



Records of Vermont Birds

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WINTER SEASON 1983

1 DECEMBER 1983 - 28 FEBRUARY 1984
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Winter birding always seems slow. The weather is rarely conducive to field work, and when one does get out, results often don't seem worth the effort. Perhaps that is the genius of the Christmas Bird Count (hereafter CBC) - to get us out for some healthy exercise and let us rediscover that the birds haven't left the state even if we have deserted the field. These Records may serve the same end, for despite the laments of many that the birding in winter 1983-1984 was unproductive, the results tell a dramatically different story. More than 120 species overall were observed, including 21 species of duck, 9 species of owl and from 7 to 12 out-right rarities, depending on one's definition of the term. All these totals represent new highs for Winter as defined for these Records since 1977-78, when the season was reduced to a three month period 1 December thru 28 February.

The weather was normal enough - until mid-February, that is. December, after a mild start, turned out about 2° colder than usual, as did January. Precipitation for the two months was also in line with norms, although December was decidedly wet while January was not. The first ten days of February were also typical enough, but thereafter a dramatic warming trend set in, so that the month as a whole proved the second warmest February on record, posting an average for the month of 27.7°, about 9° above normal. As a result, the early spring flight of Red-winged Blackbirds was both early and impressive. Also of note were early arrival dates for such species as Northern Pintail, Turkey Vulture, Killdeer and Rusty Blackbird.

Meanwhile, back in December, the CBC results had started the season with a rush, with new highs for both species (103) and for individuals (79,706) (with an additional 3 species recorded for the count period). Listing rarities is always a pleasure, so without further ado (and more or less in the order of your editor's whim and personal preference) here are the top discoveries of the CBC's: the state's third record of GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE, the third CBC record of Red-bellied Woodpecker (alas, across the Connecticut River in New Hampshire), an astonishing 17 Northern Harriers on the Ferrisburg CBC, a count period RUDDY DUCK in Burlington and a very late Blue-winged Teal on 1 January in Castleton.

Happily, the excitement provided by such goings-on was not only matched but even exceeded by such coming events as Vermont's fourth record of HARLEQUIN DUCK, the fifth sighting in four years of VARIED THRUSH, and a marvelous look at the NORTHERN HAWK-OWL, only the second record of this rarity in over twenty years. Almost lost in the shuffle were late reports for species like Red-headed Woodpecker, Northern Oriole, White-crowned Sparrow and Eastern Phoebe, to say nothing of the sighting of a remarkable 10 Bald Eagles.

Yet the most memorable events of the season were none of the above, but rather the most extensive invasion by GREAT GRAY OWLS the state has ever experienced (a total of 8 as opposed to 2 in 1978-79, perhaps 6 in 1956 and 5 in 1907) and, most extraordinary of all, a winter record of a SANDHILL CRANE atop a manure pile in Rockingham on 28 December. With re-

ords like these to report, who cares that the flight patterns of boreal species and northern finches were as erratic as ever, or that the House Finch will soon have taken the state by storm? And who says that winter birding is dull?

LOONS THROUGH HERONS

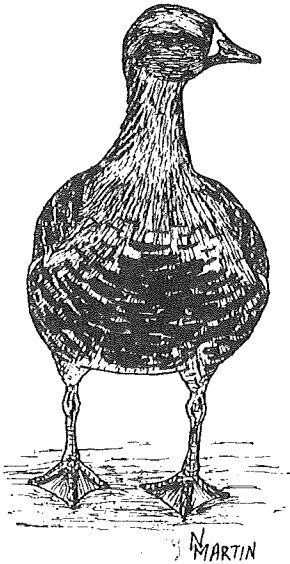
The Red-Throated Loon continues as one of our scarcer winter species with but one report for the season. The bird was observed from the Retreat Meadows on 12/16 (JJC) and then obliged by lingering one day longer in order to accommodate the Brattleboro CBC (JJC,ABM,WH). The Common Loon also provided some early winter cheer with a record overall CBC total of 23 individuals, 15 on the Ferrisburg count on 12/17 and another 8 at Burlington the following day. Only three other reports were received with the last at Ferrisburg on 12/20 (MCD,JID). Somewhat surprising was the absence of the Pied-billed Grebe; however, the Horned Grebe was present in excellent numbers with 269 CBC birds almost evenly divided between Ferrisburg and Burlington. Late reports included 3 at Blodgett's Beach on 12/27 (JDM), one picked up and revived after hitting a high tension wire in North Hyde Park on 1/22 (JJA) and two observed near Mallet's Bay on 1/27-28 (PF). Encouraging, too, was the scattering of reports of the uncommon Red-necked Grebe, starting with 2 at Ferrisburg on 12/3 (MCD,JID). Another 3 were spotted on CBC's with 2 in the Burlington area and one from the New York side of Lake Champlain. Perhaps this latter bird decided to cross to fairer regions since an individual was spotted the very next day, 12/18, in Ferrisburg (MCD,JID). The last Red-necked of the season was one that "dropped into" the backyard of Mrs. Wayne Emmons of Cuttingsville, on Christmas day. Notwithstanding an old injury to its upper mandible, the bird consumed 18 good-sized minnows in the VINS rehabilitation sink before being released on the Connecticut River on 30 December. Less in evidence this winter than last was the Great Blue Heron, although the CBC total of 4 was certainly respectable. Only two other reports were received: one from Albany on 12/6 (TP) and a stubborn lingerer in Weston on 1/4 (via NS).

WATERFOWL

Unquestionably a highlight of the season was the GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE discovered on 12/17 near Dead Creek on the Ferrisburg CBC (WGE,NLM). This record constitutes the third for the state of Vermont for this species and the first to appear in the Winter Records. Along with the White-fronted Goose were 24 Snow Geese, a total easily surpassing the prior record of 5 individuals set by Ferrisburg in 1981. Meanwhile, numbers of early-winter Canada Geese were impressive with a new overall CBC record of 2621. However, numbers dropped off quickly thereafter with only about 100 at Ferrisburg on 1/3 (MCD,JID), and just 2 at Dead Creek on 2/20 (WGE,NLM). Still the Vermont Fish and Wildlife Department's (hereafter, the VFWD) Aerial Waterfowl Census for Lake Champlain on 1/5 succeeded in finding 827 geese (NEK), although the great majority were in New York waters. Small flocks of early spring arrivals were seen in Cornwall on 2/23

CHRISTMAS COUNTS 1983-1984

	BENNINGTON Dec. 17	BRATTLEBORO Dec. 17	FERRISBURG Dec. 17	BURLINGTON Dec. 18	CRAFTSBURY- GREENSBORO Dec. 19	MINHALL Dec. 20	HANOVER- NORWICH Dec. 26	ISLAND POND Dec. 27	WOODSTOCK Dec. 29	SPRINGFIELD Dec. 30	MAQUAM Dec. 31	PLAINFIELD Dec. 31	SAXTONS RIVER Dec. 31	RUTLAND Jan. 1	TOTALS
RED-THROATED LOON		1													1
COMMON LOON			15	8											23
HORNED GREBE			149	120											269
RED-NECKED GREBE			1	2											3
GREAT BLUE HERON			2	2											4
GR. WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE			1												1
SNOW GOOSE			24												24
CANADA GOOSE	1	178	2047	395											2,621
WOOD DUCK			1	2										2	5
AMERICAN BLACK DUCK			33	141									1	41	216
MALLARD			13	323										46	382
AM. BLACK DUCK X MALLARD				2											2
NORTHERN PINTAIL				3											3
BLUE-WINGED TEAL														1	1
AMERICAN WIGEON				1											1
CANVASBACK			2	3									1		6
REDHEAD			4												4
RING-NECKED DUCK			1												1
GREATER SCAUP				9											9
LESSER SCAUP			1												1
SCAUP sp.				7											7
OLDSQUAW			8												8
WHITE-WINGED SCOTER			4												4
COMMON GOLDENEYE			350	653			25						2		1,030
BUFFLEHEAD			16	18				1							35
HOODED MERGANSER				2			2								4
COMMON MERGANSER		9	355	211			23			6			45		649
RED-BREASTED MERGANSER			15	3									1		19
MERGANSER sp.				12											12
RUDDY DUCK				CP											
DUCK sp.			6	21							4				31
BALD EAGLE			CP												
NORTHERN HARRIER			17	1							1				19
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK			3	1	1		2			2				1	10
COOPER'S HAWK			1	1										CP	2
NORTHERN GOSHAWK			1		CP		1	2			5			2	11
ACCIPITER sp.			2										2		4
RED-SHOULDERED HAWK													1		1
RED-TAILED HAWK		3	51	7	1		2		2	4	1		8	10	89
ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK		1	58	4							8				71
BUTEO sp.			6												6
AMERICAN KESTREL	2	2	23	3		1	1				1			1	34
HAWK sp.						1									1
GRAY PARTRIDGE											21				21
RING-NECKED PHEASANT			1										3		4
SPRUCE GROUSE								2							2
RUFFED GROUSE	5	1	21	11	7		2	1	3	4		3	3	10	71
GROUSE sp.								1							1
WILD TURKEY			3										16	27	46
COMMON SNIPE														1	1
BONAPARTE'S GULL			74												74
RING-BILLED GULL		3	310	920							62				1,295
HERRING GULL	8	69	105	852							13				1,047
ICELAND GULL		1		1											2
GLAUCOUS GULL		1		4											5
GR. BLACK-BACKED GULL		2	24	74											100
GULL sp.			146	34											180
ROCK DOVE	139	504	1280	1056	307	48	587	86	187	422	374	100	1045	853	6,988
MOURNING DOVE	9	137	267	311	5	35	218	1	230	382	122	69	578	543	2,907
EASTERN SCREECH OWL			5										1		6
GREAT HORNED OWL			7	2					2					CP	11



GREATER
WHITE-FRONTED
GOOSE

	BENNINGTON Dec. 17	BRATTLEBORO Dec. 17	FERRISBURG Dec. 17	BURLINGTON Dec. 18	CRAFTSBURY- GREENSBORO Dec. 19	WINHALL Dec. 20	HANOVER- NORWICH Dec. 26	ISLAND POND Dec. 27	WOODSTOCK Dec. 29	SPRINGFIELD Dec. 30	MAQUAM Dec. 31	PLAINFIELD Dec. 31	SAXTONS RIVER Dec. 31	RUTLAND Jan. 1	TOTALS
BARRED OWL				1			1								2
SHORT-EARED OWL			2												2
NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL			2												2
OWL sp.			2												2
BELTED KINGFISHER		2	4	4			1			1				1	13
RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER													1		1
DOWNY WOODPECKER	5	23	101	59	11	10	20	12	30	65	16	41	43	72	508
HAIRY WOODPECKER	4	20	65	41	19	13	18	9	29	68	8	47	29	56	426
BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKER					2										2
NORTHERN FLICKER			CP												
PILEATED WOODPECKER		1	15	7	1	3	1	2	4	6		5	2	4	51
HORNED LARK			607	8	3		1			15	570		255		1,459
GRAY JAY								4				1			5
BLUE JAY	87	253	207	245	169	389	503	132	633	1190	62	309	307	731	5,217
AMERICAN CROW	16	131	279	870	35	21	248	1	255	123	143	103	226	516	2,967
COMMON RAVEN		2	1	1	32	10	CP	83	18	1		17		4	169
BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE	119	469	963	618	681	734	684	301	978	1660	306	1120	425	877	9,935
BOREAL CHICKADEE					6			12				1			19
TUFTED TITMOUSE		10	3	9			6		7	6		1	5	3	50
RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH	1	15	3	1	7	61	1	6	20	8	1	28	3	10	165
WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH	9	35	99	67	11	31	28	4	67	84	9	27	37	89	597
BROWN CREEPER		3	3	12	3	5	CP	5	10		5	2	1	5	54
WINTER WREN			1	1											2
GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET			11	3	13	2		9				3			41
AMERICAN ROBIN	1	3	4	4			1			2			2	CP	17
NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD		5	CP	9			1			1			5	2	23
BOHEMIAN WAXWING				CP						9				CP	9
CEDAR WAXWING	14		70	146											230
NORTHERN SHRIKE		4	5		5		2	6		1		3		1	27
EUROPEAN STARLING	333	737	1261	1579	39	40	219	4	69	579	712	145	522	1148	7,387
NORTHERN CARDINAL	12	21	83	138	6	3	30	2	55	83	13	22	56	82	606
RUFOS-SIDED TOWHEE										1					1
AMERICAN TREE SPARROW	45	41	517	191	22	5	124	6	40	229	151	28	396	362	2,157
FIELD SPARROW				2					1						3
FOX SPARROW										CP			1		1
SONG SPARROW		2	13	11			6		2	9	1			3	47
SWAMP SPARROW			1	1			1								3
WHITE-THROATED SPARROW	1	7	2	1		2	10	2	4	8			6	3	46
DARK-EYED JUNCO	16	83	34	45	2		14	2	7	82*	8	8	41	59	401
LAPLAND LONGSPUR			7												7
SNOW BUNTING			43	CP			17		46	5	1372	21	3	50	1,557
RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD		4	5	3	6			2	1	CP	2		3	32	58
EASTERN MEADOWLARK			1												1
RUSTY BLACKBIRD														1	1
COMMON GRACKLE		1	26	1					3	9				2	42
BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD	4	47	4	7	16			2	32	153	2		44	39	350
PINE GROSBEAK				3	97	10	10	15	88	20	6	18	3	67	337
PURPLE FINCH		21	8	11	6	12			1	3	50	3	4	8	127
HOUSE FINCH	7	126	7	199		15	127		60	168			58	81	848
WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL												7			7
COMMON REDPOLL			112	39	7						52				210
PINE SISKIN		56		32	37	28	71	30	240	47	11	106	33	276	967
AMERICAN GOLDFINCH	15	71	461	347	18	60	73	5	20	71	74	39	61	180	1,495
EVENING GROSBEAK	254	405	376	236	594	354	750	188	2447	3060	52	1304	481	1187	11,688
HOUSE SPARROW	145	310	2076	1797	298	128	517	54	466	1367	737	337	875	1872	10,979
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	1252	3820	12937	11969	2467	2021	4348	992	6057	9954	4975	3918	5635	9361	79,706
TOTAL SPECIES	25	44	77	70	33	26	39	32	34	39	35	30	44	45	103

CP=Birds seen during Count period.
* includes one of pink-sided race.

(MBN), St. Johnsbury on 2/23 (JD), Weybridge on 2/26 (KHD) and Vernon on 2/28 (JJC). Once again, Wood Ducks turned in a surprisingly good showing with a total of 5 spotted on the Burlington, Ferrisburg and Rutland CBCs. On the other hand, numbers for the American Black Duck were down significantly with a CBC total of just 216 and a VFWA Aerial Survey tally of 362, not much over half of last year's figure. Over-winter birds were also scarce, although small numbers were noted on the New Haven River (KHD,JRA), the Castleton River (SBL,BLR,HBS) and the White River in Bethel (EH). Returning with the February thaw were flocks of 60 on the Lemon Fair on 2/17 (AP), 9 at Burlington 2/19, 16 at Dead Creek on 2/20 and 47 at Weybridge on 2/20 (WGE,NLM). The Mallard was also less prominent this season, although comparative figures were not particularly worrisome - except to the extent they seem to confirm fears about this duck's ascendancy over its close relative the Black. CBC totals a year ago, for example, showed Mallards with only an 8-7 margin over Blacks, whereas this year the margin was closer to 2-1. However, returning birds in late February showed no discernible edge one way or the other. Presumably a "mixed flock" of 1000 birds on the Lemon Fair on 2/23 (MBN) was fairly evenly divided between the two competing species. Three North-ern Pintails on the Burlington CBC were the last of the season - until late February, that is, when a single bird appeared in Weybridge on 2/20 (WGE,NLM) followed by 4 drakes on 2/26 (KHD). Certainly an unexpected bonus was the female Blue-winged Teal discovered on the Castleton River during the Rutland CBC on New Year's Day (SBL,JDL,HBS). This is only the third CBC record for this rare winter lingerer and the first since the winter of 1977-78. A pair of Gadwall on Shelburne Bay on 12/3 (WGE,NLM,JDM) were late but not exceptional. More unusual was the single American Wigeon located on the Burlington CBC, the first winter report to Records of Vermont Birds (hereafter RVB) for this species since 1979. The Canvasback enjoyed a reasonably good year with a total of 6 reported from the Burlington, Ferrisburg and Saxtons River CBCs. Others observed were a drake at Herrick's Cove on 12/16 (WJN), 2 off Shelburne Point on 1/21 (SRA), 20 near Mallet's Bay on 1/27-28 (PF), 10 off Long Point in Ferrisburg on 2/3 (MCD,JID) and a pair off Grand Isle on 2/23 (RBL). Additionally, the VFWA Aerial Survey on 1/5 discovered a raft of 300 on the New York side of Lake Champlain near Ausable Marsh. The Red-head made its first winter appearance in three years as a single was observed at Shelburne Beach on 12/7 (DCD,DLC,MCW,BWh) and 4 were noted on the Ferrisburg CBC. Perhaps these were included in the group of 5 reported from the Mallet's Bay area on 1/27-28 (PF). Yet another good find was the Ring-necked Duck spotted on the Ferrisburg CBC. The only other report came from Mallet's Bay on 1/27-28 (PF), also a single bird. Both species of scaup were present in small numbers with 9 Greater Scaup on the Burlington CBC and a single Lesser Scaup tallied on the Ferrisburg CBC. A raft of 200, spotted on the VFWA Aerial Survey near Ausable Marsh, was presumably a concentration of Greater. Two birds off Charlotte on 2/19 were identified as one Lesser and one Greater (WGE,NLM). Without doubt, the star duck of the winter was the female HARLEQUIN DUCK spotted off the Burlington waterfront on 1/15 (TAR). This is only the fourth Vermont record for this small stubby-billed sea duck and the first to appear in these Records. A nice group of 8 Oldsquaw was present for the Ferrisburg CBC as were 4 White-winged Scoters; however, no other reports were received for either species except for 2 White-winged Scoters in Burlington on 1/20 (KHD). The Common Goldeneye, on the other hand, was widely reported: 345 along Lake Champlain from Mallet's Bay to Shelburne on 12/3 (JDM), 60 at Charlotte Town Beach on 12/3 (WGE,

-4- NLM), 15 at Herrick's Cove on 12/16 (WJN) and 24 at White River Junction on 2/5 (WGE,NLM). The VFWA Aerial Survey on 1/5 revealed anew the abundance of this winter resident as 2593 were found, although all but 300 were once again in neighboring New York. The Bufflehead was present in average numbers with 34 noted on the Ferrisburg and Burlington CBCs. A major surprise was the single bird found on the Island Pond CBC on 12/29 (WGE,NLM). The only late-winter report was for a pair in Burlington on 2/19 (WGE,NLM). The Hooded Merganser was rather scarce this winter with just 4 CBC birds divided evenly between Burlington and Hanover-Norwich. Other reports were limited to a pair at the Shelburne fishing access on 12/10 (JDM), 3 at Herrick's Cove on 12/16 (WJN) and 2 near Mallet's Bay on 1/27-28 (PF). Reports of the Common Merganser were anything but scarce despite a surprisingly small CBC total of 649. On the other hand, 700 were observed near the Tri-town Water District in Addison on 1/5 (WGE,NLM), while the VFWA Aerial Survey on the same date uncovered 2731. Other large flocks included 40 at Herrick's and Roundy's Coves on 12/16 (WJN), 41 at White River Junction on 2/5 (WGE,NLM) and 150 off Long Point in Ferrisburg on 2/22 (MCD,JID). Nineteen Red-breasted Mergansers were tallied on the Burlington, Ferrisburg and Saxtons River CBCs (the last certainly a surprise), but other reports were few and far between: 2 at the Tri-town Water District on 1/5 (WGE,NLM) and 10 in the Mallet's Bay area on 1/27-28 (PF). Rounding out the Anatidae was yet another rarity, a well-described RUDDY DUCK off Blodgett's Beach on 12/17 (JDM). This is the first winter record for RVB for this species since December 1975.

VULTURES, HAWKS AND FALCONS

The February thaw was surely responsible for the very early arrival of Turkey Vultures as 2 were noted in Westminster on 2/19 (AK) followed by 4 in Middlebury on 2/27 (MCD,JID). On the other hand, winter in Vermont is apparently entirely congenial for the Bald Eagle as no less than 10 separate individuals were reported. It will be interesting to discover whether a trend is being established, as few of us need any encouragement to be alert for eagles. Adult birds were reported from Rochester on 12/5 (TAS,BR,BF), from Lake St. Catherine about 12/6 (via NS), from the Ferrisburg CBC (count period), from Hartford on 1/30 (RtR), from Wilder on 2/3 (TL,MFM et al.) and from Proctorsville Gulf, Cavendish on 2/27 (DH). Other reports, either of immatures or unspecified, came from Dead Creek on 12/11 (RHH), from Timmouth on 1/2 (PB), from Wells River on 1/6 (JDS) and from McNeil Cove in Charlotte on 2/4 (CHR), where two young eagles on the ice were evidently in some disagreement about the ultimate disposition of a fish. Another raptor of note was the Northern Harrier with an astonishing 19 reported from 3 separate CBCs. Ferrisburg alone logged 17, a figure totally eclipsing the record high of 3 set just one year ago. Departure must have been very rapid, however, since none were observed thereafter until one was noted at Dead Creek on 2/20 (WGE,NLM). A male was at the same location on 2/23 (WME) and 2/26 (KHD). Numbers for the Sharp-shinned Hawk were down a bit from last year, although the CBC total of 10 (from six counts) was still impressive. Another 13 reports were received from all over the state, generally from feeder locations. Forays were about 50 percent successful and showed no particular preference as to target (victims and/or escapees included Pine Siskin, Black-capped Chickadee, Evening Grosbeak and Mourning Dove). Expectedly, the Cooper's Hawk was considerably less prominent with just 2 CBC birds. Others were reported from Bellows Falls (MEC), Brattleboro (DUW), Clarendon (BLR), Ferrisburg (MCD,JID), Rutland (BJP,JPM) and Sudbury (SLM). The Northern Goshawk, our largest and probably most common winter accipiter, took top honors

-5- only 71 CBC birds were reported, down markedly from a year ago. There were but a handful of other records including 3 in Albany (TP), 3 in Reading on 1/8 (FMH) and 3 in Ripton on 2/25 (WME). Even though a CBC total of 46 was disappointing, the Wild Turkey appears to be holding its own. Good-sized flocks were reported by a number of contributors: 10 in Shrewsbury on 1/3 (LPS), 17 in Sudbury on 1/13 (SLM), 15 in Clarendon on 2/12 (CJF) and 11 in Rutland on 2/14 (RHH). Smaller flocks were noted in Hartland (MLW), Woodstock (GAR), Cornwall (KHD) and Grand Isle (RBL). Without doubt the most astounding bird of the season was the SANDHILL CRANE observed and photographed in Rockingham on 12/28 (RP,DP). A wintertime visit from a bird so far from its natural range can only be described as bizarre. Frustrating, too, was the disappearance of the Sandhill almost as soon as it had appeared. Far less unusual, but certainly noteworthy, was an early Killdeer in Woodstock on 2/24 (CRP), readily attributable to the mild weather prevailing at the time. Notable, also, was the single Common Snipe in Clarendon on 1/1, the sixth CBC record for the species. More interesting were the 3 flushed from the same ditch on 2/12 (CJF), evidence that this sandpiper can and will overwinter in Vermont in favored locations.



*SANDHILL CRANE - Pleasant Valley Rd., Rockingham
December 28, 1983. Photo by Robert Pelkey.*

with a CBC total of 11 individuals. Maquam, a new Count area this year, spotted 5, thus matching the record set by Craftsbury back in 1979. Other Goshawk reports came from Albany (TP), Brandon (EJ), the Champlain Islands (FO), Craftsbury (FO,GPL), Duxbury (FAP), Fairfax (PAT), Ferrisburg (MCD,JID), Franklin (PJM), New Haven (KHD), Reading (MG), Shrewsbury (LPS) and Underhill (KCS). The Red-shouldered Hawk, rare at best in winter, was a surprise on the Saxtons River CBC (DC,DPK), although the bird was not in VT but in the Walpole, NH section of the Christmas Count Circle. Meanwhile, the Red-tailed Hawk was a widespread and common CBC participant as 89 individuals were tallied on 10 separate counts. Ferrisburg's total of 51 surpassed the prior record of 33 by a comfortable margin. Once again, numbers declined precipitously with but 8 birds in the Addison area on 2/4 (RHH,BLR) and just 4 at Dead Creak on 2/20 (WGE,NLM). The only late-winter report from outside the Champlain Valley came from Peacham on 2/12 (CBR). The Rough-legged Hawk showed a similar pattern with an excellent CBC total of 71 (including 58 at Ferrisburg) giving way rapidly as winter progressed. The high count for Addison County in February was 5 on 2/2 (FAP) and again on 2/8 (KHD). Reports from other sections of the state were sparse: from Royalton on 12/3 (GFE,NSE), Richford on 12/5 (ALG), South Duxbury on 12/14 (FAP), the Brattleboro CBC on 12/17 and at Craftsbury on 2/24 (FO). The American Kestrel broke records with a CBC total of 34 and a single count high of 23 at Ferrisburg. Overwintering birds were scattered throughout the Champlain Lowlands as well as near feeders in Brownsville (BMH) and Winhall (via NS). Another individual was spotted near the Brattleboro Dump on 1/2 (JJC). Two February reports of the Merlin were received, one from Peacham and one from Woodstock. However, in view of the scarcity of this species, especially during the winter, and the fact that the reports lacked supporting details, they must be regarded as problematic. There was but one report of the rare Peregrine Falcon, a male in flight in Ferrisburg on 12/31 (MCD,JID).

GRAY PARTRIDGE THROUGH SNIPE

The Gray Partridge on Grand Isle provided the Maquam CBC with a unique species for the state as 21 were recorded. This number was improved upon on 2/12 as separate flocks of 21 and 5 were observed (RBL), the smaller number in a cornfield with several Wild Turkeys. The only Ring-necked Pheasants were one on the Ferrisburg CBC (on the New York side) and 3 from Saxtons River. Similarly, the only Spruce Grouse of the season were 2 spotted on the Island Pond CBC (LNM). Even the Ruffed Grouse seemed a bit scarce as

GULLS

Seventy-four Bonaparte's Gulls on the Ferrisburg CBC was the best showing since 1979 for this lively and very lovely species. The Ring-billed Gull, with 1295 CBC birds from 4 separate count areas, obviously continues to thrive, even though numbers were down from last year's record high. Overwintering has clearly become commonplace along the Burlington waterfront as well as at inland landfills. The Herring Gull appears equally at home here, as a CBC total of 1047 was the highest since 1977. The uncommon Iceland Gull showed up on both the Burlington and Brattleboro CBCs; the latter bird, spotted on the Retreat Meadows, was a first for the Count area (ABM). All other reports, covering the period 1/20-2/14, came from the Burlington landfill where a second-year bird apparently found the pickings to his liking (KHD,CJF,RHH). The Glaucous Gull more than matched the showing of its smaller relative, as a record 4 individuals were tallied on the Burlington CBC. Even more surprising, an adult Glaucous appeared on the Retreat Meadows, in the company of the Iceland already mentioned, thus allowing the Brattleboro CBC a double first (JJC,ABM). Other reports were for a single bird at Blodgett's Beach on 12/6 (DLC,MCW,BWh), an adult at the Burlington landfill on 1/21-22 (CJF,RHH) and 2 individuals at Burlington on 2/19 (WGE,NLM). Finally, the Great Black-backed Gull draws attention by its record showing of 74 individuals on the Burlington CBC, even though the total CBC count was down a notch from last year's. Other concentrations of note include 33 in the Burlington area on 12/3 (WGE,NLM), 23 at Blodgett's Beach on 2/13 (GEB), 50 at Burlington on 2/19 (WGE,NLM) and 60 on the West River, Brattleboro, on 2/28 (JJC).

DOVES

Like the Larinae, the doves seem in no trouble in Vermont. The CBC totals of 6988 for the Rock Dove and 2907 for the Mourning Dove were both at or near record levels. We can certainly hope that these figures reflect counters' diligence rather than irreversible population trends! Perhaps worthy of note are the medium-sized wintering flocks of Mourning Doves reported from such central and northern locations as Calais (DL), Essex Junction (AEZ), Fairfax (PAT), Milton (KAL), North Hartland (JP), Plainfield (MEM) and Randolph (EWC,MCC).

The Eastern Screech-Owl occurred in about average numbers this winter with 6 CBC birds and 4 others reported: one discovered at shoulder height in a barn in Bridport on 1/14 (MOM), a road kill found in Shelburne on 1/21 (JJA), one perched on a car fender in a garage in Middlebury on 1/21 (WME) and one in Charlotte on 2/4 (JJA). The Great Horned Owl was also well represented, as Christmas counters located 11 individuals; others were reported from Benson (CKY), Bridport (MOM), Clarendon (CJF), New Haven (KHD), Orwell (SLM), Shelburne (JJA) and Woodstock (CRP). The Snowy Owl, at best an uncommon winter visitor, gave us but three records for the season: one in Waterford on 1/18 (WP), an imm. in Newport on 2/2 (FO) and an ad. during January and February at the Berlin Airport outside Montpelier (MFM, FAP et al.). Surely one of the season's outstanding birds was a NORTHERN HAWK-OWL observed devouring a Blue Jay in a backyard in Arlington on 2/14 (MBB). This is just the second sighting of this species to be published in the Records, the first being during the winter of 1978-79. The Barred Owl was surprisingly elusive as only 2 CBC birds were found, one each at Burlington and Hanover-Norwich. Other reports were received from Woodstock (JMN) and Ferrisburg (MCD, JID) in December, North Clarendon (FP) and Ferrisburg (MCD, JID) in January, and Moretown (EN), Chester (BEP), Shoreham (MOM) and East Craftsbury (FO) in February. The spectacular flight of GREAT GRAY OWLS featured 4 in the St. Johnsbury area alone, including one widely-observed and well-documented individual that was in residence for most of the season (PC, BW, FO et al.). Fairbanks Museum bird reports record one in West Danville on 1/19 (PR), one in North Concord on 2/2 (LF) and one in Monroe, NH on 1/29 (CBr). Other reports came from Tunbridge on 1/30 (GAW) and from Plainfield on 2/29 (fide MFM). Finally, a dead Great Gray was found on the road between Richford and North Troy on 1/20 by Fred Hodgdon of Johnson and brought to the Discovery Museum in Essex Junction. The owl parade continues with another uncommon species, the LONG-EARED OWL, heard calling in Shelburne on 2/18 (JJA). Curiously, there were but two reports of the Short-eared Owl, 3 at Dead Creek on 12/11 (RHH) and 2 from the Ferrisburg CBC on 12/17. Finally, the Northern Saw-whet Owl provided excitement for a number of observers who were treated to clear, even protracted views of this most engaging species. In addition to 2 tallied on the Ferrisburg CBC, singles were reported in Clarendon on 12/11 (CJF), Ferrisburg on 1/2 (MCD, JID), Woodstock on 2/11 (JMN) and 2/25 (JL), Winhall on 2/23 (WJN) and Greensboro on 2/26 (FO et al.).

KINGFISHERS AND WOODPECKERS

Despite typical winter weather conditions 13 Belted Kingfishers were tallied on 6 CBCs. In addition, January reports were received from the Tri-town Water District (WGE, NLM), Waitsfield (ADH), Roxbury (MFM), Londonderry (AS) and Winhall (AS), while February records came from Woodstock on the 4th (CRP) and Rutland on the 8th (RHH). A report, complete with color photograph, of the rare Red-headed Woodpecker was received from Hartland (RPP), where the bird lingered near a feeder until mid-January. The even scarcer RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER put in a surprise appearance on the Saxtons River CBC (DC, DPK), but the bird was residing in neighboring New Hampshire. Numbers of the Downy Woodpecker were pretty much in line with expectations as 508 CBC birds were tallied. One individual was observed eating the grub of the goldenrod gall fly on 1/17 (GEB). The Hairy Woodpecker, with 426 CBC birds, seemed also in good shape, although three or four contributors wondered about a possible decline. The only Black-backed

-6- Woodpeckers of the season were 2 located on the Craftsbury-Greensboro CBC on 12/19. The even rarer Three-toed Woodpecker was reported twice in December, once from Brownsville and once from Woodstock. Unfortunately, neither could be confirmed and supporting details seemed inconclusive. Although the Northern Flicker eluded all Christmas Counters (except as "count period" species for Ferrisburg), three late birds were noted subsequently: 1 in New Haven on 1/13 (JRA), 1 at Dead Creek on 1/16 (MFM) and 1 in Addison on 1/21 (MBN). Finally, the splendid Pileated Woodpecker continues to thrive in our northern woods as 51 individuals were located on twelve CBCs. More than 20 other reports were received from all corners of the state.

EASTERN PHOEBE THROUGH CREEPER

A decidedly late Eastern Phoebe was spotted near the mouth of the Winooski in Colchester on 12/3 (WGE, NLM), the first winter record for the species since the Plainfield CBC of 1977. A CBC total of 1459 Horned Larks fell just shy of the record 1504 compiled in 1981. Good numbers continued throughout the winter, although reports were almost exclusively from the Champlain Lowlands. The largest flocks reported were 250 in Middlebury on 12/21 (KHD), 98 (in three groups) in Bridport on 1/22 (SBL, BLR, HBS), 60 at Dead Creek on 1/15 (MBN) and 50 in New Haven on 2/2 (FAP). Also of interest was a flock of 22 in Woodstock on 2/25 (JMN). After a strong showing in 1982-83 only 5 Gray Jays could be located: 4, as would be expected, on the Island Pond CBC and an unexpected single on the Plainfield CBC. Needless to say, the Blue Jay suffered from no such scarcity as 5217 CBC birds were tallied and feeder flocks of 15-30 were widespread. The American Crow enjoyed similar prominence with 2967 recorded on 14 CBCs. Also, the mild weather in late February produced a flurry of reports, notably 100 in Orwell on 2/24 (SLM), a spectacular 1000 in Westford on 2/24 (PAT) and 126 at Woodstock on 2/25 (JMN). The largest mid-winter flock was 200 at Weybridge on 2/2 (MBN). Meanwhile, the Common Raven turned in another strong showing as ten CBCs uncovered 169 individuals, the highest total in years. Other high counts were an impressive 40 in Randolph on 1/15 (SBL, MHS), 24 in Woodstock on 12/15 (JMN), 15 in Woodstock on 1/13 (NLM), 7 in Hyde Park on 1/14 (JJA) and 6 in South Duxbury on 2/9 (FAP). The Black-capped Chickadee continues to thrive with another near-record CBC total of 9935 and numerous feeder flocks in the 15-25 range. The Craftsbury-Greensboro, Island Pond and Plainfield CBCs could muster up only 19 Boreal Chickadees, a significant decline from recent years. However, birds were observed regularly throughout the season in Albany (TP) and Greensboro (FO), while singles were seen in Lyndon on 1/31 (KS) and in Franklin on 2/5 (PJM). The Tufted Titmouse seemed definitely less numerous this year with a CBC total of 50 compared to last year's 95. Fortunately, the February census total 76 represented a far less drastic decline, while feeder reports showed no worrisome trend. The Red-breasted Nuthatch also went into retreat, its CBC total of 165 being the lowest since 1978. Individual observers and feeder watchers sent in several other reports with high counts of 4 in Fairfax (PAT) and Shrewsbury (CJF). The more predictable White-breasted Nuthatch showed good numbers even in a down year, as 597 CBC birds were counted, again the smallest total since 1978. Other reports, as would be expected, were both numerous and widespread. A similar pattern held true for the easily-overlooked Brown Creeper. Once again, the CBC tally (54 individuals from eleven counts) was the lowest since 1978, although this number was supplemented by 9 individual reports with a high of 3 in New Haven on 1/3 (KHD).

WINTER WREN THROUGH STARLING

For the second year in a row the diminutive Winter Wren was a welcome addition to CBC lists with Ferrisburg and Burlington recording one apiece. For the Golden-crowned Kinglet, however, it was a poor year with a meager 41 on just 6 CBCs. Only 4 other reports were received: 1 in West Brattleboro on 1/22 (JJC), 2 in Ferrisburg on 1/3 (MCD,JID), 3 in Lincoln on 1/14 (CJF) and 5 in Middlebury on 2/10 (KHD). After a banner performance a year ago the American Robin came back to earth with a scant 17 CBC birds. A flock of 25 in Middlebury on 1/20 (WME) was the seasonal high, followed by 6 in Cornwall on 1/8 (KHD). Nine other reports were received including four for the month of February. Once again the VARIED THRUSH, a rare western vagrant, caused excitement by visiting a yard in Proctorsville, 12/12-12/27 (BD). Remarkably this is the fourth Winter season in the last five that this species has been reported. Twenty-three Northern Mockingbirds from six separate CBCs represent a modest improvement over 1982-1983, but the February census total of 12 was hardly reassuring. Contributors spotted single birds in such locations as Brownsville (CG), Colchester (JDM), Middlebury (WME), Rutland (CJF) and Woodstock (JFW), while 2 each were noted in Orwell (SLM) and the Retreat Meadows, Brattleboro (JJC). Nine Bohemian Waxwings in Springfield were the first to be tallied on a CBC in three years. The first of the season were 15 in Plainfield on 12/17 (MFM) and the high count was a memorable 200 (the largest flock ever reported in these Records) in Brandon on 1/28 (EBB,WGR). Another large flock of 44 was seen in West Brattleboro on 2/2 (JJC), while the last of the season were a single in South Duxbury on 2/6 (FAP) and 12 in East Montpelier on 2/9 (MFM). The Cedar Waxwing evidently overwintered in about average numbers, as 230 CBC birds were located and flocks of 10 or more were observed in Panton (WGE,NLM), Middlebury (WME) and Cornwall (BBP). The seasonal high was 90 in Shoreham on 1/5 (WGE,NLM). Good numbers of the uncommon - and formidable - Northern Shrike were found this winter including 27 on 8 separate CBCs, the best showing since 1978. More than 20 other reports were received from all parts of the state. Mercifully, the European Starling was somewhat reduced in number with a CBC total of 7387 compared to 8117 in the prior year. A greedy 400 were reported eyeing the loot in the Brattleboro Dump (JJC).

CARDINAL THROUGH JUNCO

The Northern Cardinal showed nicely this year as 606 CBC birds were found, including a record 138 at Burlington. The February census came in at 725, just a shade lower than a year ago. Feeder activity continues to attract impressive numbers with 20 at Ferrisburg (MCD,JID), 10 at Weybridge (MBN), 8 at Milton (KAL), 7 at South Woodstock (LR) and 5 at Plainfield (MFM). Late Rufous-sided Towhees were noted in West Brattleboro from 12/2-12/10 (JJC), on the Springfield CBC, and at a feeder in South Strafford from just after Christmas until 1/2 (JF). The American Tree Sparrow was present in record numbers as 14 CBCs came up with 2157 individuals, 111 more than in 1979-80. Wintering flocks of 15 or more were reported from 11 locations with a high of 35 at Franklin on 2/1 (PJM). For the sixth successive year the Field Sparrow joined the CBC fun as 2 birds were spotted at Burlington and one at Woodstock, the latter lingering until 1/16 (EMS). Another difficult species, the Fox Sparrow, was represented by just 2 individuals, one on the Saxtons River CBC and the other at Proctorsville on 12/28 (DWS). Only 47 Song Sparrows turned up for eight CBCs, the poorest showing since 1978. Other records were surprisingly few: three from the Burlington area

-7- on 12/3-4 (WGE,NLM,CJF,RHH), one from New Haven on 1/9 (KHD), one from Shoreham on 2/5 (SLM) and one from West Brattleboro, where a bird finished growing a tail by mid-January and then stayed on for the season (JJC). Late Swamp Sparrows were a feature with 3 CBC birds (one each at Burlington, Ferrisburg and Hanover-Norwich) as well as two later reports, one from Dead Creek on 1/5 (WGE,NLM) and a feeder bird in West Brattleboro throughout February (JJC). The White-throated Sparrow was present in good but not unusual numbers. Forty-six CBC birds seems about average, as does a dozen late reports from individual observers. A pair were wintering at a feeder in Weybridge until 2/9 when, in the contributor's words, "the cat got lucky and then there was one" (MBN). An adult White-crowned Sparrow at Orwell on 1/5 (WGE,NLM) was a surprise, the first January record for this species in three years. The Dark-eyed Junco was prominent throughout the season with a CBC total of 401 and a number of nice feeder flocks including 16 at West Brattleboro (JJC), 15 at Ferrisburg (MCD,JID), and 6 each at Rutland (RHH) and Milton (KAL).

LONGSPUR THROUGH ICTERIDS

The Lapland Longspur was once again quite scarce with just 7 birds on the Ferrisburg CBC plus three other reports: 2 in Benson on 12/3 (CKY), 1 in New Haven on 1/2 (KHD) and 1 at Dead Creek on 1/15 (MBN). By contrast the Snow Bunting was present in near record numbers for the CBC season, thanks mainly to a splendid 1372 in the Maquam circle, surely a new high for a single count. Contributors' reports were very numerous and included several large flocks: 100 at Westford on 2/17 (PAT), 125 on the Champlain Islands on 2/8 (FO), 190 at Shelburne Point on 1/21 (MPB), 200 at Ferrisburg on 1/3 (MCD,JID), 200 at Dead Creek on 12/11 (RHH) and 350 at Orwell on 1/6 (SLM). Red-winged Blackbirds stayed on for the CBCs in about normal numbers but lingered only briefly thereafter, as only four post-Christmas reports were received: singles on 12/28 in Proctorsville (DWS) and South Duxbury (FAP), 4 in Brattleboro on 12/29 (JJC) and finally 3 in Orwell on 1/5 (WGE,NLM). No other birds were reported until 2/18 when another single was seen in Rutland (CJF). Within two days the harbingers of an early spring flight were here, as 7 birds were noted in Addison and Panton on 2/20 (WGE,NLM) followed on 2/21 by 16 in the Retreat Meadows (JJC) and "flocks" of unspecified size in West Arlington (NS). Two days later flocks had grown dramatically: 150 at Grand Isle (RBL), 100 at Middlebury (WME) and 320 at Shelburne (MPB). The flight was capped by an imposing flock of 1200 at Clarendon on 2/26 (CJF). A single Eastern Meadowlark helped out the Ferrisburg CBC while 3 hardy souls were spotted in New Haven on 1/2 (KHD). More unusual was the single Rusty Blackbird spotted in Rutland on 1/1 (CJF), the first on a CBC in three years. Very early returning Rustys were also discovered this year, 3 at McCuen Slang on 2/19 (SLM) and another at Craftsbury two days later (FO). Forty-two Common Grackles on 6 CBCs were not surprising; the last reported for the season was a single in Woodstock on 1/2 (CRP). A scattering of early returnees were also noted: 1 at Panton Four Corners on 2/20 (WGE,NLM), 1 in Middlebury on 2/21 (AP), 3 in S. Burlington on 2/22 (PAT), 4 in Colchester on 2/22 (JDM) and another in Colchester on 2/23 (RBL). The Brown-headed Cowbird persevered this winter in above-average numbers with a good CBC showing as well as such late reports as 20 in Brattleboro on 1/2 (JJC), 20 at Woodstock on 1/24 (EMS) and 8 at Orwell on 2/4 (SLM). Late February reports included 20 at Ferrisburg on 2/22 (MCD,JID), 14 at Rutland on 2/23 (RHH) and 25 at Milton on 2/26 (KAL). No doubt all were part of the impressive blackbird flight already mentioned. Reports of tardy Northern Orioles came in for the third

consecutive year, an ad. male at a feeder in Dorset on 12/5-6 (fide NS) and a probable imm. at a feeder in Manchester 11/17-12/9 (fide NS).

FRINGILLIDS THROUGH HOUSE SPARROW

The Pine Grosbeak rebounded somewhat from last year's dismal showing, but numbers were still less than impressive. A CBC total of 337 was only mediocre and the largest flocks reported by contributors were 30 in Shrewsbury on 1/15 (LPS) and another 30 in Reading on 2/14 (FMH). More than a dozen other reports were received with numbers generally in the 7-15 range. The Purple Finch, on the other hand, went from glory to obscurity with a mere 127 CBC birds and most contributors complaining that feeder birds were either scarce or totally absent. The only exceptions were "several" at a feeder in North Hartland (JP), 10 or more at a feeder in Fair Haven (FSA) and 6 in Charlotte on 1/22 (RHH). Somewhat ominously, the House Finch continued its march towards abundance as population records were shattered anew: a CBC total of 848, 50% higher than a year ago, and new count highs established by Springfield (168) and Burlington (199). Only two years ago the total CBC count for the species was just 97, and back in 1977 the tally was a simple zero. The crossbills returned to the scene this year, but in very poor numbers: a single Red Crossbill in Pawlet on 12/29 (TCR,MHR) plus 3 in Brattleboro on 2/23 (DUW) as well as a flock of 7 White-winged Crossbills on the Plainfield CBC on 12/31. The Common Redpoll was also comparatively scarce despite a respectable CBC total of 210, thanks almost entirely to good numbers found in the northwestern circles of Maquam, Burlington and Ferrisburg. Interestingly, this apparent preference for the northwest continued as flocks of 50 were spotted at Essex Junction on 12/21 and 12/28 (JDM) and 53 at Fairfax on 2/18-26 (PAT). Other reports were limited to 3 in Albany on 2/3 (TP) plus singles at West Brattleboro (JJC), New Haven (KHD) and South Duxbury (FAP), all three records in early February. A probable Hoary Redpoll was found in the Fairfax flock mentioned above, but the status of this "species" is so problematical that all such records are presently considered hypothetical by the VT Bird Records Committee. The Pine Siskin had its best CBC record since 1979 as 12 count areas located 967 birds. However, numbers dropped off quickly until a pick-up in mid-February when feeder flocks of 15-30 were reported from a variety of locations. The seasonal highs were 60 in Weybridge on 2/24 (MBN) and 37 in Woodstock on 12/28 (JMN). In similar fashion the American Goldfinch produced good CBC results only to fade quite quickly from general view. Only six records came in for flocks in the 15-30 range with most contributors reporting none to very few. The favored locations were Fair Haven (FSA), West Brattleboro (JJC), Milton (KAL), Colchester (JDM), Weybridge (MBN) and South Duxbury (FAP). The Evening Grosbeak couldn't quite match last year's record-setting CBC total; however, Springfield alone came in with an eye-popping 3060 individuals, easily surpassing the high for a single count. As with the other finches, however, most seem to have moved further south with feeder flocks fortunately being limited to the 25-50 range. High counts for mid- and late winter were 100 in Plainfield on 1/14 (MFM) and 72 in West Brattleboro on 2/4 (JJC). For those with an interest in pigmentation deficiencies an albinistic individual was observed in North Pomfret on 1/29 (ES) and an xanthochroistic male was photographed with splendid results by George and Sally Hall of Waitsfield. Finally, the House Sparrow has rebounded to a CBC total of 10,979, just short of the record high set in 1981. It is to be hoped (but not predicted) that the record will hold.

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