



Records of Vermont Birds

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WINTER SEASON '87-'88

1 December - 29 February

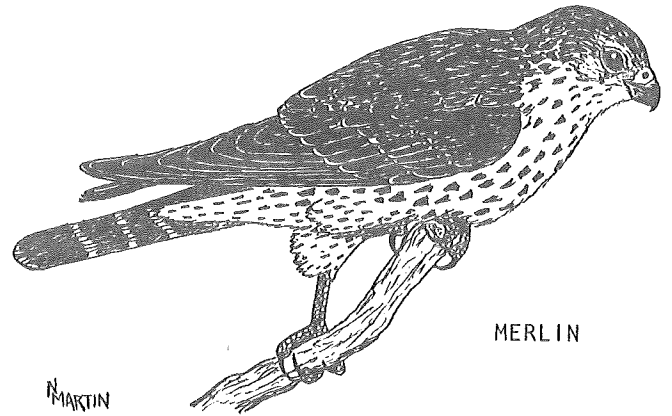
Frederick H. Pratt, Seasonal Editor

Relatively few surprises lay in store for the inhabitants and bird-watchers of Vermont during the winter of 1987-88. The weather was warmer and less snowy than usual; however, the warm periods came on the heels of a very brisk late November as well as typically cold weather during early December. As a result, most half-hardy species had already departed by the time the unseasonably mild weather of mid-December arrived. By the same token, generally wintry conditions held sway during late February, effectively discouraging early migratory movements among those species most inclined to venture north at the first sign of a thaw.

Yet, the season was not without interest as well as the surprises we all have come to hope for. The Christmas Bird Count (hereafter CBC) results were record-shattering, as 95,660 individuals were tallied, easily surpassing the old figure of 82,365. Setting new marks were such relatively uncommon species as Snow Goose, Wild Turkey and Lapland Longspur as well as such abundant ones as Canada Goose, Black-capped Chickadee, Common Merganser, Mourning Dove, House Finch, and Pine Siskin. In addition, the 113 CBC species (including an elusive tern at Vernon) was the high since the record 120 located in 1984. For the winter as a whole, 125 species were reported, once again the second-highest total on record.

Turning to individual species, the most unusual finds of the year were a NORTHERN GANNET, a LITTLE GULL and a ROSE-BREADED GROSBEAK on the Ferrisburg CBC, a NORTHERN HAWK-OWL in North Troy, a MERLIN in Addison, VARIED THRUSHES in Stowe and Barton and the aforementioned tern (species) on the Vernon CBC. Just as noteworthy was the Northern Oriole (BULLOCK'S subspecies) at a St. Johnsbury feeder from mid-November through 18 December. Other birds of note include the fourth BARROW'S GOLDENEYE in four years, an immature Black-Crowned Night-Heron in Newport and a Red-headed Woodpecker in North Danville. In short, birdwatchers had reasons to celebrate even in a year generally described as unremarkable.

Among our more usual winter visitors, relatively poor performances by sparrows and ducks were offset by another big year for the Bohemian Waxwing and an exceptional one for the Pine Siskin. Most northern finches, however,



MERLIN

stayed indifferent flights - though all were present either locally or at least during part of the season. The icterids gave a surprisingly good account of themselves with Rusty Blackbird, Northern Oriole and Eastern Meadowlark reported in addition to the regulars.

To conclude, winter birding in Vermont continues to provide surprises, even as our expectations of what is reasonable are ever better defined by increased coverage and reporting. In this regard, contributors' reports have been both valuable and appreciated; we urge your continued participation.

LOONS THROUGH HERONS

For the second year in a row the relatively scarce Red-throated Loon went unreported. On the other hand, the Common Loon was present in typical numbers with 10 CBC birds and several others as well, including 3 on the Waits R. in East Corinth on 12/17 and 23 (BeH). The last noted were 2 individuals at McNeil Cove on 1/17 (WGE,NLM). A Pied-billed Grebe in Vernon on 2/29 (JJC) was sufficiently out of season that your editor would have welcomed supporting details. Good, but not unusual, numbers of Horned Grebes were reported, including 167 birds tallied on Lake Champlain during 3 CBC's. Earlier, an impressive flotilla of 60 was observed off Charlotte town beach on 12/13 (WAM). The last of the season were 6 at Meach Cove on 1/23 and a single off Charlotte Town Beach the following day (WAM). The lone Red-necked Grebe of the winter was the Ferrisburg CBC bird, making it five years in a row that Ferrisburg has tallied this handsome but elusive species. Surely one of the season's outstanding finds was the imm. NORTHERN GANNET observed during the Ferrisburg CBC off Arnold

Winter 1987-88 is being published out of sequence, as Fall 1987 has not yet been published. Publication is anticipated in March 1989.

Bay (DLC party). Curiously, this is the second gannet in four years to appear in these winter Records, the other being an imm. discovered in Woodstock following a December 1984 snowstorm. Great Blue Herons continue to show a surprising partiality for winter in Vermont with 10 CBC birds trailing only last year's record count. Additionally, there were a half dozen other reports for December, including 2 birds at Waterbury Center on the 12th (JL). Reports for the first half of January included singles at Woodstock (JP), DCWMA (WGE,NLM,TEJ,SJS), Danby (MBo) and East Dorset (RK). Whether any successfully overwintered is unclear, but no such uncertainty exists about the BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON observed along the Clyde R. in Newport (MoJ) as a photograph of the bird appeared in the Newport Daily Express of 2/29.

WATERFOWL

A record 34 Snow Geese were tallied on the Ferrisburg CBC, while Vernon and Bennington chipped in with an additional 3. Individual contributors had considerably less luck, although 2 late birds were observed at Button Bay on 1/3 (WAM). Several large white birds noted feeding with a flock of Canadas in Arlington around mid-February (MMM) may also have been Snows. Canada Geese were also present in record numbers for the Ferrisburg CBC, as the total for all counts swelled to more than 4000 individuals. Large numbers remained well into the winter with an estimated 2000 in Panton on 1/21 (MBN). The only February reports were the aforementioned birds in Arlington and a flock of 88 in Addison on 2/15 (NLM,DHC). A Ferrisburg Wood Duck kept alive a remarkable string of CBC appearances stretching back over nine years. Green-winged Teal, on the other hand, were less accommodating, apparently having decided in November to opt for warmer climes. American Black Ducks enjoyed a banner season with 1419 CBC birds, easily their best year since these Records have been published. Large flocks observed by contributors include 50 in Franklin on 12/21 (PJM), 90 in Rutland on 12/25 (CJF), 180 in Vernon on 1/5 (WGE,DHC) and 48 in Proctor on 1/23 (RWP). Mallards were also present in record numbers, judging from a CBC tally of 2121 birds, nearly double the figure for last year. Reports from contributors were headed by flocks of 150 at Burlington on 1/2 (ATA) and 120 at Weybridge on New Year's Day (MBN). On the other hand, all the rarer ducks were very scarce indeed. For example, the only Northern Pintail of the winter was located on the Ferrisburg CBC, while the Gadwall settled for just two sightings, a single at Missisquoi NWR on 12/9 (JBG) and another off Shelburne Point on 2/15 (NLM,DHC). In like manner, only 2 American Wigeon were reported, both on the Rutland CBC. Canvasback were somewhat better represented with the Waterfowl Survey of Lake Champlain on 12/11 reporting 3 birds near Colchester Point and another 10 off Sandbar. Other records were limited to 2 individuals on the Vernon CBC, 4 at

Panton on 1/3 (MBN) and 2 drakes along with a possible hen on the Winooski R. near the Champlain Mill Mall on 2/8 (JD). Meanwhile, the Redhead eluded all observers, while the Fing-necked Duck tarried only until mid-December: 10 individuals at Missisquoi on 12/17 (JBG), 7 at Shelburne Bay on 12/5 (WAM) and 3 at L. Bomoseen on 12/12 (CJF). The only large raft of scaup observed was one of 200 off Sandbar on 12/11 (Waterfowl Survey); the specific species could not be determined. While 7 Greater Scaup were counted on the Ferrisburg and Champlain Islands/St. Albans CBC's, other reports settled for scaup (species): 6 off Shelburne Beach on 12/19 (WAM), 3 at Shelburne on 1/2 (ATA), 2 at Panton on 1/3 (MBN) and 2 at Vernon on 2/29 (JJC). Two Oldsquaw on the Ferrisburg CBC were a nice find, as was the group of 6 off Long Point, Ferrisburg, on 1/9 (WGE,NLM,TEJ,SJS). Scoters were also scarce with none reported on either the December or January Waterfowl Surveys. However, an adult male Black Scoter graced the Vernon CBC, although the bird was found in New Hampshire. Otherwise, our only report for this handsome sea duck was a "possible" on Lake Champlain on 1/30 (JRA). There were no reports of Surf Scoter, but an even dozen White-winged Scoters were noted in Addison on 12/13 (JRA). Other records were 2 individuals at L. Carmi on 12/3 (PJM) and another 2 on the Ferrisburg CBC. Early winter numbers of Common Goldeneyes were typically impressive with 2393 counted in Vermont waters during the December Waterfowl Survey. CBC numbers were also good, headed up by 789 individuals in the Champlain Islands/St. Albans circle. Thereafter the population dropped off quite sharply with but 428 spotted on the January Waterfowl Survey on 1/17. Other reports featured 200 on Lake Champlain on 1/23 (ATA), 32 at Vernon on 1/5 (WGE,DHC) and 16 at White River Junction on 2/11 (DHC). An adult male BARROW'S GOLDENEYE returned to the Connecticut R. near Vernon for the second winter in a row (JJC,WGE,DHC,PEG), marking the fourth consecutive year this rarity has visited Vermont. Bufflehead were present in average numbers at best, with only 45 CBC birds and just a half dozen other reports, topped by 10 at Missisquoi on 12/2 (JBG) and 10 at McNeil Cove on 12/9 (FAP). Two individuals were noted at Vernon on 2/29 (JJC), apparently venturing northward at an early date. Seventeen Hooded Mergansers constituted an excellent CBC tally, with other records also encouraging: 10 at Missisquoi on 12/10 (JBG), 4 at L. Bomoseen on 12/12 (CJF) and an impressive 13 along the Connecticut R. from Newbury to Barnet on 1/11 (WGE,NLM). Common Mergansers were abundant with a record CBC total of 3601 individuals, headed up by a near-record tally of 2647 at Champlain Islands/St. Albans. 1410 were noted on the



January Waterfowl Survey, while the max. count for the Connecticut R. was 45 at White River Junction on 2/11 (DHC). Red-breasted Mergansers also had a good year, as 14 CBC birds were tallied and 25 were noted at Charlotte Town Beach on 19 December (WAM). Somewhat surprising were singles reported from Woodstock on 1/16 (SSW) and from Bethel on 2/27 (SSW).

VULTURES, HAWKS AND FALCONS

For only the second time in recorded history, the Turkey Vulture appeared on the CBC roster, thanks to a dauntless individual at Ferrisburg. Two late February records may have been for the same bird, as singles were reported from the Brattleboro Dump on 2/28 (JJC) and from I-91 in Brattleboro on 2/29 (WDN). No less than three reports of wintering Ospreys leave your editor frankly puzzled as to the appropriate response. Presumably the Osprey is a relatively easy bird to identify, yet even experienced birders can be fooled by a species they know well. Further, raptors are notorious for plumage variations and deceptive flight patterns. Consequently, it is possible to imagine a variety of species that might be confused with an Osprey: Bald Eagle, Rough-legged Hawk (whitish head, black wrist-marks), m. Northern Harrier, Great Black-backed Gull, Northern Goshawk, the large falcons. Without complete details one is left with mere conjecture; however, with birds almost anything is possible and three records lead one to wonder. In any event, the reports came from Berkshire on 12/3 (AW), from near Williamstown Gulf on 1/17 (CPS) and from Salisbury near a fish hatchery on 2/26 (CMO), but none were accepted by the Vermont Bird Records Committee. Reports of wintering Bald Eagles present far fewer difficulties except, perhaps, to sort out the number of individuals. Five were observed during the eagle survey during early January: an ad. and an imm. in Ferrisburg, 2 ads. in Readsboro and an imm. in Vernon (via CCR). To this number can be added 2 ads. found on the Champlain Islands/St. Albans CBC and the ad. at Wilder Dam, back for his seventh winter in a row. Finally, individual observers seem to add another four, bringing the total for the season to 12: an imm. in Danville on 12/3 (KD), an ad. below Bridgewater on 12/7-8 (RV,RW), a bird of undetermined maturity along the Battenkill in West Arlington (via NS), and an imm. attacking mergansers on L. Champlain near Sloop Is., Charlotte (CM) may have been a 12th. Three Northern Harriers were tallied on the Ferrisburg and Brattleboro CBC's while another 3 were counted over the Champlain Islands on 1/3 (WAM). Other reports were limited to an ad. f. at DCWMA on 1/9 (WGE,NLM), a single in South Duxbury during early January (CSPi) and an ad. m. in Panton on 2/15 (NLM,DHC). Among the accipiters the Sharp-shinned Hawk was once again most prominent with 20 CBC birds, more even than in 1985 when Ferrisburg recorded the high count for a single circle. Numerous other reports were received. One individual was observed on

several occasions in Washington in hot (and often successful) pursuit of Blue Jays and Mourning Doves. The larger but less agile Cooper's Hawk was also much in evidence as contributors reported ten sightings in addition to 6 CBC birds. Two individuals were noted in Middlebury on 2/23 (JRA). Despite a poor CBC showing the Northern Goshawk was noted on several occasions around feeders, especially late in the season. Reports came from about a dozen locations including McIndoe Falls and Benson (WGE,NLM), Rockingham (AMD,MPH), Reading (FMH,GEH), Sheffield (PFW,SAW), Vernon (JCC), Corinth (NRE), Westminster West (AMD), East Montpelier (MFM), Woodstock (JMN,NLM), South Duxbury (CSPi), Burlington (AD), and Milton (TAR). A Red-shouldered Hawk made an unexpected appearance at Moose Bog for the Island Pond CBC (MSa). Winter buteos had a good year, especially the Red-tailed Hawk, which was both more numerous and more widespread than usual. 126 CBC birds established a new high - with all circles but Craftsbury/Greensboro reporting at least one individual. High counts in the Champlain Valley during late winter included 10 on 1/9 (WGE,NLM,SJS,TEJ) and 7 on 2/25 (SSW). The Connecticut valley also hosted several individuals "as far north as Newbury during January and February" (WGE,NLM). Even the interior had one report, with a single bird at Plainfield on 2/19 (MFM). The Rough-legged Hawk settled for 36 CBC birds, but evidently a good portion of these stayed on for the season. Seventeen, including 7 dark morphs, were counted around DCWMA on 1/9 (WGE, NLM,SJS,TEJ) while 10, all light, were tallied in the same area on 1/17 (FAP). The only report from outside the Champlain basin was for a single in East Montpelier on 1/11 (MFM). The American Kestrel was again surprisingly scarce with a very ordinary tally of 14; other reports were almost exclusively for singles and most were in the Champlain Valley. Outside the Champlain Valley, in addition to the Plainfield CBC, Kestrels were noted in North Montpelier on 12/19 (ATA) and in East Barre on 2/16 (ATA). One of the highlights of the winter was the male MERLIN discovered along Jersey St. in Addison on 15 February (NLM,DHC) - fully described and sketched so as to eliminate any possibility of confusion with the far more likely Sharp-shinned Hawk. Another excellent find was the ad. Peregrine Falcon on the Ferrisburg CBC, surprisingly the first time this splendid raptor has honored the Ferrisburg circle with its presence during the Count. In addition, a pair of Peregrines were observed in flight in Addison on 1/9 (WGE,NLM) while a single was at DCWMA on 1/24 (WGS). A report of two large falcons in flight over the west shore of L. Memphremagog in early January (EOM) was tantalizing but the observer didn't get a good enough look for positive identification as a Gyrfalcon.

GRAY PARTRIDGE THROUGH SNIPE

The Gray Partridge was once again scarce as well as shy with only 7 individuals tallied on

the Champlain Islands CBC. The population was reduced by one on 1/28 when a hen (weight 14 3/8 oz.) flew up in front of the observer's automobile at 4:15 in the morning (DJH). On a far happier note, a flock of 8 was observed in St. Albans on 2/15 (DIC,BLP). The Ring-necked Pheasant had its best year since these Records have been published as 11 CBC birds were tallied, including 7 on the Vernon count, albeit in Mass., not Vt. A cock spent the winter in Weybridge and was duly photographed while surveying the scene from a snowbank (MBN). For the second year in a row Island Pond located 2 Spruce Grouse for the CBC tally, but the species remains very rare and very local. One individual was also found along Lewis Pond Road in Ferdinand on 2/27 (BFR). Ruffed Grouse continued to be plentiful with 82 CBC birds as well as several other reports, including 5 in Lower Waterford on 2/16 (PFW), 3 in Winhall on 12/13 (WJN) and 3 near Moose Bog on 2/20 (WAM). The star of the Phasianidae, however, was clearly the Wild Turkey, which was reported in unprecedented numbers. Springfield's 107 birds easily established a new CBC record, while the CBC total of 238 was more than twice the record set two years ago. Other reports were equally impressive, featuring flocks of 50 in Brandon (SSW,EBB), 45 in West Arlington (MMC), 20 in Woodstock (EMS) and 15 in Windsor (WGE). Surprising, indeed, were two reports of Northern Bobwhite, in each case single birds taking advantage of feeders. One bird was observed four times during December in Washington (ATA) while the other successfully overwintered in East Corinth, drawing sustenance from sunflower seeds (CDS). A pair of Killdeer at Vernon were also noteworthy - the first CBC record for this familiar plover since 1976. The season's only other shorebird was the Common Snipe. One bird appeared on the Rutland CBC for the third year in a row, while overwintering birds were observed in Tinmouth (PMB) and Burlington (NLM,DHC).

GULLS AND TERNS

A second-winter LITTLE GULL was unique for the Ferrisburg CBC and the first winter report of this diminutive fellow since 1980. Discovered off the mouth of Otter Creek, the bird was studied for 90 minutes and described in meticulous detail (AP,JW). Not to be outdone, the Bonaparte's Gull put on a spectacular CBC show as Ferrisburg's 640 individuals totally eclipsed the previous record of 298 established back in 1979. Curiously, the only other report was for 3 birds at Shelburne Bay on 12/3 (WAM). Ring-billed Gulls were anything but scarce as the CBC total of 1229 was just about as expected. 144 birds were duly counted in Burlington on 1/17 (WGF,NLM). Herring Gulls are also thriving and the CBC tally continues to grow, with 1913. Iceland Gulls appeared on three separate CBC's, an excellent showing for the smaller of our white-winged gulls. A first basic plumage bird was observed in Burlington on

1/17 and 23 (WGF,NLM,BMP). Somewhat surprisingly, the only Glaucous Gull of the winter was a CBC bird in Burlington. The Great Black-backed Gull was present in record numbers with 116 at Burlington setting a new CBC high for the second year in a row. Reports from individual contributors confirmed that our largest gull is prospering as ever. Finally, among the Laridae, was the mysterious tern (species) reported from neighboring Northfield, Mass., on the Vernon CBC. Unfortunately, details seen in a glimpse did not provide for a more precise identification.

DOVES THROUGH BUDGERIGAR

Numbers for the Rock Dove were sufficiently impressive but somewhat reduced from a year ago. An even 100 were noted in Barre on 1/2 (ATA). The Mourning Dove, on the other hand, is clearly on the increase with 5355 birds, a new CBC high. As was true last winter, feeder flocks were also numerous as well as greedy. Even a Budgerigar, assuredly an escapee, joined in the feeder fun at a favored West Rutland location, remaining on station from late July to 14 January (JOC).

OWLS

Two Eastern Screech-Owls were discovered on the Ferrisburg CBC. The only other report was of a gray-phase individual seen on numerous occasions in Milton; pellet analysis showed it fed primarily on mice (TAR). Great Horned Owls were also under-reported with just 4 CBC birds, the lowest number in ten years. There were about a dozen other reports, including pairs in Shelburne (MPB) and along the LaPlatte R. (WAM). Snowy Owls were very well represented, though numbers were not quite equal to last season's big flight. A CBC bird in Craftsbury was joined by individuals in Rutland, (DB,NSm), Alburg (CBo), Winhall Hollow (via WJN), Newport (MAD,FOM, et al.), Morrisville, (MPB,LP) and Stowe (MFM). Needless to say, a NORTHERN HAWK-OWL in North Troy was the cause of much excitement and numerous long-distance phone calls. The bird was first discovered perched in a "tall dead-looking tree" at 4:15 p.m. on 2/11 (FO,JW). In customary manner, it remained in the area for over a month, was banded by Pat Taber (3/8), superbly photographed by Tom Rivest, and tolerated the admiration of birders from far and near. It was last observed on 3/12 (ATA). This was only the third hawk-owl sighting reported in these Records and the first since 1984. Barred Owls seemed everywhere, as a memorable 16 CBC birds were tallied, including a record-breaking 6 at Rutland. Sixteen other reports were received, an unusually high number. A probable Long-eared Owl on the Burlington CBC was the third in four years for that particular circle. A second, an injured bird found in Swanton on 2/29, died in spite of emergency surgery (EdS). Four Short-eared Owls at Ferrisburg added up to the best CBC showing since 1981 for this diurnal raptor. Also reported were 3 birds near Essex Center during

	ISLAND POND 12/18	VERNON 12/18	BENNINGTON 12/18	SPATTLEBORO 12/18	FERRISSBURG 12/18	PLAINFIELD 12/18	SAXTON'S RIVER 12/18	BURLINGTON 12/20	CHAM/ST. ALBANS 12/20	WINHALL 12/22	HANDOVER/ANDRITCH 12/27	WOODSTOCK 12/30	CRAFTSBURY/GRANS. 1/2	RUTLAND 1/3	SPRINGFIELD 1/3	TOTAL
BELTED KINGFISHER		1	3				2				3			3	3	15
DOWNY WOODPECKER	3	24	28	12	112	15	40	27	20	11	47	34	13	54	51	491
Hairy Woodpecker	7	11	5	20	56	18	22	10	5	15	36	40	14	35	59	353
BLACK-BACKED WOODPECKER	1															1
"THREE-TOED" WOPKA (sp.)	1															1
NORTHERN FLICKER					2			1						1	1	5
PILEATED WOODPECKER	1		6		13	1	3	5	CP	1	2	2	2	6	8	50
HORNED LARK		167	282		1520	7	1		260	4				28		2,269
GRAY JAY	3															3
BLUE JAY	117	166	227	239	238	111	314	106	25	177	252	428	248	327	922	3,897
JAY (sp.)	1															1
AMERICAN CROW	2	227	233	321	419	594	169	510	206	7	395	164	24	263	224	3,758
COMMON RAVEN	23			4	5	13	1	4	1	6	7	20	24	9	6	123
BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE	311	130	394	230	1100	276	671	504	341	884	1343	1658	780	1071	2127	11,820
BOREAL CHICKADEE	15					1							17			33
TUFTED TITMOUSE		27	1	10	7		28	12		1	10			6	11	113
RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH	43	3		4	9	21	7	2		88	27	9	89	31	18	351
WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH	8	37	38	29	103	5	78	31	26	45	95	74	11	90	175	845
BROWN CREEPER	3	6	1	1	9	1	3	5	3	14	13	15	7	8	12	101
CAROLINA WREN					1		1	1								3
WINTER WREN														1		1
GOLDEN-CROWNED KINSLET	7	12	1	4	10	5	27	13		30	33	30	15	12	26	225
EASTERN BLUEBIRD			1													1
HERMIT THRUSH										1						1
AMERICAN ROBIN		4		2	18		3	1			1	1			3	33
NORTHERN MOCKINGBIRD		10	5	6	3		6	8	3		4			3	2	50
BOHEMIAN WAXWING	9							83	10				22			124
CEDAR WAXWING			18		98		1	4								121
NORTHERN SHRIKE			2		2	2				1	2	3	5	1	1	19
EUROPEAN STARLING	5		1548	878	1568	232	980	1313	1366	17	694	107	349	943	485	10,485
NORTHERN CARDINAL	2	44	57	23	174	5	41	95	29	7	37	25	2	70	67	678
ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK				1												1
AMERICAN TREE SPARROW	1	83	131	92	531	19	307	123	160	14	73	28	32	126	166	1,886
CHIPPING SPARROW												1				1
FIELD SPARROW															2	2
SONG SPARROW		4	1	4	9	2	94	5	1	1		2		3	9	135
SWAMP SPARROW					2		3									5
WHITE-THROATED SPARROW		16	10	2			8			2		2		1	7	48
WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW							2									2
DARK-EYED JUNCO		78	66	180	66	1	64	11	3	3	19	9		24	78	602
LAPLAND LONGSPUR					59				5							64
SNOW BUNTING		1	150		473	25		24	495	9	1	52	53	1		1,284
RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD	1	2	1	5	5		1	CP	7	2				1	1	26
EASTERN MEADOWLARK			10													10
RUSTY BLACKBIRD						1	1									2
COMMON GRACKLE	1	1		1	3		2	1	1	1	1	3		1		16
BROWN-HEADED COBIRD		76	39		1				21		CP	6	41		371	555
NORTHERN ORIOLE															1	1
PINE GROSBEAK	57		6		13	8					CP		77			161
PURPLE FINCH	6	10	48	13	17	7	5	9		1	7	5	3	34		165
HOUSE FINCH		90	266	220	226	2	190	270	86	21	413	164	17	264	316	2,545
RED CROSSBILL	12												6			18
WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL	71						3			2		15	42		56	189
COMMON REDPOLL	108				96	20	1		CP	9			3			237
PINE SISKIN	558	70	56	404	662	732	311	430	52	301	575	263	274	738	464	5,890
AMERICAN GOLDFINCH	4	88	19	53	517	11	73	203	164	9	20	11		227	74	1,473
EVENING GROSBEAK	362	252	493	230	217	277	321	159	303	287	1217	501	565	386	842	6,412
HOUSE SPARROW	59	141	671	307	1550	93	630	962	1183	99	724	325	244	411	928	8,327
TOTAL SPECIES	34	49	51	38	80	37	54	52	51	37	41	39	33	45	43	113
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	1859	4431	7214	4434	17366	2853	6099	9209	9748	2183	7485	4637	3157	6230	8755	95,660

early December (RSe), 2 near Mt. Philo on 1/2 (ATA) and a single in Sheffield on 3/3 (PFW,SAW). Four Northern Saw-whet Owls were reported: a CBC bird at Ferrisburg, an injured bird found in Brattleboro and brought to the raptor center at VINS, and a hungry fellow who caught a mole under a woodpile in Barton on 1/30 (GGD). In Milton, the partially eaten remains of a Saw-whet were found in a nest box normally occupied by an Eastern Screech-Owl (TAR).

KINGFISHERS AND WOODPECKERS

Belted Kingfishers were again surprisingly common, with 15 CBC birds plus another eight reports. Two individuals were noted in Rutland on 1/3 while 2 others were at Saxtons River on 2/2 (REG). A first winter Red-headed Woodpecker found the fare to its liking at a North Danville feeder where it was observed daily through the season (AMA). Numbers of Downy Woodpeckers were slightly ahead of last year, as 491 birds were tallied. A Brandon observer reported 8 throughout the winter (SSW), while 13 were counted in Westminster on 2/27 (REG). Similar results were posted by the Hairy Woodpecker with a stable CBC population of 353 birds and numerous feeder reports for 3 or 4 individuals. Once again, there were no reports of the Three-toed Woodpecker and only one for the slightly more common Black-backed Woodpecker, courtesy of the Island Pond CBC. In addition, Island Pond reported a three-toed woodpecker (species). The Northern Flicker continued to show skepticism about northern winters as only 5 CBC birds were located. The only other record was for a single at Shelburne Bay on 1/2 (WAM). The magnificent Pileated Woodpecker, however, is evidently quite content with our wintry climate. Fifty CBC birds were tallied, off a bit from last year's record, and well over 20 other reports are ample evidence of the continuing success of this species.

HORNED LARK THROUGH CREEPER

Horned Larks had another big year as the Ferrisburg CBC scored a record 1520 individuals. The total count fell just shy of the mark set in 1985 but exceeds last year's total by more than two to one. Individual reports were topped by 100 at Dead Creek on 1/30 (WAM) and 530 in Addison, Pantan, Ferrisburg and Charlotte on 2/15 (NLM,DHC). There were only 3 Gray Jays on the Island Pond CBC, thus extending an alternate-year pattern (good year followed by poor) extending back to 1978. Four birds in Moose Bog on 1/16 (BMP) were well within their expected range, while 1 in Londonderry on 1/5 (WSA) was definitely a wanderer. The all-too-familiar Blue Jay had an off year as a CBC total of 3897 was less than two-thirds of last year's figure. Feeder reports confirmed this trend, although 42 were counted "on the dole" in Sheffield on 29 December (PFW). One observer reported "three sightings only" all winter at his location in South Strafford (HR). The American Crow continued abundant with a CBC tally close to the 1984 record. About 300 were

observed at the Hartford landfill on 1/5 (WGE,DHC) while 250 were noted roosting in Norwich on 12/28 (DJG). One individual was seen eating an Evening Grosbeak at a Woodstock feeder on 1/11 (JDL). CBC results for the Common Raven were very much in line with those for recent years. Fourteen ravens were observed gathered around a dead deer in North Shrewsbury on 12/10 (EFG). Finally, a raven was seen carrying nesting material toward Quechee Gorge on 2/29 (NLM). The Black-capped Chickadee scored a decisive victory over the starling as the winter's most abundant bird, outdistancing its rival by more than 1000 individuals. Once again the Springfield CBC led the way as 2127 birds were tallied, comfortably ahead of the record set back in 1981. The Boreal Chickadee was quite well represented with CBC birds at Island Pond (15), Craftsbury-Greensboro (17) and Plainfield (1). Twelve were counted in Moose Bog on 1/16 (BMP), while other reports came from Vershire on 12/3 (DM) and from Sheffield, where a pair was seen on 2/26 (PFW). The Tufted Titmouse couldn't quite match last year's record CBC showing, but the February census of 67 individuals represented a more significant decline. There were about 15 other reports with a maximum of 3 at Colchester on 12/4 (WDB). The Red-breasted Nuthatch enjoyed its best winter since 1982, judging from a CBC total of 351 birds. There were numerous other reports with a high of 10 in Mendon on New Year's Day (WGE,NLM). The White-breasted Nuthatch shared in its relative's success, as it too enjoyed its best year since 1982. Top reports from individual contributors were 11 in Westminster on 2/27 (REG), 9 in Mendon on 1/1 (WGE,NLM) and 9 in Rutland and Bridport on 1/15 (WGE,NLM,JPM). With a CBC tally of 101 the Brown Creeper topped the century mark for the first time since 1979. Numerous other reports came in, including 4 at Westford on 2/15 (WDB) and 3 in Westminster on 2/27 (REG).

CAROLINA WREN THROUGH STARLING

The Carolina Wren continues to display remarkable hardiness, as CBC birds were discovered in Ferrisburg, Burlington and Saxtons River. In addition, overwintering birds were observed at feeders, a single in Pantan (MM,v.o.) and a pair in Middlebury (MBN). A bird heard regularly along the west side of Potash Brook, So. Burlington, in February later bred there (see Summer RVTB) (VDC). A Winter Wren on the Rutland Count kept intact a streak of 6 consecutive CBC appearances for this diminutive species. The bird had been found two days earlier (1/1) in the Mendon part of the circle (WGE,NLM). Golden-crowned Kinglets enjoyed another good year from the standpoint of individual observers as well as Christmas counters. Six were noted in Washington on 1/9 (ATA) and 4 in South Duxbury on 1/23 (FAP). An Eastern Bluebird on the Bennington CBC was the only early-winter record for the loveliest of the thrushes. However, 4 were spotted during the last week of January "checking boxes" in

Shaftsbury (MLB) while another was in Vernon on 2/29 (JJC). The only Hermit Thrush of the season was in Winhall for the CBC, a pleasant discovery for that circle's industrious counters. American Robins celebrated the CBC season in about average numbers as 33 were located, almost all in the Champlain and Connecticut River valleys. There were a scattering of other records, including such less likely locations as South Duxbury on 12/21 (FAP), St. Johnsbury on 1/11 (PRB), and Sheffield Heights on 1/19 (PFW), all single birds. Early arrivals in late February seemed more numerous than usual and included 4 in South Hero on 2/18 (RL), 5 in Londonderry on 2/20 (WSA) and 4 in Shelburne on 2/28 (WAM). After a lapse of two years, the VARIED THRUSH returns to these Records as two well-described males were reported. One bird spent the winter in the company of regular feeder birds in Stowe, where it was first observed on Christmas Day (DBP, DaP); the second was spotted at a ground feeding station in Barton on 1/18 and 19 (RGE, FB). The Northern Mockingbird established a new CBC record as 50 individuals were tallied, although the single circle high of 14 (set by Saxtons River in 1981) still stands. Later winter records, however, were scarce and only 9 birds were reported during the annual February census. For the third winter in row, the Bohemian Waxwing invaded in force - although not quite in the abundance of the preceding two years. A CBC population of 124 birds was dwarfed by massive flocks of 450 in St. Albans on 1/4 (DDH) and 300 in Shoreham on 1/15 (WGE, NLM, JPM). Other major sightings included 55 in South Duxbury on 12/21 (FAP), 30 in Craftsbury on 12/6 (FAY), 20 in Waterville on 12/4 (MKM, DEK), 19 in Sheffield on 1/1 (PFW) and 15 in Brandon on 2/14 (SSW). Although 121 Cedar Waxwings were present for the CBC season (most in Ferrisburg), other reports were very scarce: single birds in South Duxbury on 12/21 (FAP), in Shoreham on 1/15 (WGE, NLM, JPM) and in Newport Center during early January (PG). The Northern Shrike appeared in rather typical numbers with 19 CBC birds supplemented nicely by another 19 reported by contributors. All records were for single birds. Meanwhile, the European Starling checked in with 10,485 CBC birds, an increase of 1053 over the prior year. An estimated 800 were in Putney on 2/18 (AMD), causing the observer to comment ruefully "the trees were black with them."

WARBLERS THROUGH JUNCO

There were no December reports of Yellow-rumped Warblers, but two from January were noteworthy: a pair at a Brandon feeder on 1/3 (SSW) and a single visiting a Lyndonville feeder during the period 1/6-27 (MWi, PFW). The Lyndonville bird was nicely photographed and easily recognizable. The Northern Cardinal presented a mixed picture. On the one hand, a record 678 were located on CBC's, with even Island Pond and Craftsbury-Greensboro

contributing a pair each. On the other hand, the February census tallied only 304 birds, down significantly from last year's 536, to say nothing of the 1149 tallied in 1982. Feeder birds were widely reported, with a maximum of 14 in Brandon (SSW). Outings in the Champlain valley on 1/15, 1/17 and 2/15 produced 13, 14 and 13 individuals respectively (WGE, NLM, DHC). A ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK in Ferrisburg defied the odds as well as the early arrival of winter in becoming the first of the species to appear on a Vermont CBC. The bird showed up at a Vergennes feeder on 12/18, was photographed, and continued in residence for a week (via AP). The American Tree Sparrow was as happy as ever with winter in Vermont - what with 1886 CBC birds and numerous other reports in the 10-60 range. 109 individuals were counted on 1/15 in Rutland and Addison counties (WGE, NLM, JPM). The lone Chipping Sparrow of the season was a CBC bird in Woodstock, making it two years in a row for a chippy to appear in this favored location. The CBC roster also included lingering Field Sparrows, with 2 reported from Springfield. In addition, a single bird was at a Colchester feeder until at least 1/24 (WDB). Song Sparrows surprised with a very strong CBC showing, including a record of 94 at Saxtons River. The old high of 70 had stood since 1976. Other reports were limited, however, although a remarkable half-dozen were in the Dead Creek area on 1/9 (TEJ). The latest records were of singles at Dead Creek on 1/24 (WGS) and in Westminster on 2/17 (REG). Swamp Sparrows also performed well, with 5 CBC birds, including 3 at Saxtons River, another new high. Hardy individuals included 5 at Dead Creek on 1/9 (TEJ) and a single in Burlington on 1/17 (WGE, NLM). The White-throated Sparrow was present in average numbers, judging from a CBC tally of 48 individuals. One bird, first spotted at a Fair Haven feeder on 12/14, decided to "stay around" (EPA), while other singles were noted in Woodstock on 12/13 (JMN), in Sheffield from 12/12-27 (PFW, SAW) and in Wilder on 12/23 (WGE). Dark-eyed Juncos were almost abundant, as evidenced by 602 CBC birds plus a host of reports from contributors. Ten were in Colchester on 1/30 (WDR) and 24 were in Bennington in mid-February (HWT), while small flocks of 5-6 were found during late winter in Springfield (WME), Westminster (REG) and Middlebury (MBN).

LONGSPUR THROUGH ICTERIDS

Fifty-nine individuals at Ferrisburg helped the Lapland Longspur establish a new CBC record of 64 birds, breaking the mark set in 1980. Additional reports came from Panton (DLC, WAM, NLM, DHC), Orwell (WGE, NLM, JPM) and Addison, where 20 of these easily-overlooked ground-feeders were spotted on 2/15 (NLM, DHC). Snow Buntings were again abundant, at least in the Champlain valley, with flocks of 500 or so in Orwell on 12/27 (SSW), in Swanton on 1/6 (JBG), and in Ferrisburg on 2/27 (MPB). An

informal census of the Addison-Shelburne area on 2/15 produced a breath-taking 1045 individuals (NLM,DHC), while small flocks were reported from Woodstock (FH), Plainfield (MFM), Brownsville (SJS) and at the Caledonia airport (PFW). Red-winged Blackbirds persevered into the winter in their usual small numbers, as 11 CBC's uncovered 26 individuals plus one count period bird. Overwintering Red-wings included 2 females in Ferrisburg on 2/15 (NLM,DHC), a third female in residence near an Arlington feeder (NS) and a male spotted in Danby during early February (MD). Ten Eastern Meadowlarks in Bennington not only were the only of the season, but also established a new CBC record for this popular species. Rusty Blackbirds joined in the holiday festivities, with CBC birds in Plainfield and Saxtons River as well as a lingerer in Brandon on 12/29 (SSW) and an overwintering male at a South Woodstock feeder (LHR). Not to be outdone, 16 Common Grackles stayed on for 11 CBC's with a max. of 3 at Ferrisburg and Woodstock. Later reports were infrequent, being limited to a pair at Newport Center on 1/8 (PG), a single during January at Quechee (KRT) and another at Wilder on 1/11 (WGE,NLM,DHC). Overwintering birds included one individual in Berlin (BMP), another in Randolph (EWC,MCC), and a pair in South Woodstock (LHR). The Brown-headed Cowbird was present in good numbers with 555 CBC birds overall, including a record 371 at Springfield. A few lingered into January, notably 41 between East Thetford and East Ryegate on 1/11 (WGE,NLM). Overwintering birds included one in Brandon on 2/13 (SSW) and a flock of 10 at a Springfield feeder on 2/14-15 (WME). Rounding out our big year for the icterids were two records of the Northern Oriole: one (BULLOCK'S subspecies) was at a St. Johnsbury feeder from 11/16-12/20 (PRB,CFB); the other was an ad. m. (Baltimore subspecies) at a Springfield feeding station where it remained for the CBC on 1/3 (PRB,CFB,EE).

FRINGILLIDS THROUGH HOUSE SPARROW

The Pine Grosbeak had an indifferent year as only 161 individuals were recorded on just five CBC's. Observer reports were no better, with only one record for the first two months of the winter, 3 birds in South Duxbury on 12/8 (FAP). February brought a slight improvement, with 7 reports, including 20 in Groton State Forest on 2/6 (BMP), 11 in Sheffield Heights on 2/9 (PFW,SAW) and 5 in Washington on 2/13 (ATA). The Purple Finch followed a similar pattern, with 165 CBC birds, infrequent early-winter reports and a minor flurry during February. High counts were 17 in Westminster on 2/27 (REG) and 5 earlier in the month in South Strafford (HR) and in Barnard (MLW). The march of the House Finch continued with a new record of 2545 CBC birds, only Island Pond holding out doggedly against the invaders. Little encouragement was provided by such reports as 120 in the area of DCWMA on 1/9 (WGE,NLM,SJS,TEJ) or 90 in Ferrisburg and another 70 in Middlebury on 2/15

(NLM,DHC). Red Crossbills were their usual scarce selves as the only records were 12 on the Island Pond CBC, 6 on the Craftsbury-Greensboro count and 8 in Reading on 1/31 (FMH,GEH). White-winged Crossbills were much better represented as 189 were tallied on 6 CBC's. Another 9 reports were received, featuring "many" at Moose Bog on 1/16 (BMP) and 7 in flight over VINS on 12/8 (NLM). Other sightings were in Washington (ATA), Bartonsville (TEJ), Winhall (WJN), Mendon (NLM), Mt. Holly (WGE) and "possibly" Sheffield (PFW), all during the month of January. Common Redpolls had a fair CBC season with 237 birds on 6 different counts. Curiously, the only other early-winter reports were for a flock of 30 in North Hero on 12/3 (FAP) and three singles in Panton, Newbury and Burlington in mid-January (WGE,NLM). The February frenzy (more than 20 sightings) was subdued as to numbers but widespread nonetheless. Maximum counts were 24 in Lincoln (JRA), 18 in Groton (SSW) and 15 in South Burlington, all on the 28th. As for the Pine Siskin, one can only remark that at least there was no ambiguity about this being a flight year. Although no circles could even approach Woodstock's record of 1244 siskins logged in 1984, the total of 5890 birds was unprecedented, outdistancing 1984 as a whole by nearly 2000 individuals. The state was veritably blanketed by siskins for the entire season, with flocks of 50-100 seemingly everywhere. Feeders, too, were overrun, often with more than 100 birds as in Hartford (WGE), Randolph (EWC,MCC), Starksboro (CC), Plainfield (MFM) and Shelburne (MPB). If the 400 in Weybridge on 2/25 (MBN) were at a feeder, we can only commiserate with the unfortunate owner! The outbreak of a bacterial infection (salmonella) affecting siskins and other feeder birds killed a number of individuals but was not of long-term consequence. The American Goldfinch settled for ordinary numbers as 1473 CBC birds were recorded, just about the average for the last ten years. Most flocks were relatively small but one especially large one, of 200, was observed in Orwell on 15 January (WGE,NLM,JPM). Outside the Champlain basin the largest group reported was 31 in Westminster on 2/3 (REG). The Evening Grosbeak was relatively subdued despite a reasonably good CBC showing of 6412 birds. December reports were quite numerous, topped by 70 in Woodstock on 12/12 (SBL), but thereafter numbers dropped rapidly. High counts for January and February were 110 in Hubbarton on 1/15 (WGE,NLM) and 25 in Woodstock on 2/28 (JMN). Finally, the House Sparrow rebounded slightly to 8327 CBC birds, happily well below the peak year in 1981.

Abbreviations Used in Text

- CBC = Christmas Bird Count
- DCWMA = Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area
- ad. = adult
- f. = female
- imm. = immature
- Is. = Island
- L. = Lake
- m. = male
- max. = maximum
- R. = River

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