

# Records of Vermont Birds

Volume 17, Number 1 - Winter 1988-1989

## WINTER SEASON '88-'89

1 December to 28 February

Frederick H. Pratt, Seasonal Editor

The only thing predictable about Vermont winters is their unpredictability. One could say the same about the birding. This past winter proved no exception: a shot of surprises, all tending to confirm the reasonableness of expecting the unexpected.

On the weather front results were characteristically confounding. December was somewhat colder than normal; January, on the other hand, was the warmest since 1975, with an average temperature nearly 4° above the thirty-year norm. However, in February temperatures were again on the cold side, making the winter as a whole typically chilly. Precipitation amounts were another story, as a perverse consistency became the norm. December was the driest since 1960, while Burlington, with a mere .42" of precipitation for the month, experienced its driest January ever. For the state as a whole, monthly precipitation totals ranged from 45% of normal in December to 76% in February.

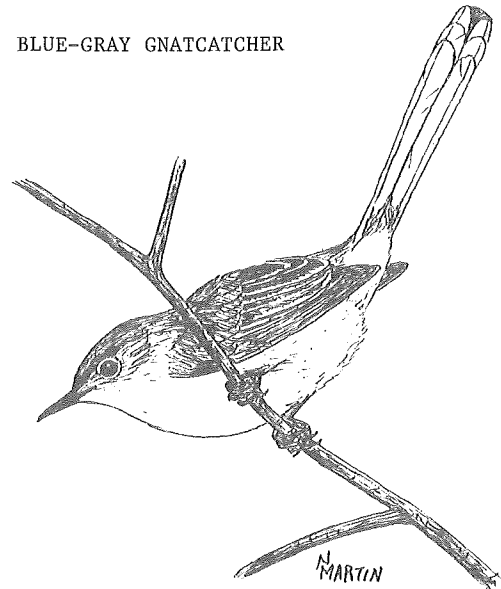
The winter was equally confusing for birdwatchers. Despite the cold December, the Christmas Bird Count (hereafter CBC) came up with a new high of 98,335 individuals, thanks in large measure to record-shattering performances by old favorites like the American Tree Sparrow and Black-capped Chickadee as well as the decidedly upstart House Finch. The 105 species recorded, however, were no better than average, well behind last year's 113, to say nothing of the 120 identified back in 1984. Nonetheless there were some notable finds: Gyrfalcon at Ferrisburg, Barrow's Goldeneye at both Burlington and Champlain Islands, a count period Brant at Burlington and a count period Merlin at Ferrisburg.

For the season as a whole, highlighted species would once again include Gyrfalcon and Barrow's Goldeneye, each with multiple post-CBC sightings, as well as the second winter record of BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER, and the second state record of LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL. Also of note was the Ruddy Shelduck on the Champlain Islands CBC, present now for the second year in a row.

Population trends among familiar species present are oftentimes deserving of comment, although winter numbers are so low that projections are risky at best. Still, numbers of wintering Bald Eagle and Tufted Titmouse are definitely encouraging while less common species that enjoyed good winters were Red-bellied Woodpecker, Carolina Wren, Winter Wren and Common Snipe. Although snipe have often overwintered at favored locations in the north, the other three species may well be experiencing population increases and/or range expansion.

Finally, a few words about the vagaries of some of our boreal visitors: The ever-erratic northern finches were mostly very scarce, including even the Pine Siskin which, in the prior year, had taken the state by storm. Other species in noticeably short supply were Pine Grosbeak, Common Redpoll and both crossbills. However, since food supply determines

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER



all, we can assume that our winter finches will reappear whenever there is insufficient seed crop in their native northern forests. More difficult to explain are the carryings-on of species like the Bohemian Waxwing, which disappeared after three memorable winters in a row, and the Snow Bunting, which chose this year for an invasion of massive proportions. Suffice it to say, the birds will always have the last word.

LOONS THROUGH HERONS. The Red-throated Loon continued its elusive ways as it once again went unreported for the season. Numbers for the Common Loon were right on target, however, as 14 individuals were counted on the three Lake Champlain area CBC's. Several other reports were received, including one from Marshfield Pond, where a bird in full breeding plumage was rescued from the ice on 12/11 and later released on Lake Champlain (MG,DP,CC). The last of the winter was a single bird at Button Bay on 1/25 (SSW). The Horned Grebe established a new record of 401 CBC birds, including 382 at Ferrisburg. A good total of 5 Red-necked Grebes was reported with 2 at Caspian Lake on 12/4 (FO,JW), 2 on the Ferrisburg CBC and a very late single at Button Bay on 1/25 (SSW,EBB). The Great Blue Heron lingered through December in relatively good numbers as a CBC tally of 10 exactly equalled last year's showing. One individual apparently overwintered at the Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area (hereafter DCWMA) Stone Dam access as it was noted several times in January and again on 2/19 (WAM). The only other January record was of an injured bird found in Williston on 1/12 that later had to be euthanized (VINS).

WATERFOWL. A record-breaking 41 Snow Geese on the Rutland CBC was noteworthy, especially since other reports were limited to 5 count-period birds from Saxtons River and a twosome on the Ferrisburg CBC. Quite remarkable was a count period report of Brant from Burlington, the first winter record of this species in Vermont since 1978. Numbers of Canada

Geese were again impressive with more than 3300 individuals tallied on 6 CBC's; 1940 birds were still present for the Midwinter Waterfowl Survey conducted by the Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department on 1/14 and 1500 were at DCWMA on 2/20 (NLM,DHC). Nevertheless, it should be noted that the total of 660,000 Canadas counted along the entire Atlantic flyway was the lowest since the census was begun in 1978 - and nearly 20% below the average for the decade. Bizarre indeed was a Greylag Goose discovered and photographed at the ferry landing in Grand Isle on 2/4 (MWA). The bird was presumably an escapee, as must have been a Ruddy Shelduck located in New York waters during the Champlain Islands CBC, for the second consecutive year. Turning to less exotic species, a Wood Duck in Rutland was the season's only CBC bird, although an average population of 10 was reported for the month of December at Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge (hereafter MNWR) (JBG). One overwintering individual was observed at Vernon on 2/18 (NLM,WGC,LRB). Green-winged Teal were also present at MNWR during December, with an average population of 10 and an estimated 25 on the first (JBG). A single bird on the Ferrisburg CBC was the only other report of the winter. The American Black Duck had another excellent year with 1399 CBC birds, just a handful shy of the record set in 1987. Other reports were encouraging, headed by 450 at Vernon on 2/18 (NLM,WGC,LRB). 230 individuals were counted along the Connecticut River between Wilder and Comerford Dams on 1/17 (CCR, DAM, JB) and 96 were noted in South Burlington on 1/9 (WGE,DHC). Mallards produced a slightly higher CBC total, including a near-record 710 at Burlington, but otherwise were generally outnumbered by Blacks. An exception: peak populations at MNWR on 12/1 showed the Mallard leading its relative about 500-200 (JBG). Northern Pintail were quite numerous in early December with a maximum count of about 25 at MNWR (JBG). However, numbers quickly dropped off as only 3 CBC birds were tallied, 2 at Vernon and 1 at Ferrisburg. Other reports were limited to singles at Charlotte on 12/10 (JDM) and again on 12/24 (WAM) and a drake at DCWMA on 1/14 (WGC,NLM,JPM). An excellent find was a single Northern Shoveler on the Burlington CBC, only the second winter report of this handsome species to appear in these Records. For the first time in several years there were no reports of Gadwall. Quite surprising was a female American Wigeon at the Basin Harbor Club in Pantou on 2/8 (PCR), renewed evidence that the species may be an occasional overwinterer in the Champlain Valley. Canvasbacks climbed to their best CBC showing since 1976 as 93 individuals were tallied at Burlington, Ferrisburg and Vernon. None were recorded on the Midwinter Waterfowl Survey, but as many as 25 were noted at Shelburne Beach on 2/12 (WAM,CSP). The handsome Redhead, always a good find in winter, was noted but twice with a single at Burlington on 1/7 (DLC) and two birds at Shelburne Beach on 2/12 (WAM,CSP). Up to 100 Ring-necked Ducks were still at MNWR on 12/1 (JBG), but no other reports were received except for 6 overwintering birds at Vernon Dam (JJC). Nineteen Greater Scaup constituted an acceptable but unremarkable CBC total - a bit disappointing, perhaps, in light of the 50 birds at MNWR on 12/1 (JBG). Late winter produced a raft of 225 off Meach Cove on 2/12 (WAM) and 7 at McNeil Cove on 2/23 (ATA). Lesser Scaup persevered at MNWR through much of December with an average population for the month of 10 (JBG). The only other report was a single bird on the Ferrisburg CBC. Oldsquaw were decidedly scarce as only two reports were received, a single on the Burlington CBC which probably was the same individual as the one at Shelburne Bay on 12/19 (WAM). Scoters kept to the high seas as only four were reported: a White-winged Scoter on the Ferrisburg CBC and 3 unidentified individuals on the

Champlain Islands CBC. Common Goldeneye were present in exceptional numbers with a CBC total easily surpassing previous records. A startling 2451 individuals were tallied on the Champlain Islands CBC alone. Other reports were both numerous and impressive, headed up by 2891 on the Midwinter Waterfowl Survey, 200 at the mouth of the Winooski on 12/23 (JDM) and 228 at Vernon Dam on 2/12 (JJC). Despite these totals, however, the entire goldeneye population along the Atlantic flyway was off some 17% from its 1979-88 average. It was a remarkable winter for the rare Barrow's Goldeneye, with reports from several locations along Lake Champlain. Early in the season, at least three ad. males were present: one on the Champlain Islands CBC (RBL), one at the Burlington waterfront for that CBC (NLM), and another at Shelburne Beach to at least 1/22 (CSP,v.o.). The Burlington bird remained from October to at least 1/9, when he was joined by an imm. male (WGE,DHC). Other males were an imm. at Converse Bay on 1/18 (MBN), and an ad. at Charlotte Town Beach on 2/12 (WAM); 2 females were at Kingsland Bay on 2/12 (JMD,KAO), making a total of as many as eight separate birds. Less confusing - and distinctly less surprising - was the performance of the diminutive but popular Bufflehead. Fifty-two CBC birds were not unexpected, as were the reports of small numbers throughout the winter from sheltered Champlain coves and bays. The maximum count was 44 at Burlington on 12/10 (WAM). The Hooded Merganser was nicely represented with flotillas of 31 at Love's Marsh, Lake Bomoseen, on 12/3 (RWP), 25 at Lake Bomoseen on 12/3 (CJF) and again on 12/10 (RWP) and 17 at Retreat Meadows, Brattleboro, on 12/2 (JJC). A strong CBC showing was followed by reports of overwintering birds on the Connecticut River. Seven individuals were counted between Wilder and Comerford Dams on 1/17 (CCR,DAM,JB) and 4 were noted at Vernon Dam on 2/12 (JJC). Common Mergansers continue to prosper in Vermont with 2913 CBC birds and 1654 on the Midwinter Waterfowl Survey. Nonetheless, this bird apparently is also suffering a decline of some 17% when population figures for the entire Atlantic flyway are considered. As for the Red-breasted Merganser, 10 individuals at Ferrisburg and 2 at Champlain Islands produced an entirely respectable CBC showing. In addition, a surprising 20 were counted along Lake Champlain on 1/5 (SSW).

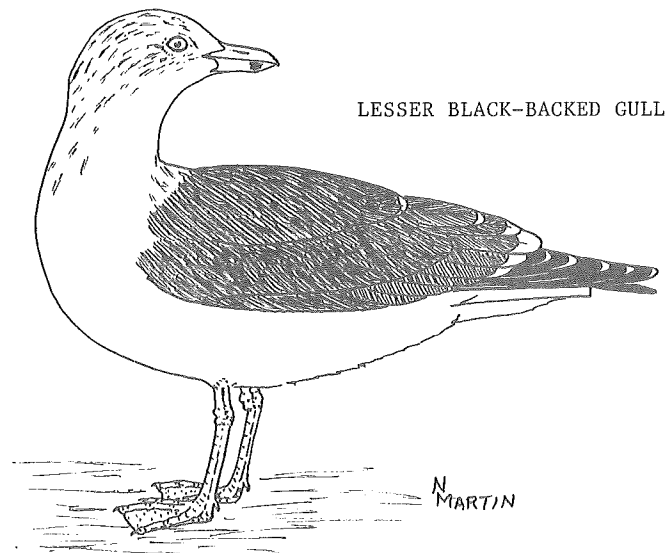
HAWKS AND FALCONS. For the second year in a row - but for only the third time overall--the Turkey Vulture joined the ranks of the CBC, compliments of a single bird at Saxtons River. The understandable fondness of the Bald Eagle for Vermont winters apparently continues to increase. Six CBC circles reported this magnificent raptor, while the January census tallied a total of 6 adults and 4 immatures patrolling such favored locations as Vernon Dam (an adult and an immature); Long Point in Ferrisburg (2 immatures); Meach Cove, Charlotte; Converse Bay; Wilder Dam; Readsboro Dam; and along the Battenkill in Arlington (all via CCR). To these 10 can be added several others: the immature in Plainfield which was present for "several weeks" enjoying the remnants of a deer (LNM), singles of unspecified age in Thetford on 12/12 (HR), and at Lake Fairlee on 1/31 (RW) and an adult at Searsburg on 2/20 (CJL). The total might be even higher in view of such reports as a second-year bird at Kellog Bay on 12/22 (FAP), 3 individuals at Thompson Point on 2/3 (via MCD,JID) and the Brattleboro and Burlington CBC birds. Four Northern Harriers on the Ferrisburg CBC corresponded nicely to results from the past five years. Late reports showed a female at Grand Isle 2/23 (DJH), a male at Charlotte on 2/4 (BLR,SBL,DLC) and 3 birds at Dead Creek on 2/18, including a female who successfully separated a Short-eared Owl from its prey (ATA). The

Sharp-shinned Hawk was well represented with 13 CBC birds along with about 15 reports from individual contributors. An immature in Grand Isle was doing its best to preserve the ecological balance as it was observed "tearing apart" an unfortunate pigeon (EMH). The Cooper's Hawk had an exceptional year as 14 CBC birds were counted, almost certainly a record. Other reports came from throughout the state including Hardwick, where an immature cut its foot after hitting a window, subsequently to be treated at the Vermont Raptor Center (VINS). The Northern Goshawk was nearly as numerous as 7 CBC circles tallied 11 individuals, not including a count period bird at Burlington. Other reports came from Sheffield (PFW), New Haven (JRA), Ferrisburg (MCD,JID), Woodstock (DLS,RVC), Washington (ATA) and Franklin (PJM). 133 Red-tailed Hawks established another CBC record, but later reports were hardly overwhelming, with a high count of 5 on 2/18 at DCWMA (ATA). The Rough-legged Hawk declined a notch with a CBC total of 34 birds and subsequent highs of 4 each at Sandbar on 1/24 (MWA,PAB) and at Dead Creek on 1/25 (SSW). The American Kestrel also settled for a mediocre year: just 10 CBC birds and several other reports of single birds, mostly from the Champlain valley. Somewhat off the beaten track were individuals in Pittsford on 1/16 (SSW) and in Waitsfield on 2/18 (JDL1). A count period Merlin at Ferrisburg was unique, the bird showing up at a feeder the day after the official count (via AP). A CBC Peregrine Falcon at Ferrisburg was both reassuring and exciting, as was an apparent male checking out the nesting site at Bristol on 2/11 (RCD). Not to be outdone was the magnificent Gyrfalcon, which first showed up for the Ferrisburg CBC. With three separate sightings of a gray-morph bird on the same day, it is possible two birds were present. A subsequent report, also of a gray morph, came from the Burlington landfill on 2/4 (SBL,DLC, BLR). In this instance, the falcon created quite a stir as it stooped on roosting Herring Gulls, then nearly caught a crow. Ah, the wonders of the wild!

GRAY PARTRIDGE THROUGH SNIPE. The only Gray Partridge of the winter were 4 on the Champlain Islands CBC while Ring-necked Pheasants were limited to 2 CBC birds at Vernon and a feeder frequenter in Washington (ATA). A lonesome individual on the Island Pond CBC was the only Spruce Grouse reported, further evidence, if any is needed, that this species is not benefitting from shrinking habitat. No such problem exists for the Ruffed Grouse which enjoyed its best year since 1982. An impressive showing on the CBC's was backed up by several other records including 10 on 12/28 in Reading (FMH,GEH) and 5 in Brownsville on 12/29 (EHH via BMH). The Wild Turkey settled back after its record-breaking performance a year ago. A CBC total of 69 was the poorest since 1984, but contributors spotted several good flocks headed by 30 at DCWMA on 12/26 (SSW), 28 at Woodstock on 1/10 and again on 2/5 (CRP) and 23 at Ferrisburg on 12/17 (MCD,JID). American Coot held on through much of December at MNWR with about 25 on 12/1 and an average population of 10 for the month (JBG). The only other report came from Shelburne Bay, where a single bird was spotted on 12/10 (WAM). The Common Snipe was present in record numbers for the CBC season, with 3 at Bennington, one at Woodstock and the dependable regular at Rutland. The latter bird apparently overwintered, as is its wont, since it was again observed on 1/14 and 2/26 in the vicinity of its favorite ditch in Clarendon (CJF). A sixth snipe was in Burlington on 1/9 (WGE,DHC) and 2/20 (NLM,DHC), and a seventh wintered in an open brook in Timmouth (PMB).

GULLS. After an outstanding year in 1987 Bonaparte's Gulls were nearly absent for the CBC's as a mere 4

were tallied. Earlier, a flock of 40 was observed feeding off North Hero on 12/3 (FAP). Ring-billed Gulls were down to 804 for the CBC's but other reports told a different story with 700 in Burlington on 1/1 (MWA,PAB) and "at least 1000" gulls (presumably Ring-billed) over 1-89 and the Winooski near Waterbury on 1/13 (MB). Herring Gulls, too, were scarcely in short supply with a CBC tally of 2013 birds plus several other impressive reports: 800 were at Blodgett's on 12/21, completely outnumbering some 27 Ring-billed (JDM) and 332 were at the Retreat Meadow on 12/6 (JJC). Iceland Gulls put on a good show with at least 4 in Burlington and 2 along the Connecticut River. These last were at Retreat Meadow on 12/7 (JJC) and near West Lebanon, NH on 1/16 (DHC), while in Burlington 1 was observed sitting very close to shore with other gulls 12/29 (ATA) and there were 2 at the landfill on 1/9 and another at the waterfront on the same date (WGE,DHC). An Iceland at Blodgett's Beach on 1/1 and 1/2 (CSP,WAM) may or may not have been still another individual. Another star of the Laridae, and of the entire winter season was an adult LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL discovered at Retreat Meadow, Brattleboro, on 12/3 (AGK). The bird was seen



LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL

again on 12/5 (JJC) and carefully described by both observers. The only Glaucous Gull of the winter had joined the two Icelands at the Burlington landfill by 2/4 (DLC,BLR,SBL). Last and largest, the Great Black-backed Gull set new CBC records with 310 individuals overall and 222 at Burlington alone. "Incredible numbers" - something in the neighborhood of 175 - were observed below Bellows Falls on 1/22 (DC).

DOVES. Rock Doves continue to threaten the 7000 mark for a CBC population, but have yet to achieve this milestone. 660 individuals were meticulously counted on 1/17 between Wilder and Comerford Dams (CCR,DAM,JB). Mourning Doves were not far behind with 4712 CBC birds, down about 10% from last year. Ninety were feeding on a lawn in Randolph on the stormy morning of 12/20 (EWC,MCC), while on the same date 55 were counted in Brandon (SSW).

OWLS. Ten Eastern Screech-Owls added up to the best CBC tally since 1978. The same number represented the peak population for the species during February at MNWR (JBG). One gray-morph bird was observed in its roost hole on Long Pt., Ferrisburg on 2/20 (NLM,DHC). Great Horned Owls were also numerous with a record 17 noted on the Champlain Islands CBC, along with another 14 individuals reported from four other circles. Five was the peak population at MNWR during January (JBG), while several other reports were



	BENNINGTON 12/17	BRATTLEBORO 12/17	FERRISBURG 12/17	ISLAND POND 12/17	SAXTONS RIVER 12/17	BURLINGTON 12/18	CHAM./ST. ALBANS 12/18	VERNON 12/18	WINHALL 12/21	HANOVER/NORWICH 12/26	WOODSTOCK 12/28	PLAINFIELD 12/31	SPRINGSFIELD 12/31	RUTLAND 1/1	CRAFTSBURY/GRNS. 1/2	TOTALS
Short-eared Owl			2													2
N. Saw-whet Owl									1							1
Owl (sp.)		1														1
Belted Kingfisher		2			3	2		3	2	1	2		2	1		18
Red-bel. Woodpkr.	1															1
Downy Woodpecker	35	38	144	18	61	71	64	17	11	47	49	24	80	118	29	806
Hairy Woodpecker	12	17	47	22	24	30	24	8	12	31	34	28	48	66	38	441
B.-bkd. Woodpkr.				2												2
Northern Flicker			5		1	2								1		9
Pileated Woodpkr.		3	16	8	3	19	4	4	1	1	4	2	2	10	1	78
Woodpecker (sp.)				1												1
Horned Lark	30		832		193	1	341	179						35	1	1,612
Gray Jay				11												11
Blue Jay	172	205	407	208	283	306	189	114	90	314	350	146	513	597	572	4,466
American Crow	210	277	305	3	336	1706	264	208	23	663	171	111	334	435	90	5,136
Common Raven		5	8	23	3	2			40	2	8	21	2	14	18	146
Bl.-cap. Chickadee	375	697	1239	643	690	855	967	157	905	1738	1958	710	2024	1718	1186	15,862
Boreal Chickadee				36											5	41
Tufted Titmouse	14	26	7		19	23	2	16	20	11	5		25	18		186
Red-br. Nuthatch	1	13	32	31	5	31			39	28	25	39	17	63	59	383
Wh.-br. Nuthatch	52	70	124	11	88	89	95	28	58	68	119	21	149	180	35	1,187
Brown Creeper		6	15	4	3	15	16	3	20	13	14	3	9	27	11	159
Carolina Wren						CP					1		CP			1
Winter Wren			1					2						1		4
Golden-cr. Kinglet		13	10	23	3	2	1	7	19	14	33	11	6	15	29	186
Ruby-cr. Kinglet													1			1
Eastern Bluebird	10		4													14
American Robin	2		144	1	7	56	1	5	1	1	2		2	2		224
N. Mockingbird	1	4	8		7	12	2	9	CP	6			4	10		63
Cedar Waxwing	CP		361		5	176	34						8	17		601
Northern Shrike			CP	1							1	2	1		2	7
European Starling	983	900	1601	27	991	1723	1514	776	36	309	181	162	699	910	288	11,100
Northern Cardinal	115	36	202		79	146	91	46	11	46	45	9	86	128	2	1,042
Am. Tree Sparrow	204	112	572	14	239	221	246	258	3	63	40	14	191	256	116	2,549
Field Sparrow		1			1		1	1								4
Song Sparrow	8	8	11		21	5	8	42		1			6	7	2	119
Swamp Sparrow					1			1								2
Wh.-thr. Sparrow	6	1	2		3	1		8	2		4	1	1	1		30
W.-crowned Sparrow			1													1
Dark-eyed Junco	260	245	36		260	18	15	99	43	40	103	1	181	70	4	1,375
" pink-sided race									1							1
Lapland Longspur			3				5						4			12
Snow Bunting			452	58	41	138	922	21		42		12	64	615	214	2,579
Red-w. Blackbird	8		3		1	9	2							1	1	25
Rusty Blackbird					1		3							2		6
Common Grackle			3	1	1					1	12				2	20
Brown-h. Cowbird	7	65	1		17	11	46	4			10		143	9	17	330
Pine Grosbeak						11						6				17
Purple Finch	3		28	4		54	13			5		2	4	6	93	212
House Finch	301	157	508	11	302	558	230	109	16	361	65	13	483	484	39	3,637
Red Crossbill															55	55
White-w. Crossbill				40												40
Common Redpoll			1		4	1						1				7
Pine Siskin			11			3	2						62		1	79
Am. Goldfinch	61	47	248	2	37	49	189	13	1	113	27	38	197	171	23	1,216
Evening Grosbeak	33	31	17	186	65	18	14	125	207	230	224	137	832	63	608	2,790
House Sparrow	359	307	2095	62	436	1462	1576	125	122	662	267	99	1151	1030	425	10,178
TOTAL SPECIES	41	37	78	31	52	62	60	49	32	42	34	30	42	49	34	105
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	4905	3872	15,568	1512	5741	13,929	13,736	4033	1856	5868	4447	1805	8187	8487	4389	98,335

received including that of an incubating bird in Alburt on 2/28 (CCR,CCF). The permanent resident at VINS chose the last day of February to lay her first egg. The variable Snowy Owl was scarce this year as only 2 were sighted, singles at Sandbar on 12/10 (BLR) and at Vergennes on 2/6 (MCD,JID). Barred Owls were reported in average numbers, what with 6 birds in 4 CBC circles and another half dozen noted by contributors. At least three were actually seen, one at Sandbar on 1/1 (MWA), one in a yard in Ferrisburg at high noon on 1/10 (MCD,JID), and one in another Ferrisburg yard on 2/20 (NLM,DHC). The only report of the difficult Long-eared Owl came from the Vernon CBC, while the Short-eared Owl also proved elusive with just 3 individuals observed, 2 on the Ferrisburg CBC and the aforementioned bird at DCWMA on 2/18 in dispute with a Northern Harrier over feeding rights (ATA). The charming little Northern Saw-whet Owl was hopefully under-reported since a mere two birds were reported, one on the Winhall CBC and another at Ferrisburg on 12/7, the latter surviving a sudden encounter with a window (MCD,JID).

KINGFISHERS AND WOODPECKERS. Eighteen CBC Belted Kingfishers produced a handsome total for a very handsome bird. Two were in South Woodstock on 1/31 (LHR), while other overwintering individuals were noted in Rutland as late as 2/13 (SSW), in Pomfret on 2/28 (JRL) and even in Topsham where a female was periodically observed, including on 2/20 (EM). Among the Picidae the Red-bellied Woodpecker caused a stir with 3 individuals reported, a CBC bird in Bennington, a second in Poultney as late as 1/21 (RMR), and a third in Bridport on 2/28 (CK,MGC). This species may well be continuing to expand its range gradually northward, even to include our snowy clime. The Downy Woodpecker soared to record numbers with 144 at Ferrisburg and a total CBC population of 806. Individual reports were topped by 10 around the Killington ski area (RWF) and 11 between Wilder and Comerford Dams on 1/17 (CCR,DAM,JB). The Hairy Woodpecker was also flourishing though numbers were short of previous records. Five were regular visitors in Sherburne (RWF), while 6 were noted on the Wilder-Comerford journey of 1/17 (CCR,DAM,JB). Again there were no reports of the rare Three-toed Woodpecker (four years running now), but the Black-backed Woodpecker jumped to near abundance with 2 birds on the Island Pond CBC anticipating two other reports, one just across the border in Hanover, NH, on 1/22 (TL) and one in Island Pond on 2/12 (ATA). Northern Flickers were also a bit more accommodating with 9 CBC birds, plus lingerers in North Hero on 12/14 (JDM) and in Shelburne on 1/1 (WAM). Finally, the Pileated Woodpecker, the grandest of the Picidae, produced another record year with a CBC tally of 78 supplemented by more than 20 reports from individual contributors.

HORNED LARK THROUGH CREEPER. Horned Larks were hardly scarce but were clearly down from recent years. A CBC population of 1612 was about average, while the largest latewinter flocks were 200 in Addison on 2/20 (NLM,DHC), 100 in Ferrisburg on 2/26 (MCD,JID), and 55 at Grand Isle on 2/4 (MWA,PAB). The Gray Jay had a good winter as the Island Pond CBC came up with 11 individuals. Other reports, all from the same area, included 3 on 1/28 near Moose Bog accepting handouts of Triscuits (RVC) and another 3 in Brighton on 2/26 (WAM). The Blue Jay rebounded a notch to 4466 CBC birds, compared with last year's total of 3897, while feeder flocks often reached the 20-30 range. The American Crow was at record levels as 1706 birds at Burlington and 5136 overall were both new highs; 150 overwintering birds were noted in Franklin (PJM), while 250 were in Clarendon on 2/25 (CJF). The Common

Raven, on the other hand, seemed under-reported notwithstanding a respectable CBC total of 146. Individual reports were limited to just 1 or 2 birds each. Meanwhile, the Black-capped Chickadee, small in stature but mighty in spirit, soared to a remarkable 15,862 individuals, far outdistancing last year's CBC record. Feeder flocks were as high as 30 in Sherburne (RWF) and 50 in Reading (FMH,GEH). Boreal Chickadees also had a good year, paced by 36 birds on the Island Pond CBC. Other reports included 5 on the Craftsbury-Greensboro CBC, 5 in Sheffield on 1/14 (PFW,SAW) and 5 near Moose Bog on 2/7 (ATA). The big news among the Paridae, however, was the resurgence of the Tufted Titmouse, as both the CBC tally and the February census were at new highs with 186 and 157 individuals respectively. The largest feeder flock was an astonishing 21 birds at Fair Haven on 12/29 (EPA). Red-breasted Nuthatches also had a good year with a CBC population of 383, the highest since 1982. The White-breasted Nuthatch did even better, establishing a new CBC record of 1187, thereby exceeding 1000 for the first time. Needless to say, both nuthatches were frequent and welcome visitors at feeders throughout the state. Not to be outdone, Brown Creepers also drew attention with 159 CBC birds, by far the greatest total in recent memory. Nearly 20 reports came from observers, the maximum count being 5-6 individuals working pines on Grand Isle on 12/25 (DJH).

CAROLINA WREN THROUGH STARLING. The indomitable Carolina Wren expanded its foothold in Vermont with at least 5 overwintering birds reported: an individual in Bloomfield (in the Northeast Kingdom no less!) from 11/12 to "well into winter" (CS,ES,DEK), another in Manchester that stayed for about ten days until 1/27 (MCS), a third in Brandon observed on 1/24 and again on 2/22 (SSW), an opportunist that roosted in a Woodstock henhouse along with the chickens until 2/11 (JHM) and a fifth wren observed under a feeder in Proctor on 2/18 and found stunned the next day in the garage (LK). In addition, birds in Brandon on 2/28 (SSW) and in Manchester Center on 2/3 (fide NS) were found only 1-2 miles distant from the locations of earlier observations. Four CBC Winter Wrens were also a surprise, matching the previous high set back in 1984. One bird was in Brandon on 12/7 (SSW) but more surprising were overwintering individuals noted on 2/28 in Dummerston (WDN), on 2/24 in Norwich (CCR) and in Island Pond through the winter, dining on peanut butter (JBW). Golden-crowned Kinglets presided in typical numbers, judging from a CBC total of 186 individuals. Little groups of 5-6 were in Woodstock on 12/21 (JMN) and in Washington on 2/5 (ATA). Pleasing were two Ruby-crowned Kinglets, one at Herrick's Cove on 12/7 (AMD) and a regular at a Springfield feeder that happily stayed on for the CBC. Less happy but certainly remarkable was the tale of a f./imm. BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER found dead on the east shore of Grand Isle on 12/24 (EMH). The specimen was sent to VINS and now resides in their permanent collection of skins, courtesy of NLM. More cheerful news was provided by 14 Eastern Bluebirds on two CBC's, including a record 10 at Bennington. Other good tidings came from contributors who reported 4 birds at Shelburne Pond on 12/4 (CSP), 3 at Panton on 1/14 (CSP), 6 in mid-January at Brandon (SSW) and 2 in Ferrisburg on 2/28 (MCD,JID). The only Hermit Thrush of the season was a hungry fellow in West Windsor on 12/8 feeding on apples and crabapples (CP). The American Robin checked in with a good CBC report of 224 individuals, the best since the extraordinary winter of 1984. Several overwintering robins were reported, while late-February records included 24 in Shelburne on 2/20 (NLM,DHC), 15 in Charlotte on 2/24 (SSW), 4 in Ferrisburg on 2/26 (MCD,JID) and 6 in



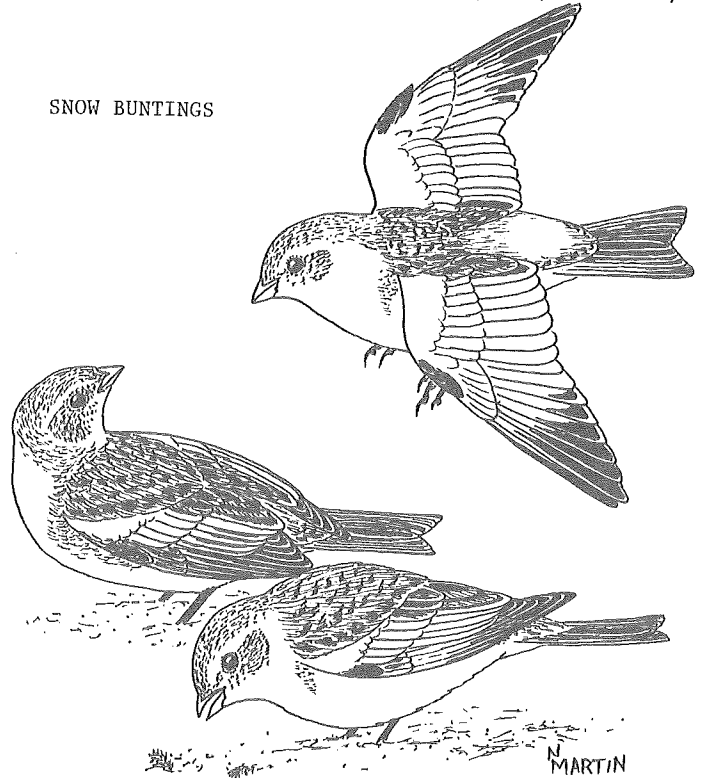
Shelburne on 2/28 (CSP). The Northern Mockingbird produced a CBC record of 63 individuals and a surprising 4 were in Pittsford on 1/1 (SSW). Late winter reports were very scarce, however, and only 6 birds showed up for the February census, 3 of which were in Ferrisburg (MCD,JID). After three big winters the Bohemian Waxwing disappeared almost entirely as just one report came in, of 6 birds in Putney on 1/26 (JJC). By contrast the Cedar Waxwing rallied to its best year since 1984: a hefty total of 601 CBC birds followed by numerous reports from contributors. Best numbers were 65 in Brandon on 2/22 (SSW), 50 in Colchester in late December (JDM) and 43 on Grand Isle on 2/20 (DJH). The Northern Shrike, like many of its compatriots, was far scarcer than usual. A poor CBC total of 7 individuals was supplemented by only four other reports: singles at Retreat Meadows, Brattleboro on 12/4 (JJC), in Moretown on 12/16 (FAP), in Marshfield on 2/12 (ATA) and in Berlin on 2/18 (ATA). The unloved European Starling unfortunately rose above the 11,000 mark for only the second time in recent CBC history; the good news is that chickadees still outnumbered them by more than 4,000 individuals.

WARBLERS THROUGH JUNCO. Two January reports of Yellow-rumped Warblers were reminders that this species is quite hardy if a food source is available. One bird was in Brattleboro on 1/23 (WDN); the other was sighted on 1/8 in Vershire on the observer's back porch "feeding on spider webs and spider skeletons." (DAM). The Northern Cardinal was widespread and numerous with 202 birds at Ferrisburg and 1042 overall, new CBC records. Once again the February census told a different story: a respectable 471 birds - but a long way from a record. The largest feeder flock was evidently in Ferrisburg, where 19 were counted on 2/28 (MCD,JID). American Tree Sparrows set another CBC record with 2549 individuals counted, although no circle even approached the Ferrisburg high set back in 1985. Reports from the field suggest that good numbers were present throughout the winter. A Chipping Sparrow in Middlebury on 12/13 (MBN) was very late - and presumably more hungry than wise. Field Sparrows showed up on four CBC's for their best performance since 1984. An apparent overwinterer was in Brandon where it was observed on 12/5 and again on 2/5 (SSW). Song Sparrows fell short of last year's record but still checked in with 119 CBC birds. Other reports featured 3 in Bridport on 1/14 (WGE,NLM,JPM) and a single in Brandon on 2/28 (SSW). Late Swamp Sparrows were at Saxtons River and Vernon for the CBC season, and a third was at Lake Bomoseen on 1/14 (WGE,NLM,JPM). White-throated Sparrows seemed quite scarce as only 30 CBC birds were registered, most in the southern tier. Only two reports came from contributors: 3 individuals at Red Rock Park in Burlington on 2/4 (MWA,PAB) and a single at Missisquoi on 2/12 (MWA,PAB). The only White-crowned Sparrow of the season was at Ferrisburg, marking the fifth year in succession that this aristocrat of the sparrow family has appeared on the CBC roster. Dark-eyed Juncos, by contrast, were plentiful indeed. A CBC tally of 1375 was the best in over a decade, except for 1984 when juncos blanketed the state. Maximum feeder flocks were 25 in Westminster West (AMD), 24 in Woodstock (JMN) and 20 in Chester (CEAd). The most noteworthy junco of the season was a member of the pink-sided race on the Winhall CBC.

LONGSPUR THROUGH ICTERIDS. Lapland Longspurs were as inconspicuous as ever with only about a half dozen sightings to report. CBC birds were at Ferrisburg, Champlain Islands and Springfield, while 6 individuals were in Panton on 2/20 (MBN) and 3 were in Addison on

2/19 (WAM). An unspecified number were observed along Jersey Street and Slang Road on 2/17 (CB,LBI) and 42 were with larks and buntings in Addison on 2/20 (NLM,DHC). Overwhelming numbers of Snow Buntings were reported, beginning with a record CBC total of 2579 birds, up a good 50% from the previous high back in 1980. Later reports were simply astonishing: 2000 in Charlotte on 1/21-22 (WAM), 1000 in Ferrisburg on 1/22 (MCD,JID), 1400 in Bridport on 2/19 (CJF), 1370 in New Haven, Addison and Ferrisburg on 2/20 (NLM,DHC), "thousands" in West Pawlet on 1/26 (ACB), and a mere 8-10,000 in Monkton on 1/20 (HB via WP).

SNOW BUNTINGS



Sixty-one buntings were observed near Shelburne Beach on 2/4 "high in a willow tree" (DLC,SBL,BLR). The observers failed to give further details on the festivities. The Red-winged Blackbird headed south right on schedule with just a scattering of CBC birds along with singles in Vershire on 12/14 (ATA) and in Washington on 12/10 (ATA). The northern migration was headed up by 3-4 redwings in Brownsville on 2/24 (PO) and 2 in Clarendon on 2/26 (CJF). Rusty Blackbirds caused a stir as 6 CBC birds were reported from the Champlain Islands, Rutland and Saxtons River, the best total since 1976 when the same number were observed. More interesting was a flock of 9 observed in Clarendon on 2/26 (CJF); the birds had either overwintered or were very early in arriving from the south. Common Grackles stayed on for the CBC's in average numbers but overwintering was restrained: singles in Stratton (MH) and in Grand Isle (EMH) along with a maximum of 5 in Randolph (EWC,MCC). The Brown-headed Cowbird was more than adequately represented with 330 CBC birds, including 143 at Springfield (which last year counted nearly 400 of the parasitic beasties). Six were noted in Charlotte on 2/18 (ATA), apparently early migrants rather than overwinterers.

FRINGILLIDS THROUGH HOUSE SPARROW. Pine Grosbeaks were very scarce with only 17 CBC birds reported, from Burlington and Plainfield. Individual observers could do no better - a single in Grand Isle on 12/1 (RN) and a good flock of 18 in East Calais in late February (JCN). Happily Purple Finches improved to a CBC population of 212, highest since the banner year of

CONTRIBUTORS

CEAD	Chester Adams	JDL1	John D. Lloyd
EPA	Betty Allen	CJL	Cynthia Locklin
TSA	Ted Allen	EM	Elisabeth Macdonald
PSA	Paul Anderson	JAM	Judy Macdonald
MWA	Malcolm Archard	WSM	Scott MacLachlan
WSA	Wendy Arace	JJM	John Marsh
JRA	Jean Arrowsmith	JPM	Janet Martin
ATA	Anne Aversa	MRM	Molly Martin
CB	Catherine Bailey	NLM	Nancy Martin
PMB	Phillip Ballou	MM	Mrs. Maynard
EBB	Betty Barbarise	JHM	John McDill
WDB	William Barnes	WAM	William Meador
HB	Harrison Bennett	DAM	David Merker
LRB	Louis Bevier	ABM	Al Merritt
JB	John Binhammer	LNM	Larry Metcalf
ACB	Angus Black	JM	Jeff Morse
MB	Mark Bradley	PJM	Phebe Jane Mullen
PAB	Patricia Brayton	WN	William Nacel
NB	Norm Brown	JCN	Joan Neale
FC	Francis Cady	BN	Bruce Nelson
MC	Mrs. Caldwell	MBN	Marge Nelson
RVC	Robert Canosa	RN	Roy Newton
DLC	Dwight Cargill	WDN	Whitney Nichols
EWG	Elizabeth Clapp	JMN	Julie Nicholson
MCC	Mary Clapp	AN	Ann Niles
AC	Mrs. Albert Clark	WJN	William Norse
CC	Chris Clark	FO	Frank Oatman
DC	Don Clark	KAO	Kelly O'Connell
MOC	Martha Clark	PO	Pauline Ouelette
JJC	Jeremy Coleman	CP	Clarence Parker
JCC	Mark Council	DP	Diane Pence
WJC	William Crenshaw	JAP	Judith Peterson
DHC	Dan Crook	WRP	Wayne Peterson
AMD	Allison Deen	RWP	Roy Pilcher
JMD	James Dingley	AP	Alan Pistorius
DHD	Doris Dolt	CRP	Carol Powell
BCD	Bonita Dundas	FAP	Frederick Pratt
RCD	Randy Durand	CSP	Craig Provost
JID	John Dye	HSP	Hugh Putnam
MCD	Margaret Dye	HR	Herman Redden
EE	Eleanor Ellis	PCR	Peter Riley
WGE	Walter Ellison	CCR	Chris Rimmer
MBF	Mary Fenn	LLR	Leslie Rimmer
CCF	Chris Fichtel	BLR	Betty Rist
RWF	Robert W. Foley	TAR	Tom Rivest
CJF	C.J. Frankiewicz	LHR	Larry Roberts
MF	Mrs. Frost	RMR	Ruth Roberts
JBG	John Gallegos	SS	Sam Sanders
PG	Phil Gentile	SJS	Jean Sangdahl
EFG	Betty Gilbert	CS	Chuck Satterfield
MGE	Marty Gedlinski	MCS	Mary Schafer
DHG	Daphne Green	LS	Lloyd Seymour
EHH	Everett Hanson	NS	Nancy Simson
AH	Avis Head	DLS	Dyanna Smith
EMH	E.M. Henning	CS	Cora Smith
JH	Jay Henry	ES	Edward Smith
MEH	Miriam Herwig	HRS	H.R. Spackman
BMH	Beryl Hinton	AS	Allan Stimson
DJH	David Hoag	RS	Rick Stys
MH	Mrs. Holmes	CHW	Christina Swartz
FMH	Fred M. Hunt	EV	Eunice VanVleck
GEH	Gloria E. Hunt	VFWD	Vermont Fish & Wildlife Dept.
LBI	Louise Indridason	VINS	Vermont Institute of Natural Science
EJ	Edna Jones	VRC	Vermont Raptor Center
LK	Leah Kapitan	PEW	Paul Wagner
EK	Elizabeth Kellogg	RW	Russell Ward
DEK	David Killan	IW	Igor Weikow
ARK	Art Kimbell	SSW	Susan Wetmore
AGK	Andrew Knafel	WHW	William Willis
CK	Carol Krauss	PJW	Penny Wiltz
SBL	Sally Laughlin	JW1	Joseph Witalis
RBL	Richard Lavallee	JWh	Jean Whitney
OL	Olympia Lebeau	CMW	Carol Wood
TL	Ted Levin	JW	Jon Wood
JRL	Jen Lingelbach	IWo	Ian Worley
GPL	George Lisi	JBW	Josephine Worth

1984. The largest feeder flock was 24 in Grand Isle, which even featured a male of orange hue on 12/24 (EMH). Smaller flocks in the 6-10 range were moderately numerous. No good news came regarding the relentless march of the House Finch, as the last line of CBC resistance at Island Pond was finally overrun. Ferrisburg, Burlington, Springfield and Rutland all surpassed the previous high for a single circle, while the overall tally of 3637 individuals exceeded last year's record by 40%. Consider by contrast the lament of the winter editor in 1978: "House Finches are becoming more common in Vermont and the winter is no exception. The Bennington CC set a new high of 10 while Ferrisburg and Brattleboro produced one and two respectively." Crossbills were very scarce, presumably the result of cone crops rather than House Finches. In any event Red Crossbills were reported only once, a flock of 55 on the Craftsbury-Greensboro CBC, while White-winged Crossbills checked in with 40 individuals at Island Pond. Three females were found near Moose Bog on 1/29 (DLC). The Common Redpoll was equally scarce as just 7 birds were tallied on the Saxtons River, Plainfield, Ferrisburg and Burlington CBC's. A flock of six was spotted in the Moose Bog area on 1/29 (DLC). In an astonishing reversal of form, the Pine Siskin virtually deserted the state - just a year after overrunning it. The CBC total of 79 birds (thanks almost entirely to Springfield's 62) was easily the most dismal since 1978. Reports from readers were no better, with a maximum of 4 individuals in West Brattleboro on 12/3 (JJC). Last year Cornell's Project Feeder Watch had Vermont as the only state in the nation with an average feeder population exceeding 30; this year we had something like 3 feeder reports of 2 birds each, all from the month of February. Less mysterious by far was the performance of the American Goldfinch. A satisfactory CBC total of 1216 was supplemented by several feeder flocks in the 20-30 range. High counts were 35 at Chester on 1/15 (CEAD) and 40 in Grand Isle during late February (EMH). Evening Grosbeaks were down quite significantly with only 2790 birds on the CBC roster, the second lowest total in ten years. Most feeder flocks numbered less than 20, although larger groups ranged up to 56 in Chester (CEAD) and 64 in Woodstock on 1/30 (JMN). Greedy birds were not lacking, however, as the CBC population of House Sparrows rose to 10,178, the highest in five years.

The Records of Vermont Birds is published quarterly by the Vermont Institute of Natural Science. Subscription is on an annual basis, dating from the original month of subscription. Yearly subscription \$7.00

Contributors are reminded to send in rare and unusual bird sightings at once (or to call the Vermont Bird Alert) and to submit seasonal summaries promptly at the end of each season. This publication is only as complete as you make it. If you need sighting cards, write VINS, PO Box 86, Woodstock, VT 05091, or call us at 457-2779.

SPRING - 1 March - 31 May  
Editors, Whitney Nichols  
William Norse

SUMMER - 1 June - 31 July  
Editors, Lynn Erb  
Roy Pilcher

AUTUMN - 1 August - 30 November  
Editor, Walter Ellison

WINTER - 1 December - 29 February  
Editor, Frederick Pratt

MANAGING EDITOR: Sarah Laughlin  
ASSISTANT EDITOR: Julie Nicholson  
LAYOUT & ILLUSTRATION: Nancy Martin  
FIELD CARD COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN: Whitney Nichols

Special thanks to all who participated in the Christmas Bird Counts; Cardinal, Tufted Titmouse, Mockingbird counts; and Bald Eagle Surveys

Abbreviations Used in Text

CBC	Christmas Bird Count
max.	Maximum
v.o.	Various observers
DCWMA	Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area
MNWR	Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge
WRD	Winooski River Delta, Colchester
TWDR	Thurman W. Dix Reservoir, Orange
LB	Lake Bomoseen, Castleton