



RECORDS OF VERMONT BIRDS

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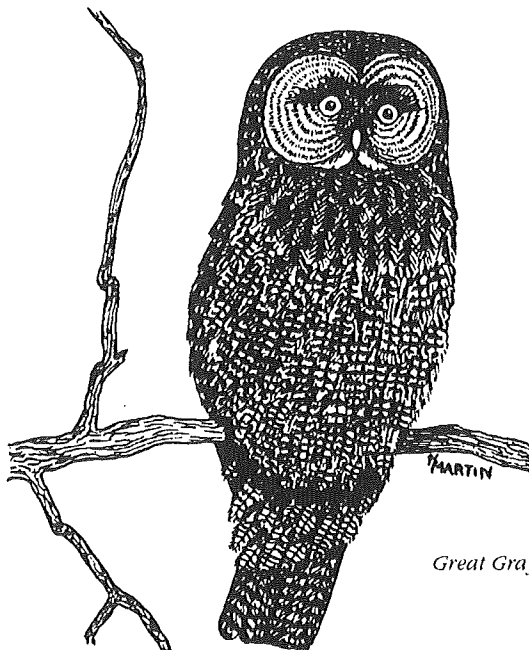
WINTER 1995-1996

1 December–28 February

Frederick A. Pratt, Seasonal Editor

December's weather is generally the decisive factor in determining bird populations for the coming winter, to say nothing of the Christmas Bird Counts. Certainly that seems to have been the case in 1995-1996. December was both cold and snowy, with temperatures 3.6°F colder than normal and snowfall on a statewide basis in excess of three feet. As a result, feeders attracted good numbers of regular visitors, half-hardy species beat an early retreat to the south and Lake Champlain waters gave in to an early freeze-up.

So it was hard work for Christmas Counters, who nonetheless tallied a total of 123,006 individuals, about 1,500 greater than last year's record high. Unfortunately, such little-loved species as Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, European Starling and House Sparrow accounted for 40% of the total, collectively showing an increase of more than 8,000 individuals from the prior year. Also present in increased numbers were such regular winter residents as Horned Lark, American Crow, Common Merganser and Black-capped Chickadee.



Great Gray Owl

Yet Christmas Counters also had reasons for cheer: an unprecedented invasion of Bohemian Waxwings, which easily eclipsed recent records, an equally impressive invasion of Northern Shrikes, several heartening surprises, such as 4 Hermit Thrushes, 4 Merlins and 7 Red-bellied Woodpeckers, as well as a couple of outright rarities, such as Ruddy Duck at Ferrisburgh and BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE at Burlington.

Mid-winter birding results were mixed, as a remarkable January thaw exposed bare ground in many areas of the state. Feeder flocks tended to disperse, along with species of the open field such as Horned Lark and American Tree Sparrow. Accipiters, too, became less conspicuous as they became less dependent on feeding stations for prey. So January was another reminder that pleasant weather is oftentimes not very conducive to successful birdwatching.

However, the winter did produce some excellent finds, beyond those already mentioned. It was a good year for Common Redpolls – and thus the inevitable reports of HOARY REDPOLL (there were two). The Laridae were represented by 8 species, including the aforementioned Black-legged Kittiwake, both Iceland Gull and Glaucous Gull, and LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL. Finally, there were two reports of the spectacular GREAT GRAY OWL, one (for one day only) in South Hero and one (on an intermittent basis) in Woodbury.

LOONS THROUGH HERONS

The Red-throated Loon continued its elusive ways, with just one reported, a Ferrisburgh CBC bird found in New York waters. Common Loons dropped back a bit from last year's record high, as 33 CBC birds were tallied, including 20 at Ferrisburgh. Latest reports were 2 at Shelburne Bay on 12/29 (TGM) and a single off Grand Isle on 12/31 (DJH). Very late, and unique for the season, was a Pied-billed Grebe at McNeil Cove on 1/17 and 1/23 (TGM). Horned Grebes turned in mixed results with a poor CBC tally and few reports from contributors. Still, 81 were found on 12/29, with 32 at Charlotte Town Beach and 49 at Meach Cove (TGM). The only Red-necked Grebe of the winter was off Grand Isle on 12/1 (DJH), as Christmas Counters missed this handsome species for the first time since 1986. Meanwhile, Double-

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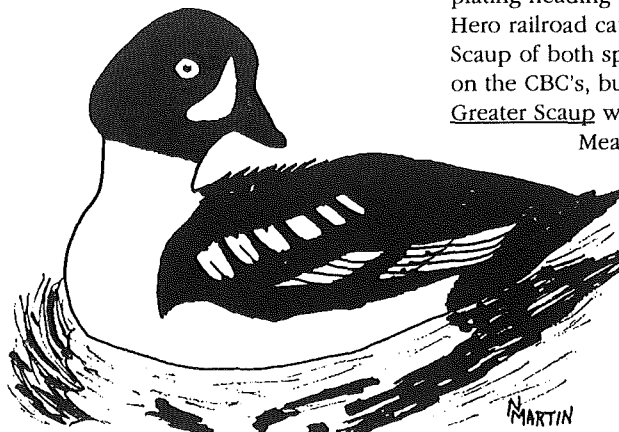
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crested Cormorants threaten to become CBC regulars, as 2 were found at Burlington and another at Ferrisburgh. The recent prosperity of this species can only be described as startling. Not surprisingly, numbers of lingering Great Blue Herons were somewhat reduced, although contributors still managed several late sightings, including singles in Bennington on 12/30 (EMA,RDB), in East Dorset on 1/3 (NAB), in Perkinsville on 1/29 (FMH,EJH) and in Shelburne on 1/31 (GEH). One unlucky individual seen in Clarendon on 12/16 was found dead at the same location on 2/19 (CJF).

WATERFOWL

A winter in Vermont apparently appealed to a group of 6 Mute Swans observed throughout January and early February at McNeil Cove (SWM,TGM,FAP,EBP). The last reported date for the birds (2 adults, 3 subadults and an immature) was 2/8 (SSW). Snow Geese showed little inclination to linger, as a mere 7 were noted on four of the early CBC's. There were no reports from individual contributors. Canada Geese were more tenacious, as evidenced by a respectable CBC tally of 2,579 individuals. However, the early freeze-up of Lake Champlain resulted in a hurried retreat by New Year's, with January reports very scarce. Latest were a single on the Battenkill River on 1/17 (BCD) and 6 in South Burlington on 1/23 (TGM). Late February reports, always a sign of warmer weather ahead, featured 150 in Vergennes on 2/27 (TGM) and 65 at Grand Isle on 2/28 (DJH). Wood Ducks continued their remarkable string of CBC appearances, as 4 birds were located at Bennington, presumably the same birds (though joined by a fifth) seen in North

Bennington on 1/15 (BCD). American Black Ducks produced numbers almost identical to a year ago, with high counts from contributors of 100 in North Pawlet on 12/26 (GRB), 130 in South Burlington on 2/23 (TGM) and 200 in New Haven on 2/13 (JRA). Mallards, too, had a good year with another strong CBC showing, backed up by such records as 500 in Burlington on 1/31 (FAP,TH) and 900 on the Winooski River in South Burlington on 2/18 (TGM). Notwithstanding a wintry month of December, there were 3 reports of Northern Pintail: 5 individuals including 2 drakes at Blodgett's on 12/5 (TGM), a single on the Burlington CBC, and another single at the Grand Isle ferry landing from 12/27 to 1/30 (DJH). Gadwall were also surprisingly well represented, with 2 birds on the Burlington CBC, a single off Grand Isle on 12/31 (DJH) and a pair at Meach Cove 1/17-21 (TGM,FAP,EBP,GEH). The female was again observed at Meach Cove on 1/31 (FAP,TH). The lone American Wigeon of the season was a drake at Blodgett's Beach on 12/3 (TGM). There were no CBC reports of the recently scarce Canvasback, but contributors compensated with two sightings: a twosome in Burlington on 1/21 (GEH) and a single drake at Meach Cove on 1/31 (FAP,TH). Also much sought after, the Redhead was even scarcer, as just one bird was found, a splendid drake on the Ferrisburgh CBC. By contrast, Ring-necked Ducks were almost commonplace, judging from the 8 CBC birds at Ferrisburgh as well as several reports from readers. Five ring-necks were at Button Bay on 12/31 (TGM,SWM) while another 5 (perhaps the same birds) were at Meach Cove on 1/21 (GEH). Two individuals were still at Meach Cove on 1/23 (TGM) and as late as 2/10 (SSW), while a single drake was at McNeil Cove, also on 1/23 (TGM). Finally an early drake, already contemplating heading north, was at the South Hero railroad causeway on 2/23 (TGM). Scaup of both species were very sparse on the CBC's, but later in the season Greater Scaup were in good numbers at Meach Cove, with 280 on 1/17 (TGM) and an estimated 150 on 1/20 (FAP,EBP). Seven



Barrow's Goldeneye

MARTIN

were also at the South Hero causeway on 2/23 (TGM). Lesser Scaup were also found at Meach Cove, a pair on 1/20 (FAP,EBP) and 3 drakes on 1/23 (TGM,GEH). For the fourth year in a row there were no CBC Oldsquaws; however, readers came through with 3 reports, singles at Roundy's Cove on 12/5 (TEJ) and at Burlington on 1/21 (GEH) as well as 2 birds at a secret location on Lake Champlain on 12/6 (SSW). The only Black Scoters of the winter were 4 on the Burlington CBC and 4, likely the same individuals, off Red Rocks Park in South Burlington on 1/6 (SWM). White-winged Scoters were similarly scarce, with just one sighting of 9 birds, also on the Burlington CBC. A count of 2,919 Common Goldeneye was the highest CBC tally since 1988, and readers also observed numerous large flocks. High count was an impressive 1,130 at the South Hero railroad causeway on 1/20 (TGM). A record 4 Barrow's Goldeneye graced the Burlington CBC – and were doubtless the same birds that were reported from Blodgett's and the Burlington area by several contributors. January records were less frequent, but included 2 birds at Grand Isle on 1/22 (DJH) and a pair at Charlotte Town Beach on 1/13 (TGM). The handsome Bufflehead had another record CBC year, with 72 at Ferrisburgh and 52 at Burlington. High counts from readers were 11 at Shelburne on 12/7 (DJH) and 13 at McNeil Cove on 2/3 (TGM). Another popular and diminutive duck, the Hooded Merganser, was well represented by 28 CBC birds and several others reported by contributors. Nine individuals were found along Lake Champlain on 12/6 (SSW), while late sightings were of single females at Converse Bay on 1/21 (GEH) and at McNeil Cove on 2/3 (TGM). The Common Merganser was far more than common, as a record 5,249 CBC birds were found. Late reports painted a different picture, however, with a high of 50 in Burlington on 1/21 (EMA,RDB). Red-breasted Mergansers lingered through December in typical numbers, with 28 CBC birds featuring 20 at Ferrisburgh. Other reports included 4 at Burlington on 12/2 (SSW) and another 4 on 1/21, with 2 each at Converse Bay and Charlotte Town Beach (TGM). Of interest were 2 birds on the Otter Creek, Middlebury, on 12/5 (JRA). Finally, and most noteworthy, was a drake Ruddy Duck on the Ferrisburgh CBC, the first winter record of this elusive species since 1984.

HAWKS AND FALCONS

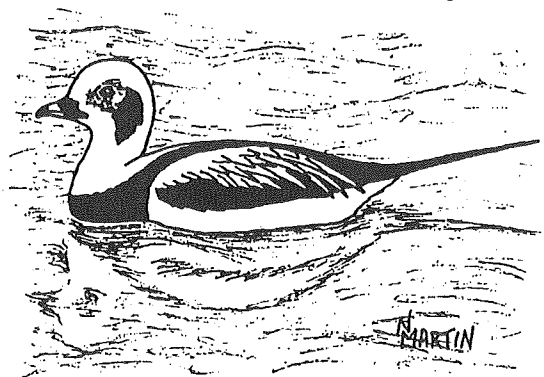
The mighty Bald Eagle continues to prosper at record or near-record levels. An excellent CBC tally of 9 individuals was overshadowed by an unmanageable number of reports from readers. Highlights would include 4 individuals along Lake Champlain on 12/6 (SSW), 2 adults and an immature at Kellogg Bay and McNeil Cove on 2/25 (TGM) and 1 at Wilder Dam for the 16th winter in a row. The Only 7 CBC Northern Harriers were found, an obvious consequence of the considerable snowcover. Other reports included a single in Bridport on 12/30 (SWM), a single in West Addison on 1/1 (NAB) and a male near the Stone Bridge access on 2/17 (ATA), probably the same bird reported from Addison on 2/29 (MBN). Sharp-shinned Hawks produced new CBC records, with 9 in Rutland and 36 individuals overall. Late-winter reports were less numerous, perhaps a reflection of the January thaw and reduced dependence on feeders. Cooper's Hawks were also much in evidence, with a record 25 tallied during the CBC season. Readers added another 13 reports, again with most during the early winter. The Northern Goshawk followed a similar pattern, with a record 17 CBC birds but relatively few thereafter. From contributors came reports of singles in West Glover on 1/22 (REG), in East Montpelier on 2/1 (FAP,TH), in Grand Isle on several dates in February (DJH), in St. Johnsbury on 2/17 (TGM) and in Barre on 2/27 (FAP,EBP). A Red-shouldered Hawk in Westminster on 12/16 (REG) was noteworthy as the first winter record for this species since 1991. No stranger to Vermont in any season, the Red-tailed Hawk provided an impressive CBC total of 249 individuals. High counts late in the winter were 9 in the Charlotte and Orwell areas on 2/10 (TGM) and 5 at Dead Creek Wildlife Management Area (hereafter DCWMA) on 2/17 (SSW). Rough-legged Hawks followed suit with a near-record CBC showing of 88 birds, but were relatively scarce thereafter. Seven, including at least 5 dark morph individuals, were in the Button Bay and DCWMA areas on 2/17 (ATA,SSW). American Kestrels were rather uncommon with only 13 CBC birds and just a handful of late reports. Singles were observed in Ferrisburgh on 12/30 (SWM), in Bridport on 12/31 (SWM), in Randolph in early January (EWC), in North

Clarendon on 2/2 (NAB), in Danby on 2/2 (NAB) and in Ferrisburgh on 2/20 (TGM). A remarkable 4 Merlins were a feature of the CBC roster, as four count circles contributed to a record tally. The Burlington bird was also seen flying over the University of Vermont (hereafter UVM) campus on 1/4 and later still on 1/13, as it devoured a House Sparrow behind a restaurant on Pearl St. (SWM,GEH). Finally the formidable Peregrine Falcon continued to impress, not only for its recovery but also for its size, speed, and beauty. Reports included CBC birds from Ferrisburgh and Rutland, a "probable" at Young Island on 12/4 (DJH), an adult in Bridport on 12/30-31 (SWM), an adult in Addison on 12/31 (TGM), the regular at the UVM water tower in Burlington (SWM) and a bird "sitting in a maple for twenty minutes" in Middlebury on 2/17 TM.

GRAY PARTRIDGE THROUGH SNIPE

For the third year in a row, Gray Partridge appeared on the CBC roster thanks to the efforts of Champlain Islands Christmas Counters. Individual contributors provided additional reports of 6 at Dunsmore Road, St. Albans, on 1/20 (FAP,EBP) and 2-3 along Middle Road, Swanton, on 1/13 (SWM,GEH) and again on 2/3 and 2/24 (TGM). Thirteen Ring-necked Pheasants constituted the best CBC showing for the species since 1990, although it is always amusing to contemplate the origin of such birds. Certainly not amusing was the absence of Spruce Grouse; however, we assume it is still holding on in its remaining strongholds in the Northeast Kingdom. Meanwhile, Ruffed Grouse continued to show good resiliency as 110 CBC birds were uncovered, a good if not memorable showing. There were several sightings by

Oldsquaw



readers, including 3 or more birds in Pawlet on 12/30 (GRB) and again at Mt. Independence on 2/10 (TGM). Similar numbers were reported as regular in Sheffield (PFW,SAW) and in Brandon (SSW). Wild Turkeys more than doubled their previous CBC high set back in 1987, while readers added a host of other reports. Maximums were 150 in North Pawlet (GRB) and 80 in Grand Isle (DJH). Two American Coot at Young Island on 12/5 (TGM) were reported as "probable," presumably because they were observed from a great distance. There was no uncertainty, however, regarding the season's only Common Snipe, a Bennington CBC bird located at its "usual place" in Shaftsbury.

GULLS

Only small numbers of the dainty Bonaparte's Gull were reported: 18 at Grand Isle on 12/1 (DJH) and 34 CBC birds divided between Ferrisburgh and the Champlain Islands. A total of 864 CBC Ring-billed Gulls was on the low side of average for a species that is too often taken for granted and generally goes underreported. Herring Gulls were also less abundant than usual, with a CBC tally only about half of the recent high established in 1991. However, 180 were observed near the Burlington Community Boathouse on 1/31 (FAP,TH). Meanwhile, the uncommon Iceland Gull was spotted only three times: a first-year bird on the Burlington breakwater on 12/5 (TGM), a CBC bird, also at Burlington, and a first-winter bird on the Winooski River in Essex Junction on 12/18-20 (FAP,EBP,TGM). Outstanding among the winter's Laridae was a much-admired and well-described LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL on the Burlington breakwater on 12/3 (TGM,FAP,EBP,SWM). The bird was present for only a few days but seen by several fortunate observers. Glaucous Gulls were also a specialty of the season, with 4 CBC birds, including 2 at Hanover/Norwich. Additionally, one bird was near the Burlington electric plant on 12/10 (FAP,EBP), while a second was off the Sandbar causeway on 2/23-27 (TGM). Sadly this latter bird had succumbed by 2/29 (TGM). As for the Great Black-backed Gull, it produced a CBC tally just short of its 1992 high, while 300 were noted at the Burlington boathouse on 1/31 (FAP) and a like number were over the Randolph landfill on 2/18 (ATA). Completing a big year for the Laridae

was a CBC BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE at Burlington (SWM). This ocean-going gull was unfortunately a one-day wonder, much to the disappointment of Vermont's birding community.

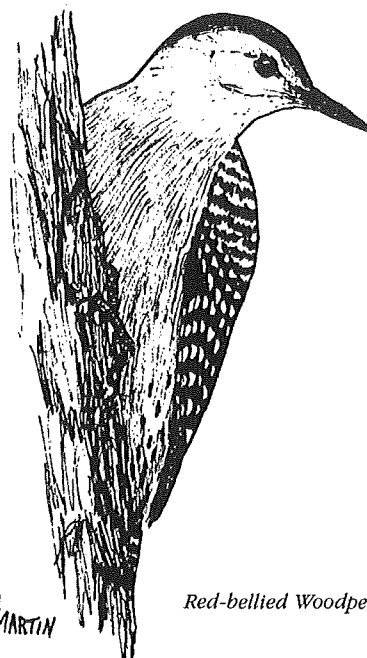
DOVES THROUGH OWLS

Rock Doves surged to an all-time CBC high of 10,848 individuals, hardly cause for celebration. Not to be outdone, Mourning Doves surpassed their old CBC record by about 2,000 individuals – yet another reason for gloom in Mudville. Turning to the Strigidae, Eastern Screech-Owls produced a respectable CBC tally, but there was only one other report, that of a "probable" bird taking refuge in "pileated carvings" to avoid the taunts of frantic Blue Jays (TGM). It was an average year also for the fearsome Great Horned Owl, as 19 CBC birds were reported from 5 circles. Readers observed or heard 8 others, including 2 in Brandon on 12/23 (SSW). Snowy Owls were very scarce, with the only reports a bird in Vershire on 1/8 (CS) and a "wonderful snowy white owl" in Thetford Center during early January (CP). The Barred Owl was very conspicuous during early winter as Christmas Counters found 19, just one short of the 1993 high. Readers came up with another 18, often with accounts of birds actually observed. One was seen "perched in a tree about 14 feet from the road" in Chittenden on 12/13 (DMBM); another was found "sleeping in small bare deciduous tree" in downtown Burlington on 12/22 (TGM); another was observed hunting during daytime in Ferrisburgh on 12/31 (SWM,TGM); yet another was photographed in Panton on 1/1 (SWM); another was at a large spruce stand in Tunbridge and "seen throughout the period" (ATA); two were seen and heard on many dates in Brandon, with one found dead on 2/25 (SSW); yet another was observed on a deck in Woodstock on 2/16 "attacking flying squirrel" (JWL); and a final bird was seen "sitting in a tree near feeder" in Sheffield on 2/27 (PFW,SAW). Space doesn't allow describing all the reports received; suffice it to say, there has rarely been a winter when this bird of prey has been more in evidence. Yet the unquestioned star attraction of the winter was the magnificent GREAT GRAY OWL – though our two, alas, did not tarry as did the famous bird in Rowley, Massachusetts. One was seen and adequately described in Woodbury on 2/20 (LG), while the

other was observed and photographed in South Hero on 2/22 (RS). Maintaining a big season for owls, the Short-eared Owl appeared in 3 CBC circles to produce a total of 15 individuals, the highest total since 1981. One bird was in Grand Isle throughout December, providing a nice photo opportunity for the fortunate observer (DJH). Finally, the beloved Northern Saw-whet Owl came through with 4 CBC birds, 2 at the Champlain Islands and one each at Ferrisburgh and Middlebury. From readers came two further reports: one seen at mid-day near the Pico ski area on 1/12 (BRJ) and one seen sitting in a lilac tree in Shaftsbury on 2/12 (BCD).

KINGFISHERS AND WOODPECKERS

Five Belted Kingfishers from five circles produced the lowest CBC total in two decades. There were another 5 reports from contributors, all singles: at Swanton on 12/17 (EMA,RDB), at Dorset on 12/28 (EFG), at the Bristol/New Haven line on 1/5 (CAB), in Woodstock on 1/7 (CRP) and in Danby on 1/14 (NAB). Red-bellied Woodpeckers gave evidence of a possible major range expansion as a remarkable 7 CBC birds were located. Other reports featured one at a feeder in Putney on 12/5 (LaG), a female at a Barre feeder for several days in mid-December (JA,RA), a single in Bridport at a Swinton Road feeder throughout December (FAP,EBP,TGM,SWM), another near



Red-bellied Woodpecker

Bridport village on 1/31 (FAP,TH) and a regular at a Brandon feeder throughout the season (SSW). Some of these were certainly overlaps with the CBC birds. Resident Downy Woodpeckers were in good supply as 777 birds were found during the CBC season, the most since 1988. The largest feeder population was 6 in Woodstock (CRP). Hairy Woodpeckers were also relatively abundant, mustering up their best CBC total in at least 20 years. Feeders generally played host to a pair or two. The only Black-backed Woodpecker of the winter was a female found during a Vermont Institute of Natural Science (hereafter VINS) outing to Victory Bog on 2/3 (CHD). Others, it is hoped, were frequenting their usual haunts near Moose Bog and the Yellow Boats in the Northeast Kingdom. Northern Flickers had little use for the December snows, as just 12 CBC birds were located. Four individuals were in Brandon on 12/2, where one was found dead on 1/9 (SSW). On Grand Isle a bird was seen on 12/24 and again on 1/1 (DJH). Grandest of the Picidae, the Pileated Woodpecker retreated only slightly from recent CBC highs. Readers contributed numerous other reports, including 3 birds at Grand Isle on 12/16 (DJH), 3 in Georgia on several dates (EMA,RDB) and 4 in Chittenden on 1/1 (DMBM).

HORNED LARK THROUGH CREEPER

The hardy Horned Lark was widespread and numerous during December, as it established a new CBC high of 5,010 individuals. Although 3 circles reported in excess of 1,000 birds, none came close to matching the Ferrisburgh high of 2,438, accomplished back in 1989. Mid-winter reports were headed up by 80 in Addison on 1/15 (EMA,RDB) and 80 at Young Island on 1/22 (DJH). Only 3 Gray Jays were located on the Island Pond CBC, but other reports were more encouraging: a Plainfield CBC bird, a single along South America Pond Road on 2/16 (TA,ATA) and 3 at Victory Bog on 2/3 (CHD). Also reported were singles at Pawlet on 12/24 (GRB) and in Marlboro on 2/17 and 2/24 (DH), locations well south of the species' normal range. The raucous Blue Jay was less conspicuous than in recent years, although favored feeders still played host to flocks of 25, as in Sheffield (PFW,SAW)

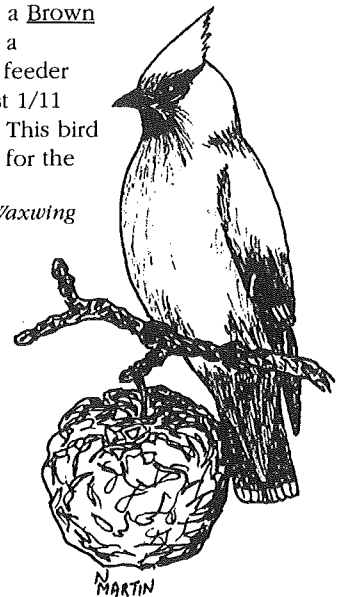
and Brookfield (ATA). The CBC tally, however, was significantly reduced from those of recent years. On the other hand, American Crows continued to increase, with large numbers present in most parts of the state. A roost of 650-750 was noted on several occasions in the Burlington area (JJA,TGM), while 75 were observed in Clarendon on 1/28 (CJF). Common Ravens were also numerous, although off a bit from last year's CBC record. High counts from readers were rather modest, however, with 8 in Reading on 2/27 (FMH,EJH) and 18 in Lincoln on 1/14 (JRA). Black-capped Chickadees climbed back above the 14,000 mark on the CBC tally and continued to bring joy to faithful feeder fillers. First prize for largest feeder flock (up to 30 birds) goes to a Tunbridge feeding station (ATA). Boreal Chickadees seemed scarce as just 3 records were received: a single in Sheffield on 1/20 (PFW,SAW), a twosome in West Glover on 12/7 (REG) and 8 birds at least at Wenlock Wildlife Management Area on 2/16 (TA,ATA). Meanwhile, the Tufted Titmouse edged up to a new CBC record, as most circles contributed to a handsome total of 406 individuals. Numerous feeders hosted 2-4 birds, including 3 in Georgia (EMA,RDB) and 4 in Randolph (EWC). The unpredictable Red-breasted Nuthatch opted for a mediocre year, just 3,772 CBC birds, less than half last year's total. The more reliable White-breasted Nuthatch dropped only slightly, however, as a satisfactory 926 individuals were counted. One observer found an impressive 13 in Dorset alone on 12/4 (EFG). Finally, the Brown Creeper was definitely in retreat as just 67 CBC birds were found, the least since 1985. Five observers produced singles in Randolph (EWC), Bristol (MBN), Manchester Ctr. (BWP) and Brownsville (FMH,EJH), plus a twosome in Rockingham on 2/1 (AMD).

CAROLINA WREN THROUGH STARLING

The only Carolina Wrens of the winter were CBC birds at Ferrisburgh, the Champlaine Islands and Middlebury. It can only be hoped that this indomitable little species can make its way back to the levels it enjoyed during the early 1990's. Another hardy species, the Winter Wren, also produced a CBC tally of 3,

pretty much in line with expectations. However, there were no further reports from individual observers. A total of 55 Golden-crowned Kinglets was barely a tenth of last year's CBC record, but numbers for this species typically fluctuate. High counts from contributors were 6 in Springfield on 12/17 (WME), 6 in West Addison on 1/31 (FAP,TH) and yet another 6 in Tunbridge on 2/26 (ATA). A Ruby-crowned Kinglet on the Hanover/Norwich CBC was the season's only, but the bird had the poor taste to be hanging out in West Lebanon, N.H. Eastern Bluebirds headed south in December – but not before 45 were tallied on the Bennington, Middlebury, Saxtons River and Brattleboro CBC's. Two birds returned early to Pawlet, where they were observed on 2/27-28 (GRB). A remarkable 3 CBC Hermit Thrushes were found, one each at Saxtons River, Burlington and Middlebury. This total nearly matched the 4 seen during the preceding 18 CBC's. There were 102 American Robins on the CBC roster, down about 2,500 from last year's extraordinary number, but still good enough to qualify as at least average. There were several December reports from readers including 17 in Shelburne on 12/9 (TGM). February records were limited to a single in Woodstock on 2/25 and 2/29 (CRP), 4 in Brandon on 2/8 (SSW) and 12 in Brandon on 2/21 (SSW). Northern Mockingbirds were present in modest numbers only, with just 43 CBC birds tallied. Late-winter reports were sparse indeed, with a single in Rutland on 2/14 and 2/18 (CJF) and another single in Westminster on 2/26 (AMD). One of the better birds of the season was a Brown Thrasher at a Woodstock feeder until at least 1/11 (LHR,JMN). This bird cooperated for the

Bohemian Waxwing



Woodstock CBC, becoming the first CBC thrasher since 1984. Turning to the Bohemian Waxwing, one is left searching for words. Just two years ago this splendid species staged a massive invasion as 1,489 CBC birds were counted, more than twice the previous high. In 1995 Ferrisburgh alone tallied 1,250 individuals, while the total CBC count was a staggering 3,034. So many reports came from contributors that only a few can be included: 103 in Rutland on 12/5 (NAB), 150 in Bennington on 2/3 (BCD), 250 in South Burlington on 12/3 (TGM), 250 in Grand Isle on 12/23 (DJH) and 300 in Charlotte on 2/25 (TGM). Cedar Waxwings could scarcely keep pace. A CBC tally of 492 individuals was certainly respectable, but reports from readers were rather modest, topped by 50 in Bennington on 2/3 (BCD) and 30 in Pawlet on 12/3 (GRB). Also invading in force was that cruel marauder, the Northern Shrike. Once again records were shattered both for a single circle and for the entire CBC. Ferrisburgh again led the way with 24, while the overall count of 104

birds was more than three times the old high



Northern Shrike

of 31. Add in at least 30 additional reports from contributors and one can only pity the small birds and mammals that fell victim to those fierce invaders from the north. With 19,207 European Starlings on the CBC tally sheet, a new record for the second year running, one might only wish our shrikes were a bit larger.

WARBLERS THROUGH JUNCOS

A single Yellow-rumped Warbler on the Middlebury CBC was unique for the season, hardly surprising given the heavy snows of early winter. It was also not surprising that Northern Cardinals headed for feeders in such numbers that they too reached new highs, with a CBC

tally of 1,149, including 294 at Middlebury. This tendency may have diminished after the January thaw, however, since maximum counts from readers were 8 each in Wallingford (SJD) and Manchester Center (BWP), 10 in Brandon (SSW) and 12 in Bennington (BCD).

In like manner, American Tree Sparrows reached a new CBC high, only to fade away as winter progressed. Thus Ferrisburgh's 871 birds, a new record for a single circle, contrasts with readers' reports in February of 10 each in Danby (NAB), in Waltham (TGM) and at DCWMA (SSW). The only Chipping Sparrow of the season was reported from the Hinesburg CBC – a surprise bird, it would seem, in such a harsh early winter. Once again, readers and compilers are urged to submit some details when birds are located a month or more out of season. Song Sparrows, unhappy with the early snows, gave their poorest CBC showing since 1983, as just 57 individuals were located. However, a few ended up overwintering, including 2 in Bennington (BCD), 1 in Manchester Center (BWP) and 1 seen in Rutland on 2/25 (CJF). A lone Swamp Sparrow was at Allen Brothers Marsh on 12/5 (TEJ), but the species missed the CBC count-down for the first time since 1989. White-throated Sparrows showed that they are prudent as well as musical, with just 8 individuals found on CBC's, easily the lowest total in twenty years or more. One bird was in Manchester Center during mid-December (BWP), another was visiting a Randolph feeder as late as January (EWC), and two were reported overwintering in Bennington (BCD). A White-crowned Sparrow on the Hanover/Norwich CBC was the first ever for that count and the only one reported during the season. Dark-eyed Juncos persevered in about average numbers, although late-winter sightings were infrequent. Eight were in Chittenden on 2/10 (DMBM), 5 were in Brandon on 2/28 (SSW) and "small numbers" were regular at a Randolph feeder throughout the season (EWC).

LAPLAND LONGSPUR THROUGH ICTERIDS

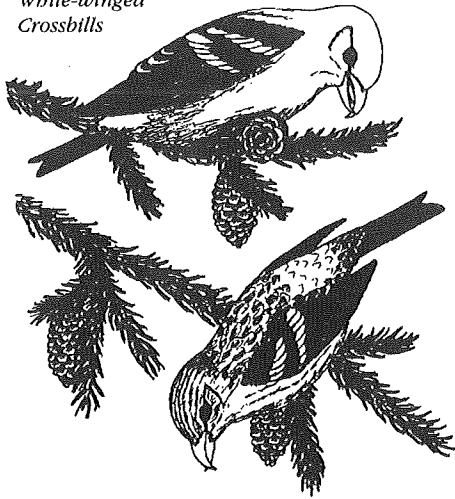
Forty Lapland Longspurs from 5 different circles was the best CBC showing in five years. Later reports, however, were minimal, with a high

count of 9 in West Addison on 12/30 (TGM), followed by 3 in Addison on 1/15 (EMA,RDB). Snow Buntings had their biggest year since 1989, as 1,807 CBC birds were found in Ferrisburgh alone. Large flocks were reported by many observers, with 150 in Brookfield on 12/25 (ATA), 200 in Grand Isle on 12/25 (DJH), 200 in Bridport on 12/31 (TGM,SWM) and 400 in Addison on 1/1 (SWM). Red-winged Blackbirds lingered in typically low numbers as 28 CBC birds were located, including 13 in Middlebury. Returning from the south were 3 or more in Westminster on 2/27 (AMD), 7 in Bennington on 2/27 (BCD), 4 in South Londonderry on 2/28 (WJN) and 13 in Reading on 2/28 (FMH,EJH). Three Rusty Blackbirds on the Rutland CBC were noteworthy, with one of these birds still on location in Clarendon on 2/25 (CJF). Common Grackles were unamused by December's snows, as just 9 stayed on for the CBC season. One individual was in Weybridge on 12/24-25 (MBN), while a second unlucky bird attempted to overwinter in West Woodstock but was ultimately found dead (JMN). Happier tidings were brought by early spring migrants, including 4 in Reading on 2/27 (FMH,EJH), 7 in Bennington on 2/27 (BCD) and 14 in Brandon on 2/28 (SSW). Meanwhile, the most hardy of the icterids, the Brown-headed Cowbird, settled for a mediocre CBC tally of just 138 individuals. A female in Waltham on 2/22 (TGM) was the only other report, until the arrival of a spring flock of 150 in Manchester Center on 2/25 (BWP).

FRINGILLIDS THROUGH HOUSE SPARROW

Pine Grosbeaks came back strong after an off year to produce a CBC tally in excess of 1,000 birds. Numbers were especially impressive in early winter, featuring 80 in Burlington on 12/20 (TGM) and 100 in Grand Isle, also on 12/20 (DJH). Thereafter, flocks were smaller but widespread, with sightings reported from most regions of the state. By contrast, Purple Finches were again very scarce, with a minimal 36 CBC birds. From readers and feeder watchers came just two reports: a twosome in South Royalton on 12/2 (CEJ) and a single in Dorset on 12/20 (EFG). A significant decline in the House Finch may prove to be more than just a seasonal aberration,

White-winged
Crossbills



as 3,597 CBC birds were found compared to last year's record high of 6,304. Observers also noticed a decline, notwithstanding a flock of 150 or more reported from Bennington (BCD). The only Red Crossbills of the season, always a difficult species in Vermont, were 2 birds on the Champlain Islands CBC. White-winged Crossbills were similarly scarce, as the only 5 reported came from the Plainfield CBC. Common Redpolls, however, were in good supply, especially during the CBC season and again in February. Reports from readers featured 300 in Reading on 2/29 (FMH,EJH), 150 in Woodstock throughout February (JWL), 120 in Westminster West on 2/11 (AMD) and up to 85 at a Plainfield feeder throughout the season (ATA). Two reports of HOARY REDPOLL are certainly noteworthy, although identification of this species is difficult and details must be submitted to the Vermont Bird Records Committee. The sightings were of single birds in West Glover on 12/6 (REG) and in Plainfield on 1/18 and 2/16 (ATA,TA). Meanwhile, Pine Siskins produced a paltry CBC tally of 80 birds, their poorest showing since 1988. Contributors noted very few, although 15 were in Manchester Center on 12/18 (BWP) and "large numbers" were regular visitors to a Randolph feeding station throughout the winter (EWC). American Goldfinches were reasonably well represented on the CBC roster, but thereafter were distinctly uncommon. Still, 36 were in South Royalton on 1/22 (CEJ), while a dozen or so were regular throughout the winter in Brandon (SSW). It was another off year for Evening Grosbeaks, although twice as many CBC birds were tallied as in the previous year. Several reports were received from readers, with highs of 60

in East Brookfield on 12/25 (ATA), 60 in Island Pond on 2/16 (ATA) and 38 in Sheffield on 1/20 (PFW,SAW). Sadly, the House Sparrow seemed to thrive in the winter snows – or, more likely, stormed feeding stations to the detriment of other visitors. In any event, a CBC tally of 11,055 missed by only a whisker the previous high of 11,101 established back in 1981.

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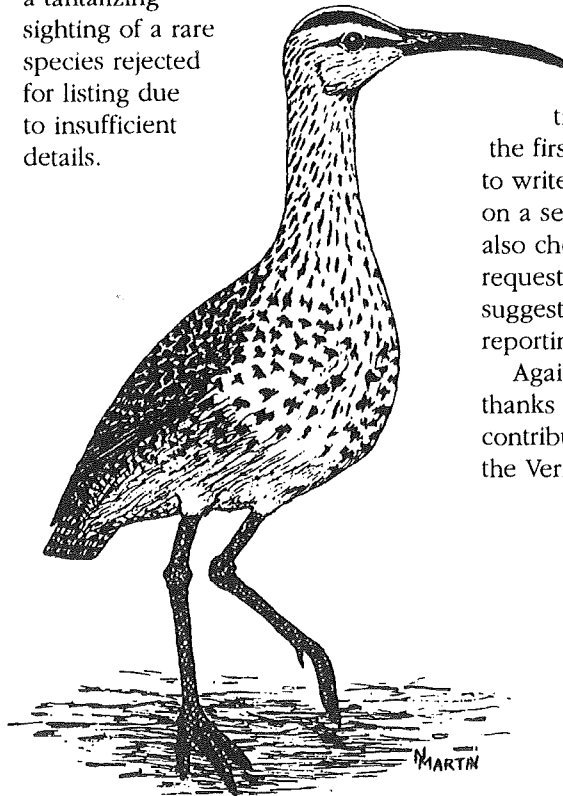
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NOTES ON THE DOCUMENTATION OF RARE BIRD SPECIES

The Vermont Bird Records Committee (VBRC) emphasizes the importance of detailed, descriptive documentation of all rarities, rare nesting species or out-of-season species. It is frustrating for both the observer and the committee to have a tantalizing sighting of a rare species rejected for listing due to insufficient details.



The committee is anxious to involve all Vermont birders in 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.

In the field, writing down the salient points of identification, talking into a tape recorder, making a sketch or taking a photograph 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 while also checking the form for the details requested. The committee welcomes suggestions for improving the reporting and voting process.

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

VERMONT RARE BIRD ALERT
The Latest Statewide Birding News
(802) 457-2779



**Vermont Christmas Counts
1995-1996**

	Bennington 12/27/95	Brattleboro 12/16/95	Burlington 12/17/95	Champlain Isl. 12/17/95	Craftsbury-Greens 12/27/95	Fernsburg 12/16/95	Hanover-Niwich 1/1/96	Hinesburg 12/16/95	Island Pond 12/31/95	Middlebury 12/17/95	Plainfield 12/30/95	Rutland 12/31/95	Saxtons River 12/16/95	Springfield 12/17/95	Winhall 12/19/95	Woodstock 12/27/95	Total
Red-throated Loon						1											1
Common Loon			7	6		20											33
Horned Grebe			17	1		23											41
Double-crested Cormorant			2			1											3
Great Blue Heron	1		2			1		2		1		1					8
Snow Goose			1	2		2				2							7
Canada Goose	114		824	565		667				409							2579
Wood Duck	4																4
American Black Duck	289		98	114		123	19	17		8		10	10				688
Mallard	913		776	752		83	66	8		77	8	94		1			2778
Am. Black Duck x Mallard						2											2
Northern Pintail			1														1
Gadwall			2														2
Redhead						1											1
Ring-necked Duck						8											8
Greater Scaup			1														1
Lesser Scaup			1			1											2
Scaup Sp.			7														7
Black Scoter			4														4
White-winged Scoter			9														9
Scoter Sp.				6													6
Common Goldeneye		4	748	1810		347	8						2				2919
Barrow's Goldeneye			4														4
Bufflehead			52			72											124
Hooded Merganser				3		16	5				1		3				28
Common Merganser	22	9	561	2443		2103	63	1		12			25	7		3	5249
Red-breasted Merganser				4		20		4									28
Merganser Sp.										1							1
Ruddy Duck						1											1
Duck Sp.						6											6
Bald Eagle		1				5	2						1				9
Northern Harrier	cp					3				4							7
Sharp-shinned Hawk	cp	2	4	2		5	1	1		8	2	9	1			1	36
Cooper's Hawk	2		1	3	3	5	2			5	1	1			cp	2	25
Northern Goshawk	4			2	1	2	3				4	1					17
Accipiter Sp.											1						1
Red-tailed Hawk	27	3	18	28		67	5	6		59	1	13	10	10		2	249
Rough-legged Hawk	2		2	29		31		1		22		1					88
Buteo Sp.					1												1
American Kestrel	2	2	1	4		1				2		1					13
Merlin			1	cp			1			1		1					4
Peregrine Falcon	cp					1						1					2
Hawk Sp.					1												1
Gray Partridge				10													10
Ring-necked Pheasant	cp					10	1			1			1				13
Ruffed Grouse	4	1	17	19	8	16	3	4	2	4	9	6		10	4	3	110
Wild Turkey	38	7	1	41		60	19	26		105	29	95	5	77	cp	17	520
Common Snipe	1																1
Bonaparte's Gull				16		18											34
Ring-billed Gull		1	662	7		184		1		5	4						864
Herring Gull	3	78	352	311		292	50	7					5	36			1134
Iceland Gull			1														1
Glaucous Gull	cp		1			1	2										4
Great Black-backed Gull		31	237	111		223	120	1					1	40			764
Black-legged Kittiwake			1														1
Gull Sp.		29												10			39
Rock Dove	605	676	748	1789	247	1189	911	256	37	1402	664	319	899	754	63	289	10848
Mourning Dove	568	275	489	1023	113	1466	460	127	10	1159	367	722	610	732	24	240	8385
Eastern Screech-Owl				5		5				2							12
Great Horned Owl				3		6				7		2		cp		1	19
Barred Owl	cp	1	1		cp	4	1	1		5		1	1	1	1	2	19

Vermont Christmas Counts 1995-1996

	Bennington 12/27/95	Brattleboro 12/16/95	Burlington 12/17/95	Champlain Isl. 12/17/95	Craftsbury-Greens 12/27/95	Ferrisburg 12/16/95	Hanover-Niwich 1/1/96	Hinesburg 12/16/95	Island Pond 12/31/95	Middlebury 12/17/95	Plainfield 12/30/95	Rutland 12/31/95	Saxtons River 12/16/95	Springfield 12/17/95	Winhall 12/19/95	Woodstock 12/27/95	Total
Short-eared Owl				3		6				6							15
Northern Saw-whet Owl				2		1				1							4
Belted Kingfisher	1		1	1		1								1			5
Red-bellied Woodpecker	1					2				3		1					7
Downy Woodpecker	37	30	62	84	14	111	58	20	2	111	51	57	32	54	11	43	777
Hairy Woodpecker	15	20	30	37	22	52	34	11	1	60	51	31	17	43	8	37	469
Northern Flicker	1			1		4		1		2	1		1	1			12
Pileated Woodpecker	3	4	9	11	cp	31	6	8		18	5	6	3	3		2	109
Horned Lark	1392	43		275		1441	38	204		1156	19	63	313	58		8	5010
Gray Jay									3		1						4
Blue Jay	137	121	139	272	136	316	179	81	37	379	337	328	168	445	76	196	3347
American Crow	352	159	1363	771	127	416	878	178	5	693	381	657	357	334	14	161	6846
Common Raven	3	2	24	4	22	18	37	8	7	7	45	25	9	21		13	245
Black-capped Chickadee	457	388	527	1431	679	1044	1595	668	187	808	1776	1136	399	1329	287	1349	14060
Tufted Titmouse	27	31	46	5	5	27	41	8		44	2	30	67	60		13	406
Red-breasted Nuthatch	4	22	9	10	34	25	30	7	10	14	80	45	6	26	14	36	372
White-breasted Nuthatch	39	45	54	83	8	134	83	25		108	61	116	31	70	12	57	926
Brown Creeper	1	4	3	7		15	10			3	4	5	3	2	1	9	67
Carolina Wren				1		1				1							3
Winter Wren										1		2					3
Golden-crowned Kinglet		4	2	4	2	13	4	2			6	4		6	1	7	55
Ruby-crowned Kinglet							1										1
Eastern Bluebird	20	2								17			6				45
Hermit Thrush			1							1			1				3
American Robin		1	17			46				35		1	1			1	102
Northern Mockingbird	2	14		1		5	1	1		7		2	5	5			43
Brown Thrasher																1	1
Bohemian Waxwing		264	61	374		1250	169	301		303	8	94	210	cp			3034
Cedar Waxwing	69	7	138	55		42		8		90			33	50			492
Waxwing Sp.			112														112
Northern Shrike		4	7	13	2	24	4	6	2	11	6	5	4	8	cp	8	104
European Starling	1802	803	840	2645	120	2144	251	187	117	6154	750	1478	958	803	17	138	19207
Yellow-rumped Warbler										1							1
Northern Cardinal	74	22	118	143	9	189	13	11		294	25	94	68	56	7	26	1149
American Tree Sparrow	194	50	239	305	14	871	96	72		876	74	162	178	95	5	3	3234
Chipping Sparrow								1									1
Song Sparrow	1	3		1		7	2	1		14		6	21	1			57
Swamp Sparrow													2				2
White-throated Sparrow	1	1	1			2				3							8
White-crowned Sparrow							1										1
Dark-eyed Junco	200	87	35	75		70	23			111	8	66	72	30	2	12	791
Lapland Longspur				12		17				7		1	3				40
Snow Bunting	488		170	256	22	1807	64	410		314	100	101	2	6		3	3743
Red-winged Blackbird			2	4		8				13						1	28
Rusty Blackbird												3					3
Common Grackle				3	3	1				1						1	9
Brown-headed Cowbird				41	3		2			61	6			25			138
Pine Grosbeak	1	4	244	31	65	22	103	38	9	46	219	31	1	33		163	1010
Purple Finch			13	1	4	4				7	1	2			4		36
House Finch	289	75	440	605		349	175	17		797	41	388	134	260	1	26	3597
Finch Sp.					25												25
Red Crossbill				2													2
White-winged Crossbill											5						5
Common Redpoll	cp	2	32	113	92	87	52	21	45	70	137	78	255	41	3	115	1143
Pine Siskin		1		11	18	5		10		2	9	2		14	7	1	80
American Goldfinch	47	148	190	239	5	256	73	38		219	94	64	40	299	cp	2	1714
Evening Grosbeak	109	30		89	241	9	121	44	128	29	344	111	18	132	11	56	1472
House Sparrow	499	502	770	1780	105	2904	253	127	7	1495	331	830	554	771	41	86	11055
TOTAL INDIVIDUALS	8865	4013	11353	18910	2151	20869	6139	2977	609	17694	6069	7303	5546	6760	614	3134	123006
TOTAL SPECIES	47	46	66	69	30	82	51	46	17	67	43	52	48	43	23	40	108