



Records of Vermont Birds

VERMONT INSTITUTE OF NATURAL SCIENCE

WINTER 1993–1994

1 December to 28 February

Frederick A. Pratt, Seasonal Editor

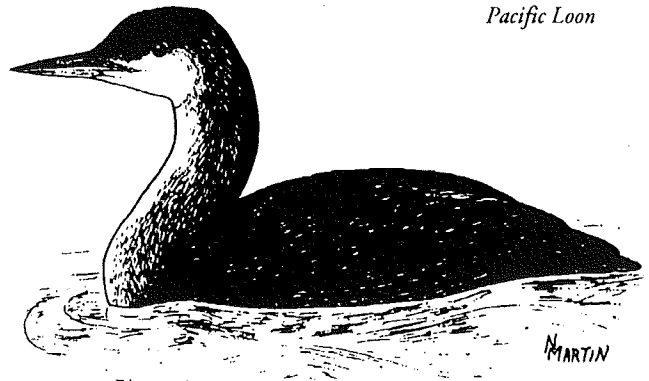
The winter of 1993-1994 was a winter to remember, or perhaps, better to forget. It produced bone-chilling temperatures and repeated snowfalls. January was the coldest January ever in New England, although here in Vermont it apparently got even colder back in 1918. Whatever the case, it produced temperatures 9.2° below the norm and snow depths about 50% above the norm. There were 20 days in January with sub-zero temperatures, of which nearly half came in with minimums of -10° or more. And February, though somewhat more moderate, provided little relief, as it produced temperatures nearly 3° colder than usual. In short, it was the kind of old-fashioned winter we used to recall with nostalgia; now we look back with a shudder.

It all began quietly, if not benignly. December was warmer than usual, especially from the 2nd through the 11th and again from the 19th through the 22nd. Thereafter the Arctic deep-freeze set in and most sensible species departed in a hurry. But not before Christmas Counters and other observers came up with a flurry of interesting sightings: American Coot, Killdeer, Gray Catbird, PINE WARBLER, Common Yellowthroat, Rufous-sided Towhee, White-crowned Sparrow. Most notable of December's birds, however, were Vermont's 9th record of HARLEQUIN DUCK and our 2nd record of PACIFIC LOON.

Our more regular winter birds were not without their own surprises. Red-tailed Hawk was especially prominent, but other raptors from the Sharp-shinned Hawk to the Great Horned Owl also approached or exceeded old CBC highs. Bohemian Waxwings invaded in record numbers, while among the northern finches Pine Grosbeaks staged their best flight in years and Common Redpolls arrived in overwhelming force. Adding to the redpoll excitement was one record of HOARY REDPOLL. And so, for the first time in years, experienced observers had the opportunity to sharpen their identification skills as they sorted through a veritable flood of redpolls.

Not to be overlooked were an unusually late Hermit Thrush, a male VARIED THRUSH and three reports of the rare and much sought-after GREAT GRAY OWL. It was, indeed, a winter to remember.

Pacific Loon



LOONS THROUGH HERONS

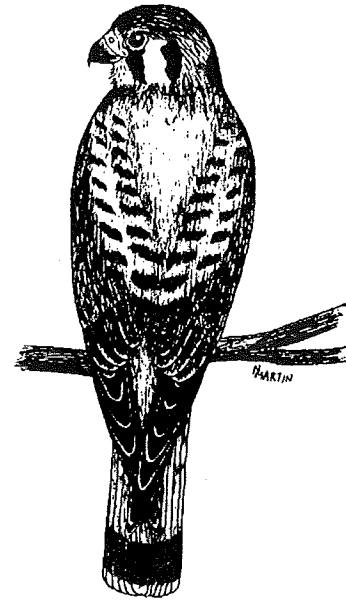
A PACIFIC LOON at the Retreat Meadows on 12/15-16 (WDN, TEJ) was carefully studied and described. This is the first winter report for easily the rarest of our eastern Gaviidae and only the 2nd state record for Vermont. The Common Loon was well represented by 21 CBC birds, all from Lake Champlain (hereafter LC) locations. Also reported were singles at Westminster 12/17 (TEJ,DC,REG) at L. Bomoseen 12/18 (CJF) and on L. Seymour 12/18 (CHD). Fifty-four Horned Grebes was only a mediocre CBC total, but one individual contributor found 15 at Shelburne Bay 12/20 (SWM). The ice on LC was such by mid-January that lingering grebes faced no choice but flight. One bird was struck by a car on I-91 in Ascutney 1/22, dying that night despite the Good Samaritan efforts of the driver-observer (SP). A second bird at Mount Holly fared far better, surviving for 2 days in a bathtub on a diet of pinhead minnows before being brought to VINS 1/25. There was an exceptional fallout of 30 Red-necked Grebes at the Tri-town Water Plant, Addison 12/9 (SSW). In addition one bird was found on the Ferrisburgh CBC and another was brought to VINS for rehab 1/25. Great Blue Herons lingered in surprisingly good numbers through December as 22 birds were tallied on 6 CBC's including 6 on the Champlain Islands. Late reports from contributors included individuals at Newport 12/20 (VM), at Dorset 1/1 (EFG) and at Clarendon 2/19 (CJF).

WATERFOWL

New to the CBC roster and also to these winter Records was Mute Swan, with one bird on the Connecticut River (hereafter CR) near Bellows Falls from late November until at least the Saxtons River CBC, and a second on the Burlington waterfront 1/6-9 (FAP,WJC,MZ). Time will tell whether these birds will prove to be pacesetters for a population expansion. Snow Geese again persevered into December with 3790 still in Panton 12/6 (JAP). That same day a flock of 50 was sighted in Ferrisburgh, flying in a northerly direction (MCD,JID). Staying on for the CBC

season were 65 birds on the Champlain Islands, 32 in Middlebury and 2 in Ferrisburgh. Last reported were 2 individuals sighted on the aerial Winter Waterfowl Survey (hereafter WWS) conducted on 1/6 by the Vermont Department of Fish & Wildlife (hereafter VDF&W). Canada Geese were hardly scarce with 2571 CBC birds along with 573 on the WWS of 1/6. The last report of note from observers was of 500 birds at Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area (hereafter DCWMA) 1/2 (BRJ,JMN). Wood Ducks were predictably scarce with the only sightings a single bird in Brandon 12/8 (SSW) and 3 on the Bennington CBC. Also late were single Green-winged Teal on the Ferrisburgh and Hanover-Norwich CBC's, the latter bird discovered in New Hampshire. Seven hundred fifty-eight American Black Ducks was an adequate CBC total but still the lowest since 1986. Observers reported small numbers only, including 9 in Dorset 12/4 (EFG), 12 on the New Haven R. 2/6 (MCD,JID), 16 in Weybridge 2/7 (JAP) and 25 near the Grand Isle ferry landing 2/12 (SWM). Mallards were significantly more abundant, as the CBC tally rebounded to 2775 individuals, while late-winter reports featured 250 at the Grand Isle ferry 2/11 (TGM) and 100 at Salisbury 2/22 (JAP). A pair was observed mating in West Rutland 2/20 (CJF), although it was not reported whether such activity was because of or in spite of the cold weather. The rarer winter ducks were all scarce, as the only Northern Pintail of the season was a single hen at Burlington 1/1 (DLC). Gadwall followed suit with just one bird reported, at Nichols Point, Grand Isle 12/31 (DJH). An American Wigeon on the Ferrisburgh CBC was certainly a welcome surprise, especially in such a difficult season for the Anatidae. Ring-necked Ducks managed a somewhat better showing as 3 individuals were tallied on the Burlington CBC and another 2 on the Champlain Islands. Also reported were 1-2 birds at Charlotte 1/10 (JAP;EMA,RDB). Fifteen Greater Scaup on the Champlain Islands were the only CBC birds of the year, along with 10 other scaup unidentified as to species. Additionally there were 5 greaters at Shelburne Bay 12/18 (SWM) and a single at Charlotte 1/10 (JAP). A highlight of the season was the female HARLEQUIN DUCK discovered off Perkins Pier in Burlington 12/19 (SWM,JAM). This was just the 9th state record for the Harlequin and its first appearance on the CBC roster. There were no reports of Oldsquaw (a first in at least 15 years) and scoters were nearly as scarce: a single Black Scoter at Charlotte 12/29 (JAP) and just 2 White-winged Scoters on the Champlain Islands CBC. Common Goldeneye were typically abundant during early winter as evidenced by an excellent CBC total. One hundred or more were off Grand Isle 1/1 (DJH) while 80 were still at Shelburne 1/10 (JAP). Thereafter the only report was of 4 individuals below the dam at Weybridge 1/31 (JAP). Three Barrow's Goldeneye were at Blodgett's, Burlington 12/10 (TSA), the only report of this uncommon species for the winter. Bufflehead were present in good numbers for the CBC season with 32 birds at Burlington and 48 at Ferrisburgh. However, they were predictably absent after freeze-up, aside from 2 birds below the Weybridge Dam 1/31 (JAP). Hooded Mergansers fared reasonably well during December with Christmas counters tallying a respectable 23 birds. Other late reports were headed up by 2 individuals in E. Putney 12/16 (TEJ), 9 at the Retreat Meadows 12/16 (TEJ), 4 at L. Bomoseen 12/18 (CJF) and a single at Charlotte 1/10 (JAP). Common Mergansers awaited the January freeze-up in record numbers, with 3396 tallied on the Champlain Islands CBC and 2007 on the WWS of 1/6. A scattering of reports from observers included 25 at Vernon Dam 1/9 (CHD), a single in Montpelier 2/1 (TSA) and 20 near the Grand Isle ferry landing 2/12 (SWM). December sightings of Red-breasted Merganser were also of interest, with 16 birds at Bridport 12/1 (JAP) and 24 present for the Champlain Islands CBC.

Kestrel



VULTURES, HAWKS AND FALCONS

For the first time in several years there were no winter reports of Turkey Vulture. However, an Osprey in Woodstock 12/24 (TZ) was the latest ever, and only the second December sighting of this species to appear in these winter Records. Bald Eagles were again widely reported with individuals observed in Woodstock (MR,JT,KW), East Ryegate (SDF), Enosburg (SWM), Waterford (HW), Swanton (FAP,EBP), Charlotte (JAP) and Wilmington (MRB). Three adults were seen along LC during the WWS of 1/6 (via TM) while as many as 2 adults were present at the traditional Wilder Dam site which was occupied for the 14th year in succession. Northern Harriers also fared well with 17 at Middlebury highlighting the CBC season. Late reports included a male at St. Albans 12/29 (FAP,EBP), 2 birds at Shoreham 12/29 (MBN), 3 at Bridport 12/31 (JAP) and singles at DCWMA 1/2 (BRJ,JMN) and at Ferrisburgh 1/10 (EMA,RDB). A sturdy individual was still in Bridport as late as 1/31 (JAP). As usual Sharp-shinned Hawks paced the accipiter division with a near-record CBC tally along with nearly 20 other reports from contributors. One bird was the subject of a photographic study as it dined below a Grand Isle feeder 2/13 (DJH). Cooper's Hawks also prospered as a new CBC record was established with individuals being located in 10 of 16 circles. Other reports came from Strafford (SDF), New Haven (JRA), Brandon (SSW) and Ferrisburgh (EMA,RDB;JRA). One Cooper's in Ferrisburgh was observed chasing cardinals before settling for a Mourning Dove, 2/2 (MCD,JID). Northern Goshawks were also much in evidence in the vicinity of feeders, as birds were noted in such places as Middlebury, (MCD,JID;JAP), Woodstock (JMN), Fairlee (SDF), Addison (TGM), Leicester and Shaftsbury (SSW). Yet easily the most prominent raptor of the winter was the formidable Red-tailed Hawk. An astonishing 314 CBC birds far surpassed the old record while Ferrisburgh, Middlebury and the Champlain Islands all approached or exceeded the former high for a single circle. Numbers held up remarkably well into the winter with 12 birds in Bridport 1/31 (JAP) and 16 in the Ferrisburgh/Addison area 2/12 (TGM). Rough-legged Hawks held their own with a strong CBC showing of 71 individuals. Other reports featured 10 in Bridport 1/31 (JAP), 3 in Grand Isle 2/12 (SWM) and 7 between Ferrisburgh and Addison 2/12 (TGM). Turning to the falcons, the American Kestrel continued its

pattern of recent years, as only 12 CBC birds were found, including 6 in Middlebury. Later reports were limited to singles in Ferrisburgh (EMA,RDB), Bridport (JAP), St. Albans (SWM) and Randolph (EWC,MCC). Always rare in winter, the Merlin nonetheless managed to grace two CBC rosters, those of Ferrisburgh and Middlebury. Somewhat surprisingly the only CBC Peregrine Falcon was a count week bird at Middlebury, although observers added an individual at Bridport 12/1 (JAP), an overwintering bird atop the UVM water tower (GEH,SWM) and an individual at the Champlain Mill in Winooski 2/11 (MK). Finally there were 4 reports of the rare GYRFALCON, though none with supporting details: a CBC bird at Ferrisburgh, a very dark gray individual at Pantton 12/6 (JAP), a "possible" at Sheffield 12/10 (PFW,SAW) and a "probable" near the Grand Isle ferry 1/27 (TGM). This editor appreciates the use of qualifiers such as those used by the last-mentioned contributors when reporting rare species seen only briefly and perhaps inadequately.

GRAY PARTRIDGE THROUGH KILLDEER

After a three-year lapse Gray Partridge returned to the CBC roster when 16 birds were discovered at the Champlain Islands. The same flock was seen again along Middle Road in Swanton on 12/31 (FAP,EBP) and as late as 2/18 (TGM). Reports of Ring-necked Pheasant included a count week bird at Ferrisburgh, a single on the Hanover-Norwich CBC, a male near the fire house in Quechee on 12/6 (OS) and a bird visiting a yard in Chelsea on 2/3-5 (NEB). Disappointingly there were no sightings of Spruce Grouse. Ruffed Grouse also suffered from the severe winter, producing the lowest CBC tally in six years. "High" counts from contributors were 2 birds in Reading 12/19 (FMH,EJH), another 2 in Grand Isle 2/13 (DJH) and 3 in Pawlet 12/18 (GRB). Wild Turkeys fared remarkably well with a good CBC showing backed up by several reports from contributors including 32 birds in Ferrisburgh 12/1 (MCD,JID), 13 in Proctor 1/13 (RWP), 14 in Waterbury 2/1 (TSA) and 12 in S. Alburg 2/12 (SWM). A flock numbering up to 40 birds was seen on several occasions along Rt. 30 in Pawlet (GRB), while a yard flock in Chester reached a maximum of 33 on 1/5 (CEA). An American Coot on L. Bomoseen 12/11 (CJF) was a good find as was a Killdeer on the Middlebury CBC. A second Killdeer at the Berlin airport 2/21 (TSA) was very early and certainly unexpected in a winter of such heavy snows.

GULLS

It was not a big year for the Laridae, as no rarities were found and even Bonaparte's Gulls were in short supply. Forty-three of these charming little gulls on the Ferrisburgh and Champlain Islands CBC's were the only ones of the season. Two hundred Ring-billed Gulls in Middlesex on 12/10 (TSA) was a good number, but later reports dwindled, and a CBC total of 706 birds was only mediocre. Herring Gulls were better represented with 1704 CBC birds, about in line with expectations. The only Iceland Gulls reported were 2 first-winter birds at the Grand Isle ferry on 2/16 (TGM,SWM), while there were no sightings of Glaucous Gulls. On the other hand, the recent rise of the Great Black-backed Gull moderated only slightly, as 620 birds from 8 circles constituted the second best CBC showing on record.

Great Gray Owl

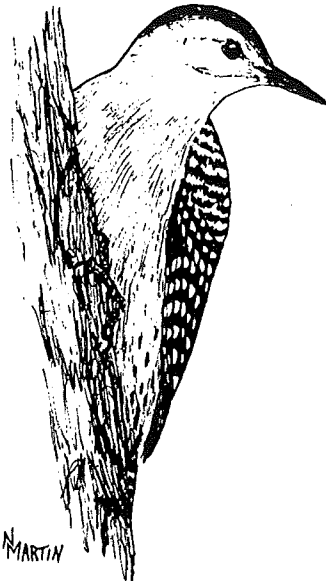


DOVES THROUGH OWLS

Rock Doves had their lowest CBC total in 3 years, but 8746 individuals were hardly cause for celebration. Mourning Doves were also anything but scarce with flocks of 30 or more reported in Manchester Center (BWP), Bennington (EMA,RDB), Brownsville (BMH) and Sheffield (PFW,SAW). Leading the list was a flock of 51 in Middlebury 1/22 (JAP). Eastern Screech-Owls produced an excellent CBC total, thanks in great measure to a noteworthy 8 birds on the Champlain Islands. A single in Sudbury on 1/23 (SSW) was the only other report. Great Horned Owls also did well, as 29 CBC birds were found, including 14 in Middlebury alone. Other records were limited to singles in Dorset (EFG), Woodstock (JMN) and Manchester Center (BWP) along with 2 birds in Georgia on 1/25 (EMA,RDB). Snowy Owls staged a minor flight with birds reported from several locations in addition to 1 on the Champlain Islands CBC. One individual was at DCWMA during early December when it was observed "sparring" with a Snow Goose on 12/14 (JAP). Another report featured a snowy in St. Albans where it was seen during much of January just south of the Swanton town line (GEH). Sightings in early February included single birds in S. Lincoln (AK), Ferrisburgh and Cornwall (MCD,JID). Barred Owls were widely reported as 10 CBC circles combined to produce a new record count of 20 individuals. Contributors added another dozen sightings (or hearings) from locations throughout the state. Excellent views were provided by such birds as the one seen from a picture window in Chester on 2/9 (CEA) or the one visiting a porch in Cabot "for a few days" in December (PFW,SAW). Three reports of GREAT GRAY OWL were tantalizing since none of the birds remained on location and thus were only briefly seen. The first in Braintree on 1/17 was described as very large with yellow eyes and displaying no fear of people (BC); the second in Royalton on 1/25 may have been the same bird and was reported as being brownish-gray in color and having no ear tufts (KMc). The third bird in S. Londonderry on 2/6 was also briefly observed but nonetheless well enough described to be accepted by the Vt. Bird Records Committee (WJN). Also of note was a Long-eared Owl first observed on the ground next to Rt. 131 in Weathersfield on 1/23 (KMC). This bird was cooperative, however, as it then flew across the road to perch atop a fence in full view of the observer. A second long-eared was found dead of apparent starvation and with "no visible trauma" in Brandon on 2/1 (SSW). Less melancholy were the three reports of Short-eared Owl: a CBC bird on the Champlain Islands, an individual in Shoreham on 1/9 (WGE,NLM,JPM,JBM) and another in Addison on 2/7 (JAP). As for

the Northern Saw-whet Owl, this diminutive species produced its best CBC showing ever as 6 birds were found, including 2 on the Champlain Islands. The only report from contributors came from Wilder where a bird was heard calling at night on 2/24 (JD).

Red-bellied Woodpecker



KINGFISHER AND WOODPECKERS

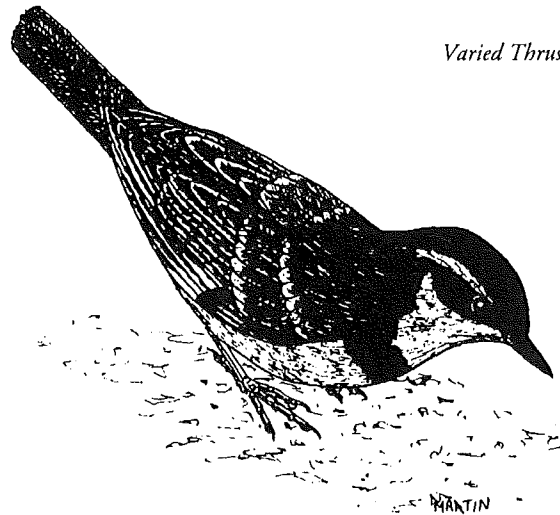
Belted Kingfishers generally headed south in a timely manner, though 15 CBC birds exactly matched last year's showing. Last reported was a single in Dorset on 1/2 (EFG). There was just one report of the decidedly uncommon Red-bellied Woodpecker, an individual visiting a suet feeder in East Rupert on 1/3 (LM). Downy Woodpeckers were present in their usual numbers with a pair or two at most feeders. A high count of 8 was noted in Brandon on 2/9 (SSW). Hairy Woodpeckers also tolerated the severe winter in good fashion, as 394 CBC birds were found, the highest total since 1989. Moderately reassuring were 3 Black-backed Woodpeckers on the Island Pond CBC along with a single at Craftsbury-Greensboro. However, this species will continue to be under the pressure of severe habitat loss in the Northeast Kingdom. A modest 8 Northern Flickers in 5 CBC circles seems reasonable for such a harsh winter. The only later report was of an individual in Ferrisburgh on 1/23 (FAP,EBP). As for the splendid Pileated Woodpecker, the species set yet another CBC record as 113 individuals were found. Nearly 40 reports were received from contributors, including 2 birds each in Charlotte on 12/29 (JAP) and in Reading on 2/17 (FMH,EJH).

HORNED LARK THROUGH CREEPER

Horned Larks persevered through the winter in only moderately reduced numbers, as many people reported flocks of 100 or more. High counts were 150 in Middlebury on 12/28 (JAP), 200 in the Grand Isle to Swanton area on 1/16 (SWM) and 300 in New Haven on 1/21 (JAP). The only Gray Jay of the season was a CBC bird at Island Pond, though perhaps the deep snows were more of a problem for observers than for jays. Certainly Blue Jays were conspicuous by their presence, as they mustered up their best CBC showing since 1986. Feeder flocks featured 30 in

Bartonsville (TEJ) and 29 in Sheffield (PFW,SAW). Apparently American Crows just loved the old-fashioned winter as they celebrated the CBC season with a new record of 5740 individuals. Late-winter counts included 100 in Clarendon on 2/21 (CJF) and 250 in Middlebury on 2/20 (JAP). Not to be outdone, Common Ravens also surged to a new high, with all 16 CBC circles participating. Thirty-four birds were in Woodstock on 12/31 (KRT), 14 were in Brandon on 12/17 (SSW) and 11 were in Reading on 2/6 (FMH,EJH). Two birds were regularly observed in Chester, including one with apparent nesting materials on 2/27-28 (CEA). Numbers of Black-capped Chickadees were impressive, with a CBC tally in excess of 14,000 and numerous feeder flocks in the 15-25 range. However, Boreal Chickadees were not much in evidence with just 14 birds reported: 10 on the Island Pond CBC, 3 in Craftsbury-Greensboro, and a single in Eden on 2/17 and 2/28 (DAB). The Tufted Titmouse posted another good year, almost matching its CBC high established in 1991. Pacing the feeder flocks were 4 in Ferrisburgh (MCD,JID) and 5 in Bartonsville (TEJ). Red-breasted Nuthatches also prospered, coming up with their second best CBC tally since the record-setting year of 1979. At feeders maximum numbers were 4 in Westminster West (AMD), 4 in Chester (CEA), and 5 in Reading (FMH,EJH). White-breasted Nuthatches were even more numerous, topping the 1,000 mark on the CBC countdown for just the third time. By contrast, Brown Creepers were quite scarce as just 70 CBC birds were recorded, the lowest total since 1985. From other contributors came just a handful of reports, including 3 birds at L. Carmi on 1/2 (SWM).

Varied Thrush



CAROLINA WREN THROUGH STARLING

Carolina Wrens came through the CBC season in good shape, as 9 individuals were tallied in 6 circles. However, other reports were few and far between with mention of just 2 birds, one in Shelburne on 12/20 (SWM) and a second at a Vergennes feeder (MCD,JID). The implications may be ominous, since this is a species notorious for its sensitivity to harsh winters. Winter Wrens at Burlington and Ferrisburgh kept intact an unbroken CBC string stretching back to 1982. But Golden-crowned Kinglets suffered through a dismal CBC season as only 48 were found, the fewest since back in 1983. Even worse, there were no other reports. However, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet, uncommon in even a mild winter, showed up for the Brattleboro CBC on 12/18, hopefully on its way south. Turning to the thrushes, Eastern Bluebirds were understandably down

Christmas Counts 1993-1994

	Bennington · 12/28	Brattleboro · 12/18	Burlington · 12/19	Champlain Islands · 12/19	Craftsbury- Greensboro · 1/1	Ferrisburg · 12/18	Hanover-Norwich · 12/31	Hinesburg · 12/19	Island Pond · 12/18	Middlebury · 12/19	Plainfield · 12/31	Rutland · 12/26	Saxtons River · 12/18	Springfield · 1/2	Winhall · 12/21	Woodstock · 12/28	
Pacific Loon		CW															
Common Loon			3	8		10							CW				21
Horned Grebe			8	1		45											54
Red-necked Grebe						1											1
Great Blue Heron			2	6		4		3		4			3				22
Mute Swan													1				1
Snow Goose				65		2				32							99
Canada Goose	11		58	518		1,403				316		71	193			1	2,571
Wood Duck	3																3
Green-winged Teal						1	1										2
Am. Black Duck	132	8	79	329		99	21	9		65		11	3			2	758
Mallard	161		568	1,662		65	2	2		289		6	8	12			2,775
American Wigeon						1											1
Ring-necked Duck			3	2													5
Greater Scaup				15													15
Scaup (sp.)				2		8											10
Harlequin Duck			1														1
White-winged Scoter				2													2
Common Goldeneye		8	479	1,964		298	12			CW			9				2,770
Bufflehead			32	19		48											99
Hooded Merganser		1		10		7	4			CW			1				23
Common Merganser	48	5	47	3,396		143	29	9		CW			20	1			3,698
Red-breasted Merganser				24		7				CW							31
Bald Eagle		2				2	1										5
Northern Harrier				1		9				17							27
Sharp-shinned Hawk	CW	2	1	6		3	4			5	1	4	1	2	1	1	31
Cooper's Hawk	1	1	1	3		2	2			2		1	1	2			16
Northern Goshawk	1				2	2	1		1				1	3			11
Red-tailed Hawk	33	12	15	58		76	8	10		64	2	3	16	10		7	314
Rough-legged Hawk			1	13		32		2		23							71
Buteo (sp.)				2													2
American Kestrel	1			1		3				6			1				12
Merlin						1				1							2
Peregrine Falcon										CW							
Gyrfalcon						1											1
Falcon (sp.)			1														1
Gray Partridge				16													16
Ring-necked Pheasant						CW	1										1
Ruffed Grouse	3		2	17	4	7	2	7	13	14	6	2	5	5		3	90
Wild Turkey	67	23				26	7				4	25	18			36	206
Killdeer										1							1
Bonaparte's Gull				2		41											43
Ring-billed Gull		16	345	128	1	99		105		5			7				706
Herring Gull	2	834	361	340		72		17		1			38	39			1,704
Gr. Black-backed Gull	CW	182	203	144		57		5		1			5	23			620
Gull (sp.)			759	3						4							766
Rock Dove	511	408	615	1,453	181	800	730	227	60	960	180	349	994	890	52	336	8,746
Mourning Dove	335	264	123	557	58	764	410	48	22	601	313	286	494	740	24	286	5,325
Eastern Screech-Owl				8		4				2							14
Great Horned Owl			3	4		1		1	1	14		1			1	3	29
Snowy Owl				1													1
Barred Owl					1	1	4		1	3	2	1	3	3		1	20
Short-eared Owl				1													1
Northern Saw-whet Owl				2		1	1			1		1					6
Owl (sp.)			1														1
Belted Kingfisher	2	1	1	2			2		1		1		2	2		1	15

Christmas Counts 1993-1994

Bennington · 12/28 Brattleboro · 12/18 Burlington · 12/19
 Champlain Islands · 12/19 Craftsbury-
 Greensboro · 1/1 Ferrisburg · 12/18 Hanover-Norwich · 12/31
 Hinesburg · 12/19 Island Pond · 12/18 Middlebury · 12/19
 Plainfield · 12/31 Rutland · 12/26 Saxtons River · 12/18
 Springfield · 1/2 Winhall · 12/21 Woodstock · 12/28

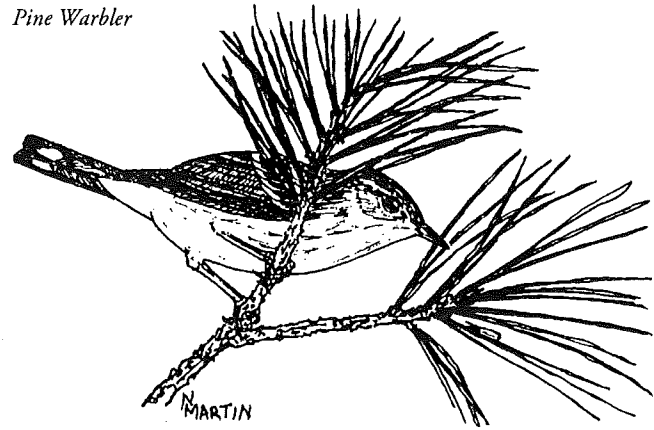
Downy Woodpecker	17	24	33	89	7	51	57	19	11	85	37	35	38	53	5	43	604
Hairy Woodpecker	10	12	11	25	16	15	45	13	21	44	46	22	32	39	4	39	394
Black-backed Woodpecker					1				3								4
Northern Flicker	1	1		1		1				4							8
Pileated Woodpecker	2	2	13	18	6	16	8	3	1	22	5	2	5	6	CW	4	113
Horned Lark	126	65		132		278	CW			84		122	122	100			1,029
Gray Jay									1								1
Blue Jay	193	387	137	226	91	265	907	135	46	338	240	529	717	980	36	500	5,727
American Crow	329	379	551	489	37	294	770	59	8	332	323	696	623	629	9	212	5,740
Common Raven	1	7	4	3	27	7	18	22	20	2	39	13	16	17	6	27	229
Black-capped Chickadee	329	523	383	875	462	743	2,460	575	315	613	1,131	1,226	906	2,002	270	1,386	14,199
Boreal Chickadee					3				10								13
Tufted Titmouse	18	28	33	3		18	44	2		23	1	20	44	68		5	307
Red-breasted Nuthatch	8	41	5	5	12	11	116	6	31	4	27	32	78	200	7	38	621
White-breasted Nuthatch	32	58	44	71	7	83	146	35	2	100	37	85	103	133	9	106	1,051
Brown Creeper	CW		13	2	2	11	10	3	1	4	2	2	6	3	1	10	70
Carolina Wren		2	2			2	CW	1				1	1				9
Winter Wren			1			1											2
Golden-crowned Kinglet	3	1			3	3	2		4		11	5	1			15	48
Ruby-crowned Kinglet		1															1
Eastern Bluebird	7	3								5		7	5				27
American Robin	1	6	3			8	1		2	4			2	1			28
Gray Catbird													1				1
Northern Mockingbird	9	9	11			5	5			4		2	7	6			58
Bohemian Waxwing			12	196		432	261	214		70	190	114					1,489
Cedar Waxwing	14	84	20			101						3	5	1			228
Northern Shrike					2	1	1										4
European Starling	1,964	1,172	973	3,469	349	1,798	379	721	39	3,721	405	497	763	582	48	191	17,071
Pine Warbler										1							1
Common Yellowthroat						1											1
Northern Cardinal	87	36	55	60	2	152	70	30	6	204	25	155	93	80	3	27	1,085
Rufous-sided Towhee						1											1
American Tree Sparrow	176	212	30	35	17	150	118	38	6	320	67	145	216	113		7	1,650
Savannah Sparrow							2										2
Fox Sparrow							1										1
Song Sparrow	3	12	3	4		4	1	1		5		2	19	5		1	60
Lincoln's Sparrow			1														1
Swamp Sparrow				1									5				6
White-throated Sparrow	3	7	1			3	6	2		1			8	3	1		35
White-crowne Sparrow										1	1	1					3
Dark-eyed Junco	199	66	19	18	1	26	32	10	3	17	1	33	105	58	5	11	604
Lapland Longspur		2															2
Snow Bunting		1	14	53		20	CW				111	54	20	75			348
Red-winged Blackbird		1		2		1		1		3		1					9
Common Grackle					1	1	1			2					CW		5
Brown-headed Cowbird	9			294	18	9		43		13	1						387
Pine Grosbeak	11	19	113	24	16	15	607	7	21	32	126	131	11	78	25	78	1,314
Purple Finch				4		14		1				4					23
House Finch	342	141	322	434	4	405	585	47	6	428	43	521	388	601	38	89	4,394
Common Redpoll	2	48	251	1,072	227	1,961	783	150	180	2,069	473	374	434	224	CW	80	8,328
Pine Siskin		107				37	43	1	3	1			78	42	CW	3	315
American Goldfinch	50	217	63	140	2	224	265	36	45	275	49	96	332	333		10	2,137
Evening Grosbeak	36	44		61	62	51	211	56	111	37	452	84	127	133	48	58	1,571
House Sparrow	218	147	520	1,649	187	648	510	100	28	1,130	327	746	589	766	72	139	7,776
TOTAL SPECIES	45	51	54	65	32	79	51	42	33	58	34	46	56	42	21	35	103
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	5,511	5,633	7,352	20,240	1,809	12,013	9,707	2,776	1,023	12,429	4,679	6,521	7,724	9,063	665	3,756	110,901

from recent highs, although a CBC total of 27 individuals was well above average. Readers produced several sightings, including 6 birds in Pittsford on 12/24 (RWP), 2 in Dorset on 1/2 (EFG), 9 in Brandon and Leicester on 1/6 (SSW), 7 in West Haven on 1/22 (CCF), and 4 in Middlebury on 2/6 (JAP). A Hermit Thrush apparently attempted overwintering in Shaftsbury where it was observed along the roadside on 2/2 (LSJ). This is the first winter record of the species in 4 years. American Robins sensibly departed early, with only 28 CBC birds tallied and only a half dozen reports of overwintering birds received. Among the latter were a single in Hubbardton on 1/23 (CJF), 2 individuals in Brandon on 1/29 (SSW) and a single in Williamstown on 2/16 (AA). Perhaps this last was an extremely early spring migrant, as presumably were birds in Shoreham on 2/22 (JAP) and in Moretown on 2/26 (MRP). A male VARIED THRUSH visited a feeder in Shaftsbury from 1/30 until at least 2/16 (CVK,FAP,EBP,RWP,SSW et al.) for the third record of this beautiful species in the past four winters. Also rare in winter was a Gray Catbird at Saxtons River, just the second CBC sighting for this well-known mimic in the past nine years. Northern Mockingbirds appeared on the CBC roster in typical numbers, but thereafter vanished almost entirely. Single birds were in Westminster on 1/13 (AMD), and in Burlington on 1/17 (MCD,JID), in Addison on 1/31 (JAP) and in South Burlington on 1/28 and again on 2/9 (SWM). Certainly one of the major events of the season was the massive influx of Bohemian Waxwings, those splendid aristocrats from the west and north. Ferrisburgh easily surpassed its own record for a single circle, while the total CBC tally of 1489 birds more than doubled the previous high set back in 1989. Reports from contributors persisted throughout the winter and featured flocks of 250 in Ferrisburgh on 12/19 (MCD,JID), 250 in Middlebury on 12/20 (JAP), 150 in Brandon during January (SSW), and 400 in Colchester on 2/4 (JDM). Cedar Waxwings were evidently overawed, as just 228 CBC birds were found, about one-tenth of the prior year's total. About a dozen other reports came in, with high counts 42 in Charlotte on 12/29 (JAP), 42 in Proctor on 1/11 (RWP) and 38 in Bartonville on 2/24 (TEJ). Northern Shrikes were notably scarce for the second year in a row as Ferrisburgh, Hanover-Norwich and Craftsbury-Greensboro combined for a grand total of 4 CBC birds. Several others were noted by contributors, often in the vicinity of feeders. One shrike at a Strafford feeder "preyed on a chickadee" on 1/23 (ERD), but a second individual in Middlesex on 1/19 was observed in fruitless pursuit of similar prey (JL). Meanwhile, European Starlings unhappily rebounded from a moderate dip last winter as just over 17,000 CBC birds were dutifully counted. Perhaps we can take some measure of comfort in the report of 30 starlings "bathing in a meltwater puddle" in Addison on 2/20 (JRA).

WARBLERS THROUGH JUNCO

Cooperative as well as noteworthy was a PINE WARBLER visiting a suet feeder in Weybridge during mid-December (AF). The bird remained until at least 12/23 (JAP), thus providing Middlebury with the first CBC record ever for the species. Also exceptional was a Common Yellowthroat on the Ferrisburgh CBC, just the fourth appearance of this diminutive warbler in Vermont CBC annals. Northern Cardinals came back strong after an off year, as Christmas counters tallied more than 1,000 individuals for the first time in 3 years. Feeder flocks were most numerous in Brandon with 22 birds (SSW) and in Ferrisburgh with 25 (MCD,JID). A Rufous-sided Towhee in Ferrisburgh was just the third CBC occurrence for this occasional lingerer in about a dozen years. Meanwhile,

Pine Warbler



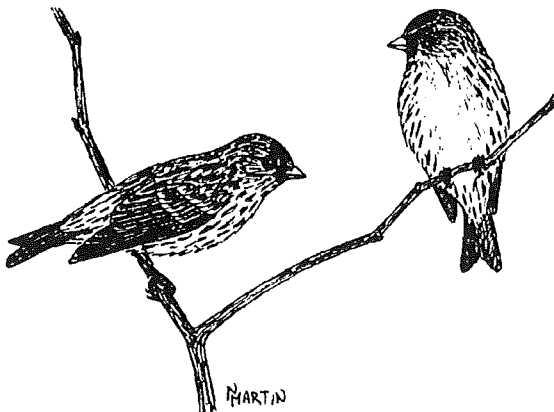
American Tree Sparrows settled for another indifferent year, presumably opting for more southerly feeding grounds during late winter. Twenty birds were still in Panton on 2/20 (CJF), while other reports included 9 in Shelburne 1/23 (TGM), 12 in Charlotte 1/24 (EMA,RDB), 8 in Manchester Center 2/10 (BWP) and 9 at a Sheffield feeder throughout the season (PFW,SAW). For the first time in nearly twenty years there were no winter reports of Field Sparrow. However, after a brief hiatus of two years, the Savannah Sparrow returned to the CBC roster, thanks to 2 birds at Hanover-Norwich. Also at Hanover-Norwich was the season's only record of Fox Sparrow, another of our occasional overwinterers. Song Sparrows, however, were in distinctly short supply, as only 60 CBC birds were located, the low since back in 1983. Whether any survived the winter (or even made the attempt) is open to conjecture. Late reports were limited to a single bird in Bridport 1/3 (JAP), 2 in Shoreham 1/2 (BRJ,JMN) and another single in Shelburne 1/23 (TGM). The first CBC record for Lincoln's Sparrow since 1970 was provided by a bird at the mouth of the Winooski R. on 12/19 (CSP). Six CBC Swamp Sparrows featured a record 5 individuals at Saxtons River, but there were no later reports from contributors. White-throated Sparrows were scarce throughout the season, though 3 were in Norwich as late as 2/5, where they "always come at dusk" with resident cardinals (EJ). One bird was heard emitting a "weak song" in Weybridge 2/27 (MBN). Five reports of White-crowned Sparrows were above average as CBC birds were found in Middlebury, Plainfield and Rutland. Also of note were singles along James Road in Swanton 12/29 (FAP,EBP) and at Benson Landing 1/9 (WGE,NLM,JPM,JBM). All these early winter white-crowned sightings were perhaps to be expected after unusually large fall migration numbers. As for Dark-eyed Junco, those handsome and well-loved winter visitors seemed little subdued by the snow and cold. A CBC tally of 604 individuals was more than adequate, while feeder flocks of 3-5 were reported in several locations. Six birds were in Chester 1/20 (CEA), while a high count of 8 was in Springfield 1/29 (WME).

LONGSPURS THROUGH ICTERIDS

Two Lapland Longspurs at Brattleboro were all that Christmas counters could uncover. Contributors fared somewhat better with singles reported in Orwell and Bridport (WGE,NLM,JPM,JBM), Grand Isle (DJH), St. Albans (SWM,TGM), Swanton (SWM), Ferrisburgh (TGM) and at DCWMA (TGM). Three birds were found in Addison 1/3 (JAP). The

inconsistent Snow Bunting produced 348 CBC birds, better than in either of the previous two years but still well below average. Most reports from contributors came from the Champlain Valley, with an impressive high of 1,000 in Orwell 1/9 (WGE,NLM,JPM,JBM). A flock of 24 was observed daily in Johnson from 1/23 until early March (JAW), while 5 were discovered in Groton at an elevation of 1700 feet on 2/1 (WBK). Other interesting locations included Caledonia Airport (PFW,SAW), Taftsville (WS), Plymouth (MsK), Berlin (TSA) and Prouty Beach, Newport (PFW,SAW). Red-winged Blackbirds were in generally very short supply, though 2 were in Wallingford 12/23 (SJD), 1 was in Ferrisburgh 12/29 (JAP), another single was in Shoreham 1/9 (WGE,NLM,JPM,JBM) and single feeder visitors were in Richmond for about a week in mid-January (LLA) and in Bakersfield 1/24 (MSB). Overly optimistic in returning from the south were a single bird in W. Addison 2/20 (CJF) and a group of 8 in Wallingford 2/24 (SJD). Surprising were 3 Rusty Blackbirds at a Wallingford feeder 2/12, followed by 6 the next day (SJD). Five Common Grackles constituted the poorest CBC showing in about 17 years, while other observers could add only 2 individuals, singles in Sheffield 12/1 (PFW,SAW) and in S. Londonderry 12/17 (WJN). Brown-headed Cowbirds were either more sturdy or more foolish, as 387 CBC individuals were tallied, including 294 on the Champlain Islands. Sixty were seen at a cattle feedlot in Shoreham 1/9 (WGE,NLM,JPM,JBM) while a flock of 33 was in Bridport as late as 2/21 (JAP). A single bird appeared in Brandon 2/28, presumably a spring migrant (SSW).

Common Redpoll



FRINGILLIDS THROUGH HOUSE SPARROW

Pine Grosbeaks enjoyed their first big year since 1985, as a near-record CBC total was buttressed by 607 birds at Hanover-Norwich, a new high for a single circle. Other reports were 100 at the UVM campus 1/14 (SWM), 60 along Maple St. in Burlington 1/23 (FAP,EBP), 50 on Grand Isle 2/26 (DJH) and 40 in Woodstock Village on 12/22 (KRT,SDF). By contrast, Purple Finches were extremely scarce. Just 23 CBC birds were tallied, a low since 1977, while contributors could add just two sightings, a single male in Wallingford 1/27 (SJD) and 2 in Ferrisburgh 2/20 (MCD,JID). House Finches managed to drop off a bit from last year's record high, much to the relief of feeder-stockers. The largest feeder flock reported was about 45 birds in Weybridge (MBN). The lone report of Red Crossbills came from Reading where a maximum of 10 birds was present

12/1-18 (FMH,EJH). White-winged Crossbills were similarly scarce, as the only ones seen were a flock of 10 in Bartonville 1/22 (TEJ). Common Redpolls, on the other hand, burst forth in truly unprecedented numbers, an explosion that covered not only Vermont, but eventually states as far south as Maryland. Both Ferrisburgh and Middlebury easily topped the old single-circle high, while the grand total of 8328 CBC birds was more than twice the numbers recorded in such flight years as 1980 and 1986. Individual contributors could only estimate the sizes of the flocks they encountered, for example 600 in Ferrisburgh 12/7 (MCD,JID), 750 in Bridport 12/17 (JAP), 1500 at DCWMA 12/28 (SWM) and 2,000 in Shoreham 1/2 (BRJ,JMN). One redpoll in S. Londonderry on 1/6 may well have been of the "Greater Redpoll" race, featuring large size, very heavy bill and dark streaking (WJN). Also reported was a single HOARY REDPOLL in Clarendon 1/2 (BRJ,JMN). This individual showed a white unstreaked rump, light face and nape, and relatively unstreaked breast and flanks, characteristics of the paler and thus more safely identified hoaries. Meanwhile, the Pine Siskin, a bird far less hazardous to identify, appeared in very low numbers except in the Connecticut Valley, where the Brattleboro and Saxtons River CBC's tallied at least reasonable numbers. Other reports were minimal, with 2 birds in Weybridge 1/28 (MBN), 2 in Springfield 2/26 (WME) and 3 in Georgia 2/27 (EMA,RDB). American Goldfinches produced a normal CBC count, but they too were relatively scarce in late winter. Still, feeder flocks in the 10-25 range were present in Brownsville (BMH), Brandon (SSW), Norwich (CHD) and Manchester Center (BWP). Evening Grosbeaks were more numerous but still far from the peaks of recent years. The larger feeder flocks, most noticeable in December and late February, appeared in such places as Lincoln (JRA), Westminster West (AMD), Manchester Center (BWP), Reading (FMH,EJH), Shaftsbury (CVK) and S. Londonderry (WJN). Finally, House Sparrows rebounded slightly to 7776 CBC birds, still comfortably below their highs of the 1980's.

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* Indicates Christmas Count compiler.

Special thanks to all who participated in Christmas Counts and the Eagle Survey.

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN TEXT

CBC	Christmas Bird Count
DCWMA	Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area
LC	Lake Champlain
WWS	Winter Waterford Survey

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.

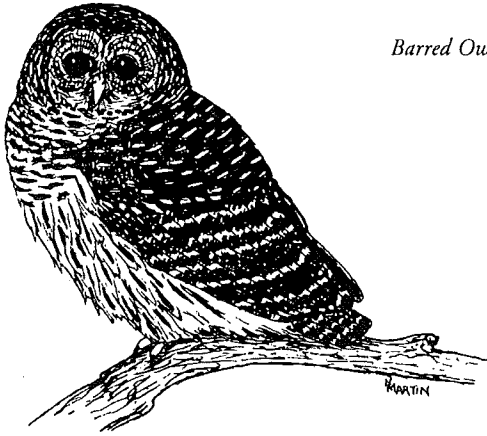
It is frustrating for both the observer and the committee to have a tantalizing sighting of a rare species not listed due to insufficient details.

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.





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