



# Records of Vermont Birds

VERMONT INSTITUTE OF NATURAL SCIENCE

## WINTER SEASON 1992–1993

1 December to 28 February

*Frederick A. Pratt, Seasonal Editor*

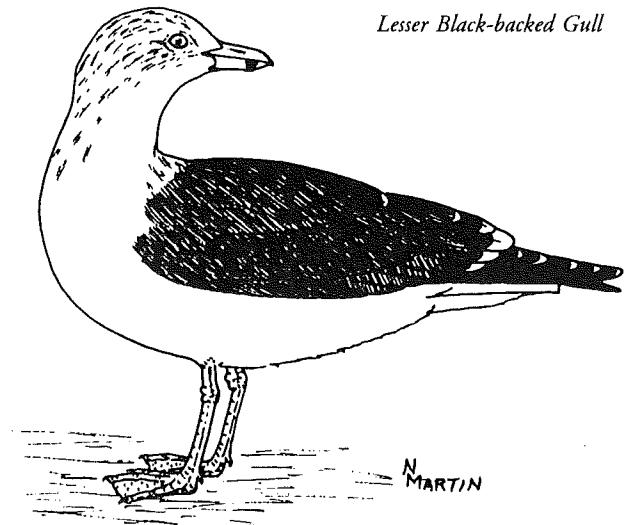
These Records seem always to begin with a summary of the weather – and this report, for better or worse, will be no exception. Certainly the winter of 1992-1993 deserves some commentary, for once again there were a number of surprises awaiting the unwary and unforwarned.

December went down as a month of warmer than expected temperatures, averaging 2 to 2.5 degrees above the norm. However, lingering waterfowl were certainly not much in evidence, perhaps already encouraged to head south by a significantly cold November as well as a chilling cold snap during the period December 5-10. The same can be said for most half-hardies, notwithstanding an extraordinary "influx" of out-of-season warblers, as will be noted shortly.

January, too, was warmer than average but February brought back memories of those good old-fashioned winters we recall from childhood. Not only was there above-average precipitation, but temperatures ran a full 8 degrees colder than usual. It was in fact the third coldest February on record, outranked only by those of 1934 and 1923. What percentage of the robins, waxwings and bluebirds attempting to overwinter actually survived the cold one can only guess. However, it is no surprise that there were no reports of returning blackbirds and the like as March finally arrived. Also predictable was the general shortage of reports of any kind. One can well surmise that the warmth of the woodstove had more appeal for most observers than the challenge of the chase after such prey as winter sparrows or finches.

And why seek winter finches whatever the weather conditions when the birds were so conspicuously absent? Just two winters ago this editor described the season as the "Year of the Missing Finches." The assessment was premature. 1992-1993 was truly the year for such a designation. There was one report of Pine Grosbeak, one report of White-winged Crossbill and not even a single report of Red Crossbill or Common Redpoll. Though present, Pine Siskins and Evening Grosbeaks experienced their worst winters since at least as far back as 1978. Also notable for their scarcity were such species as Bohemian Waxwing, Northern Shrike and Snowy Owl. For many of us the glow and the warmth of range and hearth never seemed so tempting.

Winter 1992–1993 is being published out of sequence, ahead of Fall 1992. We apologize for the delay and will publish Fall 1992 as soon as possible.



*Lesser Black-backed Gull*

Yet there were good birds to report: a Gyrfalcon in Addison for nearly a month, the second COMMON BLACK-HEADED GULL in two years, a BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE in early December at the Champlain Bridge and a LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL at the same approximate location on December 20. Indeed, it was a remarkable year for the Laridae as both Glaucous and Iceland Gulls were also reported from their usual haunts at Blodgett's Beach, Burlington. Also of note was a roost of up to 6 Long-eared Owls at Mount Independence in Orwell as well as unusual winter reports of Marsh Wren and Vesper Sparrow.

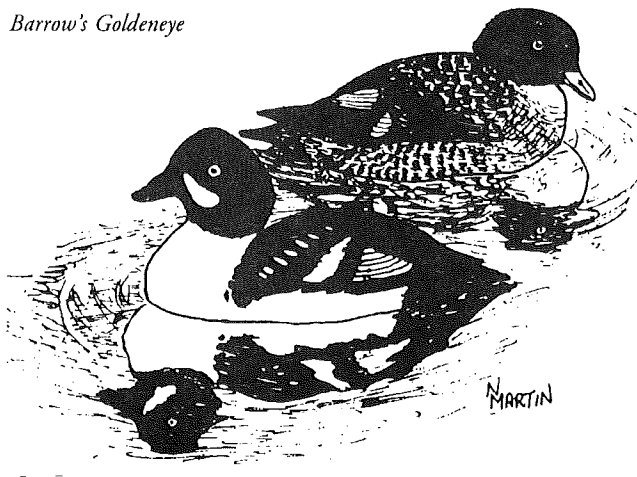
Yet the winter's greatest excitement was provided by perhaps the least likely of groups, the warblers. A Palm Warbler on the Saxtons River Christmas Bird Count, hereafter CBC, was the perfect appetizer for the sumptuous courses to follow: a nearly unprecedented CAPE MAY WARBLER at a West Dummerston feeder, a very surprising WILSON'S or YELLOW WARBLER on the Champlain Islands CBC and, most remarkable of all, a YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER present for over a month in Burlington. It was just the seventh state record for the Yellow-throated, a species normally associated with open woodlands of the south, especially pine or live oak. The surprises of a Vermont winter never cease!

### LOONS THROUGH HERONS

Two CBC reports of the rare Red-throated Loon, a count period bird at Ferrisburgh and a well-described individual at the Champlain Islands, constituted the best total for this species since 1982. Common Loons, however, settled for a mediocre performance, as Christmas Counters could only come up with about a third of last year's record number. Additionally, 4 birds were at Lake Bomoseen 12/3 (RWP) and a late

individual was at Charlotte 1/12 (JAP). The diminutive Pied-billed Grebe pulled off a number of surprises, including 2 CBC birds at Burlington, one at the city waterfront, the other at Shelburne Point. Also of note was a bird grounded in a snowstorm at Richmond 12/7 (ECC), another individual at Addison 12/11 (JAP) and a hardy, if not foolhardy, bird persevering at McNeil Cove, Charlotte, 2/2 (JAP). A CBC total of 37 Horned Grebes was very low, in part certainly because of poor counting conditions at such key circles as Ferrisburgh. A good count of 33 birds at Charlotte and Shelburne 1/12 (JAP) is probably more indicative of the species' actual abundance. Ferrisburgh did manage to come up with a CBC Red-necked Grebe, the only one reported for the season. Quite surprising was the number of Double-crested Cormorants. An immature with an injured right wing was at Porter Bay, Ferrisburgh 12/4 (FAP), while 4 were in Addison 12/11 with 2 still present 12/16 (JAP). Very late were individuals at Shelburne 1/12 (JAP) and at Burlington 1/16 (DLC) and 1/17 (FAP). Once again there were numerous December reports of Great Blue Heron including an even dozen from 6 CBCs. Latest were singles at Shelburne 1/7 (DLC) and at Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, hereafter MNWR, 1/7 (LM).

*Barrow's Goldeneye*



## WATERFOWL

The last large flock of Snow Geese, estimated at 1500 birds, was still present at Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area, hereafter DCWMA, 12/4 (FAP). Later reports were confined to CBCs, including a good total of 36 at the Champlain Islands. Canada Geese were not especially abundant, although more than 2000 were reported from 8 CBC circles. Late records included 75 at Shelburne Point 1/23 (CJF) and 150 at Meach Cove, Shelburne, 2/2 (JAP). Wood Ducks at Middlebury and Bennington continued a CBC tradition dating back to 1979, but other reports were totally lacking. Similarly, the only Green-winged Teal of the season was a lone bird at Button Bay on the Ferrisburgh CBC. The American Black Duck fared reasonably well, notwithstanding the poorest CBC total since 1986. Thirty-seven were in Clarendon on 2/7 (CJF), while 275 were on the New Haven River 2/5 (JAP). Mallards also seemed less abundant than usual, especially later in the season. High counts from contributors were 110 near Grand Isle 1/24 (EMA,RDB) and 100 at Burlington 1/27 (JAP). Northern Pintail eluded all CBC counters for the first time since 1986, as the winter's only record was a female at Burlington on New Year's Day (DLC). The less regular Gadwall also made but a single appearance, this

a lone bird at Nichol's Pt., Grand Isle, 12/31 (DJH). A female American Wigeon on the Middlebury CBC was a pleasant surprise, particularly in a poor winter for the less common ducks. However, Canvasback fared better with a good total of 60 on the Mid-Winter Waterfowl Survey conducted on 1/6, Vermont Dept. of Fish and Wildlife, hereafter VF&W. Other reports featured 7 at the mouth of Hospital Creek, Addison 12/12 (FAP), 6 at Shelburne on 1/10 (DLC, TM) with 3 still present there 1/27 (JAP). A female Redhead on the Burlington CBC was an excellent find and the only representative of this handsome species for the winter. Ring-necked Ducks were very scarce with just 2 reported, a CBC bird at Saxtons River and a second at the Grand Isle ferry landing on 2/15 and again 2/20 and 2/27 (DJH). Seven hundred fifty Greater Scaup at Shelburne 1/10 (DLC, TM) were evidently newly arrived, since they were missed on the Mid-Winter Waterfowl Survey conducted just four days earlier. Three hundred were still in Shelburne 1/27 (JAP), as were 100 Lesser Scaup (JAP). The winter's only Oldsquaw was seen in Shelburne 1/21 (DLC) and again 1/23 (CJF). This was the first year since 1985 that this elegant but uncommon species has missed the CBC roster altogether. There were no reports of either Black Scoter or Surf Scoter, while the only record of the more regular White-winged Scoter was of 3 birds sighted in Addison 12/8 (JAP). The Common Goldeneye enjoyed another fine winter, as 2250 birds were counted on the survey of 1/6. Individual observers also reported good numbers, with 300 at Burlington 12/18 (SWM), 400 off Grand Isle 1/3 (DJH) and 150 at Shelburne 1/12 (JAP). Barrow's Goldeneye were appropriately uncommon with just 3 reports for the season: 2 drakes and a female at Burlington 12/2 (FAP,EBP), a "count week" bird at Ferrisburgh, and a single drake at Shelburne 1/6 (DLC). Bufflehead were well represented, especially late in the season. Six birds were at Shelburne Bay 1/12 (CJF), 12 at Charlotte 1/24 (SSW) and 1/27 (JAP) and 10 at Meach Cove, Shelburne, 1/28 (SSW). Hooded Mergansers had another big year, headed up by a splendid armada of 61 birds on Lake Bomoseen, Castleton 12/3 (RWP) and a record 54 for the Champlain Islands CBC, nearly double the former high established just last year by Ferrisburgh. The latest report was a group of 4 at Potash Bay, Addison 1/4 (JAP). Common Mergansers followed suit with a near-record 3415 CBC birds and 1527 spotted on the aerial survey in early January (VF&W). Late reports were nearly as impressive: "several hundred" off Grand Isle 1/23 (DJH), 250 at Shelburne 1/19 (JAP) and 200 at Burlington 1/20 (SBL,LJE,DCD). Even the far less common Red-breasted Merganser made a good showing as new CBC records were set for a single circle (Ferrisburgh) and for the overall count (56 birds). Only two reports were received from contributors, 2 birds at Addison 12/11 (JAP) and 12/14 (SSW).

## VULTURES, HAWKS AND FALCONS

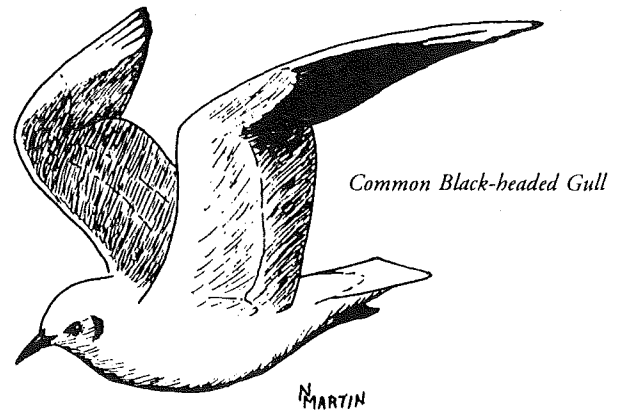
Late Turkey Vultures were reported from North Ferrisburgh 12/15 (TGC) and from Salisbury 12/22 (SSW); however, no early migrants were noted during late February. The formidable Bald Eagle [E] continued to soar, as 10 adults and 2 immatures were found on the midwinter eagle survey, just one shy of last year's record. Even more impressive was the myriad of reports from readers, including an astonishing 6 birds "in the air at the same time" at the mouth of Otter Creek 1/29 (JM,JC). Also of special interest was an adult at Lake Morey on 12/12 with a yellow patagial tag on its left wing (SP). Other reports included 2 birds at the Champlain Bridge 1/10 (SR,MF) and again 2/4 (MCD,JID), an adult and a subadult at Wilder Dam (m.ob.) and an adult and an

immature at Meach Cove 2/5, the younger bird making a pass at a flock of 35 goldeneye (RWP). Excellent numbers of Northern Harriers were tallied on the Ferrisburgh and Middlebury CBCs but thereafter few were found. Four were at DCWMA 1/7 (SSW), singles at Bridport 1/26 (JAP) and at Leicester 1/30 (SSW), while adult males were observed in New Haven 1/11 (EMA,RDB) and 2/12 (JRA). Sharp-shinned Hawks were widely reported as usual, with some 20 records from individual contributors in addition to a quite respectable tally of 20 CBC birds. This species has been the subject of some concern of late with numbers of migrants observed at Cape May, New Jersey, down considerably from those of recent years. It is unlikely Vermont reports are of great significance, however, since so many are feeder-related. The same no doubt applies to the Cooper's Hawk, although a CBC total of 9 individuals was the lowest since 1987. Other observers added another 15 sightings, including an adult female in East Montpelier 2/7 in hot pursuit of a shrike (FAP,EBP). The Northern Goshawk also more than held its own, as 9 CBC birds were found, including 4 at Craftsbury-Greensboro, and another dozen were reported by contributors. Two adults were in Hartland 2/25 (JR), while an adult and an immature were observed on and off throughout the winter in Middlebury (JAP). Red-tailed Hawks were present in typical numbers with 151 CBC birds very much in line with expectations. One observer counted 15 between Burlington and Fair Haven on 1/23 (CJF), while 7 were in Addison alone on 1/26 (RWP) and again on 2/24 (JAP). One unfortunate bird in Woodstock 1/9 was seen "being mobbed by 19 screaming crows" (JMN). Rough-legged Hawks were distinctly scarce as only 21 were found on CBCs, the lowest total since 1985. Late-winter reports held up, however, as 11 were in Addison 2/3 (JAP) and a like number were at DCWMA 2/20 (ALP). Twelve American Kestrels was an uninspiring CBC total, although 4 were still at DCWMA 1/24 (SSW) and 5 were noted 2/15 between DCWMA and Bridport (SWM). Overwintering birds were also observed in Grand Isle (DJH), Benson (RWP), MNWR (LM) and West Swanton (DJH). The fast and fearsome Merlin, a rare winter visitor in Vermont, was twice reported: a well-described adult male on the Champlain Islands CBC and a second bird at Orwell 1/24 (DLC). Peregrine Falcons were again well represented, as CBC birds were found in Saxtons River, Hinesburg and Ferrisburgh, the last possibly the same bird seen in Ferrisburgh 12/6 (MCD,JID). Other reports included a single at Bridport 2/17 (JAP), another at Addison 1/24 (DLC), 2/19 (JAP) and an adult at a feeding station in Wallingford on 2/3, which "captured a starling, proceeded to defeather, then eat it" (SJD). Also of interest were 2 adults along Nortontown Road, Addison, 2/15 (SWM). The rare Gyr Falcon put in two appearances, although the Ferrisburgh CBC bird, it must be acknowledged, was seen in neighboring New York. The second, also a gray-phase, apparently was first seen in Addison 1/8 (RO), then later observed and carefully described while perched along Gage Road 1/23 (FAP,EBP), and was last seen in Bridport 2/8 (JAP).

## GRAY PARTRIDGE THROUGH SNIPE

Continuing a worrisome trend, the Gray Partridge went unreported for the third year in succession. Another introduced bird, the Ring-necked Pheasant, graced both the Saxtons River and Springfield CBC rosters, while a third was found in Brownsville 1/28 (BMH). Three Spruce Grouse on the Island Pond CBC were somewhat reassuring, although this species continues to suffer from serious habitat loss in the Northeast Kingdom. Still, this was the best winter showing for these natives of the northern forest since 1982. Ruffed Grouse also enjoyed a

good winter as 170 CBC birds were found, the highest total since 1979. Small numbers were discovered on and off during the season, with a maximum of 8 at Woodstock 1/17 (CRP). Wild Turkeys were also prominent, especially in the southern part of the state as the CBC figures show. Good numbers were seen by contributors, including 17 in Norwich 2/21 (DHC), 18 in Rockingham 12/28 (AMD) and 35 in a Pawlet cornfield during late January and February (GRB). Among the Rallidae an enterprising American Coot tried wintering in Vermont, judging from the reports of an individual in Burlington on 1/5 (PCR) and again 1/19 (DLC). A coot at the Charlotte ferry 2/2 in the company of a Pied-billed Grebe was probably the same bird (JAP). Common Snipe appeared on the CBC rosters of Bennington and Saxtons River but was missed at the traditional location in Rutland. Later, however, a bird was found in the famous Clarendon drainage ditch on 1/24 (CJF), raising the question of whether it was "old reliable" or a new bird altogether. Finally, from the Ferrisburgh CBC, comes a report of a "Sandpiper species," a tantalizing report that must await further details.



*Common Black-headed Gull*

## GULLS

A star of the season was the adult COMMON BLACK-HEADED GULL discovered at the Burlington waterfront 1/19 (ELG). The bird obliged by staying on location for more than a week, much to the pleasure of later observers. Less noteworthy but no less handsome was the throng of 300 Bonaparte's Gulls at Mallets Bay on 12/1 (EMA,RDB). One hundred twelve were present for the Champlain Islands CBC, while a single bird added to the species total for Middlebury. Ring-billed Gulls were much in evidence with 450 at Moore Dam 12/2 (PFW,SAW) and 500 at Burlington 1/20 (SBL,LJE,DCD). A CBC tally of 1393 was almost identical to count totals in each of the past two winters. Herring Gulls were also numerous with 1961 CBC birds not far below last year's impressive figure. Eighty-two were at South Hero 1/24 (EMA,RDB), while 300 still guarded the waterfront at Burlington 1/27 (JAP). Iceland Gulls were typically scarce with just two reports received: a first-winter bird at Blodgett's 1/23 (FAP,EBP) and two birds of unspecified age at Burlington on 1/16 and again 1/26 (DLC). A major find was the carefully described adult LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL at the Crown Point bridge in Addison 12/20 (FO,JCr). An adult Glaucous Gull at Blodgett's 1/26-27 (DLC,JAP) was the lone representative of the larger of our two white-winged gulls. There was no scarcity of Greater Black-backed Gulls, however, as yet another CBC high was established, nearly double last year's mark. Of the 910 birds found, more than half were located at Ferrisburgh and Burlington. Completing a truly remarkable winter for

the Laridae was an immature BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE at the Crown Point bridge in Addison on 12/2 (ELG). The bird was seen in the company of Bonaparte's and Herring Gulls, allowing ample opportunity for study and comparison.

## DOVES

There was no let-up in the unhappy increase in Rock Doves as yet another CBC record of 9292 individuals was established. Mourning Doves, however, were noticeably less abundant than in recent years, with the CBC tally of 3752 down about 40% from 1991-1992. Feeder-related flocks in the 30's were the norm with maximums of 36 at Sheffield (PFW,SAW) and 35 at Randolph (EWC,MCC).



*Eastern Screech-Owl*

MARTIN

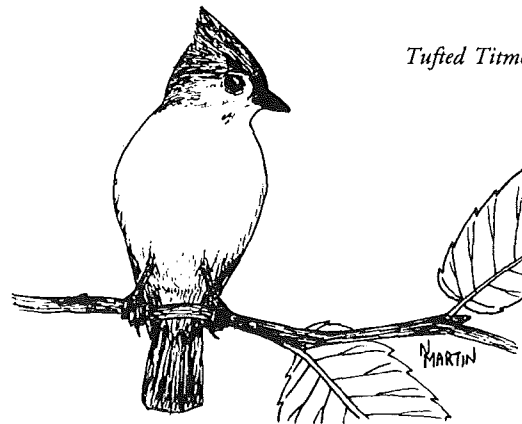
## OWLS

Eight Eastern Screech-Owls, including 5 at Ferrisburgh, was an above-average CBC total, but no additional reports were received from contributors. Meanwhile, Great Horned Owls seemed less prominent than usual, as only 9 CBC birds were found, not much over a third of last year's figure. Readers could add only singles in Danby (CJF), Randolph (DLC) and Brandon (SSW) along with two birds in Manchester 2/15 (BWP). After a major flight year in 1991-1992, the Snowy Owl retreated into almost total obscurity. One bird apparently spent the winter at the University of Vermont, while a second less fortunate individual was found dead after being hit by an auto in New Haven 12/19 (JMc). Barred Owls were also relatively scarce, with just an average CBC total of 7 birds, including 4 in Woodstock. Other reports came from such locations as Reading (FMH,GEH), Lincoln (JRA) and Pawlet, where the species was "heard at dusk a number of times" (GRB). A roost of up to 6 Long-eared Owls was discovered and observed carefully over a period of nearly five months at Mt. Independence in Orwell (BH). A single bird was first observed on 12/13, with 2 on 1/10, 6 on 2/20, 3 on 2/27 and one as late as 5/3. The site included a dense cedar growth in an old pasture along a cliff, thus providing the birds excellent roosting perches as well as good hunting terrain. As for the Short-eared Owl, the only report of the winter was of a single bird hunting low over fields in mid-afternoon at DCWMA on 2/24 (BRJ). There were no CBC birds whatever, the first time the species has failed to make the CBC roster since 1984. The ever-popular Northern Saw-whet Owl fared little better with just 4 reports: CBC birds

at Burlington and Middlebury, a single at Lyndonville 2/4 (PFW,SAW) and one heard calling in East Barnard 2/10 (JRL).

## KINGFISHERS AND WOODPECKERS

Belted Kingfishers generally opted for warmer climes as a CBC total of 15 birds was no match for last year's record high of 29. The only January reports were of single birds in Dorset 1/4 (EFG), in Rutland 1/18 (CG) and at Shelburne Bay 1/23 (CJF). The splendid Red-headed Woodpecker provided great excitement as 3 adults and an immature overwintered in Bridport (JAP). The thriving little colony attracted a number of observers, though most sightings were of 1-2 birds. A Red-bellied Woodpecker on the Springfield CBC was well described (DHC) - and presumably was the same bird observed there on 1/20 (FMH,GEH). Reports of Downy Woodpeckers were numerous and typical with no surprises from either individual contributors or CBC coordinators. Hairy Woodpeckers were also present in average numbers with exactly 300 CBC birds, just 16 less than in each of the previous two years. Meanwhile, Black-backed Woodpeckers continued to be scarce and elusive, with the only CBC report being 2 birds at Island Pond. Only one other was sighted during the winter, a female in Ferdinand on 1/9 (DLC,TGM). Northern Flickers, on the other hand, enjoyed another big year as late-winter birds were reported from a number of locations including Addison (FAP), Shoreham (RWP), Clarendon (CJF), Grand Isle (DJH), Colchester (SWM), Cornwall (JAP) and Shelburne (SSW). A surprising 4 birds were visiting a feeder in Ferrisburgh 2/2 (MCD,JID). Finally, the Pileated Woodpecker surpassed the century mark for only the second time as 102 CBC birds were tallied, just 4 short of last year. Reports from readers were also widespread, confirming anew the health and prosperity of this much-admired species.



*Tufted Titmouse*

MARTIN

## HORNED LARK THROUGH CREEPER

Reports from five CBC circles of 972 Horned Larks were well below average but hardly cause for concern. These hardy birds of open fields and shorelines were widely reported by contributors, with maximum counts 600 in Addison and Ferrisburgh on 1/17 (FAP,EBP) and 400 in New Haven on 2/19 (JAP). Four Gray Jays were in Ferdinand 1/9 (DLC,TGM), a reassuring sign in light of a very poor CBC showing with only a single bird at Craftsbury-Greensboro. Blue Jays were their usual conspicuous selves, although numbers were perhaps a bit reduced. Still,



VERMONT CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNTS 1992-1993	Brattleboro 12/19	Ferrisburgh 12/19	Hinesburg 12/19	Island Pond 12/19	Saxtons River 12/19	Burlington 12/20	Champlain Islands- St. Albans 12/20	Middlebury 12/20	Winhall 12/22	Bennington 12/26	Hanover-Norwich 12/26	Plainfield 12/26	Rutland 12/27	Woodstock 12/29	Springfield 1/3	Craftsbury- Greensboro 1/2	
R.-bellied Woodpkr.															1		1
Downy Woodpecker	39	46	16	3	48	16	44	61	13	10	39	21	44	56	100	17	573
Hairy Woodpecker	16	17	9	10	10	4	9	22	23	2	23	7	28	41	62	17	300
Bl.-backed Woodpkr.				2													2
Northern Flicker	1	3			1	3	1	6					2				17
Pileated Woodpkr.	4	22	4		7	3	6	21	6		3	2	5	5	10	4	102
Horned Lark	39	654			34		115	130									972
Gray Jay																1	1
Blue Jay	319	247	110	109	302	68	107	234	232	161	237	85	391	259	740	209	3,810
American Crow	392	418	268		353	317	538	401	20	478	354	47	463	194	328	52	4,623
Common Raven	2	6	6	50	1	2	2	5	15	1	17	31	5	11	5	17	176
Black-c. Chickadee	546	643	482	379	621	533	661	425	660	191	1,382	604	725	1,769	2,094	1,085	12,800
Boreal Chickadee				36												7	43
Tufted Titmouse	53	5			38	9		11	6	9	18		12	14	84		259
Red-b. Nuthatch	23	19	27	70	12	8	2	14	16	1	21	7	12	39	36	52	359
White-b. Nuthatch	69	55	18	3	59	37	61	77	36	11	58	9	48	141	192	17	891
Brown Creeper	6	11	7	4	1	12	9	4	14		10	3	3	31	8		123
Carolina Wren		CW				2	1				CW			2	2		7
Winter Wren					1			1		1					1	1	5
Golden-cr. Kinglet	1	15		89	5		7	3	12	1	10	3	1	14	15	10	186
Ruby-cr. Kinglet	1																1
Eastern Bluebird		9			3			24		9			6				51
American Robin	1	30	163		5	11	26	204		7				2		1	450
N. Mockingbird	8	6	3		10	4	1	8		1	1		4	1	6	1	54
Bohemian Waxwing																4	4
Cedar Waxwing		721	166		326	267	192	326	14	16	178		230	3	149		2,588
Northern Shrike		1			1		1										3
European Starling	854	1,625	617	45	1,021	1,123	2,415	3,850	90	697	251	52	820	241	567	155	14,423
Yellow Warbler							1										1
Cape May Warbler	1																1
Yellow-throated Warbler						1											1
Palm Warbler					1												1
Northern Cardinal	28	44	21		65	30	21	62	8	41	38	7	68	30	94	3	560
Am. Tree Sparrow	111	141	21	10	169	58	68	158	8	50	75	7	76	13	154	9	1,128
Field Sparrow								1			1						2
Fox Sparrow								CW							1		1
Song Sparrow	20	1			42	8	5	11	1	3	6		4	1	7		109
Swamp Sparrow								1			1						2
White-th. Sparrow	15	6	2		21	1		6	2	12	9		3	4	22		103
White-cr. Sparrow	1																1
Dark-eyed Junco	76	57	15		106	9	4	29	9	78	22	1	19	14	140	2	581
Sparrow (sp.)							39										39
Lapland Longspur		10					2										12
Snow Bunting							3				CW	CW				90	93
Red-w. Blackbird					7	2					1		1				11
Eastern Meadowlark		2															2
Common Grackle		1			4							1		1	1	2	10
Brown-h. Cowbird		1			2	50	19	CW	3				55	2	5		137
Purple Finch	6	74	8	1	73	8	5	11	18	30	47	6	11	54	294	39	685
House Finch	246	590	182		347	214	418	360	44	225	605	105	640	239	908	15	5,138
White-w. Crossbill				12													12
Pine Siskin	2	20				19	1			1	CW			14		27	84
American Goldfinch	211	163	85	26	145	70	136	215	15	47	82	9	169	4	270	435	2,082
Evening Grosbeak	2	1	66	333	15				30		15	162	3	48	161	250	1,086
Finch (sp.)				18										93			111
House Sparrow	176	974	184	29	359	324	1,228	815	80	111	141	123	469	231	714	191	6,149
<b>TOTAL SPECIES</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>104</b>
<b>TOTAL INDIVIDUALS</b>	<b>4,829</b>	<b>10,192</b>	<b>2,996</b>	<b>1,348</b>	<b>6,806</b>	<b>7,854</b>	<b>12,990</b>	<b>9,752</b>	<b>1,517</b>	<b>3,489</b>	<b>4,792</b>	<b>1,418</b>	<b>5,434</b>	<b>4,243</b>	<b>8,853</b>	<b>2,977</b>	<b>89,490</b>

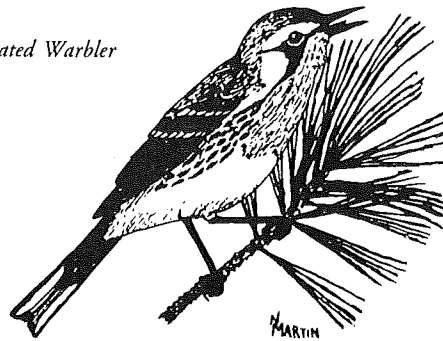
a maximum of 43 at a Sheffield feeder (PFW,SAW) must have proved a drain on the birdseed budget. Another species successfully coexisting with man, the American Crow, was also conspicuous and widespread. Two hundred were in Weybridge on New Year's Day (MBN), while 150 dotted the winter landscape of Grand Isle on 1/17 (DJH). Common Ravens fell just shy of last year's record CBC showing, with Island Pond once again leading the way. From contributors came reports of 23 in Huntington 1/31 (DLC) and 11 in Brandon 1/15 (SSW). Twelve thousand eight hundred Black-capped Chickadees was the lowest CBC total in five years, but an impressive figure nonetheless. Large feeder flocks were highlighted by 32 in Georgia (EMA,RDB) and 31 in Dorset (EFG). A Boreal Chickadee in South Londonderry on 12/13 and 1/12 (WJN) was noteworthy, the only report of the species outside the Northeast Kingdom. The CBC total of 43 individuals was divided, not unexpectedly, between Island Pond and Craftsbury-Greensboro. It was another big year for the Tufted Titmouse, as Springfield came up with a CBC high of 84 individuals. Feeders throughout the state played host to 2-3 birds each. Red-breasted Nuthatches were present in average numbers with 359 CBC birds neither worrisome nor exhilarating. High counts at feeders were 4 each in Manchester (BWP), Underhill (DLC) and Reading (FMH,GEH). White-breasted Nuthatches presented a similar picture, as 891 CBC birds were exactly 3 less than a year ago. Eight individuals were counted in Bridport 12/14 (JAP), while 5 were in Dorset on 1/4 and 1/9 (EFG). Easily overlooked, the Brown Creeper nonetheless was again widely reported by readers. Thirty-one birds at Woodstock highlighted a very respectable CBC tally of 123 birds in 14 circles.

## CAROLINA WREN THROUGH STARLING

Numbers of Carolina Wrens receded somewhat from last year's record-setting pace, but 7 CBC birds still amounted to an impressive showing. Several reports came from observers, including 2 each in Vergennes 12/5 (MCD,JID), Brandon 1/8 (SSW), Proctor 1/8 and 1/11 (RWP) and Norwich 2/1 (GFE). Obviously this species continues to be present in the winter in great measure as a result of the generosity of feeder providers. Winter Wrens were well represented, as five CBC circles reported one bird each. This marked the eleventh year in a row that this hardy little wren has put in a CBC appearance. Very surprising and very late was a Marsh Wren discovered singing at South Slang in Ferrisburgh 11/30 (CB) and still present on 12/3 (JAP,BPG,MCD). The last winter record for this species was in December of 1979. Golden-crowned Kinglets produced an unremarkable 186 CBC birds with more than half coming from Island Pond. Observers could come up with only a half-dozen additional reports, including 2 birds each in Bridport 12/8 (JAP), Ferrisburgh 12/19 (MCD,JID) and Brandon 1/2 (SSW). A Ruby-crowned Kinglet at Brattleboro was the first CBC record since 1989 for this diminutive representative of the Muscicapidae and the only sighting of the season. Eastern Bluebirds continued their recovery with yet another excellent CBC showing, including 24 birds at Middlebury. Evidence of overwintering was widespread with up to 8 birds throughout the season in Bridport (JAP), 6 in Putney 1/28 (LH), 5 at High Pond, Brandon 1/23 (RWP), 4 in Pittsford 1/27 (SSW) and 9 at DCWMA 2/20 (ALP). American Robins staged their biggest winter production since 1984 as 450 CBC birds were tallied, headed up by 204 at Middlebury and 163 at Hinesburg. Observations by contributors were also noteworthy and

included 100 birds each on 1/23 at Shelburne Point (CJF) and at Brandon (SSW). A memorable 250 robins were along West Shore Road in Grand Isle 2/15 (DJH). Northern Mockingbirds managed to hold their own as a respectable 54 CBC birds were found. Four individuals along the roadside in Bridport on 1/23 appeared not to be feeder-related (FAP,EBP). It was a very slim year for Bohemian Waxwings with just 3 sightings reported: 4 CBC birds at Craftsbury-Greensboro, 3 shivering stalwarts in -30° temperature in Wolcott on 2/7 (FAP,EBP) and a nice group of 9 in Georgia 2/28 (DLC,CSP). By contrast Cedar Waxwings seemed everywhere, especially during the CBC season when almost all circles were represented in the overall tally of 2588 birds. Other sightings featured flocks of 120 in Addison 1/4 (JAP), 75 in Dorset 1/17 (EFG) and 200 in Weybridge 2/10 (JAP). After two big years in a row, Northern Shrikes stayed away in droves as just 3 CBC birds were found, the lowest since these Records have been published. Contributors could muster only 6 additional sightings: single birds in Georgia 12/9 (GL), in Shelburne 1/7 (DLC), at Shelburne Bay 1/23 (CJF), in East Montpelier 2/7 (FAP,EBP), in Brandon 2/14 (SSW) and in Chester 2/14 (CEA). Alas, no such shortage of the European Starling can be reported, although the CBC total of 14,423 was happily some 4000 less than a year ago. One observer reported 200 starlings "vocalizing" in Middlebury on 2/17 (JRA), while another had the fortitude to endure a mob of 8000 in Whiting on 2/15 (JAP).

*Yellow-throated Warbler*



## WARBLERS THROUGH JUNCO

Either a WILSON'S or a YELLOW WARBLER on the Champlain Islands CBC was far out of season. Almost as unprecedented was the CAPE MAY WARBLER that graced the Brattleboro CBC - the first winter record of a Cape May since December 1974, when one was found within the Ferrisburgh CBC circle at Essex, New York. This bird, however, was a true Vermonter, as it took up residence for about a week at a West Dummerston feeder, where it was last seen 12/25 (WBN,FMH,GEH et al). With such goings-on it was perhaps surprising that the only Yellow-rumped Warbler of the season was a single in Orwell 1/24 (DLC). Yet another astounding bird was a YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER, first discovered at the Northgate apartments in Burlington on 11/25 and present until 12/31 (m.ob.). Completing a truly astonishing warbler run was a Palm Warbler on the Saxtons River CBC, unfortunately found across the Connecticut River in neighboring Walpole, NH. Turning to more prosaic species, 560 Northern Cardinals were hardly troubling but nevertheless the lowest CBC tally since 1986. Feeder flocks were headed up by 19 in Brandon (SSW) and 15 in Middlebury (JAP). American Tree Sparrows were also present in reduced numbers, with the lowest CBC total since 1979. Still, observers reported good-sized flocks in the Champlain Valley with 105 at DCWMA 2/15 (SWM), 75 in Addison 2/10 (JAP) and 70

along Slang Road, Panton, on 12/4 (FAP,EBP). Field Sparrows at Hanover-Norwich and Middlebury kept alive a CBC string stretching back at least 15 years. One individual managed to overwinter in Cornwall thanks to a well-stocked feeder (JAP). A Vesper Sparrow seen on a roadside in Addison on 1/26 (JAP) was unique for the season. The uncommon Fox Sparrow put in several feeder appearances, with one individual with "gray head and darker streaks" being observed in Randolph Center on 12/10 (MEH), while four birds stayed on at a Shoreham feeding station throughout the period (JAP). Wintering Song Sparrows were much in evidence and included 6 birds in Addison 2/24 (JAP), 4 at DCWMA 1/20 (SBL,LJE,DCD) and 3 at St. Albans Town 1/18 (DLC). Others were reported from Clarendon (CJF), Bridport (FAP,EBP), Burlington (SSW), Woodstock (CRP) and Norwich (WGE,NLM). Swamp Sparrows were typically scarce with just three birds reported, singles on the Middlebury and Hanover-Norwich CBCs and a third at St. Albans Town 12/13 (DLC). On the other hand, White-throated Sparrows enjoyed a banner year, as 103 CBC birds were found for their best showing since 1976. Also sighted were a surprising 7 in Addison on 2/24 (JAP) as well as overwintering singles or doubles in Brandon (SSW), Fair Haven (EAB), Shoreham (JAP), Woodstock (CRP), Norwich (WGE,NLM) and Sheffield (PFW,SAW). The only report of the difficult White-crowned Sparrow was a single on the Brattleboro CBC. Dark-eyed Juncos were not as reticent, especially early in the season when 581 CBC birds were tallied. Later reports featured 10 at a Fair Haven feeder through February (EA), 5 in Brandon 2/18 (SSW) and 13 in Weybridge 2/21 (MBN).

## LONGSPURS THROUGH ICTERIDS

Small numbers of Lapland Longspurs were present in the Champlain Valley throughout the winter, with as many as 12 in Addison or at DCWMA (m.ob.), 10 in Ferrisburgh 12/19 (MCD,JID), 7 in Waltham 1/16 (DLC) and 8 in Strafford 2/15 (SDF). Ninety-three Snow Buntings was the lowest CBC figure in at least fifteen years, but later reports were more typical. A massive flock of 3000 was sighted in Addison 1/18 (JAP), while a more manageable 150 were in Panton 2/15 (EMA,RDB). Four CBC circles tallied just 11 Red-winged Blackbirds, but a surprising 40 were still in Ferrisburgh on 1/19 (JAP). Other reports were limited to singles in Brandon 12/6 (SSW), in Chester 12/16 (CEA) and in Ferrisburgh 2/5 (MCD,JID). Two Eastern or Western Meadowlarks at Ferrisburgh were the first for a CBC since 1987, while a single bird persevered in Bridport until at least 1/24 (CJF,DLC). A Rusty Blackbird was at a Marshfield feeder 12/19 (AVG) for the only record of this uncommon winter icterid, but Common Grackles were overwintering at feeders in Brandon (SSW), Shelburne (EHT) and perhaps also Wallingford, where one was seen 1/16 (SJD). In addition, a remarkable 20 birds were seen feeding with Blue Jays in West Groton on 1/20 (WBK), while 10 CBC birds were scattered through 6 separate circles. Meanwhile, Brown-headed Cowbirds settled for an indifferent CBC performance, as a count of 137 was the lowest since 1985. Contributors could come up with two additional sightings: 6 birds in Bridport 1/19 (JAP) and 20 in Ferrisburgh 2/5 (MCD,JID).

## FRINGILLIDS THROUGH HOUSE SPARROW

Unprecedented was the total absence of the Pine Grosbeak from the CBC roster, probably a first in recorded history. Equally improbable

was that observers could provide just a single sighting for the entire winter, 9 birds in Morgan on 1/9 (DLC,TM). Purple Finches were much more cooperative, as a good CBC total of 685 individuals was indicative of a good winter overall. Feeder flocks in the 10-20 range were not uncommon with a maximum 30 visiting in Georgia 2/10 (EMA,RDB). House Finches meanwhile surged to yet another CBC record as 5138 individuals were found, about 750 more than in the prior year. Feeder flocks often built up to the 30-50 range, presumably with unhappy consequences for the budgets of their too generous providers. Never common, the Red Crossbill was missed by all observers, while the more likely White-winged Crossbill provided just one report, 12 birds on the Island Pond CBC. As for the Common Redpoll, it managed to produce the worst winter in memory as it appeared to be totally absent from the state. Even the oft-abundant Pine Siskin was scarce with just 84 CBC birds recorded. Other reports were also limited, although 33 were in Georgia on 1/23 (EMA,RDB), the maximum count for a feeder flock remaining throughout the period. American Goldfinches, generally far less erratic than their northern cousins, came through with an excellent CBC tally of 2082 birds, while feeder populations were also above average. Seventy in Proctor on 2/8 (RWP) was the maximum, followed by numbers in the 30-50 range at Lincoln and New Haven (JRA), Pawlet (GRB), West Bolton (MC), Essex Junction (SWM), Grand Isle (RBL), Georgia (EMA,RDB), and Dorset (EFG). One thousand eighty-six Evening Grosbeaks was the poorest CBC figure for this common winter visitor since at least the late 1970s, when counts and coverage were measurably expanded. Not surprisingly the larger flocks were generally in the north with 175 in Ferdinand 1/9 (DLC,TGM), 50 in Ferrisburgh 1/15 (MCD,JID) and 40 in Sheffield 2/6 (PFW,SAW). Happily, House Sparrows were also reduced in numbers, as a CBC total of 6149 was the lowest since 1978. Interestingly, a downward trend has been quite pronounced since 1989, when more than 10,000 birds were counted.

## CONTRIBUTORS

CEA	Chester Adams	JCr	Jason Cross
TSA	Ted Allen*	DCD	Deborah Davis
EMA	Elizabeth Moen Alton	AMD	Allison Deen
JRA	Jean Arrowsmith	BD	Bill Donlon
JSA	Jim Andrews*	SJD	Sarah Jane Dudley
CB	Catherine Bailey	BCD	Bonita Dundas*
RDB	Raymond Barnes	MCD	Margaret Dye
WDB	William Barnes	JID	John Dye
EAB	Betty Allen Barnouw	GFE	George Ellison
MB	Marie Beaufard	WGE	Walter Ellison*
RB	Robert Blay	LJE	Lynn Erb
MTB	Marsha Booker	SDF	Steve Faccio
GRB	Gordon Brown	MF	Mary Finney
JC	John Campbell	JNF	Jean Fleming
FC	Fran Carbino	CJF	C.J. Frankiewicz
DLC	Dwight Cargill	ELF	Ted Gaine
MC	Mike Cassara	CG	Charles Gifford
ECC	Eveleen Cecchini	EFG	Betty Gilbert
TGC	Terry Cecchini	AVG	Arthur Gilman
EWC	Elizabeth Clapp	FG	Freida Grassley
MCC	Mary Clapp	BPG	Bea Guyette
DC	Don Clark*	GEHa	Terry Hall
RC	Rich Cook	LH	Linda Hecker
DHC	Dan Crook		



BH	Bruce Hedin	JAP	Judy Peterson
MEH	Miriam Herwig	RWP	Roy Pilcher*
PH	Pat Hesterberg	AP	Alan Pistorius*
BMH	Beryl Hinton	ALP	Al Port
DJH	David Hoag	CRP	Carol Powell
RHH	Rhoda Horne	BWP	Barbara Powers
FMH	Fred Hunt	EBP	Eleanor Pratt
GEH	Gloria Hunt	FAP	Frederick Pratt
BRJ	Betty Rist Jillson	CSP	Craig Provost*
ECJ	Ed Johnson	HSP	Hugh Putnam*
PK	Peggy Kehew	SR	Stuart Randall
WBK	Warren King	EMR	Emma Raymond
LK	Lee Kowalski	DGR	Daniel Reid
SBL	Sally Laughlin*	LSR	Lillian Reid
RBL	Richard Lavallee	CR	Craig Reynolds
JRL	Jenepher Lingelbach	PCR	Peter Riley
GLi	George Lisi	CCR	Chris Rimmer
GL	Gary Low	LR	Lon Roberts
DMM	Donna Martin	JR	Janice Rowell
NLM	Nancy L. Martin*	VCS	Violetta Santo
JPM	Janet Martin	WGS	William Scott
JBM	John Martin	SS	Samuel Smith
JMc	John McClain	AS	Ann Spencer
LM	Lisa McCurdy	VRS	Victor Swenson
RWM	Rex Meader	KRT	Kevin Taft
GM	Georgia Milovsorff	EHT	Enoch Tompkins
JM	John Michuh	VFWD	Vt. Fish & Wildlife Department
MNWR	Missisquoi NWR Staff	PFW	Paul Wagner
SWM	Scott Morrical	SAW	Shirley Wagner
TGM	Ted Murin		
TM	Tom Murray		
MBN	Marge Nelson		
JMN	Julie Nicholson		
WDN	Whitney Nichols*		
WJN	William Norse*		
FO	Frank Oatman*		
RO	Rodney Olsen		
SP	Steve Parsons		
MP	Michele Patenaude*		
SSW	Sue Wetmore		
PRW	Paul Wiczorek*		

Special thanks to all who participated in Christmas Bird Counts and Bald Eagle Surveys.

\*indicates Christmas Bird Count (CBC) compiler

#### Abbreviations

CBC	Christmas Bird Count
DCWMA	Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area, Addison and Panton
[E]	Endangered
MNWR	Missisquoi National Wildlife Refuge, Swanton
m.ob.	many observers
Mt.	Mount, mountain
VF&W	Vermont Fish & Wildlife Department

## Memorandum Regarding Rare Species Documentation

The Vermont Bird Records Committee (VBRC) emphasizes the importance of descriptive and detailed documentation for all rarities, rare nesting species and out-of-season species.

The committee is anxious to involve all Vermont birders in the process of producing as accurate a Vermont state list as possible. This list and all documentation must be credible to future ornithologists who will use the material for research. Suggestions for improving the reporting/voting process will be gratefully received by the committee.

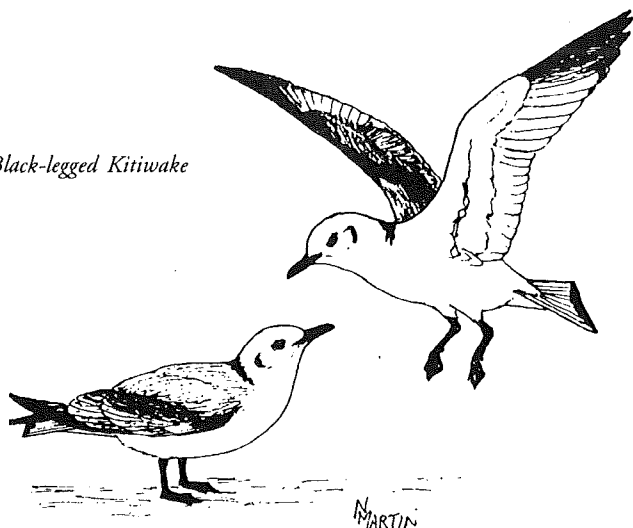
It is frustrating for both the observer and the committee to have a tantalizing sighting of a rare species not listed due to insufficient details.

Writing down the salient points of identification, talking into a tape recorder, making a quick sketch or taking a photograph at the time of observation are ways to help with accurate recounting later.

The Rare Species Documentation (RSD) form is both for filing the reports and is intended as a guide for the information needed. After completing the first page, reporters may prefer to write the description of the bird on a separate sheet of paper but checking the form for details requested.

Again the VRBC expresses its thanks to all observers who have contributed valuable information to the Vermont state list thus far.



*Black-legged Kitiwake*

VERMONT BIRD ALERT  
 THE LATEST STATEWIDE BIRDING NEWS  
 CALL (802) 457-4861  
 Monday–Saturday  
 Between 6 pm to 8 am  
 (Sunday, 24 hours–November to April)



Printed on recycled paper.

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. One year subscription \$10.

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, RR 2, Box 532, Woodstock, VT 05091, or call us at (802) 457-2779.

WINTER 1 December—29 February  
 Editor, Frederick Pratt

SPRING 1 March—31 May  
 Editor, William Norse

SUMMER 1 June—31 July  
 Editors, Lynn Erb and Roy Pilcher

AUTUMN 1 August—30 November  
 Editors, Jeremy Coleman and Terry Hall

Judith A. Peterson  
*Editor*

Nancy L. Martin  
*Illustration*

Whitney D. Nichols  
*Field Card Committee Chairman*

Sarah B. Laughlin, Whitney D. Nichols  
*Vermont Bird Records Committee Co-Chairs*

The VERMONT INSTITUTE OF NATURAL SCIENCE is a nonprofit membership organization with statewide programs in environmental education and ornithological research. Our purpose is to promote an understanding of and appreciation for the natural world; membership is open to all interested in this purpose. Members receive quarterly newsletter and calendar, and the annual magazine, *Vermont Natural History*. Membership is \$18 - Individual; \$25 - Family; \$40 - Supporting. *Records of Vermont Birds* annual subscription - \$10.

VERMONT INSTITUTE OF NATURAL SCIENCE • RR 2 • Box 532 • Woodstock, VT 05091 • 802/457-2779



Vermont Institute of Natural Science  
 RR 2 • Box 532  
 Woodstock, VT 05091

Nonprofit Organization  
 U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
 Vermont Institute  
 of Natural Science