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WINTER SEASON 1986-87

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Winter in Vermont is generally a good time for realism - and that was certainly true for birdwatchers during the winter of 1986-87. Taken as a whole, the winter was not really unusual. While January snows were 10 to 30 inches above normal, with even greater amounts in the south, December produced only a moderate snowfall and February was exceptionally dry and sunny. In like manner, temperatures were also about average, since February's prolonged freeze (it was the coldest February since 1979) was balanced off by a relatively warm December and a rather typical January. In short, the unexceptional birdwatching results of the winter cannot be attributed to unusually severe weather. The truth is, Vermont is not an inviting winter range for most species, especially in years of poor berry or cone crops.

Hard work and increased coverage produced excellent CBC totals of 105 species and 81,542 individuals, both figures exceeded only by the record results in 1984. To be sure, outstanding rarities were few, but is it realistic to expect otherwise? Still, the BREWER'S BLACKBIRD at Burlington was not only a first confirmed record for any CBC but also a first for the Winter Records, while other exceptional CBC finds included a BARROW'S GOLDENEYE at Vernon, a Merlin at Burlington and a Red-bellied Woodpecker at Ferrisburg.

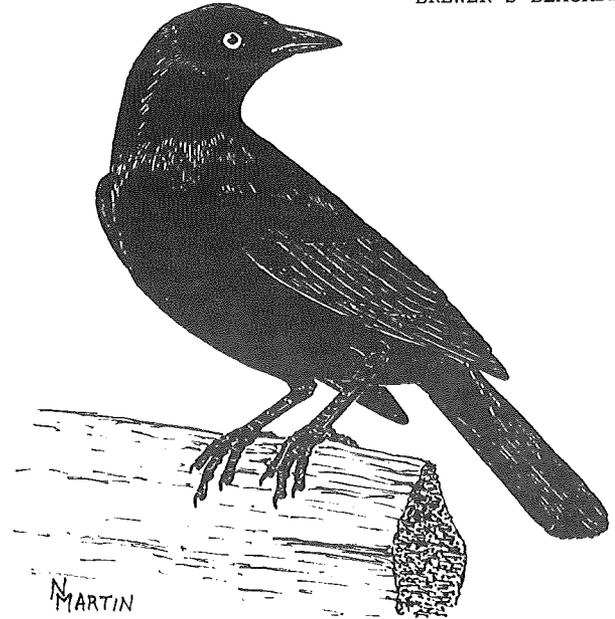
Eruptions of northern species are certainly realistic possibilities in Vermont, and 1986-87 proved especially rewarding in this respect. For the second winter in a row Bohemian Waxwings invaded in force, joined this year by the magnificent Snowy Owl, whose numbers were at new highs, at least as judged from these winter Records. Among the finches the Common Redpoll was the unquestioned leader, while the Purple Finch and both crossbills were once again conspicuous by their scarcity.

Other species drawing attention for increased numbers would include Bald Eagle, overwintering Great Blue Herons and perhaps Tufted Titmouse. It is doubtful whether any significant trends are being established but evidently these birds - and perhaps also Carolina Wrens - seem to be enjoying periods of recovery and/or vigor.

LOONS THROUGH HERONS

There were no reports of the Red-throated Loon, making this the first winter in five that this uncommon species has eluded all our observers. Numbers for the Common Loon were about average, with our CBC's recording a total of 14 individuals. Typically, there were a scattering of other reports from Lake Champlain locations, including a high of 3 on 12/17 at Button Bay (WGE, PEL, PAT). Single birds were also noted above Vernon Dam on 12/4 (JJC), at the Upper Meadows in Rockingham on 12/6 (WGE, DHC) and at Lake Bomoseen on 12/20 (CJF). The diminutive Pied-billed Grebe was as elusive as ever with but two reports for the season, singles at Burlington on 12/5 (FAP) and at Long Point, Ferrisburg on 12/17 (WGE, PEL,

BREWER'S BLACKBIRD



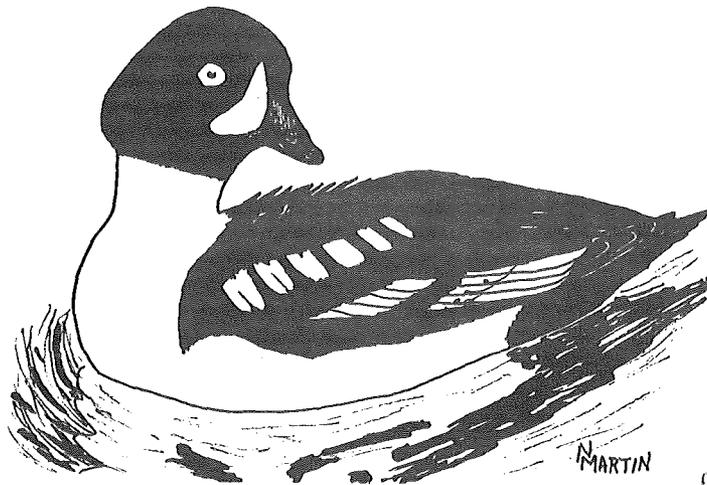
PAT). The Horned Grebe was present in somewhat reduced numbers, with a CBC total of 120 (divided almost equally between Ferrisburg and Burlington) the lowest since 1982. However, a New Year's Day search of the Champlain basin produced an impressive 123 individuals (WAM, DLC) although the entire assemblage had soon disappeared. By 1/17 there was but a single lingerer at Shelburne Beach (WAM). Two individuals near Vernon Dam on 12/4 (JJC) remind us that the species can also occur in early winter on the Connecticut River. The rather scarce Red-necked Grebe was reported but twice, once from Spaulding Bay in Panton on 12/17 (WGE, PEL, PAT) and again from Button Bay on 12/27 (WAM). Certainly one of the season's more remarkable finds was a small group of presumed Double-crested Cormorants observed in flight near Thompson's Point on 1/25 (MBN). Cormorants, although increasingly abundant during the nesting season on Young Island, are very scarce in winter. Indeed, these Records have published only one prior report of a winter cormorant, a single Double-crested at Spaulding Bay on 1/2/85. Meanwhile, winter observations of Great Blue Heron have become almost commonplace, especially during December. The CBC tally was unprecedented, with 16 individuals from 7 different counts. Ferrisburg alone had 8 birds, singlehandedly surpassing the old high set back in 1982. January reports came from locations like Montpelier (VINS), North Pomfret (TR), Dorset (EFG), Fair Haven (EPA), Converse Bay (WAM, DLC), Roxbury (VINS), and Brandon, where a heron was photographed in the snow on 1/31 (CJF, RHH). Overwintering birds were also reported from the Battenkill in Arlington (via NS) and from the Brilyea East Dam at Dead Creek (MBN). An adult Black-crowned Night-Heron found with a broken wing on a Burlington lawn on 12/12 died the next day but provided the first winter record of the species. (JR, Jr.,)

WATERFOWL

Snow Geese were understandably scarce with but 4 CBC birds divided evenly between Bennington and Ferrisburg. A pair lingering at Shelburne Beach was last observed on 12/26 (WAM). Canada Geese, on the other hand, were again numerous with Ferrisburg's 2580 birds setting a new record for an individual circle. The Midwinter Waterfowl Survey of Lake Champlain, conducted on 1/6, produced a comparable 2639 Canadas, of which 1713 were stationed in Vermont waters. With such numbers in evidence, it is not surprising individual contributors noted several significant flocks: 900 in flight over Missisquoi Bay on 12/3 (JBG), 350 at Arnold Bay on 12/24 (JRA), 1139 throughout the Champlain Valley on 1/1 (WAM,DLC), 700 at Converse Bay on 1/25 (MBN), 200 at Charlotte on 2/11 (SSW) and 200 at Shelburne Beach on 2/12 (MCD,JID). A single bird was spotted at Newbury on the Connecticut River on 1/6 (WGE,NLM,CCR,ML). A lone Wood Duck on the Ferrisburg count kept intact a succession of CBC appearances going back to 1978. The only other report was of a hen on the Connecticut River below Moore Dam on 1/6 (WGE, NLM,CCR,ML). Green-winged Teal began the season in good numbers at Missisquoi NWR, with as many as 25 individuals present in early December (JBG). However, reports from other locations were totally lacking. Both the American Black Duck and Mallard rebounded smartly as CBC totals were double those of the preceding year. Burlington set a new count record of 721 Mallards, easily surpassing the old high set back in 1982. December populations at Missisquoi gave Mallards a 3-2 margin over Blacks, with peak populations of 150 and 100 respectively (JBG). Reports from other contributors confirmed this pattern with the maximum counts 310 Mallards at South Burlington on 2/15 (WGE,NLM) and 88 Blacks, also at South Burlington on the same date (WGE,NLM). Somewhat surprisingly, the Northern Pintail escaped all observers save for a single hen on the Winooski River in South Burlington, again on 2/15 (WGE,NLM). There were perhaps 10 Gadwall at Missisquoi NWR in early December (JBG) but numbers quickly fell off. A female at Burlington obliged the CBC and then lingered until at least 1/24 (WGE,NLM). Ten American Wigeon were also noted at Missisquoi from 12/1 (JBG) but they, too, were quick to depart. However, 2 overwintering drakes in West Rutland were photographed on 1/25 (CJF) and observed as late as 2/22 (WGE,NLM). Twenty Canvasback at Ferrisburg constituted the best CBC showing for this splendid duck since 1978. Excellent numbers were present for much of the winter, as 300 were reported from Addison in early December (JRA), while in late January as many as 200 were discovered at such favored locations as Converse Bay (BLR,DLC) and Meach Cove (WGE,NLM,ATA, WAM,DLC,MBN). The handsome but uncommon Redhead eluded most observers, with the only reports a pair of drakes at Meach Cove on 1/24 (WGE,NLM) and presumably the same two again on 2/12 (MCD,JID). Ring-necked Ducks were also scarce with just one CBC bird at Ferrisburg and two at Meach Cove, Shelburne on 2/8 (ATA,SRA,WAM,DLC). Greater Scaup produced another mixed showing with several respectable rafts helping to offset a dreary CBC showing. Best counts were 152 off Grand Isle on 12/7 (WGE,NLM) and around 100 off Shelburne Beach on 1/27 (MBN) and again on 2/2 (SRA). The more difficult Lesser Scaup appeared on three CBC's, while additional pairs were spotted off Grand Isle on 12/7 (WGE,NLM) and in Burlington on 2/15 (WGE, NLM). There were 5 Oldsquaw at Missisquoi NWR on 12/4 (JBG), but there was just one other record, a drake at Converse Bay on 12/17 (WGE,PEL,PAT). The only scoter reports of the season were from CBC's with an unexpected Surf Scoter at Vernon (JJC,CCR) and a modest 2 White-winged Scoters at Ferrisburg. Another scoter at Maquam went unidentified as to species. There was no shortage of Common Goldeneye, however, with a hefty

-2- CBC total of 1295 individuals and an even more impressive 2190 located on the Aerial Survey, of which 1000 were concentrated in the Gut. The hard winter put an early end to such festivities, however, as reports tapered off significantly after mid-January. February records included 100 at Converse Bay on 2/7 (MBN), 50 at Charlotte on 2/12 (SSW) and 16 at Vernon Dam on 2/27 (JJC). For the third season in a row, the rare BARROW'S GOLDENEYE graced Vermont waters, a handsome drake having decided on the Connecticut River near Vernon for overwintering. The bird was first observed on 12/6 (WGE,DHC - exquisite details), stayed on for

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE

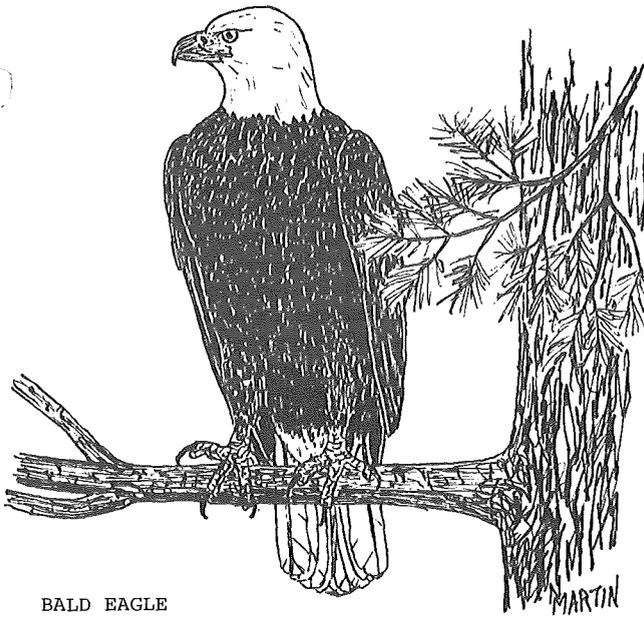


the initial Vernon CBC, and was still present as late as 3/14 (JJC). Numbers of Bufflehead were at near record levels, with 70 CBC birds tallied and several counts in the 10-20 range reported by individual observers. February sightings included 11 at Charlotte on 2/8 (ATA), 12 at Converse Bay on 2/7 (MBN), 2 young females at Burlington on 2/15 (WGE,NLM) and another pair at Vernon Dam on 2/24 (JJC). The lovely Hooded Merganser enjoyed a good season, beginning with a squadron of 25 at Missisquoi NWR on 12/4 (JBG) followed by 5 at Lake Bomoseen on 12/20 (CJF) and 7 on the Ferrisburg CBC. Overwintering birds included up to 4 at Charlotte on 2/12 and 2/28 (SSW, ATA), 2 at Converse Bay on 2/7 (MBN) and a single at Vernon on 2/4 (JJC). Earlier, 5 individuals were discovered on the upper reaches of the Connecticut River between Newbury and McIndoe's Falls on 1/6 (WGE,NLM,CCR,ML). Although the Aerial Survey on 1/6 uncovered only 554 Common Mergansers on the Vermont side of Lake Champlain, the New York figures lifted the grand total to nearly 2500 individuals. The CBC returns also gave evidence of the abundance of this species even in hard winters. From individual contributors came several reports of large concentrations including 405 (400 drakes and 5 hens) off Long Point on 1/14 (MCD,JID) and 900 off Grand Isle on 1/2 (RBL). Reports of Red-breasted Mergansers were, typically, far less frequent with 13 CBC birds about as expected. Other sightings included up to 6 off Grand Isle through December (RBL), 9 at Button Bay on 12/17 (WGE, PEL,PAT), and 2 at South Hero on 1/4 (RBL). Noteworthy was the small fleet of 25 off Charlotte on 12/29 (SSW).

VULTURES, HAWKS AND FALCONS

An early Turkey Vulture at Vernon on 2/24 (JJC) was surprising, especially in the absence of anything resembling a February thaw. Also surprising, and certainly exciting, was the continuing return to

-3- able 32 tallied at Ferrisburg. All reports came from the Champlain basin, with post-CBC high counts 6 at Dead Creek on 12/29 (SSW) and 5 between Shoreham and Addison on 2/16 (SBL). Only 14 American Kestrels were located during the CBC season and few chose to persevere for the entire winter. Only 4 were observed at various Champlain Valley locations on 2/7 (BMP). The first unmistakable winter MERLIN in close to ten years was located on the Burlington CBC (WGE,NLM). This record is rendered all the more gratifying by the excellent supporting details that accompanied it. The only Peregrine Falcon of the winter was a cooperative soul, flying directly over the observer's yard in Shelburne on 2/10 (MPB). Two other raptors reported as Peregrines seem likely to have been kestrels or accipiters since both were seen in pursuit of feeder birds. None of the winter reports for the rare GYRFALCON have been accepted by the Vermont Bird Records Committee, since details were lacking: 12/23 Ferrisburg, 1/17 St. Albans, Shelburne Beach 1/31.



BALD EAGLE

prominence of the Bald Eagle. The CBC tally of 8 birds speaks for itself, with the 5 at Ferrisburg easily eclipsing the previous record for a single count. Other reports were numerous and gave indication of several overwintering eagles: the adult at Wilder Dam (at least the sixth consecutive year now), another ad. for the second winter in a row at Readsboro (BCr,JJC), 2 imm. along the lake in the vicinity of Thompson's Point (BCr) and yet another ad. (possibly as many as three) on the Connecticut River below Vernon Dam (JJC) - roosting, apparently, in nearby Massachusetts. Three eagles, a subadult and 2 imm., were spotted at Fort Cassin Point, Ferrisburg, on 12/29 (SSW), but it seems probable these birds overlap those already enumerated. Five Northern Harriers were present for Christmas counters, notably 4 at Ferrisburg, but other reports were scarce. A single was at Swanton on 12/7 (DLC,SBL,BLR) while the only others seen were in the Dead Creek area, where an ad. male and an imm. were spotted on 12/17 (FAP). One was still present on New Year's Day (WAM,DLC). In the accipiter section Sharp-shinned Hawks led the way with 13 CBC birds and a host of other reports from every corner of the state. Of the nearly 25 records received, most were feeder-related and all were for single birds. The rather uncommon Cooper's Hawk was reported from just 2 CBC's and six other locations. Single birds were noted in Brandon on 1/13 and 2/16 (SSW), in Bennington on 2/6 (TEJ), in Woodstock on 2/25 (JMN) and in Newbury and in Wells River on 1/6 (WGE,NLM,CCR,ML). An ad. spent the entire winter in Wallingford keeping a close eye on several rather busy feeders (MRB). The Northern Goshawk had its poorest CBC showing in a decade, but 11 additional sightings suggest all is well with our largest but generally most secretive accipiter. Feeder-watching and hunting activities were noted in several instances, including a "dramatic" but unsuccessful attempt to run down a Mourning Dove in West Brattleboro (JJC). A similar sally by a goshawk in Woodstock, this time in pursuit of 5 Rock Doves, also ended in failure (JMN). Among the buteos, record numbers of Red-tailed Hawks were present during December, with Ferrisburg's 60 CBC birds setting a new high. Most had departed by early January, however, although 12 were still present around Dead Creek on 12/29 (SSW). Late-winter searches of the Champlain Valley produced counts of 6 on 1/31 (WGE,NLM) and 9 on 2/7 (BMP). Rough-legged Hawks were not as numerous, notwithstanding a credit-

GRAY PARTRIDGE THROUGH SNIPE

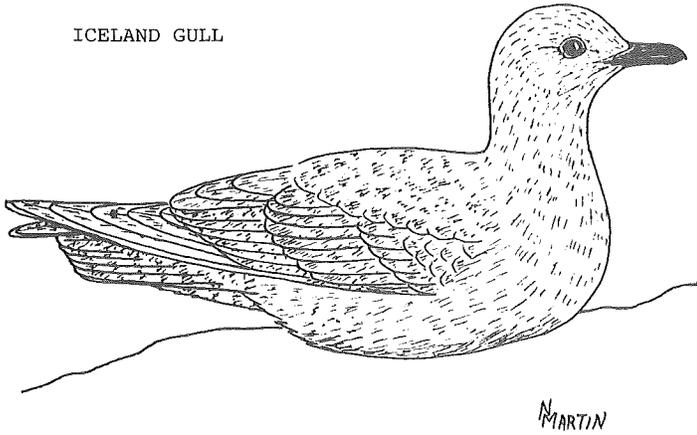
Numbers for Gray Partridge seemed low, as the only reports were for 9 on the Maquam CBC and 4 in Alburg on 1/4 (WAM). It is hoped that the hard winter hasn't set back this featured species of northwestern Vermont. Five Ring-necked Pheasants on the Saxtons River CBC, while located in neighboring Walpole, New Hampshire, provide reassurance that this species still perseveres in southern Vermont. A male observed in Charlotte on 2/1 and again on 2/15 (ATA,WGE) seems to have been a "put-and-shoot" individual. Happily, the rare and endangered Spruce Grouse returned to the CBC roster for the first time in three years, thanks to 2 birds at Island Pond. Additionally, 2-3 birds were discovered on 12/23 at Wenlock WMA (FO,CSP). A bird identified as a Spruce Grouse was seen briefly on the NH border near St. Johnsbury on 1/6 (JH) (no details or BVR submitted). Despite the early snows the Ruffed Grouse gave a good account of itself as it was recorded on 13 of 15 CBC's. Individual observers provided another dozen records from locations throughout the state. Also holding its own was the Wild Turkey, particularly in its favored locations in the southern third of the state. The CBC total of 72 was about on target as was the plethora of individual reports. High counts were 28 in February near Quechee/Hartland (PMM), 17 in West Brattleboro on 1/15 (JJC), 13 in Leicester on 1/6 (SSW) and 10 in Charlotte on 12/27 (MCD,JID). A pleasant surprise was an American Coot at Ferrisburg, the first CBC appearance for the species since 1978. Possibly the bird overwintered, since a coot was also observed at Meach Cove on 2/8 (WAM,DLC,ATA). The only shorebird report of the winter was the Common Snipe who has become somewhat of a regular in Clarendon. He was last observed on 2/14 and "seemed healthy enough" to last the rest of the season (CJF).

GULLS

Bonaparte's Gull departed rather hurriedly, judging from the lone bird gracing the Burlington CBC. December wasn't quite so desperate, with 15 birds at Sandbar on 12/7 (WGE,NLM,RBL) and another 15 at the Gut, also on 12/7 (DLC,SBL,BLR). January sightings were limited to singles on 1/14 at Long Point (MCD,JID), on 1/17 at Blodgett's (WAM,DLC) and on 1/24 at Shelburne Bay (WGE,NLM). Numbers of Ring-billed Gull and Herring Gull seemed typically plentiful, with the latter species especially abundant. Young Iceland Gulls were somewhat more common than usual with at least 5 individuals reported. Single imm. were observed at the Rockingham Overlook on 12/6 (WJN) and on that same day at Brattleboro (WGE,DHC). Three birds,

CHRISTMAS COUNTS 1986-87	VERNON	ISLAND POND	BENNINGTON	BRATTLEBORO	FERRISBURG	SAXTONS RIVER	BURLINGTON	MAQUAM	HANOVER-NORW.	PLAINFIELD	RUTLAND	SPRINGFIELD	WOODSTOCK	CRAFTS.-GRANSE.	WINHALL	
	12/18	12/19	12/20	12/20	12/20	12/20	12/21	12/21	12/27	12/27	12/28	12/28	1/2	1/3	1/4	
Common Loon					9	1	3	1								14
Pied-billed Grebe					CP											CP
Horned Grebe					66		54									120
Red-necked Grebe					CP											CP
Great Blue Heron	1				8		3			1	1		1		1	16
Snow Goose			2		2											4
Canada Goose	117		23		2,580	9		8								2,737
Wood Duck					1											1
Am. Black Duck	208		26		176		146	1	2		57		1			617
Mallard	32		133		60		721				85					1,031
Am.Bl.Duck x Mal.	4						4									8
Gadwall							1									1
Canvasback					20											20
Ring-necked Duck					1											1
Greater Scaup					2											2
Lesser Scaup					5		1	1								7
Scaup (sp.)							45									45
Oldsquaw					CP											CP
Surf Scoter	1															1
White-wngd. Scoter					2											2
Scoter (sp.)								1								1
Com. Goldeneye	159				398	17	516	202	3							1,295
Barrow's Goldeneye	1															1
Bufflehead	1				20		49									70
Hooded Merganser					7											7
Common Merganser	68				383	25	113	1025	15		2	3	6			1,640
Red-br. Merganser					12		1									13
Duck (sp.)					9											9
Bald Eagle					5	2			1							8
Northern Harrier					4		1									5
Sharp-shinned Hawk			2	1	3		1		2		CP	3	1			13
Cooper's Hawk					2	2										4
Northern Goshawk	1		CP						CP		1	1				3
Accipiter (sp.)					1											1
Red-tailed Hawk	6		19	3	60	5	13	12		1	2	3				124
Rough-legged Hawk					32		2	4			1					39
Buteo (sp.)							1	1								2
American Kestrel	2		3		3		1	4	CP		1					14
Merlin							1									1
Gray Partridge								9								9
Ring-nkd. Pheasant						5			1							6
Spruce Grouse		2														2
Ruffed Grouse	5	5	3	1	20	5	26	7	1	2	5	CP	5		2	87
Wild Turkey				11		13					41	CP	7			72
American Coot					1											1
Common Snipe											1					1
Bonaparte's Gull							1									1
Ring-billed Gull	9			6	481		871	1		2						1,370
Herring Gull	25		17	75	98	200	914	227	2			9				1,567
Iceland Gull							1									1
Great Bl-bkd. Gull	4			4	49	6	94	11				4				172
Gull (sp.)	6						122	161								289
Rock Dove	129	123	748	177	527	853	828	926	631	322	819	643	195	55	16	6,992
Mourning Dove	213	1	150	179	592	511	479	255	202	52	418	319	192	74	67	3,704
East. Screech-Owl	1				4											5
Great Horned Owl	1				5	1		3				1	1			12
Snowy Owl			1		1											2
Barred Owl			1		1	2	1		1	1			1			8
Short-eared Owl					3											3
N. Saw-whet Owl										1						1

	VERNON 12/16	ISLAND POND 12/19	BENNINGTON 12/20	BRATTLEBORO 12/20	FERRISBURG 12/20	SAXTONS RIVER 12/20	BURLINGTON 12/21	MAQUAM 12/21	HANOVER-NORM. 12/27	PLAINFIELD 12/27	RUTLAND 12/28	SPRINGFIELD 12/28	WOODSTOCK 1/2	CRAFTS.-GRANSB. 1/3	WINHALL 1/4	
Owl (sp.)					1		1									2
Belted Kingfisher	3		1		3	4	4				3	2			1	21
Red-bell.Woodpkr.			CP		1											1
Downy Woodpecker	19	6	29	9	77	32	43	11	30	29	63	43	37	16	7	451
Hairy Woodpecker	18	8	13	16	41	17	25	5	23	39	34	36	46	17	13	351
Bl-bkd.Woodpeckr.		1														1
Northern Flicker	1		1		2											4
Pileated Woodpkr.	2	7	1		16	6	18	2	2	8	6	3	4		2	77
Horned Lark	130		170		458	95		139				10				1,002
Gray Jay		11														11
Blue Jay	103	202	208	287	293	372	231	85	626	416	487	1246	896	275	311	6,038
American Crow	117	4	389	158	258	224	645	64	289	198	558	117	79	13	15	3,128
Common Raven		23		2	4	11		4	5	4	17	1	3	29	11	114
Bl-opd.Chickadee	211	412	247	242	830	503	743	230	1039	759	643	1450	1211	432	565	9,517
Boreal Chickadee		24				1				1				4		30
Tufted Titmouse	45		1	21	6	10	7		8			15	2		6	121
Red-br. Nuthatch		4	24	3	5	7	5		3	22	9	15	9	8	30	144
White-br.Nuthatch	28	7	30	36	104	45	76	10	47	24	68	70	52	8	18	623
Brown Creeper	5	2	1	5	11	6	14	4	3	3	10	7	7		10	88
Carolina Wren					2	1	2									5
Winter Wren	1											1				2
Golden-cr.Kinglet	17	28		13	22	22	7	4	25	21	5	29	20		17	230
Ruby-cr. Kinglet															1	1
Eastern Bluebird			CP									CP				CP
American Robin	2		2		2		5					1				12
N. Mockingbird	4		1	3	2	7	7		3		2	2				31
Bohemian Waxwing				4	46					74	250					374
Cedar Waxwing	52		45		87		66	10			1	4				265
Northern Shrike		1	1	1			2	4	3	2	1	1	2	2		20
European Starling	989	6	1068	264	1,659	650	1,720	882	300	292	994	392	117	23	75	9,431
Yellow-rmp.Warbler					1											1
Comm. Yellowthroat							1									1
Warbler (sp.)											1					1
Northern Cardinal	30		31	19	54	42	91	4	39	21	42	67	53	2	4	499
Am. Tree Sparrow	145	17	209	71	422	260	98	82	111	114	119	290	30	42	9	2,019
Chipping Sparrow													1			1
Field Sparrow												1				1
Song Sparrow	21	1		11	26	29	8		4		1				2	103
Swamp Sparrow	1				1											2
White-th.Sparrow	10		13			6	1		2		1	6		2		41
White-cr.Sparrow				1												1
Dark-eyed Junco	64		104	38	42	48	18		17		12	28	10	1	3	385
Lapland Longspur					1											1
Snow Bunting	5			10	514	11	67	165		84	1			4		861
Red-wng.Blackbird					3				2	1				1		7
Rusty Blackbird												3				3
Brewer's Blackbird							1									1
Common Grackle		2	2		3				2				4			13
Brown-hd. Cowbird			4		4	4	68	2	57	2		8	5	6		160
Pine Grosbeak		9					6	27	1	42	1	15		12	2	115
Purple Finch			1	6	39		5	107		5	3		3			169
House Finch	19		207	195	152	227	318	16	206		340	356	126	6		2,168
White-w.Crossbill										1						1
Common Redpoll	50	101		8	1,310	294	168	399	254	157	20	187	145	198	36	3,327
Pine Siskin	4			31	110	25	26	9	85	40	116	102	109	22	22	701
American Goldfinch	52		52	3	291	41	159	72	8	44	217	52		2	2	995
Evening Grosbeak	341	37	781	341	338	464	120	170	940	1024	1149	1052	1080	490	100	8,427
House Sparrow	228	8	282	110	1,437	769	878	1274	551	288	844	745	150	75	91	7,730
TOTAL SPECIES	51	27	42	37	77	47	61	43	41	36	45	43	36	27	29	105
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	3711	1052	5046	2365	14,331	5890	10,668	6641	5546	4097	7452	7343	4611	1819	1439	82,011



all in first basic plumage, were in the Burlington area on 2/15 (WGE,NLM) and presumably were repeats of January sightings at Blodgett's (WAM,DLC) and the Burlington dump (CJF). Glaucous Gulls were also present, starting with an ad. on the Connecticut River below Vernon Dam on 12/4 (JJC). Two others, in the more typical first winter attire, were in Burlington on 2/15 (WGE,NLM), again overlapping earlier reports from Blodgett's (BLR,DLC,CJF,BMP,LDB). The Great Black-backed Gull continued to increase, as the Burlington CBC bettered its old mark by 20 individuals. The high count for the period was 106 on 12/17 (WGE,PEL,PAT), but numbers thereafter moderated somewhat; 47 were still at Blodgett's on 2/7 (WAM,DLC) while 5 northbound birds were noted on 2/28 at White River Junction (WGE).

DOVES

There seems little reason to celebrate the "recovery" of the Rock Dove to a CBC population of just shy of 7000 individuals. The far more popular Mourning Dove was perhaps a notch less abundant than last year, but the species is clearly thriving nonetheless. A strong CBC showing was supplemented by numerous individual reports of feeder flocks in the 30-60 range with highs of 40 in Bartonsville (TEJ), 41 in Woodstock (ML), 50 in Randolph (EWC,MCC) and up to 60 in Wallingford (MRB); 148 were counted in Addison and Ferrisburg on 1/31 (WGE,NLM).

OWLS

Never widely reported, the Eastern Screech-Owl is presumably flourishing all the same, particularly in view of a peak population of 10 at Missisquoi NWR in February (JBG). Other than 5 CBC birds, the only other records were a single at Grand Isle on 2/22 (RBL) and a red-phase individual in Castleton on 2/25 (PSA). Flushed from a pine, the bird roosted in a second tree, affording the fortunate observer a close look. After a banner year in 1985-86, the Great Horned Owl settled for more normal attention. The CBC results were quite typical, as were the dozen or so reports from individual contributors. Single birds were seen or heard in Vernon (WGE,DHC), Wallingford (MRB), Woodstock (CMW,CRP), Hartland Hill, Woodstock (FBM), Cornwall (MBN), Dorset on eleven occasions (EFG) and Ferrisburg (MCD,JID). Pairs were noted in Shelburne (MPB) and Vernon (JJC) and a maximum count of 3 was at Missisquoi NWR (JBG). It was a major flight year for Snowy Owls with at least 9 and possibly 11 individuals in Vermont. Plumage descriptions suggest all were imm., as would be expected. A bird at Barnard on 12/8 (JBe) may have later taken up station in Bethel near Interstate Exit 3 (LP,BMP et al.). Similarly, it is not clear whether a Snowy seen near Montpelier from I-89 on 12/21 (BMP) might not

-6- have been one of the two that wintered in the Montpelier area, one in East Montpelier (MFM,BMP et al.), the other near the Bombardier plant in Barre (BMP,ATA et al.). Other Snowies of the season include singles at New Haven on 12/7 (MCD,JID) and at Burlington on 12/14 (WGE,NLM), a pair at Shoreham on 1/1 (SSW), and also, of course, the Bennington and Ferrisburg CBC birds. The latter individual had been on location at Dead Creek (where it wintered) at least as early as 12/5 (FAP), so surely did not match the New Haven or Burlington birds. Considerably less confusing were the reports of Barred Owls, which accommodated several observers with protracted views; for example in Ferrisburg (MCD,JID), Shrewsbury (LPS) and Woodstock (JMN). Deep snow caused several individuals to seek small mammals (and birds?) at active feeders. One trusting soul spent the day atop a fence post in a Wallingford yard, taking no offense when approached to within two feet, or when a nearby wheelbarrow was loaded with wood (MRB). As for numbers, the CBC total of 8 individuals fell just one short of last year's tally. Three Short-eared Owls at Ferrisburg was the best CBC showing since 1981, when a remarkable 15 were counted. However, other reports were limited to a single in Addison on 1/25 (BLR), plus 2 hunting along the Mt. Philo Road in Charlotte on 2/22 (WAM). The delightful little Northern Saw-whet Owl was again rather secretive with just one CBC bird in addition to five other reports. A slightly emaciated individual was found in a barn in Dorset on 12/1 and released outside the barn after a week at the VINS rehabilitation facility (VINS). One, sadly, died after hitting a window in Bennington on 1/4 (GW); one was observed roosting and hunting just after dusk in late January in Fletcher (ML); a fourth was seen on 2/5 in Randolph, when it flushed from a lilac bush near the observers' feeders (EWC,MCC); and finally, a window claimed another in Brandon on 2/16 (VINS).

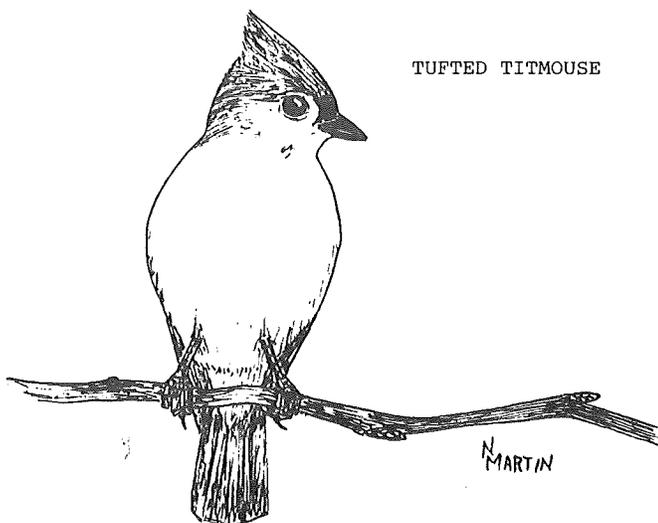
KINGFISHERS AND WOODPECKERS

There were 21 Belted Kingfishers on eight separate CBC's, a total matching the record high set back in 1979. Nine additional reports were received, the latest from Wilder Dam on 2/4 (CCR) and from Vernon Dam on 2/27 (JJC). One of the season's highlights was a male RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER first discovered at a Ferrisburg feeder on 12/7 (MCD,JID). The bird stayed on for the Ferrisburg CBC (JJA,TAR) but later proved surprisingly elusive. CBC populations of Downy Woodpeckers and Hairy Woodpeckers were virtually unchanged from the prior year - and therefore still somewhat reduced from those of the early 1980's. Feeder birds of both species were widespread and reassuringly numerous. For the second winter in a row, the rare Three-toed Woodpecker went unreported, while the more common Black-backed Woodpecker was limited to just one record, a single bird on the Island Pond CBC. This trend toward increased scarcity has continued for four years now. The Northern Flicker once again headed south on schedule, as but 4 CBC birds were recorded. Lingerers were noted in Bartonsville on 12/19 (TEJ) and in Shoreham on 1/1 (SSW), while overwintering birds were reported from North Bennington on 2/10 (WGE) and from the Shelburne Bay Yacht Club on 2/8, 2/21 and again on 2/28 (WAM). The most spendid of our Picidae, the Pileated Woodpecker, continues to thrive, as a record 77 CBC birds were tallied, supported by another 25 reports from contributors.

HORNED LARK THROUGH CREEPER

Horned Larks overwintered in their usual numbers, with 1002 CBC birds a very respectable tally, even though well below the record set a year ago. Good-

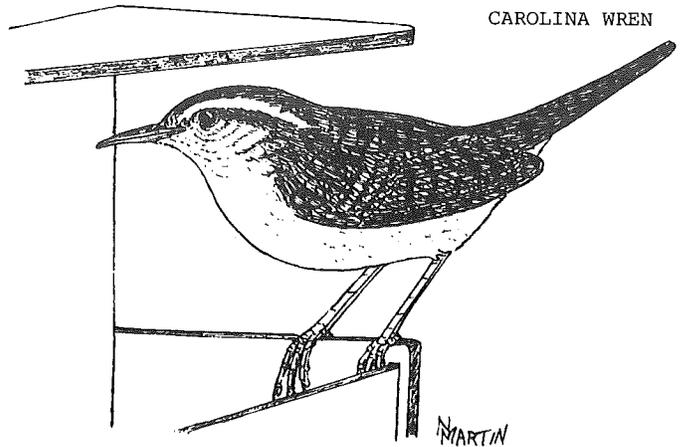
sized flocks were not uncommon in the Champlain Valley throughout the season, with max. counts of 100 at Ferrisburg on 1/14 (MCD,JID) and again on 2/15 (WGE, NLM), at Dead Creek on 1/18 (WAM) and at Pawlet during February (via NS). 145 individuals were counted on 2/10 in the South Shaftsbury/North Bennington area (WGE). Reassuring was the presence of 11 Gray Jays on the Island Pond CBC, a significant improvement over last year's dismal showing. Additional reports were received for 4 birds near Moose Bog on 12/28 (BMP) and for a pair at Stowe, well outside their Northeast Kingdom breeding range, on 2/19 (MF). For the first time since 1981, CBC Blue Jays exceeded 6000 individuals. Other reports were also impressive, with kind-hearted donors providing for more than 40 birds in Randolph (EWC,MCC), Bartonville (TEJ) and Ferrisburg (MCD,JID). Numbers for the American Crow continue steady and plentiful, as in excess of 3000 CBC birds were tallied for the third year in succession. Large flocks were reported throughout the winter from most corners of the state, including 150 along the New Haven River on 12/18 (JRA), 470 from Wilder Dam to Barnet on 1/6 (WGE,NLM,CCR,ML), 150 at Brandon on 2/12 (SSW) and 200 at Ferrisburg on 2/15 (MBN). The Common Raven was noted in small numbers from a variety of locations, north and south. Easily the largest count was from Lake Willoughby on 2/8, where (with "still more calling from across the lake") 31 individuals engaged in an acrobatic display, "shooting off the cliffs and tumbling down, chasing and rolling over." (PAT,TAR). The Black-capped Chickadee, that mighty mite of the Paridae, deserves a hearty toast for wresting first place on the CBC tally sheet from its various (and less appealing) rivals. 9517 individuals were recorded, a figure closely approaching the peak years of 1980-83. Feeder flocks reflected this upturn with numbers reaching a max. of 50 at Plymouth (WGS). The Boreal Chickadee also had a better year, with 30 CBC birds representing a nice improvement over last winter's figure. "A few" were reported from Moose Bog on 1/17 (ATA), while one at least was a regular visitor to a suet feeder in Sheffield (PSW,SAW). Heartening news also came from the Tufted Titmouse, whose population swelled to 121 CBC birds, a new record. The February census confirmed the recovery, as 112 individuals were counted,



TUFTED TITMOUSE

nearly twice the number of a year ago. The ever-popular Red-breasted Nuthatch seemed less happy with the winter or more probably, the low cone crop, however, as its CBC population dropped to just 144 birds, the lowest total since 1978. Feeders generally hosted 1-4 individuals, while 5 were noted in Marlboro on 2/7 (JJC). The White-breasted Nuthatch, on the other hand, held steady, with CBC results right in

-7- line with those of recent years. Other reports included 8 at Dead Creek on 12/27 (WAM) and 11 in the Woodstock/Hartford area on 2/28 (WGE,NLM). The Brown Creeper did even better, as it produced a CBC total of 88 birds, the highest since 1979. There were numerous individual reports for 1-2 birds, while "several" were noted in Moose Bog on 1/17 (ATA).



CAROLINA WREN

CAROLINA WREN THROUGH STARTLING

A startling 5 Carolina Wrens were present for the CBC season, 2 each at Ferrisburg and Burlington and a single at Saxtons River. No prior CBC has ever tallied more than one of these feisty little songsters. Successful overwintering definitely occurred for one of the Ferrisburg wrens (MCD,JID), but the fate of the others is less clear. Another Carolina was at a feeder in Charlotte "for a short time" around 1/28 (via FCH). For the fifth year in succession, the Winter Wren appeared on the CBC roster with records from Vernon and Springfield. However, there is no reason to suppose either bird was so presumptuous as to attempt overwintering. The Golden-crowned Kinglet was well reported, probably a tribute more to observer diligence than to kinglet reproduction. A CBC total of 230 compares favorably with most years, though no individual circle even approached the old high of 100 set by Island Pond back in 1978; 8-10 birds were present in Washington throughout the season (ATA). A Ruby-crowned Kinglet on the Winhall CBC near Manchester was the third CBC bird in five years, although winter sightings of the species continue infrequent at best. The Eastern Bluebird, that most delightful of harbingers of spring, kept tradition as a number of late-February sightings were reported: 5 in Shaftsbury on an unspecified date (fide NS), a pair in Shoreham on 2/22 (EBB,JGB,HB,JB,SSW) and singles in Ferrisburg on 2/20 (MCD,JID) and in Vernon on 2/27 (JJC). In an unusual twist, Bennington and Springfield both recorded "count period" bluebirds but both proved elusive on their actual count day. Finally, a pair of wintering birds were in Manchester, "catching cluster flies under the eaves" (via NS). The American Robin reaffirmed its status as a migratory species by virtually deserting the state by early December. Although 20 individuals were noted in Charlotte on 12/17 (WGE,PEL,PAT), the CBC total of 12 birds, including a paltry 2 at Ferrisburg, was the lowest in more than a decade. Other reports were equally sparse: 1 at Herrick's Cove on 12/6 (WGE,DHC), 2 on the Champlain Islands on 12/7 (DLC,SBL,BLR), 1 at Hinesburg on 12/14 (WAM), another single at North Bennington on 2/10 (WGE) and an overwintering bird in Shelburne (MPB). The Northern Mockingbird was similarly unamused by the winter's severity, as once again the February census could uncover only a handful of rugged individuals. A total of 5 compared to last year's census of 6, just as the CBC tally of 31 birds

compared to last year's 35. Eight other reports were received, all for singles except for a pair at Ferrisburg on 2/15 (MCD,JID). The less hardy Gray Catbird and Brown Thrasher were not heard from at all, but not so the Bohemian Waxwing, which once again invaded in overwhelming numbers. Helped on by a record-breaking 250 birds (all in one flock) (BLR) at Rutland, the CBC tally of 374 individuals shattered the mark set only one year ago. For the winter as a whole, numbers certainly approached, but did not quite equal, the extraordinary totals of 1986. With max. counts of 300 at Shelburne on 2/21 and 2/22 (WAM), 250 at Charlotte on 2/8 (WAM), 225 at Thetford Hill on 2/17 (TL) and 166 near St. Albans on 1/18 (BLR,DLC), the many flocks in the 25-100 range suddenly become almost commonplace. Most were reported from the Champlain Valley,



BOHEMIAN WAXWING

although about 60 were near Woodstock for most of the winter (v.o.), while another 50 were observed in Norwich on 2/25 (TL). A very light-colored (leucistic) bird was noted in the Woodstock flock on 1/15 (WGE,CCR). Cedar Waxwings seemed a bit overawed by their larger cousins, settling for a rather ordinary CBC total of 265 birds. A "large flock" was observed in Shelburne on several occasions (ATA), 94 were in Shelburne on 12/20 (WAM) and somewhat smaller flocks were in Charlotte and near Button Bay on 12/26 and 12/27 (WAM). However, other reports were scarce and for much smaller groups ranging from 6 in South Shaftsbury on 2/10 (WGE) to 14 in Clarendon on 12/21 (CJF). The Northern Shrike enjoyed a good year with a better-than-average CBC total of 20 individuals, plus another 25 reports from contributors. Four were counted on the Champlain Islands on 1/25 (BLR,DLC), 3 were in Alburg on 1/17 (CJF), while 1 in Barnard on 1/21 and 1/25 was so formidable that "chickadees freeze when this fellow appears" (JNF). Whether the bird observed in Woodstock on 1/9 during a VINS staff meeting had a similar effect on the participants was not attested to. Other shrikes competing for space in these Records include one with a "very faint mask" in Addison on 1/18 (MBN) and another in Barre on 1/16 attempting to protect his lunch of meadow vole from the incursions of a Snowy Owl (ATA). As for the European Starling, its CBC total of 9431 individuals represented the second decline in a row from the record population counted in 1984.

-8- WARBLERS THROUGH JUNCO

In a tough winter for half-hardy species, the presence of both Yellow-rumped Warbler and Common Yellowthroat on the CBC roster was all the more noteworthy. The Ferrisburg Yellow-rumped makes 1986 just the eighth year this winter warbler which is common along the southern New England coast has obliged Vermont Christmas Counters. Burlington's yellowthroat was an even more surprising find, as it becomes the first individual of its species to be located in Vermont on an actual count day. Earlier, a female had been discovered in Rutland on 12/7 (CJF). Meanwhile, the Northern Cardinal seems on a firm footing with impressive totals of 499 for CBC's and 536 for the February census. Other reports were heartening and included 12 in Weybridge on 12/3 (MBN) and 15 in Ferrisburg on 2/26 (MCD,JID). For the third year in four, American Tree Sparrows exceeded 2000 CBC individuals, but late-winter reports were almost exclusively from Champlain and southern locations. Among the better counts were 42 at Dead Creek on 1/11 (WAM), 52 in North Bennington and South Shaftsbury on 2/10 (WGE,NLM), 70 around West Haven and Fair Haven on 2/22 (WGE,NLM) and 106 in Addison and Ferrisburg on 1/31 (WGE,NLM). Two reports of Chipping Sparrows were a surprise in view of the early arrival of winter. One bird was at a South Woodstock feeder for the CBC and continued on until 1/5 (LHR), while a second individual was observed in North Clarendon on New Year's Day (WGE,NLM). A Field Sparrow at Springfield kept intact a CBC streak going back to 1977. The bird continued to enjoy the offerings of a Bartonsville feeder until last observed on 1/7 (TEJ). Meanwhile, a second feeder bird survived the winter in Colchester (WDB). The rather hardy Song Sparrow persevered through the season in typical fashion, as 103 CBC birds were located and a number of overwintering individuals were reported. Examples of the latter included singles at White River Junction (WGE,NLM et al.), Charlotte (MBN) and Brandon (SSW) as well as pairs in Barnumville (NLM,TEJ,WGE) and Burlington (WGE,NLM) and at Shelburne Farms (ATA). Swamp Sparrows on the Vernon and Ferrisburg CBC's were good finds, as was an individual in Springfield at Waite's Cove on 12/6 (WGE,DHC). This species has now graced the Vermont CBC roster for six consecutive years. White-throated Sparrows stayed on for the CBC season in good numbers, but subsequent reports were limited to an overwintering feeder bird in Castleton (PSA), a single in Rutland on 1/10 (WGE,NLM,JPM) and a three-some in North Bennington on 2/10 (WGE). The far more difficult White-crowned Sparrow was reported twice: a CBC bird for Brattleboro and a determined individual overwintering in South Hero, observed first on 2/13 and again on 3/2 (JL). The Dark-eyed Junco provided few surprises with a slightly below-average 385 CBC birds and relative scarcity during the heart of winter. Small flocks in the 6-10 range were noted at Richville Dam on 1/7 (SSW), at Woodstock on 1/2 (ML) and at New Haven on 2/1 (JRA). Flocks of similar size were regular at feeders in Fair Haven (EPA) and Ferrisburg (MCD,JID) but several observers felt numbers were down (TEJ,PJM,PSW,SAW,WGE).

LONGSPUR THROUGH ICTERIDS

Only 15 Lapland Longspurs were reported during the winter, the high count being 10 at New Haven on 2/11 (MCD,JID). The remaining birds were a pair at Dead Creek on 1/11 (WAM,DLC) and singles on the Ferrisburg CBC, at Alburg on 12/7 (DLC,SBL,BLR) and at Charlotte on 12/13 (WAM,DLC). Snow Buntings were present in about average abundance with most reports predictably coming from the Champlain Valley. Easily the largest flock was the 500 found in Addison on 2/1 (JRA), followed by 200-300 in New Haven on 2/8 and 2/11

(EH,MCD,JID), 200 in Charlotte on 2/15 (WAM,DLC) and 175 in Manchester on 1/6 (EFG). For the second year in a row, Red-winged Blackbirds saw little need to linger as a paltry 7 CBC birds were tallied. Other late reports came from Isle La Motte and Swanton on 12/7 (DLC,SBL,BLR), from North Hero on 12/7 (WGE,NLM,RBL), from Plainfield on 12/9 (MFM) and from Addison on 12/23 (PW,PS). The first spring migrants were 17 in Vernon on 2/27 (JJC). One of the season's better finds was the trio of Rusty Blackbirds at Bartonville on 12/23 (TEJ), possibly the same birds reported on the Springfield CBC from a location only three miles distant. One bird was still present in Chester as late as 1/7 (TEJ). The first Vermont BREWER'S BLACKBIRD to appear in these winter Records was a highlight of the Burlington CBC. (The count period bird at Ferrisburg in 1984 was found in neighboring New York.) Common Grackles were also rare in December as just 13 CBC birds were found, the lowest in a decade. The only other lingerers were singles at Dorset on 12/19 (EFG), at Duxbury on 12/24 (FAP), at North Clarendon on 1/1 (WGE,NLM) and at East Ryegate on 1/6 (WGE,NLM,CCR,ML). Two birds in Vernon on 2/27 (JJC) were the first returnees from the south. Brown-headed Cowbirds were far more numerous with a respectable CBC total of 160 individuals. A flock of 120 was at Grand Isle on 12/26 (RBL), but the only January reports were for a pair in Brandon on 1/13 (SSW), 9 in West Hartford on 1/15 (WGE,CCR) and 30 in East Thetford on 1/6 (WGE,NLM,CCR). A single overwintering bird was in South Shaftsbury on 2/10 (WGE).

FRINGILLIDS THROUGH HOUSE SPARROW

The Pine Grosbeak continued its erratic ways, as only 115 CBC birds were tallied, nearly half of which were in Plainfield. Late winter produced far better results with 70 in Montpelier on 1/22 (BMP), 55 in Woodstock on 2/8 (WGE,NLM), 39 in Hartford on 2/17 (WGE,DHC) and up to 40 in Washington late in the season (ATA). Reports for early winter were rather infrequent and generally for a half-dozen birds or less. The Purple Finch also settled for an indifferent performance. Aside from Maquam's 107 birds the CBC tally was uninspiring, while contributors' reports did little to improve the picture. Best counts were 5 in the Champlain Valley on 1/1 (WAM,DLC), up to 6 at a Vergennes feeder from 2/10 (RF) and an even 6 in Woodstock on 12/1 (CRP) and again on 1/2 (ML). The House Finch set yet another CBC record as 2168 individuals were counted, up more than 25% from the two preceding years. Only the wild and coniferous Northeast Kingdom seems secure into the foreseeable future against an apparently continuing and relentless invasion. On the brighter side, observer reports again were not as ominous, though flocks of 50 or more were recorded in the Champlain Valley (WAM,DLC), Weybridge (MBN), North Bennington/South Shaftsbury (WGE,NLM) and White River Junction (WGE,DHC). For the first time in four years there was not a single record of Red Crossbills. Happily, the White-winged Crossbill was at least represented, thanks to a lone CBC bird at Plainfield, plus 4 individuals at Wenlock WMA on 12/23 (FO,CSP) and 12 at Moose Bog on 2/20 (ATA). By contrast, numbers of the Common Redpoll soared to 3327 on 14 of 15 CBC's, the best showing in six years. Other reports were similarly impressive, with max. counts of 500 in Addison on 1/6 (SSW), 400 at a Grand Isle feeder during February (RBL), 325 at Isle La Motte on 1/18 (RBL), 300 in Charlotte on 12/13 (WAM,DLC), 300 in Ferrisburg on 12/27 (MCD,JID) and 300 in Weybridge on 2/8 (MBN). Those of us who had just 50 or so at our feeders should obviously be thankful. Not surprisingly, there were two reports of frosty and/or white-rumped individuals matching the textbook description of Hoary Redpoll, one at Winhall

on 2/14 (WJN), the other at Brandon on 2/10-2/13 (SSW). Both birds were carefully observed and well described, but the Vermont Records Committee continues to view all records of this species as hypothetical. Meanwhile, the Pine Siskin was present in average but certainly not overwhelming numbers. Both the CBC tally of 701 birds and the many reports of flocks in the 20-60 range give evidence that all is well with this lovely little slender-billed finch. The American Goldfinch produced similar numbers with just under a thousand CBC birds and several reports from contributors of flocks of 40 or so. The max. count was 100 in Weybridge on 1/31 (MBN). Highly unusual was the discovery of a European Goldfinch at a Ferrisburg feeder on 1/6 (MBN,MM,DLC). A second bird was observed on at least one occasion (MCD,JID) with the last reported sighting on 1/18 (WAM). In all likelihood these were either escaped birds or from a flock foolishly (and illegally) released in the Catskills during the preceding summer (D. Kibbe). The Evening Grosbeak, that bane of feeder guardians, was present in hefty numbers for the CBC's but became far less abundant thereafter. High counts were 334 at Wilder/Ryegate on 1/6 (WGE,NLM,CCR,ML) and 150 in Bartonville on 12/26 (TEJ). Another unpopular species, the House Sparrow again declined, with 7730 CBC birds the third consecutive drop and the lowest total since 1979. However, one elitist contributor observed "the first ever" on 2/28 in an out-of-the-way section of Woodstock, lamenting that "there goes the neighborhood" (JMN).

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AWB	Alston Barrett	ML	Mark Lapin
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HBS	Helen Shepard	CMW	Carol Wood
NS	Nancy Simson		

Abbreviations

ad. adult
 CBC Christmas Bird Count
 imm. immature
 max. maximum
 NWR National Wildlife Refuge

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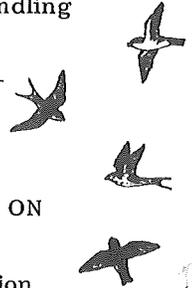
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