an unusual sight so far from the coast, where most Tropicals are found in autumn and early winter. Photograph by Bob Miller.

from the fall in several coastal localities; inland, noteworthy lowland records were of 2 in Bakersfield 19 Dec (JCW) and 4 at Silver Lakes 22 Jan (SJM).

A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher at Tinemaha Res., Inyo 5–9 Dec (J&DP) was in an area where casual in winter. Up to 9 Mountain Bluebirds, scarce and irregular along the coast, were in San Pedro, Los Angeles 27 Nov–1 Jan (MBy), 2 were in Torrance, Los Angeles 24–26 Dec (A&EB), and 5 were on Pt. Loma 12 Jan–13 Feb (TB, CGE); a record count of 76 was made on San Clemente I. on 28 Dec (JMcM). A Townsend's Solitaire in Rancho Palos Verdes, Los Angeles 29 Dec–1 Jan (KGL) was only the 2nd on the Palos Verdes Pen. since 1984.

The returning Curve-billed Thrasher at Black Meadow Landing near L. Havasu, San Bernardino remained from the fall through at least 20 Feb (*vide* RN). Up to 9 Sprague's Pipits were in fields around Calipatria through 19 Feb (GMcC), and one was near Blythe 19 Dec (RH); this species is probably regular in both areas.

#### WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

A least 13 Nashville Warblers were reported along the coast from San Luis Obispo to Orange, but reporting of this and many other scarce but regular wintering warblers is undoubtedly in-

complete. Casual in winter, a Lucy's Warbler was on the Palos Verdes Pen. 13 Feb (KGL). The only Northern Parula reported was at N.E.S.S. 2 Jan (SJM). A Chestnut-sided Warbler was in Costa Mesa, Orange 12 Jan–27 Feb (BED). A Magnolia Warbler on the UCSB campus in Goleta remaining from the fall to 11 Feb (FS) was the first to win-

ter in Santa Barbara. A dull female Cape May Warbler in Long Beach 13 Feb (MSanM, JF) was undoubtedly the same bird that was present there in late Oct. A male Black-throated Blue Warbler was in San Marcos, San Diego 17–29 Jan (RD). The only Black-throated Green Warbler was in Costa Mesa 1 Jan–27 Feb (LDT); the one that wintered in National City for eight years failed to return this winter. The 2 returning Grace's Warblers on Pt. Loma remained from the fall through 2 Apr (JC). Sightings of Pine Warblers in El Dorado Park, Long Beach 2 Jan–3 Mar (KSG) involved a bright male and a bird thought by some to be duller and hence a different individual. Our scarce but regular wintering "eastern/boreal" warblers made a rather poor showing this winter, with 12 Palm Warblers (all on the coastal slope), 7 coastal Black-and-white Warblers (plus one near Niland), and only 2 coastal American Redstarts (along with at least 7 on the s. deserts, where expected). Worm-eating Warbler has now proven to be annual in winter in the Region, and this winter one was in Santa Barbara 2 Jan–15 Mar (BKH). A Common Yellowthroat at F.C.R. 19 Dec (T&JH) was in the far n. interior, where casual in winter. Also casual in winter, a MacGillivray's Warbler was in the Montebello Hills, Los Angeles 14 Jan (HLJ). A Wilson's Warbler at F.C.R. 19 Dec (T&JH) established the first mid-winter record for Inyo; 3 were at S.E.S.S., where considered casual in winter.



A wintering Worm-eating Warbler in the Santa Barbara Cemetery in Santa Barbara, California posed for this portrait 11 January 2005. Photograph by Jim Greaves.



At least a dozen Summer Tanagers were seen along the coast; inland, one was in Riverside 25–29 Dec (C-TL), and another was in Calexico 19 Feb (SM). A Scarlet Tanager near Vista, *San Diego* 30 Dec (JT) established one of the latest records for California. The center of Western Tanager abundance in the Region in winter appears to be *Los Angeles* and *Orange*, with over 40 reported in each of those counties but only one or 2 in the other coastal counties; one in Riverside 12 Jan–20 Feb (TV, HV) was quite far inland. Six Green-tailed Towhees were reported on the coastal slope during the period; on the se. deserts, where regular in winter, a high count was of 6 in dune scrub e. of Brawley 26 Jan (BM). The Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow continuing through 6 Feb at Morro Bay (TME) was the only one reported this winter. Two Large-billed Savannah Sparrows were in Blythe 6 Jan (RH); there are few recent records of this subspecies away from the Salton Sea and the immediate coast. The only Lark Bunting during the period was in e. Bakersfield 31 Dec–1 Jan (MM). Swamp Sparrows seemed to be in lower-than-average numbers, with only six reports from coastal counties plus two in *Inyo* and one in *Imperial*. Nine Harris's Sparrows were reported on the deserts of *Inyo*, *Kern*, *San Bernardino*, and *Imperial*; the only ones on the coast were in Palos Verdes Estates 26 Dec–1 Jan (JEP) and Glendora, *Los Angeles* 8 Jan (RM-cMi). Winter longspur numbers in the Imperial Valley were lower than last year; up to 5 McCown's and 17 Laplands remained near Calipatria until 5 Feb, and up to 10 Chestnut-collareds were there to 19 Feb (GMcC).

Seven Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were found during the winter, all along the coast; in contrast, the only Black-headed Grosbeaks reported after early Dec were in Lompoc 8 Dec–8 Jan (PR) and Goleta 2–29 Jan (GR). Blue Grosbeaks, casual in the Region in winter, were in Goleta 24 Dec (PM) and Calimesa 3–5 Jan (SE). A male Tricolored Blackbird photographed at N.E.S.S. 2 Jan–18 Feb (CMcG) was only the 4th to be found in the Salton Sink. Up to 5 Bronzed Cowbirds through the period in Blythe (RH) increased to 10 birds by 27 Feb; somewhat out of range was a single bird near Lucerne Valley, *San Bernardino* 18 Dec (SJM). Orchard Orioles were in Isla Vista, *Santa Barbara* 21–23 Dec (NAL), Montecito, *Santa Barbara* 30 Dec–5 Feb (LB), and Culver City, *Los Angeles* 20 Jan–8 Mar (KLG). In addition to small numbers of Hooded Orioles reported along the coast, 2 different birds were near Bakersfield 12 Dec–23 Feb (MM) and 6–20 Feb (JCW). Baltimore Orioles included 2 in Carson, *Los Angeles* 30 Jan–13 Feb (KGL), one in Culver



This cooperative adult male Rose-breasted Grosbeak was present in Fort Rosecrans National Cemetery on Point Loma, San Diego County, California most of the winter (here 15 January 2005) and was frequently found eating grass seeds at new grave sites. Photograph by Matthew T. Heindel.

City 5–8 Mar (MSanM), and one in Orange 30 Jan (DRW). Observers commented on the continued widespread presence of Red Crossbills and especially Pine Siskins in the lowlands of the Region; siskins were numerous through the period in most of the Region, although the species was unreported after mid-Dec in the Imperial Valley.

### ESCAPEES

A Great Tit was recorded near El Monte, *Los Angeles* 18 Dec (DSC), and Australian Magpies (*Gymnorhinus tibicen*) of the s. Australian "white-backed" group were in Orange 18 Dec+ (MR) and Laguna Beach, *Orange* 24 Jan (PB).

Cited observers (county coordinators in boldface): Alex Abela, Douglas W. Aguillard, Bruce Aird, Jackie Allison, Charles Babbitt, Ron Beck, Louis Bevier, Mark J. Billings, Tom Blackman, David Bradley, Ann and Eric Brooks (A&EB), Peter Bryant, Martin Byhower (MBy), George Chapman, James Cocker, Hal Cohen, Lyann Comrack, David M. Compton (*Santa Barbara*), Peyton Cook, Daniel S. Cooper, Troy Corman, Brian E. Daniels, Jim Danzenbaker (JDa), Brad Dawson (BDa), Bill Deppe (BDe), Jay Desgrosellier (JDe), Renee Domenici, Jon L. Dunn, Tom M. Edell (*San Luis Obispo*), Steve Edelman, Claude G. Edwards, Barbara Elliott, Jon Feenstra, Diana Ferrari (DiF), Gary File, Wes T. Fritz, David Furseth (DaF), Kimball L. Garrett (*Los Angeles*), Karen S. Gilbert, Peter A. Ginsberg,

David Goodward, Philip E. Gordon, John F. Green (*Riverside*), Robb A. Hamilton, Sam Haskins, David Heckard, Matthew T. Heindel, Tom & Jo Heindel (*Inyo*), Roger Higson, Brad K. Hines, Mark Hunter, Marshall J. Iliff, John Ivanov, H. Lee Jones, Howard B. King, Alexander E. Koonce (*San Bernardino*), Kenneth Z. Kurland, Bart Lane, Kevin G. Larson, Cin-Ty Lee, Nick A. Lethaby, Jim Lomax, Sam Marsh, Elizabeth Mason, Guy McCaskie (*Imperial*), Chet McGaugh, Todd McGrath, Robert McKernan, Robert McMullan (RMcMi), Jimmy McMorran, Robert McMorran, Patrick McNulty, Michael McQuerrey, Bob Miller, David Moody, Nathan Moorhatch, Stephen J. Myers, Richard Norton, Drew Pallatte, Jim & Debby Parker, Robert T. Patton, Kaaren L. Perry, James E. Pike, Mike & Nancy Prather, Gage Richard, Mikael Rosen (MRo), Paul Rosso, Marilyn Runnels, Matt Sadowski, Florence Sanchez, Michael J. San Miguel, Mike San Miguel (MSanM), Mark and Janet Scheel (M & JS), Larry Schmahl, Alan F. Schmierer, John Schmitt, Brad K. Schram, Gregory P. Smith, Steve Sosensky (SSo), Susan Steele (SSt), Mike D. Stiles, Jim Tietz, Larry D. Tripp, David Vander Pluym, Herman van Oosten, Tom van Noort, Stanley Walens, Walter Wehtje (*Ventura*), Jeff Williams, Douglas R. Willick (*Orange*), John C. Wilson (*Kern*), Peter Woodman, Thomas E. Wurster, Karen Zepernick. An additional 30± observers who could not be individually acknowledged submitted reports this season; all have our thanks. ☺



# Baja California Peninsula



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Rainfall returned early and in abundance to drought-stricken northern parts of the Region. Then, following a warm spell, observers on the Ensenada C.B.C. 17 Dec enjoyed an early emergence of butterflies and nest-building Anna's Hummingbirds in spring-like conditions. Regional coverage was spotty, as is typical in winter, but five first state records included Mexico's first for Barrow's Goldeneye and the Region's firsts for Garganey and Bendire's Thrasher. The appearance of Unitt's *San Diego County Bird Atlas* (2004. *Proceedings of the San Diego Society of Natural History* 39) joins the previous year's *Birds of the Salton Sea* in providing excellent context for analyzing bird distribution at the northern end of the Region.

## FRIGATEBIRDS THROUGH TERNS

Two Magnificent Frigatebirds at Laguna Percebu, s. of San Felipe, 31 Dec (DSC) were unseasonal. A Greater White-fronted Goose on the Maneadero Plain 17 Dec (MSM et al.) was a C.B.C. first, while another was at Parque Morelos, Tijuana 26 Feb–16 Apr (ph. MJB, MJI). Eight Wood Ducks at the Mexicali Zoo 25 Oct–1 Apr (MJI, ph. RAH et al.) suggested successful fledging of the entire family found there in May 2004. A female Garganey at Estero San José del Cabo 21 Jan (vt. SGM, ph. Bob Van Vuren) represented a first for the Region. The only previous Mexican record is from Sinaloa 22 Mar 1973 (Howell and Webb 1995). The Estero Punta Banda area hosted a nice duck selection for the C.B.C. 17 Dec, including a female Eurasian Wigeon, a female Greater Scaup, a female Black Scoter, a female White-winged Scoter (ph. MJI et al.), and a Long-tailed Duck (LAC et al., ph. PAG, †MJI); the latter two continued on 18 Dec. Colima Canal, a diversion of the Río Colorado from Morelos Dam, was found to have good goldeneye concentrations in Jan 2004. A return visit 6 Jan produced 131 Commons along with 2 imm. male Barrow's Goldeneyes (ph. †MJI). Both birds lingered, with the last report of a single bird 23 Jan (m.ob.). This represents the first Barrow's Goldeneye record for Mexico, though there are prior unsupported reports (Howell and Webb 1995, *Monographs in Field Ornithology* 3: 190). Common Mergansers made another strong showing in the Mexicali Valley, with a high of 33 at Cerro Prieto geothermal ponds 6 Jan (MJI); much rarer was an imm. on the Pacific coast at the mouth of the Río San Telmo 16 Dec (ph. MJI).

Notable Mexicali Valley raptors included an ad. Bald Eagle on the Río Colorado s. of Colonia Nueva 16 Dec (RAE, H1) and an imm. Red-shouldered Hawk near Ejido Chipas 6 Jan (ph. MJI). An imm. Broad-winged Hawk at Estero San José del Cabo 21 Jan (vt. SGM) furnished the 2nd winter record for Baja California Sur. A Clapper Rail heard at

**SA** Fall–winter 2004–2005 reports of Cackling/Canada Geese included three *leucopareia* Cacklings at Estero Punta Banda 24 Oct, with one still present 1 Nov (KAR, †SGM, ph. RAH et al.); 6 *minima* Cacklings and one *taverneri/parvipes* at Lagunita El Ciprés 12 Dec–29 Jan (ph. GR-C, ph. MJI et al.); 2 imm. *minima* at Guerrero Negro 1 Jan–24 Mar (ph. AG-A, ph. JEP); and at San José del Cabo: 3 *taverneri/parvipes* 21 Jan, a separate *taverneri/parvipes* 21 Jan, and a *minima* that associated with the latter 23 Jan and the former 1–3 Feb (ph. SGM, NB). Mlodinow and Bruce Deuel identified the San José del Cabo birds as three *taverneri* and one *parvipes*.

The recent separation of Cackling Goose from Canada Goose begs an evaluation of the status of the four taxa known from the Region (through summer 2004); all are now decidedly rare. Since specimen evidence is limited to one *minima* from each state, plus n. Baja California band returns of *moffitti* and *leucopareia*, we offer a review of the status of each based on previous reports by Wilbur (1987. *Birds of Baja California*. University of California Press), by Erickson et al. (*Monographs in Field Ornithology* 3: 119–120), and in *N.A.B.* Note that all forms may occur as often in flocks as they do individually.

Great Basin Canada Geese (*moffitti*) were once common in n. Baja California, but the species does not winter in numbers as far s. as formerly (Leopold, A. S. 1972. *Wildlife of Mexico*). Hundreds wintered in the Mexicali Valley at least into the 1960s and flocks into the 30s were seen in Jan/Feb 1994 s. to Laguna Figueroa, but there has been only one double-digit report since (18 at Cerro Prieto geothermal ponds 13 Jan 2003). There is only one record s. of the n. half of Baja California (Bahía de Los Angeles 25 Jan 1996). There are six records (10+ individuals) of Cackling Goose (*minima*), 4 from Baja California and 2 from Baja California Sur. Aleutian Cackling Goose (*leucopareia*) has four records (16+ individuals), three from Bahía San Quintín northward (24 Nov–18 Dec) and a long-staying bird at La Paz 29 Oct 2001–1 Feb 2003.

The fourth form involves the enigmatic “Lesser Canada Goose,” a moniker that includes both *parvipes* and *taverneri*, subspecies that had been synonymized by some due to their close morphological similarity but that are now assigned to different species—*taverneri* to Cackling Goose, *parvipes* to Canada Goose. Six records (2 Nov–18 Mar; 4 in Nov) involved 23 birds, just one from Baja California Sur; notably, the Baja California records extend s. only to El Rosario. (We have generally accepted the subspecific identifications provided by observers but emphasize that the La Paz *leucopareia* was originally identified as a “Lesser”—when imm. and lacking a neck ring—and 7 poorly seen birds in the Estero Punta Banda area 19 Dec 2002 were identified as possible “Lessers,” Aleutians, or *minima*, depending upon the observer.) The relative status of *parvipes* and *taverneri* is still poorly known in California (B. E. Deuel, pers. comm.), but our current assumption is that birds of this type occurring in s. California, where rare, are primarily *taverneri*. The records from the Cape District may more likely pertain to overshooting *parvipes*, as the longitude of the Cape is more in line with their central Mexican wintering areas. Though recent work holds promise for field separation of this pair (e.g., Deuel, B. 2004. Preliminary notes on the identification of Cackling and Canada Geese. *Western Birds* 35: 181–183), we prefer to remain conservative and consider all reports safely identifiable only to *taverneri/parvipes*. Thus, we believe Canada Goose (*sensu stricto*) remains unconfirmed from Baja California Sur.

the same location 22 Jan (SGM) was a local first, and a rare Solitary Sandpiper was found in Miraflores 23 Jan (ph. SGM).

The massive gull flocks of Cerro Prieto geothermal ponds still have not received the attention they deserve, given that 40,000+ gulls roost there nightly. Highlights this winter were a second-winter Mew Gull 6 Jan (†MJI) and a first-winter Glaucous Gull 6–8 Jan (ph. MJI et al.), both firsts for the Mexicali Valley. Also seen there in Dec/Jan were 4 ad. Laughing Gulls, 3 Yellow-footed Gulls, 11+ Glaucous-winged Gulls, at least 3 Thayer’s Gulls, and a smattering of hybrids involving Herring, Glaucous-winged, and Glaucous Gulls (MJI et al.). Additional first-winter Glaucous Gulls at Guerrero Negro 31 Jan (ph. JEP) and the Islas Los Coronados 13–14 Feb (GMCC et al., †GLR, ph. MS, ph. Anne Scofield) made for a better-than-average winter total. An ad. Gull-billed Tern joined the Cerro Prieto geothermal ponds gull flocks 6 Jan (MJI) for a first Baja California winter record, while up to 3 at El Centenario 27 Jan–8 Feb (SGM, JEP) were where recorded regularly since Oct 2002. An Elegant Tern at Estero Punta Banda 17 Dec (†PP, MJB) likewise provided Baja California

with a winter first, while 2 at Estero San José del Cabo 21 Jan, with one continuing on 3 Feb (SGM, NB), provided a 3rd Baja California Sur winter record.

### HUMMINGBIRDS THROUGH PIPITS

Wintering *Archilochus* hummingbirds were well represented in Baja California Sur, with the state’s first Ruby-throated Hummingbird (an imm. male) at San José del Cabo 21–24 Mar (†MB, ph. †OJ, †DVP) and an imm. female Black-chinned at Santiago 6 Feb (ph., †JEP). Ruby-throated Hummingbirds winter from s. Sinaloa southward, but the only previous Regional record is from the nw. coast 29 Sep 2003 (*N.A.B.* 58: 148). Anna’s Hummingbirds nested later than last year at Guerrero Negro (first active nest 8 Jan, AG-A), but the unusual weather apparently drove 2 females to nest-building at Ensenada 17 Dec (RAE, RAH), one day earlier than has been recorded in *San Diego*. Costa’s and Rufous/Allen’s Hummingbirds were unrecorded in the California District. Although both are annual in *San Diego* in winter, a Rufous/Allen’s at El Rosario 24 Jan–5 Feb 2002 (JEP) con-

stituted the only potential winter record of either from this area since *N.A.B.* reporting began in fall 2000.

A female Yellow-shafted Flicker in Mexicali 9–22 Jan (KAR, ph. MJI et al.) was gray-faced and considered impure; there is one record of a phenotypically pure bird for the Region (*Monographs in Field Ornithology* 3: 130). A Red-shafted Flicker at Santiago 24 Jan (†SGM) was the 2nd for Baja California Sur but the first for the Cape District. Kingbird highlights were all in Baja California Sur: 3 Tropicals each at Lagunas de Chametla (ph. RC, ph. JEP et al.) and San José del Cabo (SGM, NB et al.); 20 scattered Thick-billed; and Westerns found among roosting Cassin’s at Santiago 5 Feb (7; ph. JEP) and El Rosario, n. of El Triunfo, 7 Feb (JEP). The Gray Catbird found at Guerrero Negro 12 Oct remained through at least 18 Apr (AG-A, ph. JEP, MB). The mimid highlight, however, was the Bendire’s Thrasher 8 km se. of Valle de la Trinidad, Baja California 1 Jan (†DSC), the first to be confirmed in the Region (cf. *Monographs in Field Ornithology* 3: 191). A Red-throated Pipit at Estero San José del Cabo 1–3 Feb (ph. NB) represented the 2nd winter record there; one of the New World’s oldest records of the species involves a bird collected there 26 Jan 1883.

### WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

A Lucy’s Warbler at Santiago 6 Feb (JEP) made it three years in a row that the species has been found there. Although Pike did not systematically search for wintering *Vermivora* as he did last year, this was the only non-Orange-crowned found in the Region and surely represents a significant change from last year in particular. Also for the 3rd consecutive winter, Northern Parula was recorded at Caduaño: an ad. and an imm. 22 Jan (SGM). An imm. male Black-throated Blue



Field identification of Cackling Geese to subspecies is still evolving. This adult (barred flanks) at Estero Punta Banda, Baja California 1 November 2004 is tentatively identified as *leucopareia* by its paler breast and larger size compared to *minima*, and by its conspicuous white neck ring with some blackish below (present on most adult *leucopareia*, but not on most *taverneri*); *hutchinsii* is eliminated primarily by range, though the back color is darker than is typical for that subspecies. Other sight records of *leucopareia*, including the lone Baja California Sur record, have been identified using similar criteria. Photograph by Robert A. Hamilton.



These two immature *minima* Cackling Geese were photographed 31 January 2005 at Guerrero Negro, Baja California Sur. Identification as *minimo* is relatively straightforward, given the extremely short necks, stubby bills, and dark breasts. They are aged as first-winters by the visible molt in the breast, the uneven edges to the back and wing coverts, and the still mostly unbarred flanks. This taxon was recorded just twice in the state prior to this winter. Photograph by James E. Pike



This, the Region's first recorded Garganey, was at Estero San José del Cabo, Baja California Sur 21 January 2005. Photograph by Bob Von Vuren.



One of North America's first recorded Red-throated Pipits was collected at San José del Cabo, Baja California Sur 26 January 1883. There are March and April records for the west Mexican mainland, but the species had not been recorded again in winter in North America until this bird was found on 1 February 2005—at the same location as the first. Photograph by Nigel Boll.



This adult male Hepatic Tanager in Mexicali, Baja California 9 through (here) 22 January 2005 represented the fourth record for Baja California and the peninsular Region. Photograph by Matthew T. Heindel.

Warbler at Guerrero Negro 5 Nov–19 Mar (AG-A, ph. JEP, †DVP et al.) was the 3rd in as many winters to be found in Baja California Sur. Yellow-throated and Grace's Warblers provided warbler highlights again this winter, with one of the former (showing characters of *albiflora*) at Mexicali 22–23 Jan (MJI, ph. MTH et al.) and a now ad. male of the latter back for its 2nd winter at Ciudad Constitucion 4 Feb (ph. JEP). Other notable warblers in Baja California included a returning Black-and-white in Mexicali 25 Oct–23 Jan (MJI, RAE et al.), a MacGillivray's on the Maneadero Plain for at least its 4th winter 25 Sep–1 Apr (RAE, MJB et al.), and a Wilson's in Mexicali 23 Jan (KAR et al.). An ad. male Belding's Yellowthroat at Guerrero Negro 1 Feb (†JEP) was well nw. of its normal range but followed one at the same location 16 Dec 2000 (N.A.B. 55: 231).

An ad. male Hepatic Tanager in Mexicali 9–22 Jan (ph. KAR, ph. MTH et al.) was the 4th found in the Region, all in the n. half of Baja California. A Lark Bunting with an unusually large concentration of Lark Sparrows on the Maneadero Plain 17 Dec (ph. JEP) may be the first ever recorded on the Region's northernmost coast. The season's single Grasshopper Sparrow was in s. Baja California Sur at Rancho Cuamuchilar 24 Jan (SGM), and the only White-throated Sparrow was a returning bird on the Maneadero Plain 17 Dec (PP). Bronzed Cowbirds were found in Mexicali for the 3rd consecutive winter (6 on 22 Jan, MJB et al.), and a female at Lagunas de Chametla 25 Jan (ph. SGM) provided another Cape District first (2nd for Baja California Sur). Rare orioles included 2 Orchards at Guerrero Negro 31 Jan–1 Feb (ph. JEP), a Bullock's in Ensenada 17 Dec (RAH), and Baltimores at Punta Banda 17 Dec (2, PU et al.) and Agraria Reforma No. 1 on 5 Feb (JEP). The Pine Siskin incursion was not closely monitored, but 77 were in Maneadero 17 Dec (JEP), and 3 were in Mexicali 9 Jan, where 4 American Goldfinches were also unusual (KAR, SG). Exceptional was the imm. male American Goldfinch at Guerrero Negro 31 Jan–19 Mar (†JEP, †MB, †OJ, †DVP), the first to be confirmed in Baja California Sur.

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Bronzed Cowbirds are being recorded with increasing frequency on the Baja California Peninsula. This one near La Paz 25 January 2005 was the second to be found in Baja California Sur and the first to be photographically documented. Photograph from videotape by Steven G. Mlodinow.



# Mexico

## Héctor Gómez de Silva

Xola 314-E

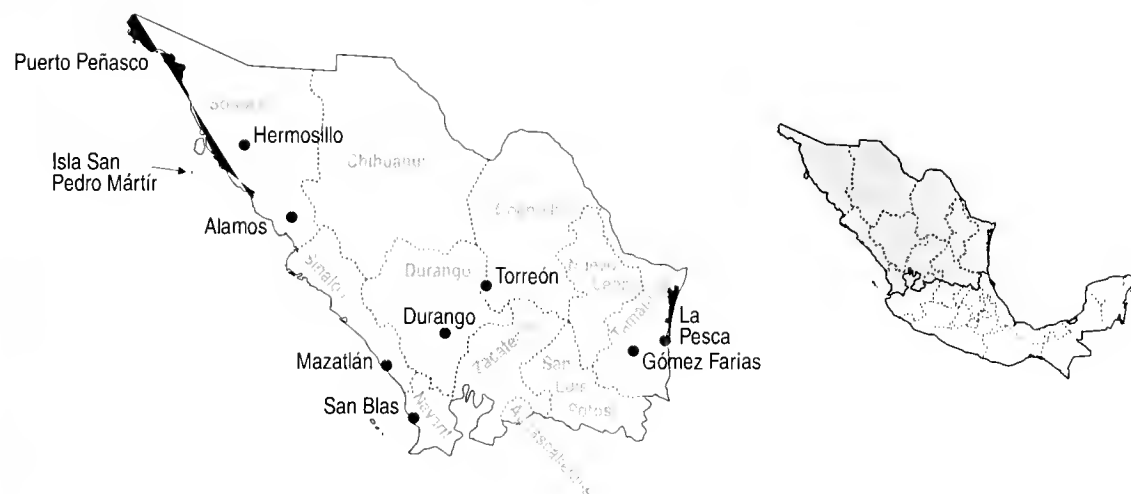
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Mexico

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An unusually cold winter blanketed most of Mexico, with, for example, Mexico City cooler than Denver, Colorado, on some days in January.

## NORTHERN MEXICO



Carmody noted that the region around Mazatlán, Sinaloa was particularly wet in mid-February, and Elegant Quail and Flammulated Flycatchers were vocal earlier in the year than usual. Howe reports that there was much flooding in n. Chihuahua near Janos in early January; added to the unusually high rainfall from the autumn, the wet conditions produced very lush grasses and a notably large numbers of sparrows.

## LOONS THROUGH NIGHTJARS

Three Common Loons were inland on Presa San Francisco nw. of Ciudad Victoria, Tamps. 3 Dec (MDC). Four imm. Northern Gannets were seen from Boca Chica, Tamps. 17 Feb (MJI). A Boat-billed Heron was in Laguna El Quelele, Nay. 9 Jan (BM). At least 3 blue-morph Ross's Geese were among about 1200 white morphs at Laguna Fierro on the e. side of Nuevo Casas Grandes, Chih. 31 Dec (vt. BH, DK, DM), one of which may have been a Ross's Goose x Snow Goose hybrid. A pair of Mexican Ducks was at Puerto Peñasco, Son. 29 Jan, the male showing

some Mallard features (MDC). Eight Mexican Ducks were in irrigation canals near Villa Juárez, Son. 9 Dec (KG, KM); though they are not mapped for western Son. or Sin. by Howell & Webb (1995) or Russell & Monson (1998), these same observers have seen them regularly s. of Ciudad Obregón and Navojoa, Son. A first-winter Surf Scoter was at San Francisco, Nay. 9 & 20 Jan (ph. MG, IA, ph. RT, CG).

An ad. Golden Eagle was seen soaring above the cliffs 3 km w. of El Palmito, Sin. 14 Feb (MDC). Two Ospreys were on Cañón de Fernández, Dgo. 6 Feb on the Nazas R. (AVJ, WB, FVP). An ad. Harris's Hawk was at the sewage lagoon at Puerto Peñasco 29 Jan (MDC), where mapped by

Russell & Monson (1998) but not by Howell & Webb (1995). A pair of Collared-Forest Falcons was 17 km w. of Linares, N.L. 3 Dec (MDC). A covey of Singing Quails was at a higher-elevation coffee finca on Cerro San Juan, Nay. 17 Feb (MDC). A group of 79–85 Sandhill Cranes were seen feeding on short grass near Tanque Aquilereño, a shallow dam on the Aguanaval R. in sw. Coah. 12 & 30 Dec (AVJ, FVP, WB). Three Black Turnstones were at Emerald Bay, Mazatlán, Sin. 12 Feb (MDC, ph.). Three Piping Plovers were seen at Ciénega de Santa Clara, Son. in the Colorado R. delta 19 Dec (OHH), and one was at La Pesca, Tamps. 31 Dec (MAP). Six Wilson's Phalaropes were at Yávaros, Son. 11 Dec (KG, KM), where they are usually considered transients. Three Red Phalaropes, new for Chih. and unusual in interior Mexico in winter, were seen in Laguna Fierro 5 Jan (AJ, CR). An ad. Western Gull was at the mouth of the harbor at Puerto Peñasco 30 Jan (MDC), and a juv. Lesser Black-backed Gull was at the Puerto Peñasco dump 19

Dec (DS, WR). A first-winter Great Black-backed Gull that had been reported since 20 Jan at the beach at Boca Chica, Texas was seen 20 Feb flying across the mouth of the Rio Grande/Rio Bravo to the Mexican side (DJ).

An Inca Dove was at Puerto Peñasco 29 Jan (MDC), a female Ruddy Ground-Dove was at Colonia Juárez, sw. of Casas Grandes, Chih. 31 Dec (DM, vt. BH, DK), and a Common Ground-Dove was at Casa de Janos, Chih. 2 Jan (BH). Two Eurasian Collared-Doves were at Miguel Alemán between Hermosillo and Bahía Kino, Son. 7–8 Dec (KG, KM), and a total of 101 was counted on the Ejido San Pedro, Chih. C.B.C., most of them in Ejido San Pedro itself 3 Jan (*fide* BH)—a surprising number, considering that the first record for that relatively well-birded area was Jan 2003. Records of this species from Tamps. include one 2 km n. of Aldama, one 25 km s. of Soto La Marina 31 Dec, 10 at km 92 of Hwy 97 (MAP), and one around the Coah./N.L. border in a small settlement around 24 km w. of San Rafael, N.L. 21 Feb (WE). In Dec, biologists from the Tecnológico de Monterrey made a record count of 3100–3500 Maroon-fronted Parrots on their main wintering ground near the border of N.L. and Tamps. (*fide* EE). Ten Lesser Nighthawks in Bahía Kino 7 Dec and 5+ between Miguel Alemán and Hermosillo 17 Dec (KG, KM) were nw. of their mapped winter range.

## HUMMINGBIRDS THROUGH FINCHES

An imm. male *Selasphorus* believed to be Rufous Hummingbird was defending a stand of tree tobacco near the Highrise parrot cliffs, N.L. 1 Dec (MDC). Two Olivaceous Woodcreepers were seen in an upper-elevation coffee finca on Cerro San Juan 17 Feb (MDC). Most unexpected was a White-striped Woodcreeper in cottonwood riparian woodland on the Rio San Pedro at the upstream end of La Presa, Chih. (DK, vt. BH, ph. S&NC, AJ, CR, K&LG, AR, DM, RM)—not far from the United States border. One to 2 Eastern Phoebes were at the same location as the White-striped Woodcreeper 1 & 2 Jan (BH et al.). A Say's Phoebe was found again in the large field at Rancho La Noria, Nay. 17 Feb (MDC). Two Scissor-tailed Flycatchers were n. of their usual winter range near Soto la Marina, Tamps. 3 Dec (MDC). On the Ejido San Pedro C.B.C. 3 Jan, a drop in Chihuahuan Ravens of about 90% compared to previous winters years led to speculations about the effects of West Nile virus there (BH et al.). A Bridled Titmouse was in a mixed flock 19 Feb in La Estanzuela, Monterrey, N.L. (CH, CE, CWR, DP), slightly n. of the range mapped by Howell & Webb (1995). Three Mexican Chickadees were in a riparian woodland at La Presa, Chih. 1 & 2 Jan, a habitat in which they are apparently regular in winter here (BH et al.).



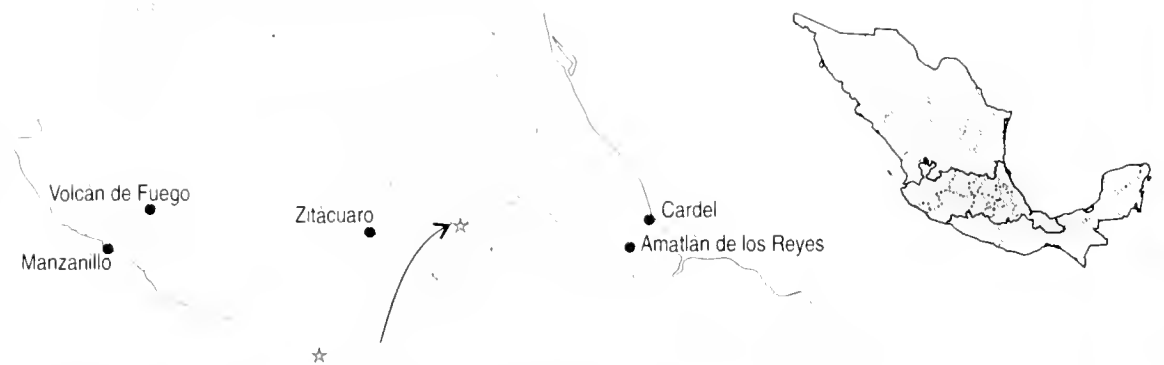
This blue-morph Ross's Geese is one of three that showed up among an estimated 1200 Ross's Geese at Laguna Fierro, Chihuahua, Mexico 31 December 2004. Photograph from videotape by Bill Howe.

A Red-breasted Nuthatch was heard at Chamizal Park, Ciudad Juárez, Chih. 1 Jan (JZ, MS), not surprising in light of the continent-wide irruption of the species in fall 2004. Compared to most winters, this season saw few thrushes in Sin. along the Durango Hwy and in Nay. on Cerro San Juan (MDC). Single Yellow-throated Warblers were seen at Copala, Sin. 5 (JF) & 15 Feb (ph. MDC). A male or bright female Pine Warbler was in a Tamps. park across the border from Anzalduas County Park, Texas 26 Dec (MAP). A male Pine Warbler was seen 30 Jan in Bosque Venustiano Carranza, Torreón, Coah. 20 m from the site of a 5 Jan 2003 sighting (WB). Groups of 3 and 4 Black-chinned Sparrows were seen 13 Feb in the Cañón del Sarnoso, Dgo., 40 km nw. of Torreón (AVJ, WB, FVP), just the 2nd sighting in this location; the previous sighting was of one 5 Feb 1999 (FVP). Four Baird's Sparrows and at least 7 Sprague's Pipits were in the ungrazed fenced grasslands at Tanque de Emergenica, Coah. 30 Nov (MDC). Three Clay-colored Sparrows were among Chipping Sparrows in oak woodlands at La Presa 1 & 3 Jan (BH, DK, S&NC). A Field Sparrow was seen in mesquite grassland on the Ejido San Pedro C.B.C. 3 Jan (N&SC). A Rufous-capped Brush-Finch was near Yécora, Son. in early Jan (K&CR). An ad. male Eastern Towhee near the e. end of El Pinal valley, N.L. 20 Feb (KW) may represent the first record for Mexico, although not an unexpected record, given its status in sc. Texas. An Indigo Bunting was at Río Matape about 74 km e. of Hermosillo, Son. in early Jan (K&CR). Around 40 Dickcissels were near Villa Unión, Sin. 5 Feb (KR, JF, SK). A single Red Crossbill was heard flying over Casa de Janos 2 & 3 Jan (BH, DK).

**Addenda:** A Northern Goshawk was at Paraíso del Oso, Chih. 18 Mar 2004 (MJI). At least one Eurasian Collared-Dove was at a small farm 16 km w. of Chihuahua City, Chih. 21 Mar 2004 (MJI). A Gray-crowned Woodpecker was inland at Paraíso del Oso 19 Mar 2004 (MJI). Nine European Starlings were at Culiacán, Sin. 20 Jan 2004 (MDC).

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## CENTRAL MEXICO



Three ad. Blue-footed Boobies were at Barra de Navidad, Jal. 25 Feb (MDC). A Pinnated Bittern was in a pond on Las Barrancas road, Ver., where 3 had been 28 Nov (HGdS). One Cattle Egret flew over Cuicuilco, D.F. 20 Dec (HGdS, AOI, LASG). An imm. Roseate Spoonbill was inland at Magdalena, Jal. 21 Feb (MDC). Inland were 27 Wood Storks at Laguna de Sayula, Jal. 21 Feb (MDC). A Bufflehead was seen in Parque Ecológico Xochimilco, D.F. 20 Dec (RW). A Snail Kite was near Manzanillo airport, Col. 15 Feb (HGdS). An ad. Crane Hawk was at Barranca el Choncho, Jal. 14 Feb (HGdS). Three dark-morph Red-tailed Hawks were near Melaque, Jal. 14 Feb (HGdS). A juv. Broad-winged Hawk was near the Instituto de Ecología, UNAM, D.F. 16 Jan and 4 Feb (HGdS).

An imm. Purple Gallinule was at Colotitlán, Jal. 13 Feb (HGdS). Four Semipalmated Plovers were seen in Parque Ecológico Xochimilco 20 Dec (RW). A Franklin's Gull, rare in Mexico in winter, was among Laughing Gulls at the mouth of Río Ameca at the Jal./Nay. border 14 Jan (BPG, MJI). A flock of 200–300 Maroon-fronted Parrots was seen 28 Dec flying high overhead near El Lobo, Landa de Matamoros, and a group of 16 was seen 8 Jan feeding on cones of *Pinus greggi*

at Puerto de Malpais, a few km w. of the previous sighting at 1720 m above sea level (RP); both records are from the e. portion of Sierra Gorda Biosphere Reserve, Qro. A group of 26 Military Macaws were seen flying over Rancho Nuevo, Jalpan de Serra, Qro. 19 Feb (RP) and were said by local inhabitants to have shown up recently in numbers to feed on the fruit of the introduced *Melia azedarach*. A Lesser Roadrunner was about one km e. of Parres, D.F. 6 Feb (KR, JF, SK, RS, HGdS, AOI). A Common Pauraque was heard in a rural area just s. of Cuernavaca at Atlacholoaya, Mor. 31 Jan (CL, BF). Small groups of 8–10 White-collared Swifts were seen on several occasions mid-Jan–early Mar at Yelapa, Jal. (AD). Two Bumblebee Hummingbirds were at the top of the hill at

La Cima, D.F. 20 Dec (HGdS, AOI, LASG). Probably the first record for D.F., a male Gray-breasted Woodpecker was seen in an area with prickly-pear cactus in Parque Ecológico Xochimilco 20 Dec (RW). Two Streak-headed Woodcreepers were heard at Barranca del Agua, Col. 18 Feb (HGdS). Two Common Ravens were seen flying over Coyoacán, D.F. 5 Feb (LASG). A singing Bell's Vireo was at Playa de Oro, Col. 16 Feb (HGdS). A Blue-headed Vireo was n. of Comala, Col. 23 Feb (MDC). One Canyon Wren at 3000 m at La Cima 20 Dec was at high elevation (HGdS, AOI, LASG); also at high elevation was a Happy Wren heard at km 16 of the road up Volcán de Fuego, Jal. 17 Feb (HGdS). Few thrushes were noted this winter on the Volcán de Nieve, Jal. rela-



This first-winter Surf Scoter at San Francisco, Nayarit, Mexico 9 January 2005 is apparently the southernmost ever recorded. Probably the same individual was independently recorded in the same location on 20 January. Photograph by Manuel Grosselet.

tive to most years (MDC). Five Eastern Bluebirds were at San Nicolás Totolapan, D.F. 20 Dec (AM). A White-throated Robin was on Playa de Oro road 15 Feb (HGdS). A Northern Mockingbird was unexpected at Cuicuilco 20 Dec (HGdS, AOI, LASG). Two European Starlings were near Parres, D.F. 20 Dec (HGdS, AOI, LASG), and 6 were in Toluca, Méx. 6 Jan (HGdS).

Single **Yellow-throated Warblers** were seen twice in early Jan and once 10 Mar at Yelapa (AD). Some of Jal.'s first records of **Chestnut-sided Warbler** were of one on the Báscula Rd. 11 Jan, one at Rancho Primavera 12 Jan and 2 there 21 Jan (BPG, MJI), and one on the Ciénega de Ojuelos Rd 14 Jan (BPG, MJI)—all of these localities are near El Tuito. A **Worm-eating Warbler** was at Rancho Primavera, Jal. 11 Jan, and a **Tennessee Warbler** was there 15 Jan (BPG, MJI). An ad. Tennessee Warbler was near treeline on Volcán de Nieve, Jal. 22 Feb (MDC). An ad. male **Black-throated Blue Warbler** was in a shady ravine n. of Comala 23 Feb (MDC). A Northern Waterthrush was seen in Parque Ecológico Xochimilco 20 Dec (RW). Two Varied Buntings were at Cuicuilco 20 Dec (HGdS, AOI, LASG). At least 30 Ruddy-breasted Seedeaters were on the road to Manzanillo airport 15 Feb (HGdS).

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## SOUTHERN MEXICO



### GREBES THROUGH BECARDS

Four Pied-billed Grebes were seen near Miahuatlán 14 Jan. Four Blue-footed Boobies were near Santiago Astata 9 Dec (HGdS). Inland were one juv. **Magnificent Frigatebird** flying high over Tulijá, Chis. 14 Dec (HGdS) and one Wood Stork flying with a flock of vultures at Río Hondo, between Oaxaca City and Tehuantepec and around 40 km e. of El Camaron 7 Feb (BF et al.). The **Mexican Duck** seen in recent years at Piedra Azul Dam near Teotitlán del Valle was seen again 25 Dec–24 Jan (RH, MEC et al.). A drake

Green-winged Teal at the same reservoir was a rarity there 24 Jan–23 Feb (MEC, CB, ESB et al.). An Osprey was about 6.5 km w of Zachi on a utility pole in valley agricultural habitat 2 Feb. A female Hook-billed Kite at the Yagul ruins 3 Jan was most out of place (MEC et al.). A Crane Hawk was seen 28 Dec on Mazín Chico road outside Camelia Roja (RH). Zone-tailed Hawks were seen 4 Dec at San Mateo Cajonos, 12 & 14 Dec at San José del Pacífico and 28 Dec at San Sebastian Etna. A Solitary Eagle was sighted 29 Dec about km 72 above Valle Nacional (RH; 1350 m), the first report for this area in some years. An ad. Black-and-white Hawk-Eagle was above Valle Nacional 22 Jan (MG). A Merlin was at Piedra Azul Dam 7 Dec (HGdS).

Two flocks of West Mexican Chachalacas



This Red Phalarope is one of three that showed up at Laguna Fierro, northern Chihuahua, Mexico 5 January 2005. This species had never been recorded in Chihuahua before and is known in the interior of Mexico from very few winter records. Photograph by Andy Johnson.

were heard near El Estudiante 7 Dec (HGdS). A Common Moorhen was recorded near Miahuatlán 14 Jan. Three Laughing Gulls were at a reservoir near Miahuatlán 14 Jan. A **Caspian Tern** was seen 14 Jan near Miahuatlán, apparently a first record for the cen. valleys of Oax. Among hundreds of

Laughing Gulls and various tern species, a single Gull-billed Tern was seen 12 Jan at Barra de Navidad. At least 5 Sandwich Terns were at Salinas del Marquez 9 Dec (HGdS). Two Yellow-headed Parrots were seen near Zipolite 23 Jan (MF, KB). A Flammulated Owl, a Northern Saw-whet Owl, and a *sartorii* Barred Owl were recorded 25 Dec on Cerro San Felipe (RH et al.); the latter was also heard by M. Edwards Crewe here, at the s. end of the species' range, in 2003. A feeding flock of 40+ Lesser Nighthawks was seen in the evening of 28 Dec between Tuxtepec

and the Cerro de Oro reservoir (RH). Six Vaux's Swifts were flying over Monte Alban ruins 23 Dec (RH), and at least 3 were seen here 21 Feb (CB, ESB et al.). Two Bumblebee Hummingbirds were seen in fairly dry pine-oak forest at San José del Pacífico 12 Dec, and the species was reported as common in the La Cumbre/Cerro San Felipe area 22 Dec (RH) but not found there after Jan. Five Rufous Hummingbirds were at San Jose del Pacífico 12 Dec. A probable male Broad-billed Hummingbird was seen in Oaxaca City 15 Jan (MF, KB), and a Green-fronted Hummingbird was below El Estudiante 25 Feb (CB, ESB).

A Tawny-throated Leaf-tosser was seen 29 Dec at about km 58 above Valle Nacional (RH, 670 m). A Strong-billed Woodcreeper was voice-recorded 24 Dec near La Cumbre, Cerro San Felipe (RH); the species is observed every few years there but appears to be rare in the Sierra de Aloapaneca. Of the 23 or so named subspecies, three (*omiltemensis*, *sclateri*, and *emigrants*) are known from s. Mexico; the Oax. birds are *sclateri*, which apparently do not respond to recordings of allopatric *emigrants* of Chiapas, for instance (*vide* ESB). Four Social Flycatchers above Teotitlán 2 Jan were noteworthy (MEC et al.). One or 2 Pileated Flycatchers were seen at Monte Alban 23 Dec–21 Feb (RH, MEC, CB, ESB et al.), and one was noted 30 Dec at

about km 70 of the Oaxaca–Tehuantepec highway above Totolapan (RH; 1335 m). A Greenish Elaenia was seen at La Cumbre 22 Dec. Hammond's Flycatchers were recorded at low elevations (670–1350 m) 27 Dec at about km 58 and 72 above Valle Nacional (RH); the species was especially numerous around La Cumbre in late Feb (CB, ESB). At least 5 Buff-breasted Flycatchers were recorded 24 Feb at Cuatro Venados. One White-throated Flycatcher was near Valle Nacional 22 Dec (MG). A Cinnamon Becard was reported near Camelia Roja 23 Dec (MG); this species is not mapped in nw. Oaxaca by Howell & Webb (1995), but there is a specimen from this part of the state (Miller et al. 1957). Several Rose-throated Becards were present around La Cumbre 22 Dec–25 Feb, as is usual here.

### VIREOS THROUGH EUPHONIAS

A White-eyed Vireo was near Yagul 21 Dec (MG), and a Philadelphia Vireo accompanied a foraging flock below El Estudiante 1 Jan (MEC et al.). A high-flying swarm of 1000+ swallows near Ocosingo, Chis. were probably Tree Swallows, which have been found to form winter swarms in this region in some years (HGdS). A Happy Wren heard and glimpsed below El Estudiante 7 Dec



(HGdS) was only the 3rd recorded in the cen. valleys of Oax, though the species occurs just over the continental divide from La Cumbre, e.g., at Gueletao de Juarez. A Golden-crowned Kinglet at Cerro San Felipe 3 Feb (BF et al.) added to the very few records from this site and the state. A Bushtit was seen completing an unusually early nest 24 Feb at Cuatro Venados. Eastern Bluebirds were seen 9 Dec at Cuajimoloyas and 24 Feb at Cuatro Venados. Swainson's Thrushes were recorded 22 Dec at La Cumbre and 29 Dec at about km 58 above Valle Nacional, and a Veery was in a mixed flock of thrushes, warblers, and becards at La Soledad in the Sierra de Miahuatlán 4 Jan (MEC et al.). An Aztec Thrush was found eating apples at an orchard in Las Guacamayas, above Etna 20 Dec (MG), and a group of around 10 was in humid oak-conifer forest above Filo de Caballo, Gro. 15 Jan (JF et al.) A Black Thrush sang steadily on the road to Yuvila, e. of La Cumbre, 25 Feb (CB, ESB et al.). A possible Black Catbird was glimpsed near La Libertad, Chis. 16 Dec (HGdS).

Cedar Waxwing's pattern of appearance (every other winter) in cen. Oaxaca continued this year, with the first records of large flocks coming 9 Dec at high-elevation locations of Llano Grande and Cuajimoloyas. Three Lucy's Warblers were near Tehuantepec 24 Dec (MG). An imm. Prothonotary Warbler was in mangroves at Parque Ecológico Aztlan in Ixtapa, Gro. 17 Jan (RS, DCR), and a female was in mangroves at Playa Ventanilla 22 Jan (KB, MF). A Magnolia Warbler was near sea level 13 Jan at Laguna Mazunte. A Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler was at the Oaxaca botanical garden 19 Dec. A Yellow-throated Warbler at Laguna Mazunte on 13 Jan was quite low, and an *albilora* Yellow-throated was seen 22 Dec at El Tequio Park in Oaxaca City—just the 2nd record for this species in the Oaxaca cen. valleys (ph. RH). A single Tennessee Warbler at San José del Pacífico 12 Dec was very high. A Louisiana Waterthrush, certainly a migrant, stopped in at Piedra Azul reservoir 20 Feb (CB, ESB et al.). Hooded Yellowthroat was seen 9 Dec at Cuajimoloyas, and another was found again below El Estudiante, apparently on territory 25 Feb (CB, ESB et al.).

Common Bush-Tanagers were seen in relatively dry pine-oak forest at San José del Pacífico 12 Feb; one recorded 22 Dec below El Estudiante (MG) was far out of its normal habitat and range, whereas 2 Red-headed Tanagers there were scarce residents, seen 25 Jan (MEC et al.) and 24 Feb (CB, ESB et al.). About 20 Red-legged Honeycreepers were seen 13 Jan at Finca El Pacífico. About 35 Rose-breasted Grosbeaks were reported 20 Dec on the road from San Gabriel Etna to Guacamayas. Two Blue-gray Tanagers at El Camarón between Oaxaca and Tehuantepec

8 Dec were a surprise (HGdS). A hyperxanthic Chipping Sparrow was at Monte Albán 6 Feb (BF, V&KB). About 15 Striped Sparrows (mostly paired, with some possible courtship behavior, including begging) were recorded 24 Feb at Cuatro Venados. Four Oaxaca Sparrows near Puente de Fierro 27 Dec confirms sympatry with Rusty Sparrow



in this location (RH). Oaxaca Sparrows were "abundant" (or at least very conspicuous) around Teotitlán del Valle and other traditional locations this winter, with daily counts as high as 24 birds (MEC, CB, ESB et al.). Some 11 Grasshopper Sparrows were seen 22 Dec at El Tequio park, and another 6 were seen 30 Dec below the Yagul Ruins. At least 6 Grasshopper Sparrows were at Oaxaca airport 26 Dec (MG). Single Song Sparrows were found at Monte Alban 31 Dec and at Piedra Azul reservoir 2 Jan (MEC et al.); the species is hardly known in the Oax. central valleys.

Black-vented Orioles and a Hooded Oriole at San José del Pacífico 12 Jan were unusually high. Two Streak-backed Oriole pairs were recorded 30 Dec–3 Jan below Yagul ruins (MEC, RH et al.). A Black-backed Oriole was recorded 27 Dec between Guacamayas and Zoquiapan. About 6 Scott's Orioles were at Cuajimoloyas 9 Dec. A Melodious Blackbird was w. of Tehuantepec 9 Dec (HGdS) and 9 Feb (RC), one was s. of Tehuantepec 10 Dec (HGdS), 2 were at an RV park at the n. edge of Tehuantepec 10 Feb (BF), and 2 were in Puerto Ángel 24 Dec (MG). A Scrub Euphonia was heard at El Camarón 8 Dec (HGdS). Thirteen *stricklandi* Red Crossbills were gathering nesting material and singing vigorously at La Cumbre 22 Feb (CB, ESB et al.).

**Addendum:** Unexpected was a juv. Bald Eagle seen in Chis. 13 km n. of Puerto Arista on the road to Paredón 12 Jan 2004 (MDC, ZS, JT).

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## YUCATÁN PENINSULA

Records of the three merganser species in one season was unprecedented. The second occurrence of Short-eared Owl and a new species for the Yucatán Peninsula, White-winged Tanager, were major news items of the season. In addition, seven new species were recorded for Cozumel, and a second sighting of Yellow Palm Warbler was reported.

**Abbreviations:** Ecotucán (Villas Ecotucán, southern Q. Roo); Coz. (Isla Cozumel, Q. Roo); P.M. (Puerto Morelos, Q. Roo); P.T. (Peten Tuchá in Ría Lagartos Biosphere Reserve, Yuc.); R. L. (Río Lagartos).

## GREBES THROUGH FALCONS

A high count of 22 Pied-billed Grebes was made at a large pond between Muná and Umán 20 Jan (AD). A Pinnated Bittern was seen at Cobá in Dec (DB), and Least Bittern was reported in the Celestún area 20 Jan (AD) and in Feb (DB). Another was seen at Palancar Beach, Coz. 1 Jan (PB, LB, JM). Surprisingly, 100 Reddish Egrets were totaled during the day in the Celestún area 12 Feb (AD), the largest congregation of this species reported on the peninsula. Several reports of Glossy Ibis, a regular but uncommon winter visitor in the subregion, were submitted: 2 flying eastward over the hwy. near P.M. 29 Jan (KH), one across from the cemetery on the outskirts of R.L. 28 Dec (RM), and a few there 28 Feb (BW, CW). Among them were 3 ad. White-faced Ibis 19 Jan (MC, SC, AF, ph. DF) and one 9 Feb (AM, JM, MT). A record of the latter species in the same location last Aug was the first record for the Yucatan Peninsula. Sightings of **Jabiru** are always exciting, and at least 2 ads. and one juv. were at rice fields s. of San Hipolito, Camp. 16 Jan (MC, SC).

Three **American Wigeons** were photographed at pond near the entrance to P.T.

24 Jan (PB, LB, AM, JM). A high of 60 Blue-winged Teal was counted at a small pond near Chacchoben, s. Q. Roo 5 & 14 Feb (BS). An uncommon winter visitor to the subregion, a Ring-necked Duck was seen in the area of P.M. 22 Dec (JF, JG, NH, NJ). A Hooded Merganser was reported on Coz. 30 Jan (KH), and a flock of 30 Common Mergansers, extremely uncommon migrants in the Region, were bathing and feeding in the Ría de Chelem 2 Feb (BM, MT). A Red-breasted Merganser was reported on Isla Holbox, Q. Roo 17 Dec (TvS), and one was in a pond on the se. coast of Coz. 10 (RC, JM, AM, AMcG, JM) & 26 Jan (PB, LB, AM, JM)—a new record for the island. A Masked Duck was sighted at Palancar Beach area on Coz. 4 Jan (NH).

Also on Coz., a tape recording of Great Curassow produced a vocal response 8 Jan in heavy forest e. of El Cedral (RTC, JM, AM, JM). Two Ocellated Turkeys were on the entrance road to Hacienda Tikuch, 10 km n. of Izamal, Yuc. 30 Jan (BM, DW). A King Vulture was seen flying over the R.L. garbage dump 8 Dec (IN). Non-breeding Greater Flamingos are often found at Celestún—but rarely as many as the 28,000 reported there 2 Feb (AD). The resident *ridgwayi* Osprey nests in winter in the subregion; 2 chicks were in a nest on Isla Holbox 17 Dec (DB, BM). A dark Hook-billed Kite was seen flying across the hwy. at the n. end of Laguna Bacalar 19 Jan (JC, KH). An ad. Black-collared Hawk was at the large waterhole one km e. of the staff housing at Calakmul 14 Jan (MC, SC); and a single Crane Hawk, formerly quite common in Q. Roo, was sighted at Ecotucán 20 Feb (BS). A pair of Great Black-Hawks was seen at Rancho San Salvador in Ría Lagartos Biosphere Reserve 28 Dec (AM, BM, RM, MT), while a dark-morph Red-tailed Hawk, uncommon in Q. Roo, was seen flying over Rancho Santa María, Q. Roo 15 Dec (PW). An ad. Black-and-white Hawk-Eagle was at the Mamantel R. crossing 16 Jan (MC, SC), and an ad. Black Hawk-Eagle was seen at Rancho Santa María 19 Jan (AM, JM). A Peregrine Falcon was sighted in Celestún 15 Feb (RL).

### RAILS THROUGH TERNS

Five Rufous-necked Wood-Rails were easily viewed feeding around mangrove roots a few km e. of Celestún bridge 30 Dec (AM, BM, RM, MT). It seemed that shorebirds were congregating somewhat early this year in preparation for their migration northward, as noted at Chelem, where 20 Black-bellied Plovers were feeding in the mudflats 2 Feb (BM, MT; usually no more than 3 are seen together during the winter). A Piping Plover was among other plovers on the outer beach at Isla Holbox 17 Dec (DB, BM); the species is almost annual here. A high number of

Northern Jacanas—75 (60% juvs.)—were counted on a small lake near Chacchoben village 14 Feb (BS). A Whimbrel, not very common in the subregion, was feeding in the flats of the Ría Chelem 14 Mar (LG, BM). That same morning, flocks of 20 and 15 Long-billed Curlews were seen heading northwestward along the coast at Chelem (LG, BM). Four Marbled Godwits were on the sandbar upstream from the bridge at R.L. 24 Feb (BM, DN). A flock of 100 Least Sandpipers was seen at Celestún 2 Feb (AD), and a few Dunlin were at salt flats in R.L. area 28 Feb, with a few Stilt Sandpipers (BW, CW). On the same day, 2 Long-billed Dowitchers were reported feeding at an inland pond a few km s. of the coast of R.L. (BW, CW). Nearby that day were several Wilson's Phalaropes and 3 Red-necked Phalaropes,



This female Ruddy Ground-Dove found at Colonia Juárez on 31 December 2004 may represent the first photographic record for Chihuahua, though its appearance in this state is not too surprising in view of the increasing number of records in all of the southwestern United States in recent years. Photograph by Bill Howe.

thought to be a vagrant to the subregion (BW, CW). Four nonbreeding Wilson's Phalaropes were in salt ponds at Celestún 20 Feb (AM, JM).

A Pomarine Jaeger was seen over the estuary at Celestún 2 Feb (AD), while a Franklin's Gull in breeding plumage was at Chelem 28 Feb (RL, BM). A rare Bonaparte's Gull was reported over the coast at R.L. 16 Jan (DN). Herring Gull is expected each year but may be on the increase. One with a band was noted 17 Dec at Isla Holbox (DB, BM); one ad. and one second-winter bird were at Chelem 1 Feb (BM); one first-winter bird was at R.L. 24 Feb (BM, DN); and possibly the same individual was at Las Coloradas 28 Feb (BW, CW). Definitely present in above-normal numbers this season was Lesser Black-backed Gull: one winter ad. and one first-winter bird on the beach at Isla Holbox 17 Dec (DB, BM); 6 ads. at Chelem 1 Feb (BM); 2 ads. at Churburná 4 Feb (AM, JM); 10 ads. plus one third-year bird at Las Coloradas salt ponds 8 Feb (AM, JM; MT); and 4 ads. at Chelem 14 Mar (BM). A Kelp Gull was at R.L. 24 Feb (BM, DN). Although Forster's Tern is expected in winter in the Region, it is not common and should be re-

ported. An ad. in breeding plumage and another in almost full breeding plumage were present at R.L. 24 Feb, as were 50 Black Skimmers (BM, DN). The tremendous variation in numbers of Black Skimmers during fall and spring migration periods indicates that this species participates in local migrations within the Region.

### DOVES THROUGH ORIOLES

A Eurasian Collared-Dove was reported from Celestún 24 Dec (JC, NH), and what appeared to be a Ringed Turtle-Dove was in the main square of San Miguel, Coz. 7 Jan (RTC, JM, AM, AMcG, JM). Another case of possible escapees, or misidentification, were two pairs of White-crowned Parrots reported flying around Celestún 26 Feb (RL). An unusual but not impossible sighting was of a single Smooth-billed Ani with 2 Groove-billed Anis in Xcalak 3 Feb (GL). An undocumented report of Central American Pygmy-Owl, this one from Calakmul 9–12 Jan (BB, JS), is worth mentioning in case others have the opportunity to tape-record its call. Black-and-white Owl is rarely reported in the subregion; 2 juvs. were seen at Kohunlich 19 Feb (BS). A Short-eared Owl at Las Coloradas salt flats seen at a 150-m distance represented another new and unusual record for the subregion (AM, JM; MT); the only other record is of one reportedly shot by R. Dickerson in sw. Camp. 16 Nov 1963 (Allan R. Phillips, pers. comm. to BM).

This winter season produced several new records for Coz., including a Cinnamon Hummingbird in San Miguel in the courtyard of the Hotel Marrauang 3 Jan (JF, JG, NH). The only other previous "record" was a doubtful Gaumer specimen and a mention by E.P. Edwards in a popular article. Ringed Kingfisher is very local in Yucatán and Q. Roo; 4 were seen at the small pond near Chacchoben 5 Feb (BS), and one was at Cobá in Feb (DB). A Collared Araçari was reported on Coz. 30 Jan, either a very good record or perhaps an escapee. A Northern Barred-Woodcreeper was located 10 km ssc. of El Cuyo 11 Feb, where it has previously been reported (AM, JM, MT). Black-faced Antthrush is more readily found in the s. part of the peninsula, so one seen at Central Vallarta, 15 km w. of Puerto Morelos, 24 Jan, along with a Slate-headed Tody-Flycatcher (MV), is noteworthy.

An Eastern Wood-Pewee was seen at Celestún 15 Dec, very late for this transient (AD). Another new species for Coz. was an Eastern Phoebe at the Hotel Presidente 3 Jan (JF, NH); one was at El Cuyo 10 Feb (AM, JM). Great Kiskadee was first reported on Coz. in fall 2003, and this year there were several reports, including one in the same location near the small pond at the entrance to the Cozumel Golf Club 7 Jan (MC, SC), one there and another at a small cenote near

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shore near Bella Caribe 11 Jan (RC, RLC, AM, AMcG, JM), and one near the lighthouse 31 Jan (KJ). Rose-throated Becard continues to thrive on Coz., where one was photographed in Oct (RC); other singles were recorded in the Hotel Presidente garden 3 Jan (JF, NH, NJ), at San Gervasio ruins 12 Jan (BiB, NB; JM), and nearby 26 Jan (PB, LB, AM, JM). A pair of Gray-collared Becards at P.T. 28 Dec was a new species for the R.L. biosphere reserve (JE, BM, RM, MT). A male Masked Tityra was seen at San Gervasio ruins, Coz. 12 Jan, a new species for the island list (BiB, NB, JM). Tree Swallows passed through in Feb, as expected, with 10 at Chelem 2 Feb (BM, MT) and 50 at Celestún 12 Feb (AD). Barn Swallow was first reported Celestún 12 Feb (AD).

Two Yucatan Wren fledglings were being fed by an ad. 30 Dec at Celestún (JM). New for Coz. were a Ruby-crowned Kinglet near the entrance to San Gervasio 8 Jan (AM) and single Clay-colored Robins at Hotel Presidente 3 Jan (JF, NH, NJ) and El Cedral 7 Jan (MC, SC). The latter was previously known on Coz. only from a dubious Gaumer specimen. A Veery was reported at Calakmul 12 Jan (JS); the species is not known to winter in the Region. The many reports of American Robin included a male and female on Isla Holbox 3 Dec (DB, RE, ph. BM); a male 7 Dec at Central Vallarta (LK, GR); one on Coz. 17 Dec (ph. RC); a pair at a water station 10 km e. of Celestún 30 Dec (BM, AM, RM); one at San Miguel, Coz. baseball fields 3 Jan (JG); and a male at El Cuyo Reserve Station 10 Feb (MM, AM, JM, MT).

Black Catbird is predominantly found on the e. coast of the peninsula but is also known from scattered locations elsewhere: one was in a coastal dune near El Cuyo port 27 Dec (BM, RM, MT); one was at San Bartolo, Tekax 17 Jan (KH); and one was at Chachoben 14 Feb (BS). A European Starling on Coz. 17 Dec (ph. RC) constituted a new record for the island of this very occasional visitor to the peninsula. A single ad. Golden-winged Warbler, predominantly a transient on the peninsula, was noted at Calakmul 12 Jan (BB, JS). Tennessee Warbler is also mostly transient in the Region, but 6–7 were at Hacienda Chichén, Yuc. 11 Dec (TE), and one was still there 1 Jan (BM). Cape May Warbler winter records are also rare, but 2 were at km 10 of the Palizada road, Camp. 16 Dec (HGdS), and a single male was at Cobá 28 Jan (PB, LB, KH, AM, JM). The big news at Chichén Itzá this winter was a male Black-throated Blue Warbler that wintered there. It was first reported 10–12 Dec (TE, BM), and subsequent records were from 18 Jan (MC, SC, AF, DF) and 27 Feb (BW, CW). "Many" male and one female Black-throated Blue Warblers were reported on Coz. at Chankanaab 20 & 23 Jan (MV). A Yellow

Palm Warbler, a subspecies with one previous subregional record, was at Rancho Santa María 20 Jan (AM; JM). Another species that is usually a transient, a Louisiana Waterthrush was at Hacienda Chichén 11 Dec (TE), and another was seen on the banks of the Mamantel R., Camp 16 Jan (MC, SC). An uncommon ad. male Kentucky Warbler was at C.V. 21 Jan (MV); and an equally uncommon migrant, a Mourning Warbler, was tentatively identified at P.T. at the R.L. biosphere reserve 28 Dec (JE, BM).

Sightings of Western Tanager, an extremely rare migrant reported more frequently in recent years, included an ad. male at Calakmul 31 Dec (JF, JG, NH, NJ) and a young male at Izamal eating fruit of *Sideroxylon foetidissimum* 12 Dec (TE, BM). A pair of White-winged Tanagers was photographed at C.V. 21 Jan (MV)—a new species for the Yucatan Peninsula. Ten to 12 Blue-gray Tanagers fed feverishly on the fruit of *S. foetidissimum* atop the Mayan ruin at Izamal 12 Dec (TE, BM); another 2 were in the village of Chelem 1 Feb (BM, MT), where they are commonly found though not mapped by Howell and Webb (1995). A female Red-legged Honeycreeper at San Miguel 3 Jan (JF, NH) furnished just the 2nd record for Coz.

Sparrows also made news this winter, with sightings of less expected ones such as the single Lark Sparrow at Cancún airport 29 Jan (KH); 2 Savannahs at Celestún 12 Feb (AD); and single Lincoln's and White-crowned Sparrows at El Cedral 30 Jan (KH). Rarely reported, a female Blue-black Grosbeak was spotted at a small pond near Chachoben village 5 Feb (BS). Two female Brown-headed Cowbirds, rare migrants, were in Chelem 18 Mar (AD, BM), and Baltimore Oriole sightings were up this winter, with an ad. male at Hacienda Chichén 31 Dec (BM), 3 at Ecotucan 3 Feb (BS), one at San Bartolo Tekax (JC, KH), and a first-winter male 14 Mar at Chelem (LG, BM).

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# Central America



This winter season was an active one for birders and birds alike. With 97 named contributors and the collective contributions of four tour groups, the Central America region reached the century mark of participation for the first time. Coverage is steadily improving as well; however, there are still no reports coming out of Nicaragua.

Birds were on the move as well. The event of the season was the unprecedented invasion of Cedar Waxwings, with record numbers occurring as far south as Panama. One must wonder how many made it as far south as Colombia, where it is considered accidental. In Costa Rica, a series of intense winter storms moving in off the Caribbean may have contributed to the appearance of several typically pelagic and Caribbean island species along the coastline at Tortuguero in January and February, among them both Pomarine and Parasitic Jaegers, Sooty Tern, Brown Noddy, and White-crowned Pigeon, the latter only the second ever recorded in the country. The resulting severe stormy weather in the highlands may have driven at least three mid- and high-elevation species to record-low elevations. Purplish-backed Quail-Dove and Emerald Tanager were recorded at La Selva for the first time, and a Golden-olive Woodpecker turned up in the lowlands at Guapiles.

In Belize, several fall transients—Eastern Kingbird, Red-eyed Vireo, Blackburnian Warbler, and Scarlet Tanager—were recorded well into December for the first time. Panama recorded its first Golden-cheeked Warbler and Costa Rica its fourth. But El Salvador again topped the list with Red-breasted Merganser, Sungrebe, and Ruff, all country firsts, and an incredible Buff-breasted Sandpiper, one of few ever seen in winter in North America.

**Abbreviations:** N.H.M.E.S. (Natural History Museum of El Salvador); N.M.C.R. (National Museum of Costa Rica); N.M.P. (National Marine Park); N.R. (Nature Reserve); W.S. (Wildlife Sanctuary).

## SHEARWATERS THROUGH DUCKS

Costa Rica's 2nd Cory's Shearwater appeared at Tortuguero alive but floundering in the surf on 6 Dec (AS, CSt, WS, ph. PH, \*N.M.C.R.). Other noteworthy pelagics in Costa Rica this fall were a Red-billed Tropicbird and a Nazca/Masked Booby (specific identification not determined), the former a juv. seen a few km off Punta Uvita in Isla Balena N.M.P. 3 Jan (RD), and the latter an ad. seen perched on a rock stack between Marengo in Drake's Bay and San Pedrillo in Corcovado N.P. 31 Dec (JRZ). An imm. Nazca Booby found dead on the beach at Mizata, *La Libertad* 11 Dec (ph. RI, \*N.H.M.E.S.) was the first reported in El Salvador outside the month of Apr. Red-footed Boobies, all of the brown morph, were found on Isla Violín

at the mouth of the Sierpe R. in Jan (ph. RM, *fide* JS), with at least one observed on a nest. This is the first Costa Rica nesting record of Red-footed Booby away from the Cocos Is.

Numbers of American White Pelicans wintering in n. Central America continue to increase. In Guatemala, 500+ were in Monterrico N.R., *Santa Rosa* 20 Feb (KE, CA), and one, only the 2nd for *Petén*, was on L. Yaxhá 5 Feb (CA, EK). In El Salvador, a flock of 48 seen flying over San Salvador 6 Jan (MR) established the first record for *San Salvador*. Three Least Bitterns were in Monterrico N.R. 20 Feb (KE, CA), and in Panama, one was at the Ammo Dump Pond near Gamboa 2 Feb (MJI et al.). An ad. Cooi Heron seen from a train along the shore of L. Gatún, Canal Zone 27 Jan (JV et al.) was unexpectedly far west.

A presumably wild Muscovy Duck on Caye Caulker 4 Feb (JB, DB) was the first reported from any of the true cayes in Belize. Another at Comalapa airport, *La Paz* 11 Feb (RI) was in a part of El Salvador where the species is seldom recorded. Nine American Wigeon at Nova Shrimp Farm 19 Dec (LJ, JB et al.) was a high count for this uncommon species, and an imm. male Ring-necked Duck near Punta Gorda 30 Dec (LJ) was in an unexpected locality, as this species is seldom reported in Belize away from Crooked Tree W.S. Red-breasted Merganser made news in two countries: a female-plumaged bird on L. Olomega, *San Miguel* 22 Dec (†RI, JH, EM) established the first record for El Salvador, and another along the shoreline of Belize City 22 Dec (JU) was only the 3rd or 4th ever recorded in Belize. The other 2 (or 3?) were just n. of Belize City in Dec 2000. Establishing a first for intensively birded L. Olomega were 10 Masked Ducks, including one ad. male and several juvs. 18 Feb (RI).

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## KITES THROUGH FALCONS

Unexpected in s. Belize was an imm. Snail Kite near Punta Gorda 13 Dec (LJ). Five Northern Harriers, including 2 ad. males, at the Blue Creek rice fields, *Orange Walk* 3 Jan (LJ, JU) was an impressive number for this uncommon species. All previous published records of harriers in Belize have pertained to imms. Also at the Blue Creek rice fields was a dark-morph Swainson's Hawk 3 Dec (BC, GC) and 3 Jan (LJ, JU). Following the report of 3 Swainson's Hawks at Tocumen, e. of Panama City, last winter on 5 Feb were 3 there again this winter, also in early Feb (MJI et al.). An ad. Bicolored Hawk in Santo Domingo de Heredia 14 Feb (WAI, IA, MV, RR) was out of place in an urban setting and may have been a first for Costa Rica's Central Valley. An ad. Solitary Eagle (studied in direct comparison with Black Vultures) seen from the Rainforest Aerial Tram 1 Dec (AD) was the first reported from Costa Rica's La Selva—lower Braulio Carrillo area in a while.

An ad. White-tailed Hawk, rare in southernmost Belize, was at The Dump 15 Dec (MT et al.), and later that day it or another ad. was

seen flying over nearby Aguacaliente Lagoon (LJ, JU). Farther n., in *Orange Walk*, the species is fairly common; however, 18 feeding in freshly plowed fields at the Blue Creek rice fields 3 Jan (LJ, JU) was an exceptionally high concentration. A Collared Forest-Falcon in Areatao 3 Jan (FF) was the first for *Chalatenango*. This species is apparently quite rare in interior El Salvador. Two Red-throated Caracaras were seen 26 Feb a few km beyond the Rio Mamoni bridge in the lower Bayano Valley, e. *Panamá* (WA, LH). The species has not been reported recently from this far w. on the Pacific slope of Panama. Red-throated Caracara is rare anywhere in Costa Rica, so 2 seen and another heard nearby 19 Dec (JJJ), and again on 3 Jan, at Tortuguero were noteworthy.

Meanwhile, Crested Caracaras continue to turn up in n. Belize: 2 were observed at the Blue Creek rice fields 28 Dec (JU), and at least one, an imm., was still there on 3 Jan (†LJ, JU). Another one was at Crooked Tree W.S., *Belize* 6–7 Feb (MC). There were only two previous fully convincing reports for Belize prior to these. Merlins were seen 1 Feb in downtown San José (BH) and 6 Feb in Celaque N.P., Honduras (RG). Following the first report of Bat Falcon on the Belize cayes this past fall (Caye Caulker), one was again seen at Caye Caulker 22 Feb (JB, DB). In Guatemala, an Orange-breasted Falcon, identified in part by its large size compared with a harassing Bat Falcon, was a first for Punta de Manabique near Puerto Barrios 11 Jan (NK, JLB).

## RAILS THROUGH SANDPIPERS

A Gray-breasted Crake was at the Gatún Drop Zone near Ft. Sherman 2 Jan (CM). There are few records of this elusive species from Panama. Four Crested Guans at Bajo Frio 12 Feb (MJI et al.) were unexpected, as this species is very rare in Chiriquí. A Rufous-necked Wood-Rail on a levee at Nova Shrimp Farm 19 Dec (LJ, JB) was at a locality on mainland Belize where it had not previously been recorded. Most impressive was a Sungrebe, previously unrecorded in El Salvador, found 300 m inland of Estero de San Diego, *La Libertad* 23 Dec (†MCo). Southern Lapwing continues to make news in the Region. The one present at Crooked Tree W.S., *Belize* since last Mar remained through the period (m.ob.). In Costa Rica, a nest with four eggs was found 21 Feb+ at Montaña de Fuego Resort at the base of Volcán Arenal (JT et al.). The eggs were laid on top of a dry pat of manure and were fiercely defended against humans and livestock by the ads. This event marked the first confirmed breeding record in Costa Rica for this species,



Coming less than two years after Costa Rica's first, this Cory's Shearwater was found floundering in the surf 6 December 2004 (here) at Tortuguero, also the site of the country's first record. It later died, but unlike the first bird (which was thrown out before the specimen could be prepared), this one made it safely to the Costa Rica National Museum. Photograph by Pabla Herrera.

which first appeared in 1995.

Thirty Killdeer at L. El Jocotal, *San Miguel* 21 Jan (AM) was a high count for that area. A Black-bellied Plover at the Blue Creek rice fields 3 Jan (LJ, JU) was the first ever recorded inland in Belize. Rare anywhere in the Region, a Long-billed Curlew was observed at Playa Azul in the Gulf of Nicoya 26 Feb (KL, DaMa). In Belize, a Marbled Godwit was at Nova Shrimp Farm 19 Dec (LJ, JB), and the 2 reported last fall at Caye Caulker remained throughout the period (JB, DB). Exceptional were two reports of Dunlin in Costa Rica during the period, 2 at the Rio Tarcoles Estuary 7 Jan–14 Feb (DW, RC et al.), and 2 at La Ensenada Lodge, n. shore Gulf of Nicoya 15 Feb (RC et al.). A Solitary Sandpiper and a Stilt Sandpiper at L. El Jocotal 21 Jan (AM) were believed to represent only the first and 2nd winter records, respectively, for El Salvador, but their apparent rarity is almost certainly an artifact of a general unfamiliarity of local ob-



Until now, all Nazca Booby records for El Salvador have come from the month of April. This immature—found dead on the beach at Mizata in the Department of La Libertad and here photographed on 11 December 2004—provided the first winter record and second specimen for the country. Photograph by Ricarda Ibarra Portillo.

servers with shorebirds in the past. Expect more winter records of these two shorebirds in El Salvador in the future. Likewise, there are few winter records of Stilt Sandpiper from Panama, but 13 found near El Agallito Beach, *Los Santos* 19 Jan (DaMo, MS) suggests that this species may be more prevalent in winter than the few records indicate.

Truly extraordinary were 2 Buff-breasted Sandpipers carefully observed, but unfortunately not photographed, 21 Jan at L. El Jocotal (†AM). The species has apparently never before been reliably reported after Dec in the New World n. of Colombia and seldom n. of Paraguay; however, vagrants have turned up in winter in Europe, Africa, and Australia (Hayman et al., 1986, *Shorebirds: An Identification Guide*), perhaps making this record more plausible. As if 2 Buff-breasted Sandpipers were not enough for one day, a Ruff was also found at L. El Jocotal the same day (†AM), the

first ever recorded in El Salvador, and one of the few for Central America. A flock of ca. 60 Long-billed Dowitchers were at the Blue Creek rice fields 3 Jan (LJ, JU), where they are no longer considered unusual.

## JAEGERS THROUGH DOVES

Both Pomarine and Parasitic Jaegers were seen flying low along the beach at Tortuguero but on different dates by different observers. An ad. Parasitic was seen 4 Jan (JRZ), and a Pomarine was seen 26 Feb (CS et al.). Two Laughing Gulls near Guapiles 16 Dec (EC) were more than 30 km inland. An imm. Bonaparte's Gull seen at the mouth of Río Jiboa, *La Paz* 7 Dec (ph. TJ) was a different individual than the one photographed there in late Nov, thereby providing only the 3rd country record. First-winter Ring-billed Gulls were at Tortuguero 4 Jan (JRZ) and Panama Viejo 7 Feb (MJI et al.). Two Herring Gulls were reported in El Salvador: one each at the mouth of Río Jiboa 19 Nov (ph. TJ) and Punta Amapala, *La Unión* 30 Dec (AM); 3 reported in Costa Rica were singles at Hatillo Viejo R. estuary 3 Jan (RD), Tortuguero 4 Jan (JRZ), and Chomes Shrimp Farm 9 Feb (JRZ).

At least 50 Caspian Terns at Monterrico N.R. 20 Feb (KE, CA) was an unusually high number for this locality, and one at Tortuguero 21 Feb+ (NM) was considered to be unusual on Costa Rica's Caribbean coast. At least 3 Forster's Terns were at Nova Shrimp Farm 19 Dec (LJ, JB). This species is a rather uncommon winter visitor in Belize. An ad. Sooty Tern at Tortuguero 2 Jan observed flying in from the ocean toward Río Tortuguero Lagoon (JRZ) may have been the first ever recorded from the Caribbean coast of Costa Rica; however, there is an Apr 1983 specimen from Río Sarapiquí near La Selva, well inland. An ad. Brown Noddy was observed flying over Caño Palma n. of Tortuguero Town on 3 Jan, and a recently dead bird was found the next day on the beach at the mouth of Río Tortuguero (both JRZ). This

**SA** Work began last year on a highly controversial hydroelectric project in the remote Raspaculo wilderness of w. Belize, home to the country's only Scarlet Macaw population. The subspecies in n. Central America, *cyanopectus*, is now threatened because of extensive habitat loss and exploitation by the pet trade. In early Jan, a pair of these magnificent birds showed up in the Bladen River N.R. 30 km to the s. on the opposite side of the Maya Mts., where the species had not been reported in many years (JM). By mid-Feb, daily sightings of up to 9 birds were being made. The Raspaculo wilderness provided an abundance of suitable nest sites and preferred food trees, an essential combination that experts believe are no longer duplicated anywhere else in the country. Therefore, it will be interesting to see in the coming months and years if birds displaced by the hydroelectric project will eventually settle at Bladen (or elsewhere) or simply "blink out," as many have speculated.

species is occasionally blown ashore by storms in the Caribbean. Thirty Black Skimmers at Monterrico N.R. 20 Feb (KE, CA) were unexpected, as this species is rarely seen at this locality.

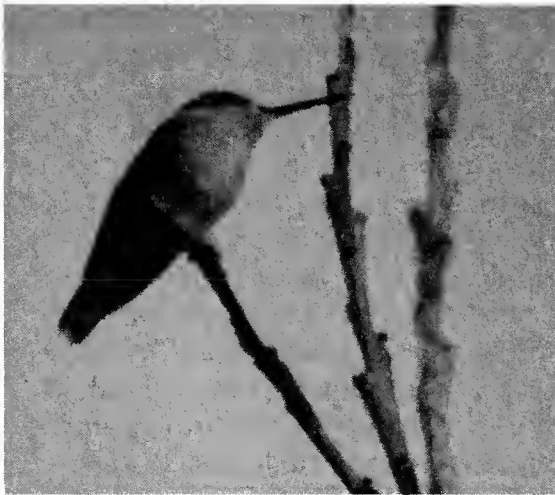
At least one Band-tailed Pigeon was seen on the coast at Tortuguero 2 Feb (PM et al.) well away from its typical highland haunts. Even more impressive, though, was a **White-crowned Pigeon**, also at Tortuguero 2-6 Feb (PM, KW, ph. JS et al.), which provided only the 2nd confirmed record for Costa Rica. It is thought to have been blown in by one of the severe storms that plagued the s. Caribbean coast this winter. Also representing a 2nd record for Costa Rica was a **Eurasian Collared-Dove** seen 21 Dec (JJJ) at Zapote on the e. side of San José. Two **Purplish-backed Quail-Doves** at La Selva 20 Dec (SW) were the first for that intensely birded locality and may have been driven to lower elevations by the intense winter storms. A **Violaceous Quail-Dove** at Carara N.P. 27 Dec (MD et al.) was either a wanderer or representative of a very sparse and rarely detected resident population in this area.

### CUCKOOS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

Mangrove Cuckoos were reported from three localities where they are rarely seen: in Panama at Cienaga de las Macanas, *Herrera* 19 Jan (DaMo, MS) and at David, *Chiriquí* 8 Feb (MJI et al.), and in Belize at Punta Gorda 15 Dec (JB). A Greater Ani at Tortuguero 11 Dec-22 Feb (ph. DL) was thought to be the same bird that has been seen off and on since summer 2003, although it had not been seen in recent months. A **Black-crested Coquette** in the Río Bravo C.A. near the La Milpa Field Station, Cayo 4-5 Feb (BR) was well n. of its known breeding range in s. Belize and may have been a seasonal wanderer. A **Green-throated Mountain-gem** nest with two eggs was found 25 Jan at Los Volcanes N.P. *Santa Ana*, and on 25 Feb feathered nestlings were present (both JRS). Additionally, a recently fledged juv. was caught in a mist net at this site 26 Jan (ph. JRS). This is the first documented instance of winter nesting in this species.

A **Buff-bellied Hummingbird** on Caye Caulker 20 Feb (JB, DB) provided the first record for any Belize caye, and a **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** at David airport in extreme w. Panama 8 Feb (MJI et al.) was in

the only area of the country where the species is reported somewhat regularly. At Gamboa, near Panama City, a **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** was observed 29 Jan (JV et al.). This species is seldom reported so far south. A **Golden-olive Woodpecker** at Guapiles 6 Dec (AD) may have been yet another exam-



A rare winter visitor anywhere in Panama, **Ruby-throated Hummingbird** can be seen on the Pacific plain in extreme western Panama somewhat regularly. This female was discovered 8 February 2005 at the David airport by an alert tour group led by Marshall Iliff. Photograph by Marshall Iliff.

ple of a higher-elevation species driven downslope by the storms that pummeled Costa Rica this winter.

### FLYCATCHERS THROUGH VIREOS

Providing the first report in many years for the Chiriquí highlands of w. Panama was a carefully studied **Sulphur-rumped Flycatcher** at Finca Hartmann 10 Feb (MJI et al.). A **Willow Flycatcher** observed in full song near Big Falls, *Toledo* 12 Dec (LJ) was the first ever reported in Belize in winter, and 2 **White-throated Flycatchers** at the same location 12 & 15 Dec (LJ, MT, MC, JU) were the first reliably reported from s. Belize in winter. An **Ash-throated Flycatcher** in the Agáun Valley, *Yoro* 11 Feb (RG) was the first recorded in Honduras away from the Pacific slope. A **Brown-crested Flycatcher** at Caye Caulker 19 Feb (JB, DB) was likely an early migrant, as this principally summer resident in Belize is unrecorded on the cayes in winter. A **Boat-billed Flycatcher** at 2100 m near Antigua 26 Feb (KE, CA) was at an unusually high elevation for this species.

Exceptionally early were a **Piratic Flycatcher** at Rocjá Pomtilá, *Alta Verapaz* 29 Jan and a **Sulphur-bellied Flycatcher** there 2 Feb

(both EfC). Neither species winters n. of South America. An **Eastern Kingbird** near Medina Bank, *Toledo* 18 Dec (LJ) was an exceptionally late fall migrant. As it occurs only sporadically as far s. as Costa Rica, a **Scissor-tailed Flycatcher** near Potrero Grande de Coto Brus 16 Feb (AO, TM, JG, DWo) was unexpected. Providing only the 9th El Salvador record, and the 2nd for Montecristo N.P., was a male **Gray-collared Becard** captured 15 Feb (LCA, ph. RP). In Panama, a **Golden-headed Manakin** seen 26 Feb (WA, LH) a few km beyond the Rio Manoní bridge in the lower Bayano Valley, e. *Panamá* was farther w. than it has been reported in recent years. Two **Blue-headed Vireos** were reported this winter in Costa Rica: one at 1300 m on the Caribbean side in Tapanti 12 Dec (JS, HA) and another at 1200 m on the Pacific side in Naranjo de Alajuela 18 Dec (JRZ). Two late fall records of **Red-eyed Vireo** provided the only Dec records to date for Belize: one was on the s. outskirts of Punta Gorda on 15 Dec (JB), and another was at El Pescador Resort n. of Punta Gorda three days later (LJ).

### SWALLOWS THROUGH WAXWINGS

Two presumed male **Purple Martins**, the first recorded in winter in Costa Rica, were observed at El Quizarra near Guapiles 16 Dec (PM, HF). The similar **Southern Martin**, an austral migrant, is also possible in Costa Rica but would be far more likely in summer during the austral winter. **Tree Swallow** is a rare and irregular winter visitor as far s. as Panama, so one at the Ammo Dump Pond near Gamboa 2 Feb (ph. MJI et al.) was considered noteworthy. A **Gray-cheeked Thrush**, rare in winter as far n. as Costa Rica, was observed at 1100 m in Naranjo de Alajuela 21 Jan (JRZ); and 3 **Wood Thrushes** mist-netted at Los Volcanes N.P. 26 Jan and 24 Feb (ph. JRS) were more than typically reported in El Salvador in winter.

### WARBLERS THROUGH BLACKBIRDS

A **Blue-winged Warbler** was mist-netted at Los Volcanes N.P. 24 Feb (ph. JRS), providing roughly the 6th record for El Salvador. In Costa Rica, 2 **Blue-winged Warblers** were at Fila Costera between San Isidro de El General and the Pacific coast 3 Jan (PW, LS, MK), and another was seen in the Monteverde Reserve at 1500 m on the Pacific slope 18 Feb (RC et al.). In Costa Rica and Panama, **Northern Parulas** were reported from Barra Honda N.P. at the base of the Nicoya Pen. 14 Dec (SH), from Ft. Sherman 2 Jan (DaMo, DeMo), and from the Ammo Dump Pond 26 Jan (JV et al.). An imm. male **Cape May Warbler** was on the mainland in Punta Gorda 15-16 Dec (JB, LJ, JU, JSh), where rare, and a **Yellow-rumped Warbler** was at Ft. Sherman 27 Jan (JV et al.), where rare. Single **Golden-cheeked Warblers** were



**SA** This winter saw Central America's largest invasion of Cedar Waxwings on record. In Belize, there were more reports than usual, including the earliest on record by several weeks (see fall season report), but no especially large numbers were reported. In Guatemala, three flocks of at least 30 individuals each were reported from Los Tarrales Reserve near L. Atitlán 7 Feb (KE). In El Salvador, more than 700 were reported from the greater San Salvador area in Feb. In Honduras, among a scattering of other reports were 20 at the Copan Ruins 16 Jan (RG). Since this species is regular, however, in n. Central America in winter, most sightings from these countries may have gone unreported. The waxwing invasion was most impressive in s. Central America. Reports from Costa Rica in Jan and Feb were too numerous to report individually, with nearly everyone afield in those two months from Cerro de la Muerte to sea level reporting small to moderate numbers, mostly one to two dozen birds per flock. The earliest report was of one 15 Dec at Cerro de Diría on the Nicoya Pen. In Panama, a flock of ca. 20 just outside Bocas del Toro Town, Isla Colón on 29 Jan (GA) was only a prelude of what was to come. Angehr later commented: "This seems to be a really big waxwing year for Panama, with more records than I have ever seen."

reported from Panama for the first time and Costa Rica for the 4th time. Panama's first record was established 3 Jan, when an ad. male was closely observed along the Los Quetzales Trail in Volcán Barú N.P. above Cerro Punta, Chiriquí (JTo, NH, MH). In



For a species that is not very common anywhere within its range in Mexico and northern Central America, Gray-collared Becard is especially rare in El Salvador. This adult male, mist-netted in Montecristo National Park, furnished only the eighth ever record for that country. Photograph by Ricardo Pérez.

Costa Rica, a well-studied female at 1700 m in Finca Los Espinos, Oratorio de Orearuno, Cartago 25 Dec (†DaMa, VR) was only the country's 4th. The four Costa Rica records, all recent, have been females, and there is still no photographic documentation of the species for the country. A Hermit Warbler in the Central Valley at Agres R., San Antonio de Esezú 28 Dec (MKü) was the only one reported this season in Costa Rica. A male Prairie Warbler at Zona Protectora El Rodeo, Colón 29 Dec (AS, AA, AOn, FC) and a Palm Warbler at Tortuguero 27 Feb (CS et al.) were rare winter visitors. An exceptionally late Blackburnian Warbler near Punta Gorda 15 Dec (MM) provided Belize with its first convincing Dec record. Typically, only one or 2 Yellow-breasted Chats are reported each year in Costa Rica; however, at least 5 were reported from widely scattered locations across the country between 8 Dec and 23 Jan this season.

A male Scarlet Tanager on Caye Caulker 20 Dec (LJ, JB, DB) was either a very late fall migrant or a winter visitor. The only other Dec record for Belize was of a wing-damaged bird that could fly but apparently not well enough to have continued its southward migration. Yet another example of a species at unprecedented elevations in Costa Rica this winter, several Emerald Tanagers were low at La Selva 22 & 26 Dec (JA). A female Blue Seedeater at Los Volcanes N.P. 28 Jan (ph. JRS) was the first recorded at this site since Oct 1979. At Cenegón de Mangle W.R., Herrera, a male Painted Bunting was recorded 29 Dec (JL). This species is a rare migrant in Panama, especially in the east.

An Eastern Meadowlark at Comalapa airport, La Paz 11 Feb (RI) established the 2nd winter record for El Salvador, and a Black-cowled Oriole at 600 m in Las Tumbas de Pérez Zeledón between San Isidro El General and the Pacific coast 3 Jan (LS, RiG) was the first ever recorded on the Pacific slope of Costa Rica. The bird may have reached this area by crossing the divide at Cartago or San Ramón and skirting the mid-elevation Pacific slopes of Cerro de la Muerte. This weak singer is not a typical edge bird, but it is a showy species, thus its natural provenance is not necessarily a given in this case.

**Corrigenda:** In the summer 2004 season's report, the Blue-gray Gnatcatcher credited to



Researchers at Los Volcanes National Park in El Salvador were surprised to find this stunning male Blue-winged Warbler in their nets on 24 February 2005. There are only five previous records for the country. Photograph by Jennifer R. Smith.

NH should instead be credited to OK and JF, and the Blackburnian Warbler from El Imposible N.P. also should be credited to OK and JF.

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This leucistic Whimbrel stood out along the Rio Tarcoles in western Costa Rica 23 February 2005. Photograph by Larry Semo.

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# West Indies & Bermuda

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Winter weather varied throughout this large Region, but frequent, strong north winds appeared to be a common factor. In Bermuda, cool temperatures and high winds in January and early February brought many birds. The temperature hit 48.5° F on 24 January, the lowest in about 50 years. In the Bahamas, temperatures were seasonably cool, and the winter dry season did not provide any relief from last summer's drought. Puerto Rico, on the other hand, experienced above-normal rainfall. Gemmill's ongoing studies on Vieques and Sykes's survey of the U.S. Naval Base, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba provided many noteworthy observations. Reports of the impact of last fall's hurricanes are still being received. The endangered Grenada Dove and Cuban Parrot (Cayman Islands races) survived, but their footholds on existence became even more precarious.

William Hayes has proposed that the endemic Grand Bahama race (*insularis*) of Brown-headed Nuthatch be assigned species status and called Bahama Nuthatch *S. insularis*. (See W. Hayes et al. 2004. Grand Bahama's Brown-headed Nuthatch: a distinct and endangered species. *Bahamas Journal of Science* 12: 21–28.) Hayes et al. estimate that fewer than 1800 nuthatches exist on Grand Bahama, and this estimate was made before last autumn's hurricanes. If accepted by the A.O.U., the Bahama Nuthatch will be the

fourth extant endemic species in the Bahamas and a critically endangered species.

**Abbreviations:** BAMZ (Bermuda Aquarium Museum & Zoo), B.V.I. (British Virgin Islands), D.R. (Dominican Republic), G.B. (U.S. Naval Base, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba), H.W.P.N.P. (Harrold & Wilson Ponds N.P., New Providence, Bahamas), P.R. (Puerto Rico), T.C.I. (Turks and Caicos Islands).

## GREBES THROUGH HAWKS

A pair of Pied-billed Grebes with 4 juvs. at Somerset Long Bay Nature Reserve 29 Jan (DW) provided the earliest hatching date in Bermuda. Another pair was on the pond at the Hydroponic Farm, Vieques, P.R. 9 Feb (DG, BM). Two Horned Grebes were in Castle Harbour, Bermuda 6 Feb (IF, PW). Among the many seabirds observed during a cruise in the Lesser Antilles, Wells saw 2 Cory's Shearwaters 17 Jan. A single Audubon's Shearwater was seen over the Tongue of the Ocean, Bahamas 9 Jan (EC, PBA). On 25 Feb, Hayes visited Catto Cay, Graham's Harbour, San Salvador, Bahamas and counted 150 Brown Booby nests, 3 Red-footed Booby nests, and 75 Magnificent Frigatebird nests. Brown Boobies and frigatebirds were also probably nesting on nearby White Cay. He estimated 100+ frigatebird nests on the two cays, more than double what he has seen in past years. An imm. Northern Gannet flew

along the reef line at St. George's, Bermuda 15 Feb (IF, PW). Three American White Pelicans that flew past Spittal Pond 2 Jan (HD, DS) provided Bermuda's second record. A juv. Double-crested Cormorant was noted 15 Jan at Tortuguero Lagoon, P.R. (JS et al.). A Great Cormorant was in the Great Sound, Bermuda 5 Feb–28 Feb+ (IF, PW).

An American Bittern was at West End, Grand Bahama 25 Feb (RP), and a Least Bittern in mangroves at Small Hope Bay, Andros, Bahamas 8 Feb was unusual there (TW). A Great White Heron, rare in the Bahamas, was seen at Staniard Creek, Andros 11 Jan–4 Feb (MB, JSt, m.ob.). A Little Egret at Punta Soldado, Culebra 2 Jan (JC) was an outstanding find for the Greater Antilles and first for that island. A Black-crowned Night-Heron was noted 24 & 28 Jan at G.B. (PS). A Roseate Spoonbill was seen 20 Feb near Cable Beach, New Providence (KB), but there may have been more, as 4 were found in that area in early Mar (CW, PD, m. ob.). A single Roseate Spoonbill was at G.B. 3 Feb (PS). JRC found about 145 Greater Flamingos 24 Dec at Trou Caiman, Haïti.

Seven West Indian Whistling-Ducks on Laguna Kiani were the first reported from Vieques in 23 years (AM, JR, ML). An imm. Snow Goose appeared on Warwick Academy sports field 18 Dec (JH), while a Canada Goose was at Southampton Princess Pond, also Bermuda 23 Jan (AD). Single Common



The Bahamas' (and West Indies') first Mute Swan was this first-winter bird at Baker's Bay, Great Guana Cay, Abaco Island 28 (here) and 29 January 2005. Photograph by Bill Herrington.

(Eurasian Green-winged) Teal males wintered at Southampton Princess Pond 23 Jan+ (AD, PH) and Parsons Road Pond 1 Dec+ (EA, TWe). On 9 Feb, a pair of Northern Shovelers were on Laguna Navio, Vieques, where uncommon (DG, BM). Continuing dry weather concentrated the ducks at Great Exuma, Bahamas in golf course ponds, where there were 50 Blue-winged Teal, 90 White-cheeked Pintails, and 30 Northern Shovelers 9 Jan (J&BM). Six wintering Common Goldeneyes made a Bermuda record count, with 3 at Spittal Pond 26 Jan–mid-Feb (DW) and 3 more, including an ad. male, at Mangrove L. 1–mid-Feb (DW). At Trou Caiman, Haiti, Crouse counted 50+ Ruddy Ducks 31 Dec. Twenty-three Ruddy Ducks were at Little Bay Pond and 35 at Fresh Pond, St. Martin 14 Jan (AB et al.). Two Masked Ducks were near Humacao, P.R. in mid-Jan (JNv, *vide* ESB).

A leucistic Turkey Vulture was present on Big Wood Cay, Andros, Bahamas late Nov–early Jan (ph. DB). Wintering birds of prey in Bermuda included Osprey, 2 long-staying Red-tailed Hawks, and 2 Northern Harriers. There were sightings of Gundlach's Hawk 22–28 Jan at G.B. (PS et al.), providing unusual reports from e. Cuba of this rare hawk. On 7 Feb, PB spotted a Gundlach's Hawk at Cayo Coco, Cuba near the airport. The sighting of a Broad-winged Hawk of the threatened Puerto Rican race on Mt. Pirata 7 Feb (OD) provided only the 2nd record for Vieques; the first was at Mt. Pirata 16 Oct 2004 (DG). Two Rough-legged Hawks at the Bermuda Airport 26 Jan–28 Feb+ (DH, PHol) and 1–mid-Feb (DH) were exceptional, as there are only two previous records for this species in Bermuda. Seven Crested Caracaras were

found at G.B., where they are permanent residents, 31 Jan–3 Feb (PS, PSc, KK).

#### RAILS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

It appeared to be a good season for Yellow-breasted Crakes in P.R. A record 5 were noted at Garrochales and Main Canal, s. Caño Tiburones, Arceibo 18 Dec (Jri et al.; JC et al.), and 3–4 (one ph.) were on a golf course near Humacao, P.R. 27 Jan (ph. ESB, vt. JMc, m.ob.). An American Coot at the Hydroponic Farm Pond, Vieques 9 Feb was a first for that island (DG, BM). Piping Plover reports in the Bahamas included 2 at Island Seas Resort, Grand Bahama 4 Jan (P&SL); 8 in mid-Jan on Green Turtle Cay, Abaco (EB); and 3 on only one day (27 Feb) at Winding Bay,

Eleuthera, where 5 wintered last year (DC, DVP). Piping Plovers apparently concentrated at Staniard Creek, Andros, Bahamas, where Baltz saw “two dozen if there was one” in Jan, and Steensma reported over 100 in early Feb. An American Avocet at Ocean View G.C. 21–26 Jan (RL) was the first winter arrival for this species in Bermuda, and one reported in Nov at H.W.P.N.P. wintered (PD, NM, m.ob.).

Single Greater and Lesser Yellowlegs wintered in Bermuda (AD). Two Solitary Sandpipers at a roadside pond near Small Hope Bay, Andros, Bahamas 13–14 Jan (MB) and a lone Willet at Small Hope and Calabash Bays, Andros 7 Jan–4 Feb (MB, PBa, TW) were unusual in midwinter. The Eurasian Whimbrel found on St. Martin in Nov remained at least through 14 Jan (AB). A Red Knot was at Spanish Point, Bermuda 18 Dec (BL, JT). Fifteen Red Knots at Piñones, Carolina, P.R. 31 Dec (JS) were a good find. Two Sanderlings wintered on Anegada, B.V.I. (DIA, *vide* AMc). A Dunlin was noted at Cayo Guillermo, Cuba (EN, *vide* PB) 7–8 Feb. A Ruff was at Palmas Altas, Barcelonesa, P.R. 18 Dec (SC); this species, annual in the Region, may soon no longer warrant boldface type. A Red Phalarope was found dead at Bermuda Airport 18 Feb (DH, \*BAMZ).

On his return cruise to Barbados 21 Jan, JW saw 6 Pomarine, 2 Parasitic, and 2 Long-tailed Jaegers. At least 3 Black-headed Gulls were seen at various locations on Bermuda 26 Dec–24 Feb (PW). A Franklin's Gull in definitive basic plumage was found 7 Feb during strong northwesterly winds at Cayo Coco, Cuba (PB). In Bermuda, Iceland Gulls were present 27 Jan–28 Feb+ (m. ob.), with a high count of 7 on 20 Feb (AD, PH, TWe). Three Glaucous Gulls were also recorded

**SA** Hurricane *Ivan* devastated Grenada last Sep, but the critically endangered **Grenada Dove** survived. Rusk conducted a census in Nov–Dec and found 33–60 males. If there are as many females as males, then the total population is just 66–120 doves. The males were not singing on territory as they normally do at this time of year, so there is a degree of uncertainty in her estimates. This year's estimate was below the 2003–2004 count of 91 males or 182 doves (BR). JW visited Mt. Hartman, Grenada 17 Jan and heard 2 doves there.

*Ivan* also devastated Grand Cayman; there was huge environmental damage to forests and wetlands that almost certainly will not recover in time to avoid being cleared and sold for development. Much of the black mangrove forest—50% of the Cuban (Grand Cayman) Parrot's (race *caymanensis*) breeding habitat—has been felled, with less than 1% of the nesting trees (now dead) standing. The Cayman National Trust and Department of the Environment are installing nests in urban/semi-urban areas where parrots are regular or have lost known nest trees. They are also organizing a count of Grand Cayman Parrots in coordination with new satellite mapping.

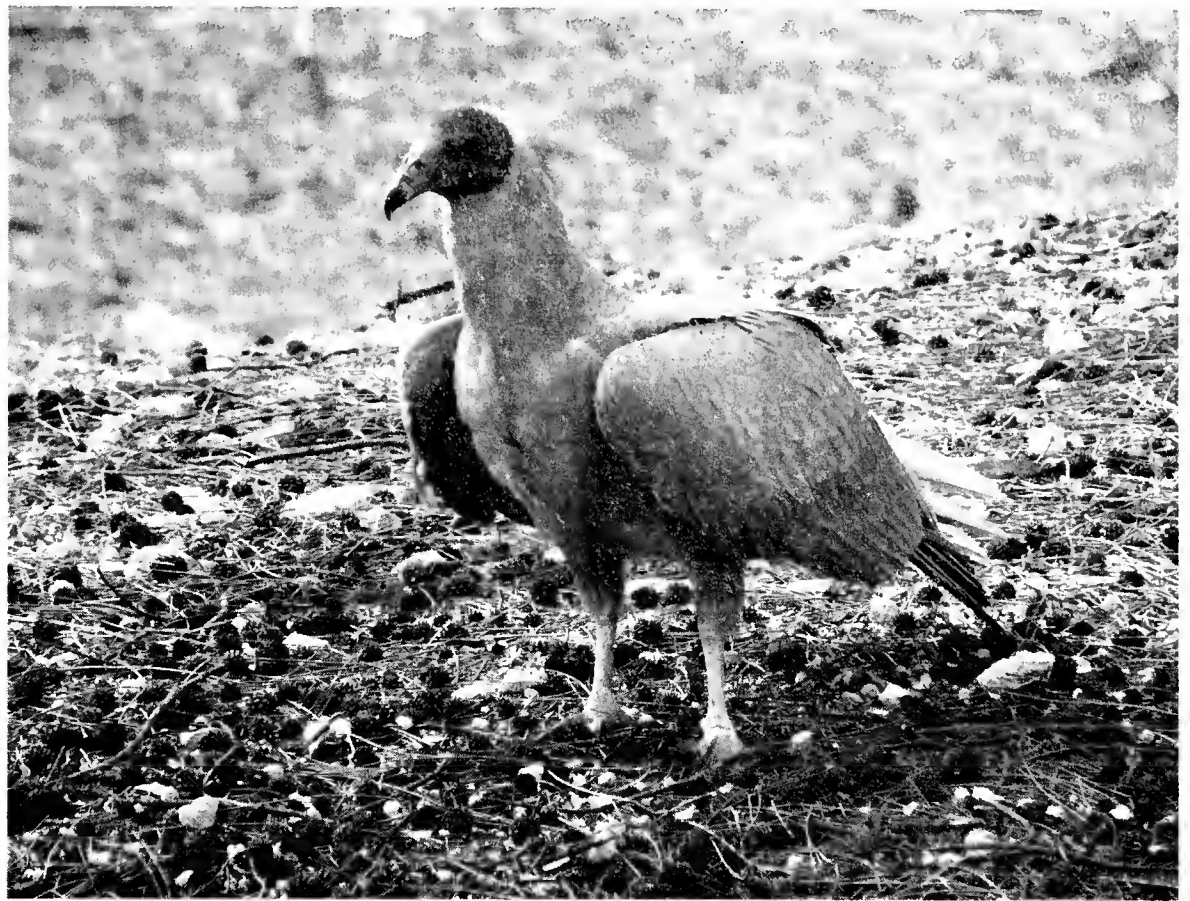
Another endemic race of the Cuban Parrot, *hesterna*, resides on Cayman Brac. This parrot's habitat escaped the hurricanes, but as a consequence of the storm, land on the bluff at Cayman Brac is now at a premium, and several subdivisions are planned as well as a computer back-up facility and offices. The Trust is attempting to raise a half-million dollars to buy forested land that separates the two parts of the parrot preserve. J. W. Wiley et al (2004. Status and conservation of the family Psittacidae in the West Indies. *Journal of Caribbean Ornithology* 17: 94–154) feel the chances of this race's survival are slim even if the land is purchased. (PBr).

About 15 of the *bahamensis* Cuban Parrots that arrived on Man-o'-War Cay, Abaco, Bahamas after the hurricanes remained there through Feb. Four moved to nearby Cistern Cay (NA). On the main island of Abaco, they wandered as far northward as Treasure Cay, well beyond their normal range (IL).



during Feb at various locations in Bermuda (IF, PW, m.ob.). On 28 Dec, a first-year Great Black-backed Gull, 2 Lesser Black-backed Gulls, 2 Herring Gulls, and 21 Ring-billed Gulls were observed at San Juan Harbor, P.R. (JN). A first-winter Herring Gull at Green Beach 31 Jan and a second-winter one at Isabel Segunda 2 Feb provided the first and 2nd records for Vieques (ESB, SWH). Four Black-headed Gulls, 4 Lesser Black-backed Gulls, and a Great Black-backed Gull on Great Salt Pond, St Martin 14 Jan were good finds that far south (AB). A count of up to 30 Lesser Black-backed Gulls this winter in Bermuda (IF, PW) was the highest yet. An ad. Sabine's Gull off Cooper's Pt. 3 Feb, Bermuda (IF, PW), provided only the 3rd record for Bermuda. An imm. Black-legged Kittiwake flew past Cooper's Pt., Bermuda 6 Feb (AD, IF, m.ob.), while an ad. stayed in-shore 7 Feb+ (IF, DW). A Caspian Tern was noted 24 Dec at Trou Caiman, Haiti (JRC). A Common Tern was at G.B. 25 Jan (PS). A Forster's Tern was at West End, Grand Bahama 16 Dec (TW, T&JG), and another wintered at Dockyard, Bermuda (AD). A Black Skimmer, rare in the Bahamas, was at Montagu Foreshore, New Providence 13–20 Jan (ph. NM, m.ob.). The number of White-winged Doves at Gates's feeder in Lucaya, Grand Bahama peaked at 10 on 2 Dec.

On 2 Jan, a Yellow-billed Cuckoo was at Abaco N.P., Bahamas (EB), and one was found at Loterie, St. Martin 3 Jan (AB). A Long-eared Owl was at Hog Bay Park, Bermuda 5–11 Feb (LHy), while a Short-eared Owl was at Bermuda Airport 13 Jan (DH). A Chuck-will's-widow was photographed on North Caicos, T.C.I., where rare, 18 Feb (BBO, *fide* NMa), and 2 were calling at Coral Harbour, New Providence 21 & 25 Feb (CW). Antillean Nighthawks are rare in winter in Puerto Rico, but 6 were found 15–16 Jan at Vieques (AP, CM, AR). Sykes found 2 Black Swifts and a White-collared Swift in low, dry habitat at G.B. 28 Jan; another White-collared was at Barrio Mameyes, Utuado, P.R. 19 Dec (JN). Reports of four hummingbirds, most likely Ruby-throateds, on Bermuda this winter were extraordinary; they were seen 18 Dec at Port Royal G.C. (EA) and at Orange Valley Road (BL), 9 Jan near Astwood Park (TWe), and 31 Jan at Lighthouse Hill (PT). Bahama Woodstars were scarce on Grand Bahama after the hurricanes, but Pagliaro found 4 and a nest in a blooming bottle-brush tree at West End, Grand Bahama 18–25 Feb. West Indian Woodpeckers apparently suffered from last fall's hurricanes. Hayes found none on San Salvador, Bahamas despite searching known territories, and they have been extremely scarce on Abaco (EB, SK). Puerto Rican Woodpeckers are no longer rare on Vieques. Six were noted in less than a km on 7 Feb (DG BM), and 36 were counted



This leucistic Turkey Vulture was a ghostly presence in a cohort of normally pigmented scavengers on Big Wood Cay, Andros, Bahamas (here in December 2004). Photograph by Daniel Belasco.

on the C.B.C. 15–16 Jan. A Northern Flicker was on Port Royal G.C., Bermuda 3 Jan (AD).

#### FLYCATCHERS THROUGH WAXWINGS

Winter Eastern Phoebes in Bermuda were noted at Compston's Pond 18 Dec (DBW), Wreck Road 2 Jan (WF), and Riddell's Bay G.C. 20 Feb (TWe). On 16 Jan, Wells found 3 Grenada Flycatchers in a few hours ashore at Union I., Grenadines. A Western Kingbird and a Cedar Waxwing were at Shannon G.C., Grand Bahama 17 Dec (PD), and another Western was with 6 Cedar Waxwings at San Andros Airport, Andros 12 Jan (P&SL). A Scissor-tailed Flycatcher was seen at H.W.P.N.P. 8 & 19 Feb (TW, ph. CO). The first record of White-eyed Vireo on St. Martin was provided by one at Loterie 11 Jan (AB). Five White-eyed Vireos were at San Miguel/El Convento, Luquillo–Fajardo, P.R. 19 Dec (BH, JS). A Thick-billed Vireo, rare and threatened in Cuba, was netted at Cayo Coco 8 Feb (PB, APa, EW). Single Yellow-throated Vireos were at Morgan's Pt., Bermuda 1 Jan (AD, PW), Mt. Pirata, Vieques 15–16 Jan (C.B.C.), and Camalache S.F., P.R. 23 Jan (ESB et al.). A Blue-headed Vireo was seen in Devonshire Marsh, Bermuda 20 Dec (JM), and one was at Samana, D.R. 3 Feb (AB). A Red-eyed Vireo was at Mt. Pirata, Vieques 16 Jan (SC, WHe). Three Horned Larks were discovered at Bermuda Airport 25–30 Jan (DH).

A male Cuban Martin displaying to 8 unidentified female *Progne* was attacked by an ad. male Caribbean Martin at Punta Jagüey, Cabo Rojo N.W.R., P.R. 24 Jan (ESB et al., vt. JMc); it was almost certainly the same bird as present 22 Jan the previous year

(N.A.B. 58: 294). The Bahamas' first Purple Martin of the year was at West End, Grand Bahama 25 Feb (RP). Two Tree Swallows and a Barn Swallow were recorded 18 Dec at East End Dairy, Bermuda (PW). Three Northern Rough-winged Swallows were photographed near San Andros, Andros, Bahamas 8 Jan (EM, PBa). Cave Swallows are rare on Vieques, so 3 at Playa Grande 15–16 Jan were unusual (JC, VA, JA). Three House Wrens of the distinctive Grenada race *grenadensis* (a full species?) were found at Mt. Hartman, Grenada 17 Jan (JW). A Gray-cheeked/Bicknell's Thrush was noted 15–16 Jan on the Vieques C.B.C. at Mt Pirata, a first for Vieques. Brown found 3 Bicknell's Thrushes on the Pico Duarte Trail, D.R. 5 Feb. At least one Hermit Thrush wintered at Hog Bay Park, Bermuda (PH). Six American Robins were at Morgan's Point, Bermuda 1 Jan (AD, PW). There were more American Robins in the Bahamas than usual this winter. One was at Great Guana Cay, Abaco 20 & 27 Dec (RP), 2 at High Rock, Grand Bahama 1 Jan (DN), one near Treasure Cay, Abaco 1 Jan (EB), one at Shannon G.C., Grand Bahama 4–6 Jan (P&SL, EG), and 6 at Angel Fish Pt., Abaco 19 Feb (EB). Three Red-legged Thrushes were reported from Red/Blue Beach, Vieques (MA, HM), for only the 2nd record on that island (*fide* DG).

Up to 3 Gray Catbirds were at Cerro Nacho, Arecibo, P.R. 12 & 18 Dec (SC, JS); also on 18 Dec, one was at Barrio Isote, Arecibo (SC). A Gray Catbird at Playa Brava, Culebra 2 Jan may be the first there (JC). A Northern Mockingbird early Dec–25 Feb was banded at the Bermuda Biological Station (DBW). At

Caravelle Pen., Martinique, where a controversial proposed development threatens one of only two White-breasted Thrasher colonies in the world, Wells found 2–4 thrashers 21 Jan. A Pearly-eyed Thrasher on Eleuthera 13 Dec was a good find (DC). Up to 4 European Starlings, uncommon on New Providence, Bahamas, were found at Diamond Farms this winter (PD, TH, FS, CW). Seven Cedar Waxwings were in s. Eleuthera 28 Jan (DC, SW), and 4 were at Camperdown, Nassau, Bahamas 25 Feb (TH, LH).

### WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

A male Golden-winged Warbler was in Caribbean N.P., P.R. 27 Jan (ESB et al.), where the species is not known to winter. Single Blue-winged Warblers banded at Loterie 2 & 19 Jan provided 2nd and 3rd records for St Martin (AB). Pagliaro found a first-winter Nashville Warbler and a first-winter Orange-crowned Warbler at West End, Grand Bahama 25 Feb. A late Yellow Warbler was seen at Waterville Park, Bermuda 1 Dec (DW). This winter, Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warblers were abundant on New Providence, where they outnumbered Palm Warblers on the C.B.C. for the first time (NM). A Townsend's Warbler at Orange Valley Road 19 Dec–16 Feb (BL) constituted Bermuda's 2nd winter record. Gemmill reported that Adelaide's Warblers are abundant on Vieques; 433 were found on the C.B.C. 15–16 Jan. A Pine Warbler at Kiani Lagoon boardwalk, Vieques 5 Feb was unusual (DG, BM). Cuba's first Kirtland's Warbler was at Cayo Coco in Nov (details will be published elsewhere) (APa, *vide* PB), and Bermuda's first Kirtland's Warbler was found during the C.B.C. 18 Dec (vt. EA, m.ob.). In the Bahamas, the Kirtland's Warbler Research & Training Project found almost 50 Kirtland's Warblers on s. Eleuthera this winter (DC). A first-year female Chestnut-sided Warbler 4 Dec at El Portal, Caribbean N.F., P.R. (JvM) was a good find. Brown banded a Chestnut-sided Warbler 6 Jan and 2 Kentucky Warblers 19 Jan at Loterie, St. Martin. A Worm-eating Warbler on 10 Feb provided the 3rd record for Vieques (DG, BM), and 2 at Loterie, St. Martin provided the 4th and 5th records there. A Swainson's Warbler was at Ocean View G.C., Bermuda 16 Jan (AD, TWe), and another was at Lyford Cay G.C., New Providence, Bahamas 15 Feb (TW, ph. CO). Eighteen Bahama Yellowthroats at West End, Grand Bahama 18–25 Feb (RP) was a good count after the hurricanes.

Single Bananaquits were netted 7 & 13 Feb at Playa Dorado, Cayo Coco, Cuba,



Gray Heron, an Old World species unknown on the North American mainland except for an Alaskan sight record and several Canadian specimens, has been recorded regularly at Barbados in recent years. This adult was photographed 15 January 2005 at Graeme Hall Swamp. Photograph by Jeff Wells.

where they are vagrants (PB, APa, EW). On 9 Jan, a Summer Tanager was at Lighthouse Marina, Andros, Bahamas (RMR). An Indigo Bunting netted 13 Jan (OD) was a first for Vieques. A Vesper Sparrow provided an unusual winter record at Bermuda Airport 15 Feb (IF, PW). A Grasshopper Sparrow was at Lover's Lane, Bermuda late Dec–early Feb (DW). Two Snow Buntings wintered on the Castle Harbour Islands, Bermuda (JM). A Dickcissel was at Talbot Estate, Bermuda 18 Dec (EA). Six Yellow-bellied Seedeaters were at Mt. Hartman, Grenada 17 Jan (JW). Yellow-shouldered Blackbirds, a critically endangered species, were seen 19 Dec at Roosevelt Roads, Ceiba, P.R. (JvM); 200+ were in usual haunts around La Parguera, P.R. 25 Jan, and fewer showed evidence of eye disease than in 2004 (ESB et al.). An Eastern Meadowlark flushed at Bermuda Airport 26 Feb (DBW) was possibly the same bird seen in Nov (GH). A Baltimore Oriole was at the Playa Grande perimeter road, Vieques 9 Feb (DG). A Common Redpoll was at Cooper's I., Bermuda 5 Feb (IF).

### EXOTICS

A first-winter Mute Swan of unknown provenance was photographed at Baker's Bay, Great

Guana Cay, Abaco 27–28 Jan (LF, BHe, *vide* RP). A Hill Myna was seen near Rolle Town, Great Exuma 18 Feb (BS). A flock of 10+ Chestnut Mannakins at Kew, North Caicos, T.C.I. 6 Jan–early Feb (NMa) was the first reported from the Bahamian Archipelago. A Pint-tailed Wycherly 15–16 Jan (AP, CM, AR) and Orange Bishops 10 Feb (DG, BM) were both new for Vieques.

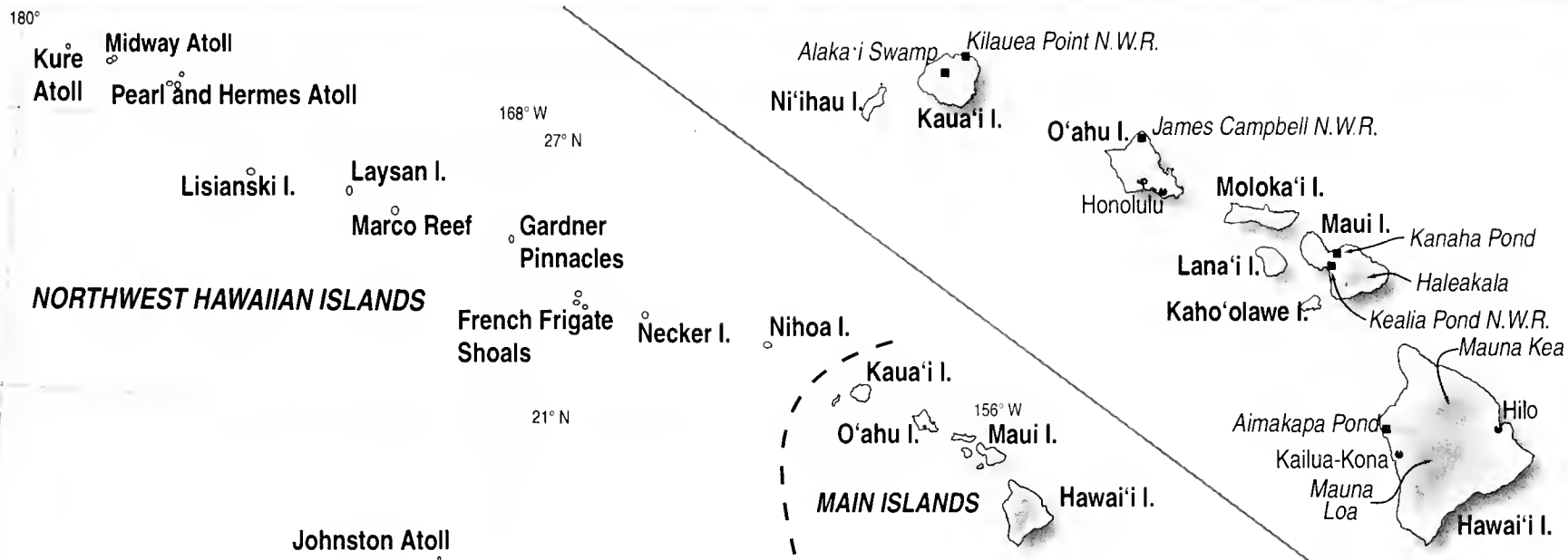
Addenda: Reports received too late to report in the winter 2004 issue: one Bridled Quail-Dove was seen 27 Feb 2004 at Mt. Pirata, Vieques (DG, BM), where three species of *Geotrygon* sporadically coexist. A Yellow-throated Vireo 27 Feb 2004 (DG) and a Worm-eating Warbler 25 Feb 2004 (DG) provided the 2nd and first records, respectively, for Vieques.

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# Hawaiian Islands



After several years of drought, the Hawaiian Islands had a wet winter for the second year in a row. In a few cases, the wetter weather seems to be having an impact on bird numbers. Few new rarities showed up over the winter, but some of last fall's rarities remained, allowing many more observers a chance to see them.

**Abbreviations:** BPBM (Bernice P. Bishop Museum; used with catalog number of specimen in Bishop Museum bird collection); Hakalau (Hakalau N.W.R., Hawai'i I.); Hanalei (Hanalei N.W.R., Kauai I.); H. (Hawai'i I.); HRBP (Hawaii Rare Bird Documentary Photograph; used with image catalog number from the HRBP file at Bishop Museum, Honolulu); Honouliuli (Honouliuli Unit of Pearl Harbor N.W.R., O'ahu I.);

Kanaha (Kanaha Pond, Maui I.); K. (Kauai I.); Kealia (Kealia Pond N.W.R., Maui I.); Kii (Ki'i Unit of James Campbell N.W.R., O'ahu I.); Kokee (Koke'e S.P., Kauai I.); K.P. (Kilauea Point N.W.R., Kauai I.); M. (Maui I.); Midway (Midway Atoll N.W.R.); O. (O'ahu I.); Pouhala (Pouhala Marsh Wildlife Sanctuary, O'ahu I.); Waiawa (Waiawa Unit of Pearl Harbor N.W.R., O'ahu I.); Waikamoi (Waikamoi Preserve, Maui I.).

## ALBATROSSES THROUGH EGRETS

As usual, small numbers of Laysan and Black-footed Albatrosses were reported near the main islands. The highest counts reported were of 2 Laysans s. of O'ahu 28 Feb (GLA, PD, AJ) and 8 Black-footeds near Ni'ihau 7 Jan (DK). Of course, the main populations are out on the nw. islands, where

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286,576 Laysans and 15,868 Black-footeds were counted 4 Jan on just part of the refuge at Midway (MO). A Short-tailed Albatross (Endangered) has been on Midway Nov+ (MO). Counters on Midway also reported 1023 Bonin Petrels (MO). A dying dark petrel turned into Sea Life Park, O. early Jan was brought to Bishop Museum (EV) for identification and to be kept as a specimen (BPBM 184828). This bird is thought to be either a Murphy's Petrel or a dark Herald Petrel, both of which are very rarely recorded in the Region. Only one Wedge-tailed Shearwater was reported over the winter, a bird spotted on a pelagic trip w of Kauai 7 Jan (DK). Six storm-petrels observed off the Kona coast of Hawai'i I. were all thought to be Leach's Storm-Petrels (RB).

Counters on the Kualapuu C.B.C. scoped 101 White-tailed Tropicbirds and 55 Red-tailed Tropicbirds on tiny Okala I., just offshore of Molokai I. (ADY). The count of White-taileds is a new high count for the Region, and the count of Red-taileds is unusu-



This petrel was turned in to Sea Life Park on Oahu. Dark petrels are not the easiest birds to identify, even in the hand. The bird has been tentatively been identified as a Murphy's Petrel (which appears to be correct) but could conceivably be a dark-morph *heraldica* Herald Petrel. Both species appear to be rare in the Region. Photograph by Eric VanderWerf/HRBP 5192.





Cackling Geese are regular winter visitors to the Hawaiian Islands, but it is rare for visiting Cacklings to associate with their endangered Hawaiian cousin, the Nene or Hawaiian Goose. This *minima* Cackling was in Kilauea on the island of Kauai 26 February 2005 (here). Photograph by Brenda Zaun/HRBP 5205.

ally high. The least common booby in the main islands is Masked, so the 16 counted 18 Dec on Moku Manu I., just offshore of O'ahu I., is a good number for the main islands (EV). Single subad. Brown Boobies were observed in Hilo Harbor, H. (DL, CZ) and on Moloka'i I., 7 Feb (ADY). Brown Boobies are seldom reported from those areas. An active Black-crowned Night-Heron nest was found on little Manana I., about one km offshore of O'ahu, a very unusual location (F&JS). A single Great Blue Heron, a rare but regular species in the Region, was spotted on the Marine Corps base in Kaneohe, O. 18 Dec (EV).

### IBISES THROUGH HAWKS

*Plegadis ibis* remained on Kaua'i, O'ahu, and Maui Nov+, with high counts of 5 on Kaua'i I. at Hanalei 28 Jan (EV), one on O'ahu at Honouliuli Nov+ (PD, RM, MM), and 3 on Maui at Kealia 4 (MM) & 9 Jan (EV). One bird at Hanalei 28 Jan had reddish eyes, and the bird at Honouliuli was developing reddish eyes and reddish facial skin by Feb (ph. PD), confirming their identity as White-faced Ibis. The rest of the birds are also thought to be White-faced Ibis, the only species documented in the Region to date.

A single Greater White-fronted Goose remained at Kii Dec+ (MS, ph. PD, m.ob.). Many white-checked geese were reported Dec+. Most of the birds thought to be recent

migrants were small birds believed to be Cackling Geese, with a high count of 6 at Kii Dec+ (MS). A Cackling Goose joined a flock of Hawaiian Geese at Kilauea, K. 26 Feb (ph. BZ). A group of larger white-cheeked geese in Hilo, H. has been there for some time. The provenance of these birds is uncertain. Numbers of many migrant duck species were low again this winter. The high count for Northern Shovelers, 238 at Kealia 16 Dec (MN), was up a bit from last winter's peak of 180, but the peak count of 75 Northern Pintails at

necked Ducks, 3 Greater Scaup, and around 30 Lesser Scaup at 'Aimakapa, H. 31 Dec (J&SH).

An Osprey, rare but regular in the Region, was observed 19 Jan (RM, PD) and 20 Feb (PD) over Pearl Harbor, O. Native Hawaiian Hawks (Endangered) were reported regularly on Hawai'i I., with as many as 7 seen on one birding tour 30 Jan (H.F.T.). Single Peregrine Falcons were observed in several spots on O'ahu Dec-Jan (TC, MM, EV, MS), at Kealia 9 (EV) & 10 Jan (LT, EV), and on Moloka'i 27 Jan (AC). It is hard to tell how many different birds may have been involved.



Hawaii is one of the few places where Bristle-thighed Curlew (at left) is seen more often than Whimbrel (at right). Whimbrels from both North America and Eurasia reach the islands. This bird had the gray-and-white barring on its lower back characteristic of the *variegatus* race from Siberia. It was photographed on the coastal dunes in Kahuku, Oahu Island 21 February 2005. Photograph by Peter Donaldson/HRBP 5203.

Kealia 3 Feb (MN) was down from last winter's peak count of 88. A good-sized flock of bay ducks at Kii during the fall was gone by 10 Dec (RM). The highest count of bay ducks this season was a flock of 3 Ring-

### QUAIL THROUGH TERNS

Introduced California Quail were reported to be unusually abundant on Moloka'i, with coveys of 30-50 seen regularly in some areas (ADY). A Killdeer, rare but regular in the Region, was seen at Pu'unene, M. 22 Dec (J&SH). A Eurasian Whimbrel was observed among Bristle-thighed Curlews at Kahuku, O. 21 Feb+ (KP, ph., PD, JD, AJ). Whimbrels are much less common than Bristle-thigheds at Kahuku—as many as 25 Bristle-thigheds were counted there this winter (RM, PD). A single Marbled Godwit, presumably the bird first seen on O'ahu the previous fall, remained at Kealia Dec+ (m.ob.). Two Curlew Sandpipers, first observed at Kealia last Nov, were seen at Kealia 2 Dec (MN). A single Curlew Sand-



All gulls are uncommon in the Hawaiian Islands. Some species occur fairly regularly, but Glaucous Gulls are rather rare. This cooperative first-winter bird remained along the Hilo Bay waterfront much of the winter, here photographed 2 February 2005. Photograph by Mary McArthur/HRBP 5198.

piper was seen at Kealia early Dec–late Jan (LT, MM, MO), and one was seen at Kanaha 1 Feb (LT). The species is very rare in the Region. Thirty-four Long-billed Dowitchers were counted at Kanaha 28 Jan (FD), a new high count for the Region. Since Wilson's and Common Snipe were split, observers in the Region have managed to observe only a few snipe well enough to determine the species. A snipe at Kii 8 Jan (PD) and one at Kealia 10 Feb (CP) were observed to have dark, evenly barred underwings and were thus identified as Wilson's. A snipe at Kanaha 4 Feb (CP) had pale bars on its underwings and a wide, pale stripe on the trailing edge of the secondaries, thus apparently a Common.

Gulls were relatively widespread and abundant. The three most common species in the Region—Laughing Gull, Glaucous-winged Gull, and Ring-billed Gull—were reported in several locations Dec+ (m.ob.). Uncommon gulls included a single ad. Bonaparte's at Kawaiee, K. 1 Jan & 11 Feb (ph. JD), on the latter date already developing a black hood. A first-year Glaucous Gull at Hilo Harbor 24 Jan+ (DL, ph. MMc, CP, RD) was a rare find. Single Caspian Terns were observed on Maui I. at Kealia in early Dec (LT, MN) and on O'ahu at Kaneohe late Dec–late Jan (EV, TC). A single Common Tern was photographed on the beach at Mokuleia, O. 24 Dec (ph. DH). Common Terns are rare in the Region. Thousands of Sooty Terns were observed swarming over Moku Manu I., one of their breeding sites off O'ahu, 23 Feb (F&KS).

### DOVES THROUGH PASSERINES

The population of Mourning Doves seems to be increasing. Fifty-five were counted at Kealia 16 Dec (LT), and an estimated 300 were seen there 9 Jan (EV). These are, by far, the highest counts for the Region. Mourning Doves continue to be reported on O'ahu, too. Five were counted at Honouliuli 2 Jan

(RM), and 3 were seen there 20 Feb (PD). Eighty-nine Mitred Conures were observed in e. Maui in late Jan (LT). Dozens of Red-masked Parakeets were seen at Kahala, O. in late Feb, with a new high count of 55 on 23 Feb (MO). Native Short-eared Owls seemed to be unusually abundant this season, perhaps a result of the wet weather the past two years. Tour groups on Hawai'i recorded over 10 Short-eareds several times Dec+, with a high count of 28 on 30 Jan (H.F.T.).

We continue to get regular reports of Palila (Endangered) at Pu'u La'au, H., 'Akiapola'au (Endangered) and Hawaii Creepers (Endangered) on Pu'u 'O'o Ranch, H., and 'Akepa (Endangered) in Hakalau from tour groups (H.F.T.), but the reports generally contain no information about numbers seen, so it is hard to tell much about how these species are doing. One 'Akoheohe (Endangered) was observed at Hosmer Grove, M. 24 Dec (J&SH). 'Akoheohe are very rarely seen in that popular



Despite its name, Common Tern is rare in the Hawaiian Islands. This bird spent a few days on the beach at Mokuleia on Oahu Island, photographed here 24 December 2004. It is probably a first-winter bird, the ageing based on the fairly fresh, evenly worn primaries. Photograph by Dayna Harris/HRBP 5188.

birding spot. One 'Akoheohe was seen from the boardwalk at Waikamoi 12 Feb (CP), a location where the species is more regularly reported. No Maui Parrotbills (Endangered) were reported this season.

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# First Harlan's Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis harlani*) for Baja California Sur

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## Abstract

This paper documents the first record of Harlan's Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis harlani*) for Baja California Sur, apparently only the second record for Mexico, and reviews the range of *harlani* in North America, including Mexico.

## Field Encounter

On 24 January 2003, Brabata and Sauma found a Harlan's Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis harlani*) in Chametla, near La Paz, Baja California Sur. Unaware of the earlier sighting, Mlodinow located the same bird at that location on 28 January and obtained videotape of the bird on that date and on 31 January. This bird was last seen 10 March by Carmona. The hawk frequented a partly flooded pasture adjacent to five wastewater oxidation ponds, each of them 5 ha in size. This wet pasture, the adjoining oxidation ponds, and a collector tank 15 km away, are the only freshwater bodies within 100 km (Castillo-Guerrero et al. 2002) in a region that is quite arid, averaging only 200 mm of annual rainfall (García 1964). The hawk spent much of its

time perching on large trees bordering the pasture area, occasionally making soaring forays over the flooded short-grass field (in which cows and goats grazed). It was never observed taking prey.

The following description is from notes taken by Mlodinow and the videotape. The hawk's body was entirely blackish (no brownish hue), excepting several uneven longitudinal white streaks on the upper chest. The upperwing was solid blackish. The underwing coverts were entirely blackish. The undersurface of the flight feathers appeared whitish with a dark trailing edge to the secondaries and primaries that included the outer primary tips; no barring was observed in these whitish areas. The remiges' tips appeared solidly dark in the field (but may have borne fine pale barring on the outer primaries). Seen from below, the rectrices were off-white with a fairly distinct dark terminal band. Dorsally, the rectrices appeared dusty gray with a dark terminal band that was less distinctly demarcated than in ventral aspect. With closest views, the dark of the terminal band continued onto each rectrix, forming fine, dark longitudinal stripes on the dusty gray tail—markings very similar to those shown in Clark and Wheeler (2001; p. 223) and Wheeler and Clark (1995; p. 88). Observers were not able to eliminate the possibility of a very thin pale terminal band on the tail, although none was observed. The plumage showed no hint of rust or reddish. The cere was yellow, the bill dark. Leg color was not noted. On the perched bird, the wingtips fell noticeably short of the tail tip, extending about 80 per cent of the way down the tail. The black body plumage, white chest streaking, and tail pattern eliminate all other *Buteo* hawks, including other subspecies of Red-tailed Hawk. The lack of brownish hues on the body and reddish/rusty hues on the tail argue against intergradation with other *B. jamaicensis* subspecies. Videotape footage of this bird is archived at the San Diego Museum of Natural History.

## Distribution and Vagrancy

Harlan's Hawk breeds sparsely throughout much of interior Alaska, southern Alaska,

the Yukon, and northernmost British Columbia, and its core wintering range stretches from southwestern Iowa, through eastern Kansas, western Missouri, Oklahoma, and western Arkansas (Wheeler 2003a). Smaller numbers winter in eastern Texas, Louisiana, and in isolated scattered pockets throughout much of the remainder of the western United States and southwestern British Columbia (Wheeler 2003a). This subspecies is, however, quite scarce in southern California and southwestern Arizona. Unitt (1984) lists no records for San Diego County, and G. McCaskie (*in litt.*) knows of none since. There are four records for Orange County (Hamilton and Willick 1996, Collins and Bloom 2000), five records from the California portion of the Salton Sink (Patten et al. 2003), two records for Inyo County (T. Heindel, pers. comm.), and four records (possibly involving the same individual) from the Lower Colorado River valley (Rosenberg et al. 1991). All of these reports involve dark-morph Harlan's Hawks; the light morph is relatively rare.

Given the relatively long migration route of Harlan's Hawk, it is not surprising that vagrants have been reported as far east as New Jersey, Virginia, and Florida (Wheeler 2003b). Prior to 2003, however, there appears to be only one known Mexican report: a bird seen at Mexicali, Baja California, 1–15 December 1994 (Patten et al. 2001). Harlan's Hawks have not yet been recorded in Tamaulipas, despite several records of this subspecies from the Texas portion of the Lower Rio Grande Valley and the presence of apparently suitable habitat on the Mexican side (Howell and Webb 1995, B. K. Wheeler, *in litt.*). Likewise, Harlan's Hawk winters regularly in small numbers in southeastern Arizona (Wheeler 2003a), but it has not been recorded in the neighboring state of Sonora (Russell and Monson 1998) or elsewhere in northern Mexico (H. Gómez de Silva, *in litt.*). The dearth of reports from the southernmost United States and northern Mexico may indicate genuine scarcity or, perhaps, a lack of awareness of field characters that reliably separate the cryptic *harlani* from similar taxa of *Buteo*. Chametla lies 1050 km to the south-south-




west of the nearest previous record at Mexicali. Observers who visit the Baja California Peninsula and other parts of Mexico should attend carefully to the dark *Buteo* hawks, so that the status of Harlan's Hawk at the southern extreme of its range becomes clearer.

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# First record of Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush (*Catharus mexicanus*) for the United States

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## ABSTRACT

This paper documents the first United States record of Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush (*Catharus mexicanus*), a single male that frequented a residential backyard in Pharr, Hidalgo County, Texas from 28 May through 29 October 2004.

## Field Encounter

On 28 May 2004, Robert Bates discovered a Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush (*Catharus mexicanus*) in Allen Williams's yard in Pharr, Hidalgo County, Texas at 1745 CDST. It was subsequently observed that evening by Sravanthi Bates, Roy Rodriguez, and Allen Williams. At 1910, the bird began singing the typical advertising song for the species. The bird's plumage was not abraded or unusually worn, and the soft parts were also in good condition, showing no signs of cage wear. The upperparts of the thrush, including the wings and tail, were plain olive-brown with no darker or rufous coloration. The underparts were pale gray with a narrow brownish breast band. The throat was a very pale gray, noticeably lighter than the remainder of

the underparts. The bird had a black, rather shaggy crest. The black on the head extended down to include the lores and surrounded the eye. The auriculars and cheeks were dark gray, lighter than the black above and darker than the remainder of the bird's plumage. It also had a bright orange bill and orange eye ring. The eye ring made the black eye look rather large. The legs were long and fairly bright orange, although much duller than the bill. Similar thrush species that were ruled out both during and after the initial discovery of the Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush included Slaty-backed Nightingale-Thrush (*C. fuscatur*) and Orange-billed Nightingale-Thrush (*C. aurantirostris*). Slaty-backed, resident from Costa Rica through the northern Andes, has uniformly dark gray upperparts and white irides (Stiles and Skutch 1989, Ridgley and Greenfield 2001), while Orange-billed, a breeder from northern Mexico through northern South America (Howell and Webb 1995, Hilty 2003), has an overall rufous-brown plumage above and lacks the black crown of Black-capped. The latter has been detected twice in the Lower Rio Grande Valley (Papish et al. 1997, S. Cardiff, pers. comm.).

The behavior of the Pharr nightingale-thrush appeared typical for the species: it for-

aged in the understory and on the ground, fed on fruits of various plant species, and established several advertising perches. The habitat where it was discovered is a 0.34-ha patch of restored Tamaulipan thorn-scrub comprised of an overstory of Honey Mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*) and an understory of 46 species of small trees and other vegetation. During its five-month stay, the nightingale-thrush frequented this small patch of native habitat as well as the neighboring lot, which contains a line of trees composed mainly of Texas Ebony (*Pithecellobium flexicaule*) and a few Anaqua (*Ehretia anacua*), with scattered mesquite and shrubs. From late May through June, the nightingale-thrush was very vocal, singing at varying intervals throughout the day. The intensity of territorial singing decreased during July and early August, when the bird sang only between dawn and mid-morning and then again from late afternoon until dusk. After the bird quit singing, it became very difficult to locate, and it was thought to have departed until it was found again on 19 October and seen regularly through 29 October 2004. During the bird's stay, hundreds of visitors were able to see the nightingale-thrush as it frequented the yard and came to a birdbath on most evenings.

## Discussion

Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush has a discontinuous range from northeastern Mexico southward to western Panama (Howell and Webb 1995, Ridgley and Gwynne 1989). The northernmost population of this species is found near Ciudad Victoria, Tamaulipas, some 240 km from the Rio Grande (Robins and Heed 1951). Approximately 130 km farther south, populations have been studied extensively at Rancho del Cielo, in Tamaulipas. This work began in 1949 and 1950, when Harrell (1951) investigated the breeding avifauna and determined that *C. mexicanus* was the most common species there, with an av-



Figure 1. The Black-headed Nightingale-Thrush in Pharr, Texas exhibited plumage and behavior consistent with populations in northern Mexico. The occurrence of the bird fits well with the surmise that it arrived as a spring migrant that "overshot" the northern limits of the species' breeding range. Photograph by Larry Ditto.

erage of 105 pairs/40.5 ha. In Tamaulipas, where Black-headed Nightingale-Thrushes are abundant in summer but rare in winter (Arvin 2001), they are primarily found in an elevational range of 900 to 1800 m. The first spring arrivals have been found as early as mid-March (Harrell 1951), but the majority of the population arrives on nesting grounds in mid-April. Phillips (1991) was of the opinion that the species is absent from the northernmost portion of its range between early October and mid-April and reported that the northernmost winter record was in eastern San Luis Potosí. However, the species appears to be very rare in winter in southern Tamaulipas: although Harrell (1951) did not record it at all during his study; Arvin (pers. comm.) has recorded one individual during this season since 1972. The Pharr record appears to represent the first extralimital record of the species, although spring "overshoots" in northeastern Mexico would likely go undetected.

Pharr is located in the Lower Rio Grande Valley approximately half way between the mouth of the Rio Grande and Falcon Dam. Pharr and McAllen merge into one metropolitan complex, and there is very little remaining native vegetation in this area. Therefore, the Williams's yard and the adjoining undeveloped lot provide an island of native vegeta-

tion in an otherwise urbanized environment. The property owner's intensive efforts to revegetate the yard with native plants, including the addition of many fruiting species, have further enhanced this small patch of thornscrub for birds: other species that frequented the Williams's yard during the nightingale-thrush's stay included Plain Chachalaca (*Ortalis vetula*), Buff-bellied Hummingbird (*Amazilia yucatanensis*), Brown-crested Flycatcher (*Myiarchus tyrannulus*), Great Kiskadee (*Pitangus sulphuratus*), Black-crested Titmouse (*Baeolophus atricristatus*), Clay-colored Robin (*Turdus grayi*), Long-billed Thrasher (*Toxostoma longirostre*), Olive Sparrow (*Arremonops rufivirgatus*), and a vagrant Blue Mockingbird (*Melanotis caerulescens*).

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# Recent nesting and current status of Aplomado Falcon (*Falco femoralis*) in New Mexico

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## ABSTRACT

Aplomado Falcons (*Falco femoralis*) historically ranged within the United States from southeastern Arizona across southern New Mexico to western Texas, as well as in southernmost Texas. The species was resident and at least locally common within its United States range through the 1800s. It became uncommon by the 1930s and had largely disappeared by the 1940s, with the last documented nesting in 1952; it was federally listed as endangered in 1986. More recently, documentation of breeding Aplomado Falcons in northern Chihuahua, Mexico and increased reports from throughout the historic range in southern New Mexico suggested that natural recolonization of New Mexico's Chihuahuan Desert grasslands was underway. To assess the current status of the species in New Mexico, we conducted formal surveys and informal searches in suitable habitat in the southwestern and south-central portions of the state between 2000 and 2004. We found one territory that remained occupied by Aplomado Falcons from October 2000 through the project completion in 2004. This pair successfully fledged three young in 2002, the first such nesting by naturally occurring Aplomado Falcons in the United States in 50 years. We also observed at least eight other falcons, including a new pair in

the monitored territory and another pair nearby. Additionally during 2000–2004, we received credible reports of 11 falcons, including one pair, elsewhere in New Mexico, plus others just south of the United States–Mexico border. The existence of an occupied territory in southern New Mexico, plus reports of additional pairs and individuals on both sides of the international border, indicate the presence of a population in southern New Mexico and adjacent northern Chihuahua.

## INTRODUCTION

For over 50 years, the Aplomado Falcon (*Falco femoralis*) has been among the most elusive and sought-after bird species in the United States, where many authorities (e.g., Monson and Phillips 1981) concluded it no longer existed. Although known from the United States–Mexico border region, the majority of the falcon's distribution is from southern Mexico south through Central and South America (Keddy-Hector 2000). Within the United States, the species historically occurred in high-desert grasslands from southeastern Arizona and across southern New Mexico to western Texas, and in coastal prairies in southern Texas; it was considered regular in occurrence and fairly common, at least locally, through the 1800s by most authorities (e.g., Bendire 1892, Fisher 1893, Phillips et al. 1964, Hubbard 1970, Oberholser 1974). By the late 1930s, however, it had become decidedly uncommon, and by the 1940s it had largely disappeared from its U.S. range. A primary factor attributed to the decline was habitat alteration or loss, especially from brush encroachment into desert

grasslands (U.S.F.W.S. 1986, 1990, Hector 1987). Subsequently, organochlorine pesticides such as DDT were cited as inducing reproductive failure in southern Mexico, limiting the potential for the species to recolonize its former U.S. range (Kiff et al. 1980, Hector 1987, U.S.F.W.S. 1990). The United States Fish & Wildlife Service listed the northern subspecies, *septentrionalis*, as endangered in 1986 (U.S.F.W.S. 1986).

In New Mexico, the historic range included the southern tier of counties from Hidalgo and Grant eastward through Luna, Doña Ana, Otero, Eddy, and Lea and northward in the Rio Grande Basin through Sierra to Socorro (Figure 1). Bailey (1928) and Ligon (1961) implied a range contraction occurred by the early 1900s, limiting the falcon to the southwestern part of the state. By the 1930s, Aplomado Falcons had become rare in New Mexico, with the last specimen taken in 1939 in Hidalgo County and the last documented U.S. nest located in Luna County in 1952 (Ligon 1961, Hector 1987).

During the 1990s, however, an increase in Aplomado Falcon reports and verified records heightened interest in the possibility that the species might be recolonizing the southwestern United States (Williams 1997). Those sightings involved mostly single birds seen briefly at various locations. However, the presence of territorial falcons in southern New Mexico seemed likely, based on the number, frequency, and timing of observations, plus the proximity of a recently documented falcon population in nearby Chihuahua, Mexico (Montoya et al. 1997, Young et al. 2002, 2004). Since its discovery, the falcon population in Chi-

**Table 1. Estimated chronology of Aplomado Falcon nesting events during the 2001 and 2002 breeding seasons for four nests in Luna County, New Mexico. Egg and nestling stages estimated as 31–32 days and 38 days, respectively.**

Event	2001 Nest 1	2001 Nest 2	2002 Nest 1	2002 Nest 2
Nest site selected	Jan	May	Mar	May
Nest confirmed	8-Mar	25-May	22-Mar	16-May
Incubation initiated	8-15 Mar	9-25 May	23-29 Mar	19-23 May
No. of eggs	≥1	3	≥1	3
Hatching date	8-16 Apr	—	23-30 Apr	21-25 Jun
No. eggs hatched	≥1	0	Unknown	3
Nest fate	Failed	Failed	Failed	Successful
Nest failure date	28 Apr-6 May	1-7 June	29 Apr-5 May	—
No. of young fledged	—	—	—	3
Fledging date	—	—	—	29 Jul-2 Aug

huahua had been considered an obvious source of birds to repopulate areas within the historic range in the southwestern United States (Williams 1997, Keddy-Hector 2000).

The Aplomado Falcon recovery plan (U.S.F.W.S. 1990) recognized that an important first step in recovery was to document the status of any existing populations. According to Keddy-Hector (2000), a primary deficiency of ongoing conservation efforts was the continued lack of available information on the current status of natural populations. In response to this need and in light of increasing Aplomado Falcon reports, the U.S.F.W.S.'s New Mexico Ecological Services State Office and the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish sponsored this study to assess the status of native Aplomado Falcons in New Mexico. To accomplish this, we conducted formal surveys and informal searches for the species within its historic range in the state. In addition, we compiled and evaluated all recent Aplomado Falcon reports from the state to identify potential trends.

## METHODS

### Searches and monitoring

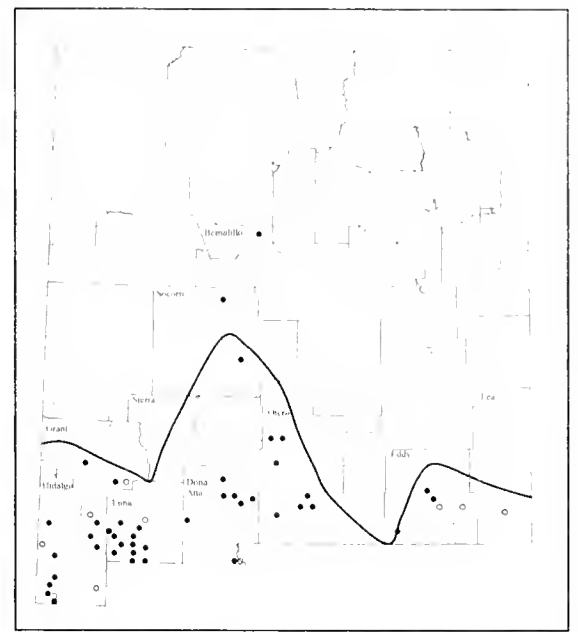
In early 2000, grassland areas with potential Aplomado Falcon habitat were identified in the counties of Grant, Hidalgo, Luna, and Doña Ana in southwestern and south-central New Mexico. These areas, within the species' former range, were chosen based on apparent habitat suitability and similarity to occupied habitat in nearby Chihuahua. Suitable falcon habitat in desert grasslands was considered to be generally flat, open grassland with less than 10 per cent shrub canopy cover (Young et al. 2002). Woody plants associated with such habitat include yucca (*Yucca* spp.), Longleaf Ephedra (*Ephedra trifurca*), Honey Mesquite (*Prosopis glandulosa*), Creosotebush (*Larrea tridentata*), and Tarbush (*Flourensia cernua*) (Montoya et al. 1997, Young et al. 2002). Potential habitat within our study area ranged from extensive, contiguous grasslands in some areas to various smaller-sized patches, these latter often occurring as linear swales within drainages, interspersed with shrublands.

We conducted formal surveys in all seasons between March 2000 and November 2004, spending some 850 hours surveying road-based survey routes in pre-identified grassland areas. Our formal survey protocol was based on survey methodology developed by U.S.F.W.S (1999). Survey points were located at 1-km intervals along available roads. At each stop, the observer exited the vehicle and scanned the surrounding countryside for at least 5 minutes with binoculars and spotting scope. Surveys were conducted primarily in the morning or from late afternoon to dusk. On days with calm winds and cooler temperatures, surveys were continued through midday. Because breeding Aplomado Falcons rely on nests of other avian species, which provide an important component of their habitat (Keddy-Hector 2000), all raptors and ravens detected during surveys were recorded. We conducted repeated surveys of potential habitat to offset in part the difficulty in detecting transients or newly arrived falcons (Hector 1980). Because surveys were restricted to a subset of potential habitat accessible by road, the number of Aplomado Falcons observed was considered a minimum count and not an estimate of the total number of birds or occupied territories in New Mexico. In addition to formal surveys, we also conducted informal searches for Aplomado Falcons whenever we were in potential habitat in southern New Mexico.

Following initial detections of Aplomado Falcons, follow-up visits were made to determine the status of the bird(s) and the possible existence of territories. When the existence of a territory was confirmed, the site was monitored at least once each month through the end of the project. During the 2001 to 2004 breeding seasons (February–August), falcon pairs were monitored at intervals of 7–14 days, with monitoring consisting of 1–4-hour observation periods. To minimize disturbance, nests were observed from a minimum of 350 m with binoculars and spotting scope; active nests were not approached.

### Records of Aplomado Falcon after 1952

We compiled and evaluated all New Mexico



**Figure 1.** Map of New Mexico showing historic range of Aplomado Falcon (area below heavy line) and approximate locations of reports for the period 1960–2004 (n=53). Open circles are reports from 1960–1989 (n=10); closed circles are reports from 1990–2004 (n=43). Included are all photographically documented reports, most published reports, plus other reports considered certain or probable.

Aplomado Falcon records reported since the last known nesting in 1952. Data were obtained from published sources, archived documentation, and ongoing field work. The great majority of records were published in seasonal reports in *Audubon Field Notes* and its successors, as well as in *New Mexico Ornithological Society Field Notes*. In most cases, published reports were supported by original written documentation on file with the New Mexico Ornithological Society's Bird Records Committee and/or the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish; beginning in 1991, many reports were documented photographically. We inspected all available documentation for each record, and accepted for our analysis all photographically documented reports, most published reports, plus other reports judged certain or probable. We excluded reports lacking documentation or considered erroneous, as well as those determined to be duplicates of other reports. Since the early 1990s, precise locations for most reports, and especially for territorial falcons, have remained confidential, to protect the birds from undue disturbance.

All Aplomado Falcons found in New Mexico were judged as naturally occurring, native birds. In coastal southern Texas, where the species was extirpated and there were no nearby Mexican populations to assist natural recolonization, releases of captive falcons have initiated an introduced population (e.g., Perez et al. 1996); to date, however, no individuals from that population have been documented straying the necessary 1300 km to reach the high desert grasslands of southern New Mexico. Releases of captive falcons in West Texas began in 2002; to our knowledge, none of those marked individuals have been documented

**Table 2.** New Mexico Aplomado Falcon reports, 1960–2004 (n = 53). Data compiled from documentation, including photographic documentation where available, on file with the New Mexico Ornithological Society Bird Records Committee and/or the New Mexico Department of Game and Fish. Included are all photo-documented reports, most published reports plus, other reports considered certain or probable. Excluded are known duplicate reports and reports lacking documentation or considered erroneous.

Time period	Reports	Counties
1960–1969	2 reports of 3 birds	Eddy, Lea
1970–1979	4 reports of 4–6 birds	Doña Ana, Grant, Hidalgo
1980–1989	4 reports of 5 birds	Eddy, Grant, Hidalgo, Luna
1990–1999	24 reports of 26–31 birds	Doña Ana, Eddy, Grant, Hidalgo, Otero, Socorro
2000–2004	19 reports of 24 birds, including 4 pairs and 3 fledglings	Bernalillo, Eddy, Grant, Hidalgo, Luna, Otero



**Figure 2.** The Aplomado Falcon pair in Luna County, New Mexico 5 October 2000 was the first confirmed pair in the state since 1952. Photograph by Raymond A. Meyer.

in New Mexico or adjacent Chihuahua; no observations of Aplomado Falcons in New Mexico were of birds that were marked in Texas.

## RESULTS

### Aplomado Falcon Surveys

Surveys and searches detected one resident pair of Aplomado Falcons in Luna County in southwestern New Mexico 2000–2002 and another pair there in 2004. Also in Luna County, we observed at least eight additional Aplomado Falcons, including another pair, away from the monitored territory. Credible reports of additional falcons by other individuals during 2000–2004 were: three singles in Luna County; one in Hidalgo County; one in Bernalillo County; two each in Grant County and Eddy County; and a pair in Otero County.

Other raptors and corvids encountered during our surveys whose nests may be used by Aplomados included White-tailed Kite (*Elanus leucurus*), Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*), Red-tailed Hawk (*Buteo jamaicensis*), and Chihuahuan Raven (*Corvus cryptoleucus*). Chihuahuan Ravens were recorded on all formal surveys and were the most abundant nesting species. White-tailed Kites were conspicuous in several areas during the 2000 and 2001 survey seasons but were rare in subsequent years.

Formal surveys conducted in 2000 failed to detect Aplomado Falcons. However, upon revisiting a site in Luna County on 5 October 2000, a pair of Aplomado Falcons in recently molted adult plumage was found (Figure 2). The noticeable size difference between the birds, together with their behavior, indicated that they were a mated male-female pair. They continued to occupy the same general area through the winter, thereby confirming the existence of an established territory. Interestingly, this territory (referred to as "Luna" hereafter) closely coincided with the location of the last known historic U.S. nest from 1952 (Ligon 1961; H.

Campbell, *in litt.*). The Luna territory exhibited similarities with some occupied areas in northern Chihuahua (Meyer, pers. obs.), consisting of a mosaic of desert grassland and shrubland surrounding a large, open Tobosa (*Pleuraphis mutica*) swale. Conditions for falcon occupation seemed favorable at the time due to improved range management in recent years (M. Howard, Bureau of Land Management, pers. comm.) and high densities of avian prey in the allotment (Meyer, unpubl. data).

Formal surveys conducted in 2001 yielded no additional Aplomado Falcons other than the established pair. However, on 24 August 2001, we incidentally observed a single bird elsewhere in Luna County.

Much more intensive formal surveys in 2002, which doubled our previous efforts, produced at least four additional falcons, including a second pair. An adult female, first reported by others, was observed 2 February 2002 in the same general area as the single bird we sighted in August 2001. We continued to see that bird through February and early March along the United States–Mexico border. On the morning of 8 May 2002, a pair of falcons was detected during surveys north and west of the Luna territory. Those birds, perched in a large Soaptree Yucca (*Yucca elata*), exhibited pair bonding behavior before flying away. That same day, the original pair was observed nesting in its established territory, thereby confirming the existence of two pairs that day. The new pair was not relocated on subsequent searches or surveys; however, sightings of single falcons, which may have been members of that pair, were made in that general area during three later surveys in May. Finally, on 13 August 2002, an immature female falcon not affiliated with the resident pair was noted in the Luna territory but was not seen on subsequent surveys.

Aside from observations associated with monitoring the Luna territory (which included the resident female paired with a new male, plus a second male seen, in 2004), no additional Aplomado Falcons were detected during our less intensive surveys and searches in 2003 and 2004.

### Territory and Nest Monitoring

Monitoring of the Luna territory began upon its discovery in October 2000 and continued through 2004; the territory remained occupied throughout the monitoring period, although on some visits no falcons were observed. During the 2001 breeding season, the Luna pair made two unsuccessful nesting attempts (Table 1). The first nest was located one km north of the initial sighting. As early as 24 January, one of the falcons was

observed entering a stick nest in a Soaptree Yucca. Eggs were laid in early March, and incubation began about 12 March. From mid-March through April, the female and, to a lesser extent, the male were observed attending and incubating the nest. Based on an incubation period of 31–32 days (Keddy-Hector 2000), we estimated the eggs hatched about 8–16 April. The nest was active at least through 28 April but by 9 May was abandoned. An inspection of the nest revealed that at least one nestling had hatched but later died. Comparing juvenile feathers found near the nest with a photographic age key, we estimated the nestling was about 20 days old at the time of death. Several of the feathers showed damage only at the base of the shafts, suggesting that the nestling was plucked by an avian predator, such as a Great Horned Owl (*Bubo virginianus*) or Chihuahuan Raven. Great Horned Owls are known to depredate young Aplomado Falcons in South Texas (Perez et al. 1996) and are suspected of doing so in Chihuahua (C. Méndez González, pers. comm.) and were known to inhabit the vicinity of the Luna territory. Following the failure of the first nest, the pair initiated a second nest in a Soaptree Yucca 2.3 km to the west. At this nest, the female incubated three eggs from 25 May through 1 June, but by 9 June the falcons had abandoned the effort. The Luna pair remained on territory throughout the rest of that year but made no further nesting attempts.

In 2002, the Luna pair bred later than in 2001 and was observed inspecting a series of nests throughout the territory prior to nesting (Table 1). The first 2002 nest, situated in a Little-leaf Sumac (*Rhus microphylla*) and located between the two nest sites used the previous year, was discovered 22 March. In early May, at about the time eggs were expected to hatch, the nest was abandoned for unknown reasons. A second nest was initiated in mid-May in a Soaptree Yucca 3.3 km east of the first nest (Figure 3). We estimated the eggs hatched 21–25 June. This nest was successful, fledging three young at the end of July. For about a month, the juveniles continued to be attended by the adults (Figure 4). During this period, the juveniles gradually became more independent but continued to hunt with the adults. On 24 September and thereafter, no juvenile falcons were seen in their natal territory. The adult female remained on territory through 2002, but the male was not seen after 29 October.

No breeding activity was observed during the 2003 season. One adult, presumably the resident female, was periodically seen throughout the year in an expanded home range in the area occupied in previous years. We observed no other Aplomado Falcons in that area in 2003.



Through March 2004, only the female was seen on territory, but by late April, a male joined the female. We believe it unlikely that this male was a member of the original pair, although this could not be confirmed; we considered it a new pair. The pair engaged in breeding activity, including copulation and nest inspection, but we did not determine if egg laying occurred at any of three potential nest sites the falcons were seen inspecting. The pair was last seen together 18 May; by 23 May and thereafter, the female was alone. In mid-November and December, a male falcon was observed at the southern periphery of the Luna territory. Because of the substantial time interval (six months) since a male was last seen in the area, we assumed this later bird represented yet another male.

#### *Increased Presence of Aplomado Falcons in New Mexico*

Following the last known nest in 1952, no additional Aplomado Falcons were reported in that decade in New Mexico. During the subsequent three decades, reports of falcons were few and widely scattered and amounted to two reports in the 1960s and four reports each in the 1970s and 1980s (Figure 1, Table 2); none was confirmed with photographs or other tangible evidence, but together they implied a continuing, albeit low, level of occurrence during those decades. That changed, however, when single Aplomado Falcons were photographed near Tularosa, Otero County 25 June 1991 (Williams and Hubbard 1991) and near Bingham, Socorro County 14 August 1992 (Williams 1993). As the 1990s progressed, an increased presence of Aplomado Falcons became apparent; in all, the decade produced 24 credible reports involving 26–31 falcons in southern New Mexico, with three to six observations occurring per year by the latter part of the decade. By 2000–2004, not only did the high frequency of sightings continue (Figure 1, Table 2), but pairs of birds

were being encountered, one of which occupied a territory for at least two years and successfully fledged young.

Aplomado Falcons also occupy areas in northern Chihuahua, Mexico, where indications of the extent of their range were only recently revealed (e.g., Montoya et al. 1997). In 1998–1999, Young et al. (2002, 2004) conducted extensive falcon surveys in the northern portion of Chihuahua. They found 18 nests and a minimum of 79 falcons within a 100-km belt of the United States–Mexico border. Sightings of individual falcons were made in two successive years in the same locale within 12 km of the New Mexico border, and breeding falcons were observed within 50 km of the border. More recently, in April 2002, the wildlife group Profauna de Chihuahua conducted a brief survey in northern Chihuahua along the United States–Mexico border and reported four Aplomado Falcons, including one pair, not far from the Luna territory (A. Lafón Terrazas, pers. comm.). Immigration of Aplomado Falcons to New Mexico was documented when a first-year female Aplomado Falcon, banded as a nestling in Chihuahua in July 1999, was observed twice in September 1999 in Otero County, some 300 km from where it was raised (Meyer, pers. obs.).

#### DISCUSSION

The near half-century absence of breeding native Aplomado Falcons in the United States came to an end with the documentation of an occupied New Mexico territory in 2000 and the eventual successful fledging of three young in that territory in 2002. Our study, plus other recent observations, point to an increased presence of Aplomado Falcons in the Chihuahuan Desert of New Mexico. Although heightened awareness and vigilance likely contributed in part to the increase in reports, the accumulated observations nonetheless indicate a significant and growing presence of the species in the state. In the 1990s, Aplomado Falcon sightings in New Mexico involved single birds that were initially regarded as vagrants. The eventual discovery of pairs and successful breeding, however, provided encouraging signs that natural recolonization of the species' historic range in the Southwest may indeed be underway.

In adjacent Chihuahua, documentation of breeding Aplomado Falcons plus other recent sightings, together with recent findings in New Mexico, indicate the existence of a population along the border serving as a source for further colonization into historic range in New Mexico, Arizona, and western Texas. Based on this and other recent studies, falcons in northern Chihuahua and southern New Mexico



**Figure 3.** This Aplomado Falcon nest was in a Soap Tree Yucca in Luna County, New Mexico; three young successfully fledged from this nest in July 2002. Photograph by Raymond A. Meyer.

should be considered a single interacting population (Williams 2000, Young et al. 2004). Apparent gaps in distribution within suitable habitats along the United States–Mexico border may be an artifact of relatively low survey effort and coverage in the United States and large portions in Chihuahua adjacent to the border, some of which have not been searched at all. Large amounts of time are required to detect Aplomado Falcons, including those on territory (Hector 1980), even with intensive survey methods (Young et al. 2004; this study). For example, in the formal survey portion of our study, Aplomado Falcons were detected only during the period when effort was at least double that of other survey periods.

There is great concern for the health of Chihuahuan Desert grasslands in this borderland region (Dinerstein et al. 2000, Curtin et al. 2002). Studies have documented several factors associated with human activities (e.g., excessive livestock grazing) as well as climate change as causing degradation or loss of desert grasslands, including shrub encroachment into these grasslands (Humphrey 1958, Hastings and Turner 1964, Buffington and Herbel 1965, York and Dick-Peddie 1969, Swetnam and Betancourt 1998). Large-scale habitat alterations were implicated as principal factors responsible for the Aplomado's original decline (U.S.F.W.S. 1986, 1990). Based on our understanding of Aplomado Falcon's habitat requirements in Chihuahuan Desert grasslands, we observe that much of this habitat in southern New Mexico is now fragmented by woody plant encroachment into formerly open grasslands. Such brush encroachment limits habitat suitability for the Aplomado Falcon as well as other sensitive grassland



**Figure 4.** These are three of a five-member Aplomado falcon family in Luna County, New Mexico, photographed 11 September 2002. This breeding event established the first successful U.S. nesting by naturally occurring Aplomado Falcons in 50 years. Photograph by Mike Haward, Bureau of Land Management.

species that require similar open grasslands, including Ferruginous Hawk (*Buteo regalis*), Sprague's Pipit (*Anthus spragueii*), and Baird's Sparrow (*Ammodramus bairdii*).

Montoya et al. (1997) and Young et al. (2002) found an association of Aplomado Falcons with grasslands having tall grass with dense basal cover and low woody plant densities. The U.S.F.W.S (1990) cited the need for range management practices that promote maintaining open pastures and other practices that improve potential Aplomado Falcon habitat. We believe it is imperative for government agencies, land managers, and conservation organizations to employ active international ecosystem management to encourage successful Aplomado Falcon recolonization and recovery, while minimizing risks to the falcons. The long-term success of any recovery effort ultimately will depend upon the ability of the habitat to support the species. The current grazing permittee at the Luna territory has implemented a conservative grazing regime aimed at improving range conditions (M. Howard, Bureau of Land Management, pers. comm.), which could serve as a model for successful management of Aplomado Falcon habitat consistent with existing land uses throughout much of the species' northern range.

### Acknowledgments

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# Baja California Sur's first record of Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius*)

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## ABSTRACT

This article documents a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius*) at San Antonio, Baja California Sur, Mexico, a first for that state, and considers molt timing and other issues relevant to field identification of this species vis-à-vis Red-naped Sapsucker (*S. nuchalis*).

## Field Encounter

On 25 October 2002, we found a sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus* sp.) feeding on palm fruits in the village of San Antonio, approximately 45 km south of La Paz, Baja California Sur. We initially identified it as a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*S. varius*). Its crown and throat were completely red, the transocular stripe was largely black with some buff flecking, and there was a complete dark border surrounding the red throat that was moderately flecked in yellow-buff. The throat's red did not intrude into this border. The back was broadly barred black and buff. The chest was a dusky hue mottled with buff. The nape was devoid of red. Figures 1–6 illustrate these features.

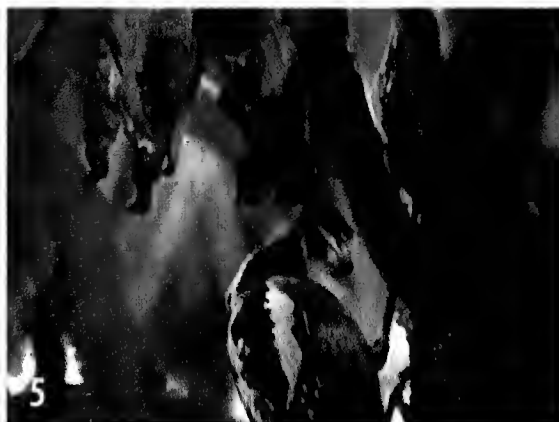
## Discussion

The separation of Yellow-bellied Sapsucker from Red-naped Sapsucker (*S. nuchalis*) poses significant challenges. One difference between these species is that juvenile Red-naped Sapsuckers typically molt on their breeding grounds, whereas juvenile Yellow-bellieds usually do so on their wintering

grounds, sometimes not attaining full adult plumage until March (Pyle 1997). This discrepancy often has been used to identify vagrant Yellow-bellieds in states of the West Coast, as the majority of such are first-year birds. The assumption has been that a bird in juvenile plumage in winter is a Yellow-bellied. To some extent, the reverse has been assumed as well, especially regarding fall migrants: a bird showing significant adult-like plumage should not be a Yellow-bellied. Because our bird clearly showed several adult features, we were concerned that it might be

a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker × Red-naped Sapsucker hybrid.

Mlodinow sent videograbs (including Figures 1–6) of the San Antonio sapsucker to several knowledgeable birders and ornithologists: Jocelyn Hudon, Paul Lchman, Tony Leukering, Michael O'Brien, and Will Russell. All agreed that the bird's plumage was consistent with Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and inconsistent with Red-naped. Though none of these marks, by themselves, are conclusive, the important characteristics mentioned were as follows: 1) red throat com-



Figures 1–6. This Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, a first for Baja California Sur, Mexico, was videotaped at San Antonio, 25 October 2002. Note that the red throat is surrounded by black and that there is no red on the nape, characters of typical Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. Though the back pattern is perhaps more typical of Red-naped, it is within the range of pure Yellow-bellied, per Hudson's research and the authors' review of museum specimens. The pale bars on the back were distinctly butter-colored, which would be atypical for Red-naped. Photographs from videotape by Steven G. Mlodinow.

pletely surrounded in black, sometimes mottled with buff, but with no intrusion of red; 2) no red on nape; and 3) fairly broad butterfly yellow barring on back. Additionally, juvenile Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers have butterfly-colored mottling in the malar stripe, transocular stripe, and dusky chest band, whereas juvenile Red-naped Sapsuckers usually lack mottling on their malar and auriculars and have grayish mottling on the chest (Mlodinow 2003). The San Antonio bird showed buffy mottling in all three areas, the color of which was more apparent in the field than on the videographs.

Despite the strong evidence provided by the plumage, Russell expressed concern regarding the bird's advanced stage of molt and thought that this might be a sign of hybridization with Red-naped Sapsucker. Hudon (*in litt.*), who studies hybrid sapsuckers, stated that this bird would score as a pure Yellow-bellied in his research framework (<[www.pma.edmonton.ab.ca/natural/birds/projects/results.htm](http://www.pma.edmonton.ab.ca/natural/birds/projects/results.htm)>). He also added that the zone of hybridization is limited to southwestern Alberta, with the entire hybrid population likely numbering fewer than 5000. To study the molt-timing issue further, Mlodinow reviewed 19 first-year Yellow-bellied Sapsucker specimens at the Field Museum of Natural History, all collected between 14 September and 16 November. Of these,

only nine were entirely, or almost entirely, in juvenal plumage. One bird, collected in Chicago as early as 25 September, already had a nearly adult black face pattern, a full red throat, and a moderate amount of red on the crown (#368337). Another bird, collected on 10 October in northeastern Illinois (#325782), had a completely red throat and crown, as the San Antonio bird did. Mlodinow, Jessie Barry, and Cameron Cox reviewed first-year Yellow-bellied Sapsucker specimens at the University of Washington's Burke Museum and found that four of six birds collected in October showed substantial adult characteristics. A bird collected on 11 October in Maryland (#41290), already had a half-black chest band, a crown that was approximately 50% red, and a throat that was greater than 50% red. Another specimen from 16 October in Massachusetts (#33549) had a throat that was almost entirely red and a crown that was 50% red. Interestingly, most of the birds with advanced plumage in both collections were males. Consequently, we concluded that signs of adult plumage in first-year fall Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers are not infrequent and that hybridization is an unlikely explanation for such birds.

The San Antonio Yellow-bellied Sapsucker represented Baja California Sur's first record. There are also at least ten records from the Baja Peninsula's northern third,

spanning 18 October and 3 March (Erickson and Howell 2001).

### Acknowledgments

We extend thanks to Jocelyn Hudon, Paul Lehman, Tony Leukering, Michael O'Brien, and Will Russell for carefully examining the videographs of this sapsucker and tendering their thoughts on them. A substantial debt of gratitude is also owed to David Willard at the Field Museum of Natural History and to Rob Fawcett and Sievert Rohwer at the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture for access to their collections. Finally, we thank Jessie Barry and Cameron Cox for help in reviewing specimen material.

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# Probable Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius*) × Red-breasted Sapsucker (*S. ruber*) hybrid from eastern Kansas, with comments on the field identification of adult sapsuckers

## Abstract

A sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus*) found 15 December 2001 near Lawrence, Kansas was collected and studied through molecular methods (mitochondrial DNA sequencing and allozyme analysis), consultation with researchers working on hybridization of sapsuckers, and analysis of 201 adult male specimens of Red-naped (*S. nuchalis*) and Yellow-bellied (*S. varius*) Sapsuckers. We conclude that the individual sapsucker in question is not a Red-naped Sapsucker as originally identified in the field but rather a hybrid, most likely the result of a pairing of a female Yellow-bellied with a male Red-breasted Sapsucker (*S. ruber*), thus potentially the first specimen of this hybrid combination away from the very limited contact zone of these species in British Columbia. We offer comments on pitfalls in the identification of sapsuckers by plumage, as well as an overview of reports of similar sapsuckers in eastern North America, especially the Great Plains region, where unusually plumaged sapsuckers have occasioned debates for over a decade.

## Field Encounter

On 15 December 2001, Seibel discovered a sapsucker with unusual plumage on the Lawrence, Kansas Christmas Bird Count near Lawrence. This individual was initially identified as an adult male Red-naped Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus nuchalis*) because of the presence of an extensive red nape and the complete incursion of red in the black malar (Figure 1). However, Seibel and others recognized that the bird was atypical for an adult male Red-naped because of extensive red suffusion on the broad black chest band. When Robbins was shown photographs of the bird, he recognized that the back pattern (Figure 2) was typical of an adult Yellow-bellied (*S. varius*). Furthermore, his past examination of adult male sapsucker specimens (see below) had shown the presence of extensive red on the nape to be an unreliable character for separating these two sapsucker species. Knowing that genetic studies had been done on sapsuckers (Johnson and Zink 1983, Cicero and Johnson

1995), both before and after the recognition of these sapsuckers as separate species (AOU 1985), Robbins collected the bird on 20 December 2001 (KUNHM 92332; Figure 3) and preserved tissue for analysis by Cicero.

## Age, Sex, Plumage, and Genetics of the Lawrence bird

Upon dissection, the bird surprisingly proved to be an adult female with a granular ovary mass  $3.5 \times 2$  mm. Internally, the size and shape of the gonads coupled with the absence of the bursa of Fabricius indicated that the bird was at least a year and a half old. The uniformly dark and fresh primary coverts, the uniformly adult secondaries, and the uniformly adult flight feathers indicate that the bird was at least four calendar years old (Pyle 1997). In addition to having a typical Yellow-bellied back and ventral pattern (i.e., intensive yellow underparts), it also had the outermost two pairs of rectrices (numbers 4 and 5) heavily mottled and tipped with white (intermediate between Figure 129A and Figure 129B in Pyle [1997]). Adult male Red-naped and Red-breasted Sapsuckers (*S. ruber*) have the outer rectrix mostly black, and adult female Red-naped and Red-breasted have less mottling than female Yellow-bellied, especially on rectrix four.

Mitochondrial (mtDNA) sequencing of a diagnostic 300 bp fragment of the mtDNA cytochrome-*b* (Cicero and Johnson 1995) identified the bird as a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker. This result was confirmed by additional sequencing of the entire cytochrome-*b* gene for the Lawrence bird and known individuals of *S. nuchalis* (MVZ 168594) and *S. varius* (MVZ 168650). However, because mtDNA is maternally inherited, the sequence data only confirmed that the maternal parent was *varius*.

In an attempt to identify both parents, Cicero also used allozymes following the work of Johnson and Zink (1983). Their study did not find fixed differences between any species of *Sphyrapicus* other than *S. thyroideus*, although there were notable fre-

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quency differences at purine nucleoside phosphorylase (NP) and aminopeptidase leucyl-glycyl-glycine (LGG). Cicero analyzed LGG for the Kansas sample, using the same two MVZ specimens for standards, and found the Kansas bird to be homozygous for the allele that occurs in higher frequency in *S. nuchalis* than *S. varius*. Attempts to score the same samples for the NP locus were ambiguous. A review of the raw allozyme data used in Johnson and Zink (1983) revealed that two of the eight *S. varius* that they examined likewise were homozygous for this allele; the other six birds were either het-





**Figure 1.** Adult female probable Yellow-bellied Sapsucker x Red-breasted Sapsucker, 16 December 2001, near Lawrence, Kansas. Note that the dark malar is mostly red and the red of the throat masks most of the black chest band. The prominent red nape is visible even in this profile. Photograph by Kyle Gerstner.

erozygotes or homozygous for a second allele. Therefore, the allozyme data for the Lawrence bird are not unexpected but unfortunately do not provide evidence to identify the paternal parent of this individual.

Although the genetic data indicate that the female parent was a Yellow-bellied, we are limited to an analysis of plumage to infer the identity of the male parent. There are two plausible hypotheses for the male-like plumage in this individual. It is conceivable that the abnormal amount of red on the throat and upper breast are the result of a genetic abnormality or an unknown aging phenomenon, perhaps related to reduced hormone levels (e.g., estrogen). Older females in some species may acquire male-like plumage, e.g., Summer Tanager (Pyle 1997, Owens and Short 1995). However, our discussions with J. Hudon and M. Gosselin, who examined photographs of the Lawrence specimen, and our examination of hybrids have led us to believe that the most likely explanation for the unusual degree of red in the Lawrence bird is a hybridization event between a female Yellow-bellied and a male Red-breasted Sapsucker.

As mentioned above, the Lawrence bird has back, rectrix, and facial patterns of a Yellow-bellied, whereas the extension of the red of the throat masking the black breast band is exhibited only in Red-breasted. Although the bright yellow underparts may simply be the result of Yellow-bellied genes, we note that the northern (nominate) subspecies of Red-breasted—unlike the southern subspecies (*S.*

*ruber daggetti*) and Red-naped Sapsucker—also shows a bright yellow belly. From a distributional standpoint, a hybrid event between Yellow-bellied and nominate Red-breasted is far more probable than a Yellow-bellied x *S. ruber daggetti* event (Campbell et al. 1990, A.O.U. 1998).

Because of the wide range in variation in hybrid phenotypes among all three of these sapsucker species (Howell 1952, Johnson and Johnson 1985, J. Hudon, M. Gosselin, pers. comm.), it is uncertain if the Lawrence individual is an F<sub>1</sub> or the result of a back-cross. Interestingly, except for the Yellow-bellied back pattern of the Lawrence bird, it is very similar to specimens of Red-naped Sapsucker x Red-breasted Sapsucker hybrids of both sexes, e.g., Canadian Museum of Nature, Ottawa specimens 47951 and 52385

(Devillers 1970, Johnson and Johnson 1985, M. Gosselin, pers. comm.).

## DISCUSSION

### Plumage characters and their relevance for identification

#### Nape

As mentioned above, the presence or absence of red in the nape is an unreliable character for separating Yellow-bellied and Red-naped Sapsuckers. Kaufman (1990) correctly pointed out that some Red-naped, especially worn individuals in late summer, lack red on the nape. In mid-July 2004, Robbins conducted field work in the South Dakota/Wyoming Black Hills and observed 14 adult Red-naped Sapsuckers (in which nape coloration was clearly visible) with the following distribution: one female with no red, two females and two males with only a hint of red, and five birds that had moderate to extensive red napes.

Kaufman (1990) also noted that some adult male Yellow-bellieds have red in the nape.

While reviewing a controversial Missouri report of a Red-naped in 1993 (see below), Robbins examined a total of 120 adult male Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and 81 adult male Red-naped Sapsucker museum specimens. Of the adult male Yellow-bellieds examined, 23 (19%) had red in the nape ranging from a few red feathers that would not be visible in the field to two individuals taken during migration near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania (ANSP 173632 and 173633) that had as much red in the nape as average fresh-plumaged, adult male Red-naped. Except for the red nape, the plumage of both of the latter two individuals appeared to be classic Yellow-bellieds. In Howell (1952), E. Godfrey related that a specimen from Megantic County, Québec, Canada had an extensive amount of red on the nape but showed no other Red-naped characters. A more recent Québec record of a breeding adult male Yellow-bellied with an extensive red nape was documented with a color photograph at Saint-Jacques de Leeds in 1988 (*American Birds* 42: 1225).

#### Malar

The coloration of the dark malar in adult male sapsuckers is a valuable character for identification. Adult male Red-naped usually have some encroachment of the red throat onto the malar. However, this can vary considerably, ranging from birds that have an all-



**Figure 2.** Dorsal view of the same Lawrence female depicted in Figure 1. The red nape is conspicuous and the malar, which is typically black in both sexes of Yellow-bellied and in female Red-naped, is heavily suffused with red. However, the typical Yellow-bellied back pattern—i.e., the extensive light-colored plumage in proportion to black, is apparent. Photograph by Kyle Gerstner.

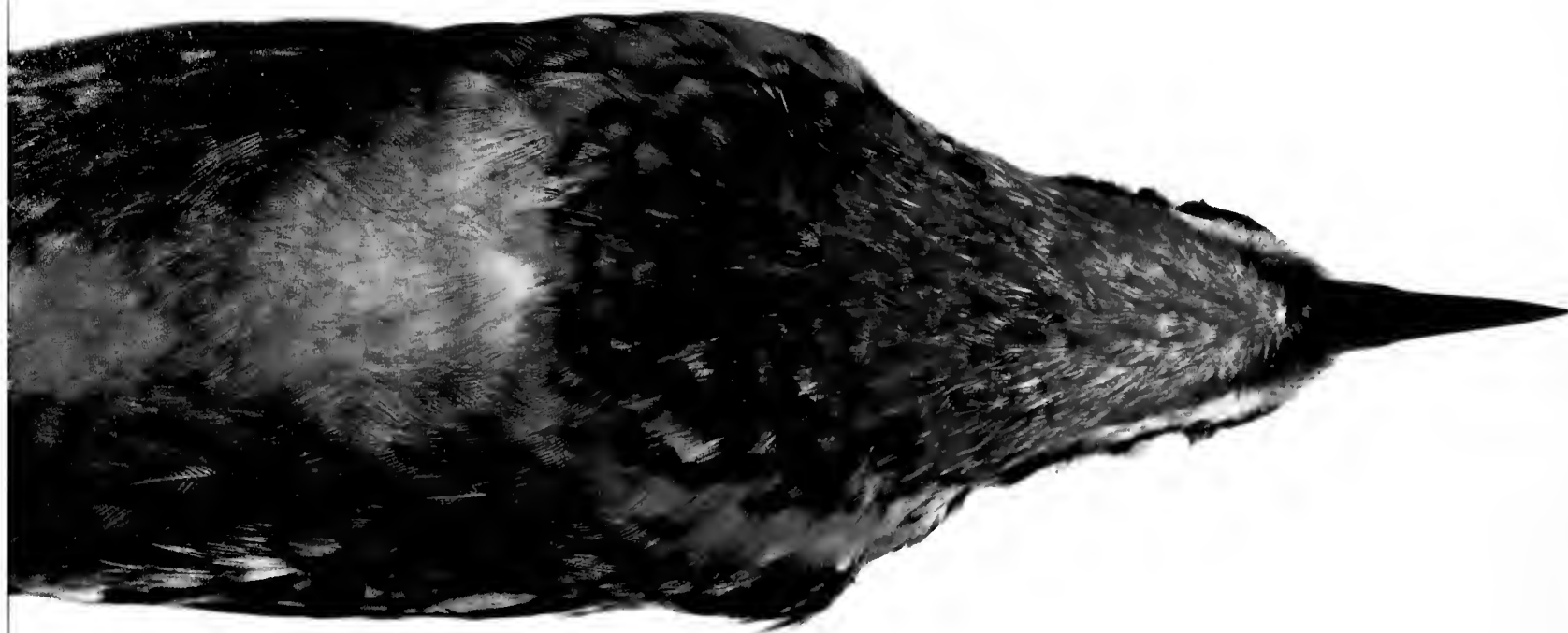


Figure 3. Ventral view of Lawrence female (KUMNH 92332). Note that the red throat masks most of the black chest band. This feature is unknown in pure Yellow-bellied and Red-naped but is characteristic of Red-breasted. The bright yellow underparts are typical for Yellow-bellied and the nominate subspecies of Red-breasted. Photograph by Mark Robbins.

black malar to more extreme cases in which the black malar is nonexistent—i.e., the malar region is entirely red. Robbins observed five of seven adult male Red-naped during mid-July in the Black Hills that appeared to have all-black malars. Given that red pigmentation in sapsuckers is present only in the tips of feathers, this can be easily worn off, revealing the all-black remainder of the feathers. However, this should not be an identification concern outside the period from late June through August. Female Red-naped typically do not have any red in the black malar, and we are unaware of any Yellow-bellieds, with the exception of possible hybrids, having red in the black malar. Thus, if red is present in the malar and there is no unusual coloration elsewhere that might indicate a hybrid, it is reasonably safe to say that the bird is a Red-naped, and very likely a male.

#### Back

The character that seems to be the least variable in non-hybrid adults of all three of these sapsuckers is the proportion of black and light-colored areas in the back. Adult Yellow-bellieds invariably have more light-colored back plumage than do adult Red-naped and Red-breasted (both sexes of Red-breasted average more black than Red-naped). Adult female Red-naped have less black in the back than adult male Red-naped, and thus some females approach Yellow-bellieds in the amount of light-col-

ored area in the back, especially in mid- to late summer, when birds are heavily worn and may appear washed out (Robbins, pers. obs.). Nonetheless, female Red-naped still possess noticeably more black in the back than either sex of Yellow-bellied (Figure 3). Additionally, the reduced pale area in adult Red-naped is typically whiter than that of Yellow-bellieds; in the latter, this pale region is often washed with a light buffy-yellow. It should be noted that the pale dorsal region of nominate Red-breasted also is yellowish.

#### Throat

In addition to unusual individuals like the Lawrence sapsucker, sexing of adult Red-naped Sapsuckers can be problematic because of variability in the amount of red in female throats (Kaufman 1990, Pyle 1997, Shunk 2005, T. Leukering, pers. comm.). This variation runs the gamut from females with only a thin red area immediately above the broad, black chest patch to individuals that have entirely red throats. It is unknown if the amount of red on the throat is age-related or the result of hybridization. Female Red-naped showing an all-red throat and black malars would be extremely challenging to distinguish from adult male Yellow-bellieds. The only field characters that might distinguish them would be the extent of black on the back, coloration of the light area on the back, and potentially the coloration of the underparts.

#### Hybridization

It has been known for some time that the identification of a small percentage of adult Yellow-bellied, Red-naped, and Red-breasted Sapsuckers is problematic, both because of overlap in plumage characters among these species and because of hybridization among them. Kaufman (1990) underscored that some adult individuals of this complex cannot be identified under field conditions. Until recently, hybridization between Yellow-bellied and Red-naped Sapsuckers was thought to be “limited and localized” (Howell 1952, AOU 1998); however, unpublished details from western Alberta indicate that there is “extensive” hybridization (J. Hudon, pers. comm.; <[www.pma.edmonton.ab.ca/natural/birds/projects/results.htm](http://www.pma.edmonton.ab.ca/natural/birds/projects/results.htm)>; Shunk 2005). Further complicating identification are hybrids between Red-naped and Red-breasted along a narrow interface from central British Columbia south to the California–Nevada border (Howell 1952, Devillers 1970, Browning 1977, Johnson and Johnson 1985, Campbell et al. 1990, Hamilton and Dunn 2002, Shunk 2005). Presumed Red-naped × Red-breasted hybrids have been encountered during migration and winter as far east as Arizona and western Texas (Phillips et al. 1964, Lockwood and Shackelford 1998). In contrast, because of very limited contact in northern British Columbia, only a single potential hybrid specimen of Yellow-bellied and Red-breasted has been reported prior to the

Lawrence bird (Howell 1952, Campbell et al. 1990, Walters et al. 2002, M. Gosselin, pers. comm.). As Howell (1952) noted, the identification of a *varius* × *ruber* hybrid collected by H. S. Swarth at Telegraph Creek, northwestern British Columbia (MVZ 39781) was based more on the fact that it was well north of the *nuchalis/ruber* contact zone than on plumage characters. Indeed, our examination of the specimen indicates there are no obvious *varius* characters, and if it were not for the locality we would classify it as a *nuchalis* × *ruber* hybrid. Unlike the Lawrence presumed *varius* × *ruber* hybrid, the Telegraph Creek bird has a back pattern typical of *nuchalis* and *ruber*. Mixed *varius* × *ruber* pairs have, however, been documented through fieldwork in 1969 by W.E. Godfrey (summarized in Campbell et al. 1990) and in 1974 by Scott et al. (1976).

In addition to the examples above, we mention the following records to underscore the extent of unusual-appearing sapsuckers in central and eastern North America. A bird that was initially reported as an adult male Red-naped in April 1993 in Jackson County, Missouri was either a Yellow-bellied or a Yellow-bellied × Red-naped hybrid. Although this bird had an extensive red nape, quite similar to the Lawrence bird, it too had the classic back pattern of a Yellow-bellied, and the malar stripes were entirely black (color photographs in Missouri Bird Records Committee file #1993-33). A similar bird was photographed 12–19 February 1993 at Tishomin-go National Wildlife Refuge, Johnston County, Oklahoma (Grzybowski [1993] includes black-and-white photograph; we also examined a color image). Another similar sapsucker was documented 26 February 2002 at Washington, Washington County, Kansas by Dan Thalmann. Both of these birds were presumed to be males and had red napes but otherwise appeared as typical Yellow-bellied. An adult sapsucker, of unknown sex, that appeared in Holmes County, Ohio 3–8 April 2005 (under review by the Ohio Bird Records Committee; Casey Tucker, pers. comm.) may have been a Yellow-bellied × Red-naped hybrid. The Ohio bird had a red nape and mostly red malars, but the ventral yellow wash was more typical of a Yellow-bellied and the back pattern appeared intermediate between these two taxa. In Appalachian North Carolina, John Gerwin observed a presumed adult male Yellow-bellied Sapsucker with a conspicuous red nape and inordinate “orange-yellow” patches, nearly forming a band, on the upper chest on 28 March 2004 in Moses Cone National Park, Watauga County. Except for the chest being orange-yellow instead of red, the North Carolina bird apparently was very similar to the Lawrence sapsucker. The bird was not collected or photographed; if it was indeed a male, one wonders whether it could have been a hybrid.

## Summary

Great care must be exercised in the identification of sapsuckers because of overlap in plumage characters and because of hybridization. The proportion of black vs. white on the back and the presence or absence of red in the dark malar in adult males are the most reliable plumage characters for separating Red-naped and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers under field conditions. The presence of red in the nape should only be considered suggestive of Red-naped; the other two characters should be observed carefully in order to distinguish these species. Hybridization should be considered as a possibility for any sapsucker that has a combination of the above key characters and has an unusual amount of red in other regions of the head and chest. The sapsucker from eastern Kansas documented herein potentially represents the first specimen of Yellow-bellied Sapsucker × Red-breasted Sapsucker hybrid away from the very limited contact zone in British Columbia.

## Acknowledgments

We especially want to thank Jocelyn Hudon and Michel Gosselin for sharing their unpublished data on sapsucker hybrids. Kyle Gerstner (Lawrence) and Dan Thalmann (Washington) provided splendid photographs of the Kansas birds. Joseph Grzybowski and Normand David provided color photographs of the Oklahoma and Québec birds, respectively. Casey Tucker provided details of the Ohio bird. John Gerwin shared his observation of the North Carolina sapsucker. Peter Pyle, Alvaro Jaramillo, Brian L. Sullivan, Tony Leukering, and Steve Mlodinow made helpful comments on the manuscript. Specimens were examined at the following institutions: Academy of Natural Sciences, Philadelphia (ANSP), American Museum of Natural History (AMNH), Museum of Vertebrate Zoology, University of California-Berkeley (MVZ), and University of Kansas Natural History Museum (KUNHM). Possible hybrids were loaned to us by U.S. National Museum of Natural History, Smithsonian Institution (USNM), and Occidental College (Moore Laboratory of Zoology, MLZ).

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# Photo Salon I

## The Northern Owl Invasion: Winter 2004–2005

Southern Manitoba, along with much of southern-central Canada, was awash in northern owls in winter 2004–2005. Their numbers, already high by late November from Saskatchewan to Québec, continued to increase through the winter, marking the season as one of the largest irruptions of Great Gray, Boreal, and Northern Hawk Owl in years. Though many owls were stressed or starving, their tenacity and hardiness were a source of admiration to the many birders who traveled northward to witness the season's spectacle.



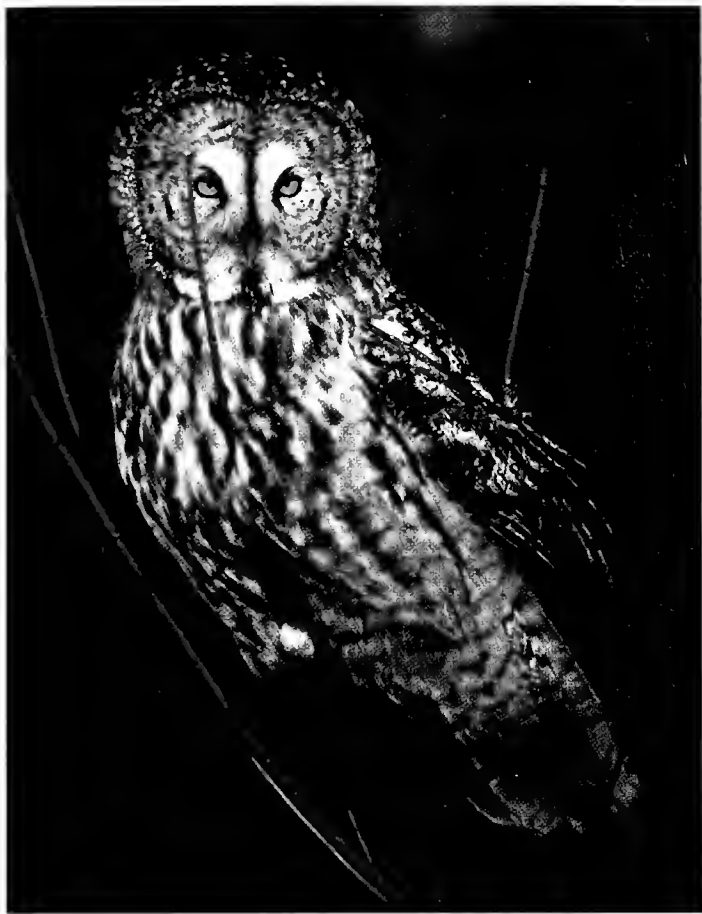
This Northern Hawk Owl with vole was photographed 17 December 2004 at Winnipeg, Manitoba. All three species on this page are highly dependent on microtine voles for surviving the winter months. *Photograph by Christian Artuso.*



Unlike its larger cousins (and perhaps in order to avoid being eaten by large owls such as Great Horneds), Boreal Owls are nocturnal hunters that locate prey by ear. Boreals that hunt diurnally, such as this one in Steinbach, Manitoba (10 February 2005), are probably stressed or starving. *Photograph by Christian Artuso.*



This Great Gray Owl with vole (left) was photographed 10 December 2004 near Pinawa, Manitoba; the bird at right was found 11 November 2004 near Patricia Beach. Northern owl populations, as well as their southward irruptions, are closely tied to fluctuations in populations of prey species. In records kept by James Duncan of the Manitoba Conservation Department, the numbers of small mammals recorded in Minnesota's Roseau Bog area in autumn 2004 were the lowest recorded since 1992. *Photograph by Christian Artuso.*



This Great Gray Owl photographed 5 January 2005 was one of about 10 present all winter on Île Bizard, Montréal, Québec. The largest owl species in North America, Grays are nonetheless 15% lighter in weight than Great Horned Owl, thus capable of perching on tree limbs apparently too small for their bulk. Photograph by Pierre Bannan.



The gaze of a Great Gray Owl has as much to do with listening as with looking. Highly specialized asymmetrical ears allow for precise location of prey items by sound alone. This bird at Peterborough, Ontario on 27 January 2005 is probably responding to the sound of a rodent tunneling through the snow. Photograph by Adrian Binns.



Boreal Owls visit Owl Woods on Amherst Island, Ontario (here 27 January 2005) during most flight years of the species. In the past, there have been problems with overzealous individuals disturbing these birds or even breaking off branches, but vigilance by local birders has resulted in a marked improvement in the ethical behavior of visitors. Photograph by Adrian Binns.



This Northern Hawk Owl, photographed 13 February 2005 at Bracebridge, Ontario, has captured what appears to be a rat. Hawk owls lack the asymmetrical ear openings of Great Grays and are thought to hunt mostly by sight. They often hunt from conspicuous perches. Photograph by Adrian Binns.



Great Gray Owls are quite active while hunting, often plunging face-first into snow—and able to break through an ice crust strong enough to support 150-pound person. This Great Gray with Deer Mouse was photographed 27 January 2005 at Bracebridge, Ontario. Photograph by Adrian Binns.



Most Great Gray Owls in the winter invasion appeared to be adults, which normally hold winter territories within the breeding range unless forced out by prey scarcity. The uniformity of color in the remiges of this bird (27 January 2005, near Orillia, Ontario) suggests that it is more than three years old. Photograph by Adrian Binns.





Iowa's second Northern Hawk Owl was found on Valentine's Day 2005 (here 26 February) in Manly, Worth County, Iowa; perhaps the southernmost of all the hawk owls in this winter's invasion, it obligingly stayed through the end of the month. *Photograph by Stephen J. Dinsmore.*



This Boreal Owl—Iowa's first—was photographed quite early in the owl invasion, on 14 November 2004, in George Wyth State Park, Blackhawk County. Unfortunately, it was not relocated after being identified a bit belatedly by examination of photographs. *Photograph by Scott Garrett.*



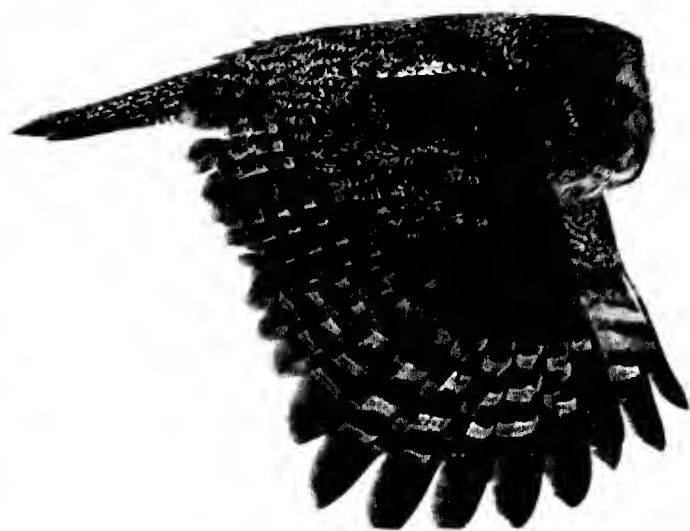
This Boreal Owl in Central Park, New York, New York 19 (here 20) December 2004–14 January 2005 was first found on the Lower Hudson Christmas Bird Count and seen subsequently by hundreds of birders. It represents one of the most southerly records of the species on the Atlantic coast. *Photograph by Deborah Allen.*



A Boreal Owl in the town of Wilson, Niagara New York (here 23 January 2005) was one of five recorded in New York state this winter—called "an invasion" by modern standards. *Photograph by Willie D'Anna.*



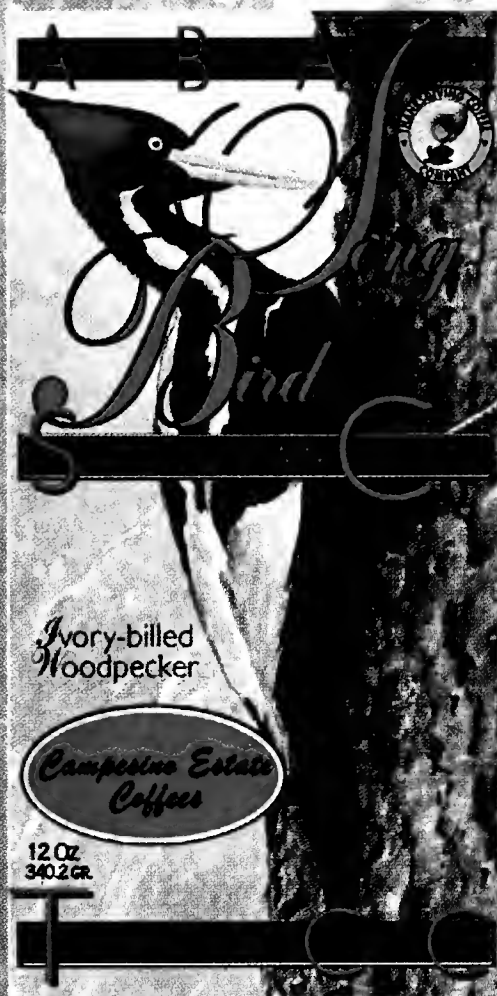
The bogs between the towns of Sax and Zim in St. Louis County, Minnesota are a mecca for northern owls during invasion years. By the end of January 2005, 1715 Great Gray, 400+ Boreal, and 300+ Northern Hawk Owls had been tallied statewide. This vole-diving Great Gray Owl was photographed in that area 16 January. *Photograph by Tony Leukering.*



Taken in the Sax–Zim Bog area 28 January 2005, this photograph of a Great Gray shows the different-aged remiges nicely. Large *Strix* owls have molt centers in both the primaries and secondaries as well as the corresponding coverts. The innermost primaries (p1–3) in this bird are new and contrast with the middle three retained feathers—which contrast with the outer four, which are also new. Experts suggest that this bird is probably in its third calendar year (thus 18–19 months old). *Photograph by Tim Avery.*



# BUY SONGBIRD COFFEE at ABA SALES



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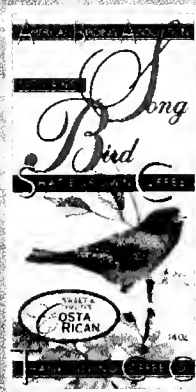
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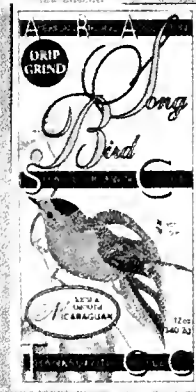
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# Photo Salon II

## Mexico Comes To Texas: Winter 2004–2005



Prior to the 2004–2005 winter season, there were only four records of Roadside Hawk for the United States, all from South Texas. This individual at Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge, Hidalgo County 9 February through 31 (here 8) March 2005 was one of three documented in Texas during the season. *Photograph by Keith Brody.*



This immature male Elegant Trogon provided the fourth documented occurrence in the Lower Rio Grande Valley when it was discovered on 14 (here 18) January 2005 at Frontera Audubon's Sanctuary in Weslaco, Hidalgo County. This individual lingered through the winter and into the spring. *Photograph by Steve Bentsen.*

Two Green-breasted Mangos appeared within the city of McAllen, Hidalgo County, in autumn 2004. This adult male lingered until 25 (here 16) January 2005 at a feeder that has hosted an adult male in two previous winters. *Photograph by Geoff Malosh.*



This Social Flycatcher provided the first fully documented record for Texas and the United States. It was at Bentsen–Rio Grande Valley State Park from 7–14 January 2004, here on the latter date. Though a very vocal bird, at times it was difficult to locate. It showed signs of injury on 14 January and was not seen again. *Photograph by Geoff Malosh.*



Two Dusky-capped Flycatchers made an appearance in the Lower Rio Grande Valley during the winter. This bird was at Frontera Audubon's Sanctuary in Weslaco, Hidalgo County 18 (here 29) December–1 January. Both individuals reported were of the much more brightly plumaged subspecies *lawrenceii*, found in northeastern Mexico, now documented in the United States on five occasions. *Photograph by Earl Crow.*



Most unexpected was this Streak-backed Oriole found on the Upper Texas Coast at Brazos Bend State Park, Fort Bend County 12 December 2004 (although word did not get out until early [here 6] February). This represents the first record of the species for Texas. *Photograph by Greg Lavaty.*



Up to 9 Rose-throated Becards were documented in the Lower Rio Grande Valley during the winter. This is by far the largest number seen in Texas in over 30 years. This immature male was one of three frequenting Santa Ana National Wildlife Refuge between 18 December 2004 and 4 March 2005 (here 12 February). *Photograph by Matt Victoria/www.fickity.net.*



When the first White-throated Robin was discovered in late December 2004, it was big news, but before January was at an end, seven had been documented in Texas. This adult frequented Frontera Audubon's Sanctuary in Weslaco, Hidalgo County from 2 January to 23 March 2005 (here 26 February). *Photograph by David Nelson.*



The big news of the fall and winter, Crimson-collared Grosbeaks invaded as never before: an unfathomable total of 17 individuals was documented in South Texas. Obviously many more were present in the neighborhoods and woodlands. There had only been 8 found in the United States prior to this incursion, all but one of those in Texas. This adult female was one of up to three present in Pharr, Hidalgo County, from 20 November 2004 into the spring (here 6 March 2005). *Photograph by Mark W. Lockwood*



Single Golden-crowned Warblers were documented at three Cameron County, Texas locations, including this bird present in Brownsville 18 January–4 March (here 12 February) 2005. This was the first occasion on which more than one individual of this species was found in Texas in a winter season. *Photograph by Mott Victoria/www.fickity.net.*



# Pictorial Highlights



Three Pink-footed Geese spent most of February 2005 (here 18 February) in Pictou Harbour, Nova Scotia, attracting birders from as far away as Ontario and New York. The geese had previously been spotted in early January on nearby Prince Edward Island but were first identified correctly in Nova Scotia. *Photograph by Richard Stern.*



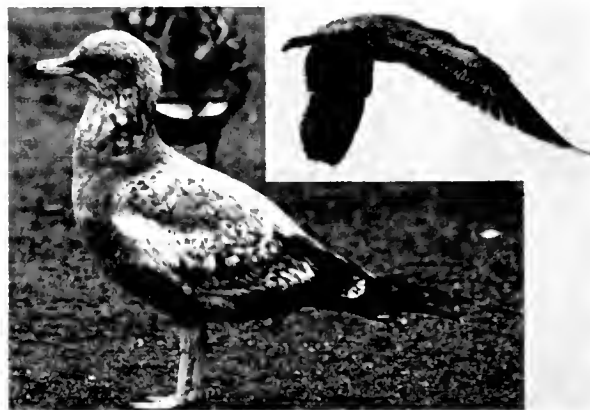
Potentially representing the Atlantic Coast's first record, this Glaucous-winged Gull was studied 24 February (here) through 6 March 2005 at productive Quidi Vidi Lake, St. John's, Newfoundland. *Photograph by Bruce Mactavish.*



This Redwing in Topsail, Newfoundland ate mountain ash berries put in a feeder for an American Robin 3 (here)–5 February 2005, providing an 8th provincial record. A Redwing seen 15 km away on 5 January 2005 was thought to be the same individual. In comparison to the Washington state bird, this bird's breast streaking is noticeably heavier and less distinct, possibly indicating the Icelandic race *coburni*. *Photograph by Bruce Mactavish.*



Is Western Meadowlark an undetected vagrant along the East Coast? This bird (inset, bottom) inland near Neguac furnished New Brunswick's sixth record (and second for the Acadian Peninsula), present early December 2004–10 April 2005 (here 10 January). Above, an Eastern Meadowlark was photographed on 21 January 2005 at Mount Herbert, Prince Edward Island, where rare in winter. Note the comparative paleness of the Western, even in fresh plumage, and its different pattern of barring on the rectrices and tertials. *Photographs by Clay Merrithew (top) and Dwoine Oakley.*



California Gull, very rare in the East north of Chesapeake Bay, was detected 3 January 2005 on Polpis Road, Nantucket and relocated on Hooper Farm Road 6 (here 8) January. The mottled brown body plumage, a mix of feather patterns in the mantle and scapulars, and the pale patch on bend of the wing form by bleached, worn lesser and median wing coverts help distinguish this bird from a small Herring Gull. The dark-based greater coverts with broad pale edgings, visible on the flying bird, form a pale bar along the base of the secondaries. *Photograph by Jeremiah Trimble.*



Although there are records of the species from as near as New York City (in 1959), Redwing was not expected to turn up in Pennsylvania. This bird, found by young Jessica Huff at Peace Valley Park, Bucks County (here 2 February 2005), was seen by about 50 (ranging in age from 14 months to over 80!) birders during its one-day stay. *Photograph from videotape by Devich Farbotnik.*



This Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch of the *rephrocotis* subspecies group frequented the feeder of John Somerset near Chelmsford, Sudbury County, Ontario 19 December 2004–25 (here 5) February 2005; the species is very rare in the province. Although essentially unknown east of Ontario, a bird of this same subspecies group (*L. t. littoralis*) spent the winter of 1936–1937 at Gorham, Maine. *Photograph by Chris J. Escott.*



Part of a widespread movement of the species east of typical winter range, this male Varied Thrush was photographed in River Vale, New Jersey 12 December 2004. *Photograph by Kevin Watson.*



Gene Revelas was stunned when this Redwing appeared in his Olympia, Washington yard 21 December 2004. It remained through 24 February 2005 (here 11 January). Few would have guessed that western North America's first Redwing would appear in Washington rather than Alaska! *Photograph by Keith Brady.*



Representing the first record for the well-birded Point Pelee area, this Fork-tailed Flycatcher at Hillman Marsh, Essex County, Ontario was found 5 December 2004 (here) but died that night or next day; examination of the specimen indicated that it was of the nominate subspecies, a long-distance South American migrant. *Photograph by Alan Wormington.*



Canada's first Pyrrhuloxia was this female near Eagle, Elgin County, Ontario (here 3 December 2004). Though this mostly sedentary species would seem an implausible candidate for natural vagrancy so far north, there was a small "flight" of Pyrrhuloxias out of range in late autumn 2004. *Photograph by Barry Cheriére.*



An overdue first for Pennsylvania, MacGillivray's Warbler made its state debut in Maxatawny Township, Berks County 18–20 (here 19) December 2004. *Photograph by Devich Farbotnik.*



A first for Kentucky, this male Bullock's Oriole was present from some time in mid-January 2005 through the winter period (here 5 February) in Anderson County. *Photograph by David Roemer.*



This Sedge Wren on the Grand Junction, Colorado Christmas Bird Count 19 (here 30) December 2004 remained for the winter season—furnishing the first Mesa County record, the first West Slope record, and the first wintering record for the Colorado & Wyoming region. *Photograph by Christopher L. Wood.*



The highlight of season in the Great Basin was Utah's first Rufous-backed Robin, discovered in an apple orchard near Springdale, Washington County, Utah 18 (here 22) December 2004 during the Zion Christmas Bird Count. It remained through New Year's Eve day to be enjoyed by many Utah birders. *Photograph by Rick Fridell.*



This Tufted Flycatcher was photographed along the Colorado River near Lake Mohave, Arizona 24 February 2005 by a visiting birder—a first Arizona record of this mostly Mexican species. *Photograph by Steven Servontez.*



Arizona's second Le Conte's Sparrow was located 19 December 2004 along the Santa Cruz River in Marana, where it remained through 9 February 2005. *Photograph by David Stejskol.*



This Falcated Duck frequented Coburg, Lane County, Oregon for much of the winter (here 1 February 2005); it may be the same bird that played hide-and-seek with observers at nearby Fern Ridge Reservoir last winter, Oregon's first. *Photograph by Peter Patricelli.*





This first-winter male Orchard Oriole in Isla Vista, Santa Barbara County, California was known to be present for only three days, this photograph being taken on 22 December 2004, the second day of that short stay. *Photograph by Wes Fritz.*



This female Blue Seedeater mist-netted in Volcanes National Park 28 January 2005 was the first of this highly nomadic species record in the park since October 1979. *Photograph by Jennifer R. Smith.*



This White-striped Woodcreeper was located 1 (here 2) January 2005 near La Presa, Chihuahua. The bird frequented the cottonwoods of a riparian area along the side of a reservoir that serves Casa de Janos and Ejido San Pedro. There are no records of this endemic, usually found in pine-oak forests, for northern Chihuahua, but the species may occur regularly in the little-birded Mesa de Guacamayas close to La Presa. This location is only 70 km from the U.S. border. *Photograph by Steve Cax.*



One of a very few to be found in California at this time of year, this Elegant Tern associated with Royal Terns on the coast of La Jolla, San Diego County, in mid- (here 15) January 2005. *Photograph by Lyann Camrock.*



A male Baikal Teal graced the Kent Ponds south of Seattle 10 (here 14) December 2004–1 February 2005, providing Washington's second record. As with Falcated Duck, there are very few accepted reports of this striking species in North America away from Alaska. *Photograph by Keith Brady.*



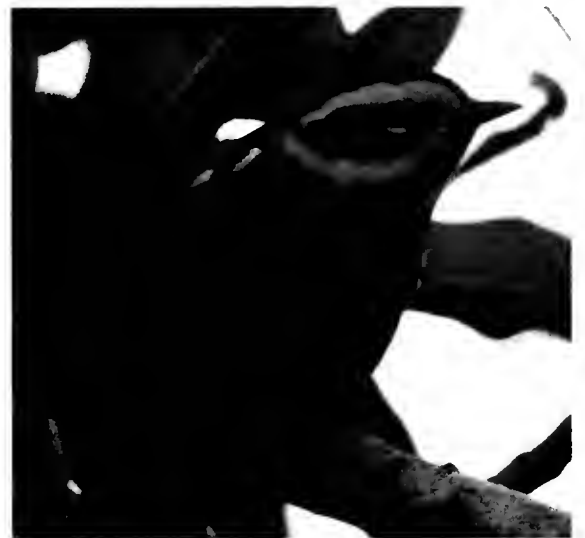
Washington state's second Cape May Warbler appeared at a Spokane suet feeder from mid-January 2005 through the end of winter (here 13 February); the other state record is from 1985. *Photograph by Tom Munson.*



Representing the first confirmed record for Mexico, these immature male Barrow's Goldeneyes were found near Algodones in extreme northeastern Baja California 6 January 2005 (here). They associated with up to 131 Common Goldeneyes and lingered for most of the month. *Photograph by Marshall J. Iliff.*



This Kirtland's Warbler found by Eric Amos on the Bermuda Christmas Bird Count 18 December 2004 was a first for the island—and first anywhere away from the Bahamas in winter. It was the island's 39th warbler species and remained through the next day, to be enjoyed by many. *Photograph by Eric J. R. Amos.*



Bermuda's reputation as a magnet for off-course migrants from four continents is well known. Some of these migrants also remain to winter after appearing in autumn. This Townsend's Warbler, a second for Bermuda in winter, was found by Bruce Lorhan along Orange Valley Road 19 December 2004 and remained through at least 16 (here 13) February 2005. *Photograph by Ion Fisher.*



Yellow-breasted Crake is not often observed in Puerto Rico, where it is an uncommon permanent resident of freshwater wetlands. This bird frequented a wetland mitigation project near Humacao 27 January 2005, one of several heard at that location. *Photograph by Edward S. Brinkley.*



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