

THE CHANGING SEASONS

Winter 1980-'81 — cold in the East, mild in the West, low mortality and early migration

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FOR YEARS, *American Birds* (and its predecessor, *Audubon Field Notes*) has provided an ornithological mirror in which the student of bird distribution and population dynamics can find trends in North American avifauna reflected. While perhaps less precise than trends monitored by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service's Breeding Bird Survey or by National Audubon's own Breeding Bird Census and Winter Bird-Population Study, information gleaned from the regular seasonal reviews of *American Birds* can be very significant when viewed in relationship to the variables of *weather and time*. However, much as Alice's looking glass in Wonderland often produced distorted impressions, so, too, can hastily drawn conclusions using Changing Seasons data produce distorted interpretations. Only through careful and patient analysis can these distortions be properly focused.

Perhaps primary of these distorting elements is the weather variable. Weather is the subtle expression of long-term climatological change, and as such, has always been among the primary agents ultimately responsible for determining the destiny of biological populations. For example, what would be the state of New World avifauna today had we never experienced an Ice Age? If weather, as we typically envision it, is thought of as a relatively short-lived phenomenon, then the other variable, *time*, may represent the best alternative in attempting to explain what is happening to North American bird populations.

The point of this gross simplification is to emphasize that while a single season may have direct short-term consequences on the future of any given bird species, it is highly unlikely that weather

alone will permanently expedite the demise of that species, unless of course that species (or race) is already teetering on the brink of extinction. Examples such as the Dusky Seaside Sparrow or certain of the Hawaiian endemics serve to illustrate these fortunately few exceptions.

What one really sees as one looks in the mirror is that the winter of 1980-1981 is a reflection of a series of phenomena, some of which may be short-lived, some more permanent, but all distorted by the variable of time. Time, when measured against the yardstick of human life, represents "a drop in the bucket" in the ebbing and flowing sea of animal population dynamics. While translating recent events in terms of cause and effect is often straightforward, it must always be remembered that those changes that withstand the test of time will ultimately be of greatest biological significance. Hence, while Cooper's Hawk, Carolina Wren, and the bluebirds seem to have seen recent hard times, their fluctuations may indeed be cause for less concern biologically than the meteoric population explosion of large Larids during the past century, or the potentially serious consequences created by such mushrooming competitors at the Cattle Egret and House Finch. It is important to re-emphasize that what may at first appear as ornithological disasters, especially in the aftermath of winter, may very well not stand the test of time. Thus, without placing human priorities on the biological worth of various bird species, what is this generation's Peregrine Falcon may be another generation's Starling.

As one peruses the pages that follow, remember that they demonstrate not only short-term population trends—

trends that immediately reflect the varying conditions of the season's weather—but they also conceal the pieces of a larger puzzle, a puzzle whose solution lies hidden in time.

WEATHER CAPSULE

THE COMPLEXITIES of meteorological prediction and explanation are, at the very least, intricate. Even anticipating tomorrow's forecast can be a sophisticated refinement of Russian roulette for one practicing the art in New England! Fortunately, reporting on weather already past is another matter. While some seasons pose greater difficulties than others, the winter of 1980-81 was practically cut and dried—cold in the East, mild in the West. Obviously an oversimplification, the pattern consistently echoed by western Regional Editors was one of generally lower-than-usual precipitation, continued drought, and generally milder-than-usual temperatures. In some cases, these conditions reached extremes. In the Northern Great Plains, the season was described as "hardly a winter at all by NGP standards" with South Dakota seeing the mercury in the seventies (F.) and a "state that was [powdery dry] as a result of the driest weather in 37 years." In the Mountain West, mountain snowpacks stood at 20-30% below normal by the season's end and Denver had its warmest December since 1933. South Texas saw the Rio Grande Delta escape killing frost for the second consecutive winter, and even the Alaska Region received some amelioration in weather after the first of year, when most of January and February recorded above-average temperatures at Anchorage. At Fair-

banks, Alaska, January's average temperature was 30° above normal and it was warmer than in any previous December-February period on record in that city. Insular Hawaii received little rainfall to abate its continued drought, no doubt due in part to the "absence of the normally persistent trade winds" typical of midwinter.

The effects of continued drought and little rainfall in many areas prompted several western editors to comment generally on species displacements or of the absence of birds due to drought-related factors. The mid-continental regions (Prairie Provinces, Northern Great Plains, and Southern Great Plains) all described poor wild food crops, primarily seeds, and noted that in spite of the mildness of the season, many granivores were present in lower-than-normal numbers. In both the Middle Pacific Coast Region and the Central Southern Region, waterfowl were dispersed or concentrated in unusual ways due to either the distribution of surface water or the lack of it entirely.

In slight contrast to the mild and dry pattern outlined above, a few exceptions warrant mention. The Northern Pacific Coast Region reported that "several more inches of rain than usual fell in December on the Seattle and Portland weather stations," mostly in late December. This apparently flooded many choice Christmas Bird Count (hereafter, CBC) localities. In South Texas, Fred Webster described that much standing water in the coastal lowlands, following hurricane *Allen's* passage in early August, actually may have attracted many waterfowl away from the confines of Aransas National Wildlife Refuge (hereafter, N.W.R.)—this in spite of an otherwise dry season. And finally, in the Middle Pacific Coast Region, attention should be drawn to the highly localized effects created by an early December cold snap in the San Francisco Bay Area that made "Bay Area birders bemoan the lack of diversity there," while observers in the Monterey-Santa Cruz area and in north coastal and interior California all enjoyed a variety of overwintering summer birds and vagrants.

In stark contrast to the weather in the West, the weather in the East was almost uniformly described as bitter cold. Kibbe writes "Certainly few regions have endured the range of environmental extremes exhibited within the boundaries of the Niagara-Champlain Region this winter." while in the Hudson-

Delaware Region "the winter season was characterized by extraordinary weather of several extremes." The cold weather reached as far south as Florida where at Tallahassee a reading of 8° F on the night of January 12-13 was the second lowest recording in the history of the weather station. Fortunately the severe cold lasted for a relatively short period in the South. Precipitation was below average and drought or near-drought conditions prevailed through much of the East. The freeze-up of rivers, lakes, and coastal bays forced many waterbirds farther south to open water.

In concluding an overview of the season's weather, mention must be focused on an exceptional warm flow that developed almost continent-wide during mid-February. One can do no better than to quote from the U.S. Government's publication *Weekly Weather and Crop Bulletin* (68:1) for the period February 16-22, "Mild, spring-like temperatures dominated the Nation. Many record-high temperatures were reached on several days of the week from Southern California to New England from Western Montana to Alabama. Average temperatures were as much as 27° warmer than normal in the northern Plains and 30° in parts of New England." The Regional Reports that follow are filled with early records and migration dates that fell close on the heels of this weather system.

LATE LINGERERS AND NORTHERLY WINTERING BIRDS

DUE TO THE exceptionally mild and open season this winter many waterbirds remained much farther north than usual, while similarly abnormal wintering passerine records are scattered throughout the Regional Reports. A few paradoxes do appear, however. Perhaps most notable of these is the scarcity of certain granivores, despite the open-ground conditions. Particularly on the Northern Great Plains and on the Canadian Prairies, observers lamented the lack of certain regular winterers, attributing the absence, in part, to the depauperate wild food crops created by last season's drought. It was suggested that the open conditions dispersed wintering species sufficiently to [largely] remove the artifact created by bird feeders, which often can bias an observer's impression of a species' winter status. Finally, as Wayne Harris pointed out in the Prairie Provinces, the bitter cold that

began the season may have killed or forced many lingerers south, despite the exceptionally mild conditions for the remainder of the period. Conversely, these same mild conditions at the end of the winter may have increased the survival of those marginal wintering species that can often survive for part of a winter, but frequently not its entirety.

Birds requiring extensive open water were, as expected, present in unusual places this season. The Prairie Provinces obtained its first winter record for Common Loon and an Eared Grebe remained in Nebraska until December. White Pelicans generated excitement when they wintered in North Dakota, Idaho, and Utah, while nineteen in Arizona were most remarkable. A count of 130 Brandt's Cormorants along the northern California coast was considered unusual so far north in winter. Waterfowl lagards included two Brant in Alaska and an all-time winter high of 25 Ring-necked Ducks there. Barrow's Goldeneyes are appearing regularly in winter in the Northern Great Plains Region but a Hooded Merganser in Wyoming was the first in winter for nine years. A Black-bellied Whistling Duck shot in Louisiana in late November may more properly be a displacement.

An American Kestrel on the Alaska coast was considered casual. Lingering shorebirds were widespread, both coastally and inland, and only a selection of the more noteworthy records is listed below. An American Golden Plover in Alaska was late by two weeks, while 75+ were found wintering from central California southward. Many of these were described as being of the richly-colored *fulva* race from Asia.

The first North Dakota overwintering record of Common Snipe was perhaps slightly eclipsed by a record in Saskatchewan. A Whimbrel on the Texas Gulf Coast was most unusual, while another in northwestern Florida provided a second winter record. A misplaced Lesser Yellowlegs wintered in Utah and Red Knots in the Pacific Northwest were quite unusual, as was a concentration of 1500 on the Bolivar flats in Texas.

Despite the cold in the East, several interesting finds were noteworthy. A Buff-breasted Sandpiper in Massachusetts that barely lingered into the period may represent the first winter record for the continent while a Wilson's Phalarope in that state was slightly less exciting. Long-billed Dowitchers are recorded on the East Coast in small numbers but

Short-billed Dowitchers are seldom found. Thus, reports from Connecticut and New Jersey are unusual but read the Hudson-Delaware Region editors' cautionary note on winter dowitcher identification. A Pectoral Sandpiper in New Jersey and a critically studied Hudsonian Godwit in North Carolina were exceptional, out-of-season discoveries. Although terns didn't create much news, a Forster's Tern in Quebec and a Black Tern in Massachusetts were remarkable.

A flock(!) of Vaux's Swifts in northern California has few winter precedents, and in the same way, a Whip-poor-will (race *arizonae*) calling in southern California has never been recorded in winter north of central Mexico. Unusual winter hummingbirds occurred in their Texas and Arizona strongholds with numbers of Rufous Hummingbirds in the Texas Coastal Bend and records of Broad-tailed and Calliope hummingbirds in the Southwest. A Ruby-throated Hummingbird in Wisconsin ultimately succumbed and others were reported from Maryland to Florida. Four Red-headed Woodpeckers (family group?) in southern Manitoba were extremely unusual in winter. Enigmatic (or overlooked?) were three Elf Owls heard calling in response to tapes in southern Arizona for first winter records. The presence of a Yellow-billed Cuckoo in Arkansas would certainly seem to reflect the mild winter season, as might the Common Nighthawk in northwestern Florida.

IN ALASKA, a Townsend's Solitaire and Water Pipits were noteworthy. Meanwhile, Mountain Chickadees made their first winter appearance in northwestern Canada. Winter flycatchers were impressively represented. California had records of Western and Cassin's kingbirds, Olive-sided Flycatcher, and seven Western Flycatchers, a species unrecorded there only thirty years ago. Similarly, Arizona had several records of Western Flycatcher, along with three Dusky Flycatchers. Winter swallows in central California are always rare, so the presence of Rough-winged, Barn, and Cliff swallows there was remarkable. Rough-winged and Barn swallows in Ontario were incredible.

A Long-billed Marsh Wren in Montana represented a product of the mild winter. Short-billed Marsh Wrens in Minnesota, Massachusetts and New York were unusual while six in southern

New Jersey were possibly routine. Brown Thrashers wintered in Manitoba and Blue-gray Gnatcatchers made unusual winter appearances in northern California and in Colorado. A Bell's Vireo was recorded in California along with at least six Solitary Vireos of the *plumbeus* race, a form unrecorded there prior to 1960. The list of out-of-season warblers requires that only selected records be mentioned. Of these, Lucy's in California, Cape May in Illinois, Michigan, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, North Carolina and West Virginia, Yellow-rumped in Alaska, Hermit in Oregon, Yellow-throated in Nebraska, and Chestnut-sided and Bay-breasted warblers in Texas all stand out. It should be pointed out however, that like many winter records, some of these involved December birds, many of which certainly fail to survive even during the mildest of winters as a freshly dead Kentucky in Pennsylvania testifies. Most intriguing, however, was a report of a male Bay-breasted Warbler in mid-February in West Virginia.

Almost extraordinary were three male Bobolinks (Lark Buntings?) in "near breeding plumage" in Colorado in late January. More plausible were two Scott's Orioles in Texas and four records of the Hooded Oriole in California, where its winter status remains uncertain. Hepatic Tanager wintered for the fourth year in a row in California, again highlighting the now well-known theme of returning to established wintering areas—even for extralimitals and vagrants.

Indigo Buntings were out of place in New Jersey, Virginia and Alabama as was the first successful wintering Manitoba Rufous-sided Towhee. Unusual numbers of sparrows lingered or wintered in Alaska including Tree, Harris', Golden-crowned, and Lincoln's. First winter records for Savannah Sparrow in Colorado and Vesper Sparrow in Manitoba added testimony to the temperate season. A remarkable 23 Le Conte's Sparrows appeared in Indiana where the species is allegedly rare in winter. Scattered reports of Lincoln's Sparrow wintering in the Northeast were unusual.

IRRUPTIVE SPECIES

THE PATTERNS EXHIBITED by irruptive species represent an annual winter kaleidoscope in the Changing Seasons report. While many previous authors of

this account have discussed the dynamics of the irruption phenomenon, a few basic facts pertaining to irruptions might profitably be restated. Bock and Lepthien (1972, *American Birds* 26:558-561) have nicely demonstrated that if a food shortage exists in breeding areas, Red-breasted Nuthatches erupt southward (see George Hall's comments in the Appalachian Region). The same workers have further suggested that some form of synchrony exists, possibly on a circumboreal basis, in seed crop production and failure (1976, *American Naturalist* 110:559-571). However, Newton (1973, *Finches*) reminds us that in Europe, trees in widely separated areas may be on different fruiting regimes, partly because of regional variations in the weather, so good crops in some areas may coincide with poor ones in others. He also points out that the finches depending on tree-seeds always concentrate wherever their food is plentiful at the time. Thus, while the majority of individuals migrate *regularly* in spring and fall, they may breed and winter in *different* areas in successive years. And finally, and perhaps most to the point, "The different species occur abundantly in the same area in the same years only when their particular food-plants fruit together." In the winter of 1980-81, there appears to be some support for this line of thinking as evidenced by certain of the winter's seed-eating irruptives. The mammalian predators, however, clearly marched to a different drum.

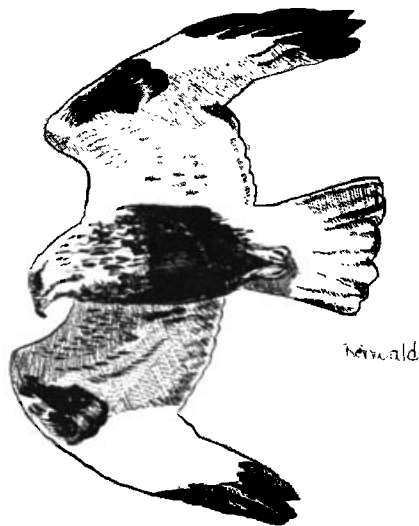
Raptors

GOSHAWKS LARGELY spent the winter at home, with indications of exceptional members coming only from northwestern Canada, where Varying Hares are said to be at a peak in their ten-year cycle. In the Cumberland House-Hudson Bay section of Saskatchewan, Goshawks were common for the second year in a row. A minor flight also incurred throughout the Middlewestern Prairie Region. Rough-legged Hawks exhibited similarly spotty concentrations with no really massive movements anywhere. While Kodiak, Alaska did get its first winter record, Rough-leggeds were all but absent along the Pacific coast. They were described as present in above-average numbers in southeastern Manitoba and Alberta, but low in southern Saskatchewan. Although numbers were unimpressive in the Northern Great Plains, they were above

average in northwestern Nebraska and in the Dallas, Texas area, clearly suggesting that locally abundant rodent populations can concentrate an otherwise sparse winter raptor population. A moderate influx of Rough-leggeds in the Ontario Region peaked at 162 birds at Wolfe Island. Above-average numbers were noted in the Northeastern Maritime Region, especially in southern New England, but in the Hudson-Delaware Region it was a massive invasion. A New Jersey Raptor Association Winter Hawk Census recorded 152 Rough-legged Hawks. The flight continued into the Middle Atlantic Coast Region where it made a good showing. Red-tailed Hawk was abundant in both the Appalachian and Hudson-Delaware Regions. Gyrfalcons remained largely north of the Canadian border with the Prairie Provinces, Ontario and Quebec accounting for no fewer than forty reports. Ohio and Long Island were the maximum extent of southward penetration for Gyrs this winter.

The Snowy Owl was the only raptor that staged any semblance of an irruption this season. Its primary corridor of incursion was through the middle states, with the Southern Great Plains Region getting 23 records, the Northern Great Plains 70 reports, and one area in Manitoba recording 52 at one location in mid-February! In Minnesota it was reported from 29 counties with up to 30 in residence in the Duluth area. Illinois documented its largest invasion ever. In the Northern Pacific Coast Region, numbers were three times those of last winter, but were nowhere common. In Quebec Snowy Owls were present in good numbers but south of there numbers were unimpressive except in southern New England where numbers were better-than-average and in the Hudson-Delaware Region where they staged the first sizable flight in six years. Two reached Maryland where they caused a media event.

The "rare" northern owls almost lived up to their reputation, except that in the prairie region of southeastern Manitoba, Great Gray Owls were again common (105 reports), with a major influx of 78 in February. Manitoba may well prove to be the Great Gray Owl winter stronghold of North America! In northern Minnesota they were considered present in usual numbers, while a single bird appeared at Vancouver, British Columbia. Hawk Owls were described as common in northwestern Canada, how-



Rough-legged Hawk (Buteo lagopus). Drawing by J. David Renwald.

ever, elsewhere they were apparently scarce. A Boreal Owl in the Yukon was observed killing and eating a Northern Flying Squirrel! Spotted Owls, while not usually considered highly irruptive species, staged a modest flight in the Southwest Region, with two records in Tucson, of which Phillips *et al.* wrote (1964, *The Birds of Arizona*) "Its reappearance in the Tucson Valley of today is unthinkable." The Northern Shrike did practically nothing throughout the continent. Only in northern Arizona was it even described as being widespread.

Bark Gleaners and Generalists

CORVIDS WERE ALMOST unreported in the West, however, Aransas N.W.R., in Texas, held thousands of Blue Jays following October's big invasion. The best acorn crop in ten years no doubt helped sustain this voracious, blue horde. Many areas experienced greater-than-usual numbers of Black-capped Chickadee as a result of its spectacular fall movement. In southern Vermont it was a massive invasion and CBC counts on Long Island were record highs. In the Appalachian Region numbers were considered large and it occurred south of its usual range. In the Pacific Northwest, and to a lesser extent in the Middle Pacific Coast Region, Bushtits seemed to undergo a population explosion (?), and while perhaps not truly an irruption, counts of 1157 on the Seattle CBC and a new Canadian high count of 534 on a British Columbia CBC certainly suggest that some form of dynamic population activity was at work.

Of the two northwoods gleaners, the Red-breasted Nuthatch and the Golden-crowned Kinglet, it can be said that both generated irruptions into at least a few Regions, but curiously, not all the same Regions. The Golden-crowns were described as abundant at Kodiak, Alaska, and the Middle Pacific Coast Region recorded both kinglet species in high numbers, including a rare Ruby-crowned on Farallon Island! The Middlewestern Prairie Region reported encouraging numbers of Golden-crowns, and that species evidently penetrated in quantity into the Southern Great Plains, Central Southern, and South Texas Regions. In the Appalachian Region the Golden-crowned Kinglet is making a good recovery from the severe mortality of previous winters. Unlike kinglets, Red-breasted Nuthatches were hard to find on the central and northern coast of California, but they paralleled them in the Southern Great Plains. Red-breasted Nuthatch was present in excellent numbers in New York following an excellent fall flight and they were common throughout the Appalachian Region where the flight was considered more spectacular than that of the Black-capped Chickadee. The flight extended southward in unprecedented numbers to northwestern Florida.

Frugivores

THE PEREGRINATIONS of fruit-eating birds are so strongly tied to appropriate food oases that plotting their pattern of occurrence is often quite simple. This season, Varied Thrushes were described as abundant only at Kodiak, Alaska and in northern California. However, they moved eastward in unprecedented numbers. In the Western Great Lakes they were "all over the place" with at least thirty reports. Maine logged five Varied Thrushes and one travelled as far south as Maryland. American Robins, however, staged impressive food-related movements. On the Middle Pacific Coast, numbers influxed in January to feed on the ripening Toyon berry crop, while an influx in the Middlewestern Prairie Region brought hundreds to urban plantings. In the Northern Great Plains Region, robins were scarce after last winter's abundance, but so were Russian olive and box-elder seeds. Could the robins that were extravagantly reported in the Rio Grande Delta of Texas for the first time in several years and the roost of 1.5 mil-

lion near Austin possibly account for those missing from the northern plains? Despite the bitter cold in the East, American Robins survived in numbers. Robins were seen in record numbers in central New York and the numbers wintering in Michigan were described as unbelievable. In western Pennsylvania it was "the winter of the robin" with more than 12,000 on the Pittsburgh CBC.

Bohemian Waxwings were essentially sedentary in much of the West and it was suggested that the poor berry crop in the Prairie Provinces may have shifted the local wintering populations eastward in search of better food sources. The Northern Great Plains saw a similar situation with the Dakotas getting top counts of only 200-250 birds. A strong case can be made for an eastward movement of Bohemian Waxwings. In the Western Great Lakes Region they were in excellent numbers in the northern half of the Region while Ontario, Maine and New Brunswick witnessed possibly the best flight ever.

Granivores

THE SMALL NORTHERN catkin connoisseurs generated major irruptive movements throughout much of the West. Pine Siskins led the parade with numbers present in central and northern California, a huge influx in February into Colorado, and large quantities occurring all the way from the Northern Great Plains and Middlewestern Prairies into South Texas and the Central Southern Regions. In most eastern regions the siskin distribution was spotty, common to abundant in some areas and scarce or lacking in others, but they inundated the Southern Atlantic Coast Region and were common early in the season in northern Florida. In Memphis, Tennessee, a single yard actually supported 1500 Pine Siskins! Clearly a case for avian welfare! Common Redpolls demonstrated a similar pattern, but only in the middle states, with their movement penetrating only about as far south as Nebraska and North Carolina. In North Dakota, both species occurred in flocks of thousands in sunflower fields. A scattering of Hoary Redpolls was reported as is usual when Common Redpolls irrupt.

Pine Grosbeaks appeared in exceptional numbers only in southern Manitoba, where they fed on unharvested flax, and in the northern portion of the Western Great Lakes Region. This same

movement apparently carried many into central and eastern North Dakota. Elsewhere, their numbers were sparse. Crossbills did nothing extraordinary this season, except in the California Sierra where Red Crossbills apparently had a good breeding season since both Central Valley and Great Basin CBCs recorded them in numbers. White-winged Crossbills were described as common only at Kodiak, Alaska, however, in Kenmare, North Dakota, flocks at feeders were "the big event of the year." Extending into the Middlewestern Prairie Region, White-winged numbers were widespread and apparently outnumbered Red Crossbills. White-winged Crossbills were present in excellent numbers in northern and central Wisconsin. Reports suggested that Evening Grosbeaks were present in barely normal or below normal numbers throughout the western portions of the country. Could it be that this handsome finch is so well-established that observers no longer document its numbers as carefully as they should? It was a different story in the East with very high numbers reported from Ottawa and generally good numbers elsewhere and some even as far south as Florida although several observers commented on the lack of large flocks. Purple Finches almost shadowed the siskins and redpolls, but with a shift to the southeast. They were common throughout most of the Middlewestern Prairie Region (reaching concentrations of up to 1500-2000 in one Missouri county) and extending commonly into the Southern Great Plains and Central Southern Regions.

POPULATION DYNAMICS— TRENDS, SHIFTS, EXPANSION, CONTINUING PATTERNS

TRADITIONALLY IT IS in this section of the Changing Seasons that our predecessors have attempted to document the destinies of North American bird species during the winter. Indeed, this is a primary responsibility of *American Birds*, and one that clearly deserves all the attention that it has historically received. Before beginning to capsulize the winter that was 1980-1981, we wish to hark back to our opening theme—the relationship existing between weather and time. By now, the relationship between weather and short-term population change should be obvious. In severe winters, attrition is high in many bird populations, which produces a dip in the continuum that constitutes a population

profile. Conversely, a season such as the one just past may produce a bubble in that same profile, thus leading us to believe that birds are once again prospering. Indeed, both situations are true within the dimension created by weather. It is here, however, that we are reminded that the time dimension must also be considered before attempting to accurately describe population dynamics from the standpoint of trends or continuing patterns in status or distributional change. Since it is well known that bird species are constantly modifying the parameters of their ranges, some of the peripheral changes that may appear are often temporary, while others clearly reflect more permanent expansion or withdrawal. For instance, trace the fuzzy line that demarks the apparent withdrawal of Lewis' Woodpecker from much of its former range, the lengthening line that denotes the expansion of the House Finch, and the vacillating (?) transition zone between Western and Glaucous-winged gulls in the Pacific Northwest.

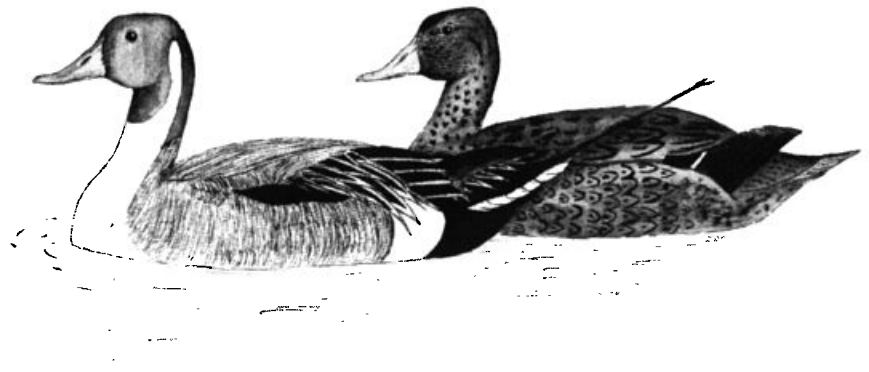
While weather will nicely give us insight into the short-term dips and bubbles, it will be time alone that will determine the outcome of the cases just described. As the reader delves into the pages ahead, think not just about the season just past, but also about how it equates to the winters of 1960-1961 and 1970-1971, for within that framework better lies the ultimate value of this summary.

Impressive numbers of loons and grebes concentrated in the Pacific Northwest where local CBCs amassed record counts of Common and Arctic loons. No doubt the 1180 Arctic loons passing Bodega Bay, California in late December represented some of these birds. Also, a remarkable concentration of 600+ Red-throated Loons feeding on spawning herring at Tomales Bay in January served ample testimony to the importance of California waters to divers. Two Vancouver Island counts of 15,000 Western Grebes were equally impressive. With increasing attention being devoted to morph types in this species it will be interesting to see how these forms may separate on a distributional basis. In a careful count in New Mexico only one out of 375+ proved to be of light morph. In the continuing saga of the Cattle Egret, 450 was the largest count ever in the Middle Pacific Coast Region, while in Hawaii the population is similarly climbing, with one roost comprising 400 birds. What will be the final ef-

fect of this aggressive wader as it usurps more and more space in established heronries?

Waterfowl populations in the northern and western states were substantially higher than usual due to the mildness and openness of the season. Readers should particularly see the well documented census efforts in the Northern Rocky Mountain-Intermountain Region, realize that Canada had a new CBC high for Pintail (23,647 in British Columbia), and be aware that counts like the 21,000 and 14,700 Mallards in the Northern Great Plains Region were at least in part attributable to the open season. Evidence of excellent recruitment in Trumpeter Swans—a species recently removed from the Federal Threatened and Endangered Species List—was shown by census efforts in Montana. California observers noted considerable displacement toward the coast by the large Anseriformes, probably owing to drought conditions in the Central Valley. Somewhat the opposite situation occurred in South Texas where it is thought that increased grain production in northeastern Mexico is luring numbers of waterfowl away from the Texas coast and onto the winter fields, a situation that could prove disastrous if the birds are persecuted. Also in Texas, meager reports of Redheads suggested that their populations were drastically down, however, Canvasbacks seemed to be doing well in the same area. The “Eurasian” Green-winged Teal is becoming slightly more difficult to monitor, at least in California, where editors complained of fewer reports since the two forms were “lumped.” A similar situation has been noted by the authors as it pertains to the “Ipswich” Savannah Sparrow in New England. Despite this concern, in the Pacific Northwest, twice as many reports of the teal were received as in the recent past!

Because of the deep freeze in the East, the Northeastern Maritime, Hudson-Delaware and Middle Atlantic Coast Regions all reported an unprecedented scarcity of loons, grebes, herons, and shorebirds. However, the situation in North Carolina was strikingly different. Winter peaks of 10,000+ Common Loons and 1000+ Red-throated Loons were reported from Pamlico Sound. Elsewhere in North Carolina a count of 1500+ Red-throateds along three miles of beach was equally impressive. A staggering total of 150,000+ Red-breasted Mergansers was seen from the Cedar Is-



Pintails (Anas acuta). Drawing by Edward Heise.

land-Ocracoke ferry where a count of 20,000 along the same route the previous winter was considered good. Whistling Swans and Brant solved the problem of obtaining food by taking to browsing in open fields when the bays froze.

The White-tailed Kite continued to be recorded in California in good numbers, however in western Oregon, where last year an extensive survey was made, numbers were only 20-40% of last year's count; however, this season the census efforts were not as complete. Significantly, perhaps, none were seen at a regular roost near Eugene, Oregon. Reasonably positive vibrations were received from the two smaller Accipiters, but only in South Texas were they termed obviously high in numbers, perhaps in response to the excessive numbers of Blue Jays and American Robins there this winter. Bald Eagle reports in the West were very encouraging, with a few reports wisely including age ratios, but with some impressive concentrations not even hinting at approximate age categories. For the sake of the readership (if not for America's national emblem), it would seem that such statistics should be included, even if only estimates can be provided. Also in the West, Marsh Hawks appeared to have a particularly successful winter, perhaps partly owing to the decreased snow and mild weather. Both the Mountain West and Middlewestern Prairie Regions particularly commented on their increase and 50 at one location in Alabama (winter roost?) reflected the situation in that area. They were particularly numerous in the Hudson-Delaware, Middle Atlantic Coast and Appalachian Regions. An equally optimistic, though more conservative, signal came from re-

gions reporting Peregrine Falcons. This species appears to be responding to bans on hard pesticides, as well as to management efforts, however it is now running the test of time. Both Turkey and Black vultures are spreading in Pennsylvania and New Jersey. The Winter Hawk Census in New Jersey recorded 547 Turkey Vultures while some areas in Pennsylvania commented on high numbers of Black Vultures.

Reports of gallinaceous birds showed several of what are probably short-term trends. In the Prairie Provinces, Spruce Grouse numbers remain low, but in an area in Oklahoma, a count of 33 Greater Prairie Chickens was the highest in modern times. In the Middlewestern Prairie Region, both Bobwhite and Gray Partridge have all but disappeared and drought is thought to be the cause of Bobwhite and Scaled Quail declines in the Southern Great Plains Region. California Quails are encountering a continued population decline on Vancouver Island and near Victoria, British Columbia.

This season, 72 adult Whooping Cranes and six juveniles wintered at Aransas N.W.R.; however, wandering birds made censusing especially difficult this year. No doubt these wanderers were responding to the high water levels that affected waterfowl in the same area. Very impressive was a report of 23 Black Rails at Port Chicago, California, one of several important colonies in that region (Manolis, 1978, *Western Birds* 9:151-157).

LARIDS CONTINUED to strengthen their hold in North America, where they are rapidly becoming The Birds of the Future! The Glaucous Gull is escalating

its winter thrust to the point where virtually all regions in the lower United States are now annually reporting it, including birds believed to be hybrid Glaucous x Herring and Glaucous x Glaucous-winged (!) gulls (California). Similarly, Great Black-backed Gulls are beginning steadily to encroach into the southern states, as well as at scattered localities in the West. Glaucous-winged and Western gulls appear to be jockeying for winter position in the Pacific Northwest, while the increasingly more familiar Thayer's Gull is being discovered in many new locations. In the East, where identification of Thayer's Gull is a much-debated topic, there were scattered reports from the Northeastern Maritime Region to Florida. The Lesser Black-backed Gull, whose New World breeding is imminently expected, continues to tantalize eastern birders, while Texas observers got to see three this winter and Missouri got its first record. Along the East Coast Lesser Black-backed Gulls were reported in all regions from Quebec to Florida with three regions reporting double figures. Some observers have become so familiar with them that identification in sub-adult plumage poses no problem. Some Regional Editors comment that the presence of Lesser Black-backed Gull is no longer newsworthy.

In central California, the newly Blue-listed Screech Owl showed continued decline in an area where orchard spraying is a suspected factor. Little other information was available on this species, a situation that we hope will improve so that its true status can be better appraised. Barred Owls continued their penetration into the Northern Rockies and into the Pacific Northwest. Due to increased efforts by California's hard-core, five new Spotted Owl stations can be added to those previously described by Gould (1977, *Western Birds* 8:131-146). Short-eared Owls were reported in better-than-average numbers in several western regions, perhaps for the same reasons as suggested for the Marsh Hawk.

The Red-bellied Woodpecker is doing well in areas where it has recently expanded. In Ontario it continues in good numbers while some Pennsylvania CBCs reported record high counts. Lewis' Woodpecker appears to be genuinely in trouble. While not widely reported, several Editors specifically described its demise. Contributors are reminded that negative reports can be as useful as positive reports, so perhaps all observations

of seriously threatened Blue-listed species should be submitted, thus letting Regional Editors sift the grain from the chaff. A curious coincidence (?) in California's Central Valley is the long-term decline of the the Downy Woodpecker while Nuttall's Woodpecker is increasing. Both Eastern and Western bluebirds gave a slight glimmer of increase in several Regions after the reprieve granted by a particularly mild winter. Eastern Bluebirds were present in excellent numbers in the Hudson-Delaware and Middle Atlantic Coast Regions. The Brown Jay now seems well established in the Lower Rio Grande Valley all the way from San Ygnacio to Roma. Common Ravens are noticeably increasing in Pennsylvania, some sections of New York, and in Vermont where it was recorded on 75% of all CBCs.

The mildness of the season presumably accounted for the exceptional numbers of Townsend's Warblers in the Pacific Northwest. Great-tailed Grackles are still spreading and observers might profitably review James Pruitt's article (1975, *AB* 29:985-929) when identifying any over-sized, extralimital grackles. A real curiosity occurred in the Southwest this winter when the normally solitary and sedentary Pyrrhuloxia staged a minor dispersal, including a flock (!) of 22 at one location. The notorious House Finch is still radiating by leaps and bounds. Regions specifically commenting on its increase are the Mountain West, Northern and Southern Great Plains, Middlewestern Prairie, Central Southern, Hudson-Delaware, and the Appalachian Regions. House Finches have reached Nova Scotia, Quebec, Ontario and Minnesota obtained its first documented record. The precise origin of all of these birds is becoming somewhat uncertain, but Florida's first record was considered of suspicious origin.

Lapland Longspurs wintered considerably farther north on the Great Plains than usual due to the open winter, however, readers should be sure to read the fascinating account of mass longspur movements preceding prairie blizzards described in the Northern Great Plains Region.

DISPLACEMENT OF SPECIES

THE DISPLACEMENT of species far beyond the bounds of their normal range has many implications. Displacement may represent the ultimate expres-

sion of navigational error or it may be the end-product of weather-related translocation. It may be a glimpse of the iceberg tip that is range expansion and colonization or it may simply be the quotient of an aberrant gene or chromosomal division. In the context of our introductory remarks, species displacement could be a demonstration of a subtle response to long-term climatic change or it can simply represent the ability of a bird to survive under abnormal environmental circumstances. And last, and perhaps by no means least, species displacement may be a direct function of the increase and expertise of the North American birding fraternity. Regardless of how one views the displacement phenomenon, this winter saw an impressive array of out-of-range species, including one new record for the United States. Additionally, as one could reasonably anticipate, the excessively mild and largely snow-free conditions in much of the country contributed to a large number of displaced species, some of which might properly represent northerly wintering birds instead of truly displaced species.

Western Birds East—While the numbers of western birds in the East didn't numerically match the eastern birds in the West, the list was not diminished in the quality department. Arctic Loon in Mississippi and Western Grebe (morph?) in Louisiana were noteworthy Gulf Coast records, while a Red-necked Grebe in Nevada provided a first photographic record. Additional Western Grebes were found in South Carolina (dark morph) and two in Tennessee while Eared Grebes were present in Massachusetts, South Carolina, Florida and Tennessee. A Ross' Goose in Florida established a first state record and another was at Pea Island, North Carolina where most regional appearances are recorded. A drake Cinnamon Teal in Maryland was considered a true vagrant while one reappeared in Augusta, Georgia for the fifth consecutive year. Greater Scaup and Barrow's Goldeneye in the Southwest stand among few definite records for the area. The Ferruginous Hawk found its way to Mississippi and Alabama, where it established first state records. Larids continued to make headlines with an amazing (first record?) Western Gull reported from South Texas and a repeating Heermann's Gull in Ohio for the second consecutive winter. A California Gull returned to New

York for the third successive winter, another was observed in Florida and a possible was noted in Ontario.

Lesser Nighthawks in Everglades National Park constituted the first winter record for the state. More bewildering was the flock of Vaux's Swifts numbering as many as 22 individuals in Gainesville, Florida for more than two months. This represents Florida's first record, if accepted, and points out that you can't look at some birds too carefully. Two Rufous Hummingbirds were found in Florida and *Selasphorus* Hummingbirds were reported from Florida (2) and South Carolina, the latter thought to be a certain Rufous. A banded Black-chinned Hummingbird in Louisiana provides another link in the continuing chain of records of this species' occurrence east of its normal range.

Indiana obtained a first Band-tailed Pigeon record, and one was even farther astray in New Brunswick. Ash-throated Flycatcher and Sage Thrasher both appeared in Florida. Finally, a Lesser Goldfinch in Kentucky could furnish a first record east of the Mississippi River.

Townsend's Solitaires were found in Michigan, Ontario and New Jersey. A Townsend's Warbler in New Jersey provided a fourth state record—all in winter! There were scattered reports of Western Tanager and Black-headed Grosbeak but fewer than in recent years. The first regional Lazuli Bunting, a male, graced a Morehead City, North Carolina feeder. A Gray-crowned Rosy Finch visiting a Wisconsin feeder supplied a state first record but one in Minnesota was deemed less noteworthy, there being seven previous records. A Smith's Longspur in North Carolina represented the first fully documented state record.

Eastern Birds West—Hawaii recorded its first Green Heron and its third and fourth Snowy Egrets. Waterfowl largely stayed where they belonged, but a Common Eider must have been fun for prairie birders in North Dakota while one in Michigan was slightly less exciting. A "White-bellied" Brant in southern California reminds us of the difficulties inherent in the Brant complex. (Hoffman and Elliot, 1974, *Western Birds* 5:91-93). Also in southern California, a Broad-winged Hawk may actually better be described as a northward winterer in recent years. Not so, however, the Osprey in Hawaii. Four Killdeer in

Hawaii were termed extremely rare and a Piping Plover in southern California continued from the fall. A Common Tern in Hawaii furnished one of fewer than ten records.

A Gray Catbird wintered for the first time in Arizona; however, it was the California "hit parade" of warblers that stole the show. At least seven species of eastern (or similarly extralimital) warblers attempted to winter there. Most extravagant were the many records of Black-and-white, Tennessee, and Palm warblers, along with several Northern Waterthrushes. More outrageous were Northern Parula, both Black-throated Blue and Black-throated Green warblers, and a Grace's Warbler. Four Rose-breasted Grosbeaks in southern California made them more numerous than Black-headed Grosbeaks there. Also in vagrant-rich southern California, an Indigo Bunting was one of less than ten winter occurrences. Oregon saw its sixth record for Clay-colored Sparrow and Washington similarly obtained a Swamp Sparrow record.

Northern Birds South—A total of nine Yellow-billed Loons was reported between the Northern and Middle Pacific Coast Regions and the Southwest picked up two records of the Red-throated Loon. A Great Cormorant appeared in Alabama and King Eiders strengthened their status in the Pacific Northwest. The Harlequin Duck first found in southern California in 1977 was still present this season. A Purple Sandpiper again frequented the Freeport jetty in Texas. Great Black-backed Gulls continue their explorations with Destin Pass, Florida seeing a returning veteran of the seventh consecutive year (rivaling Digby, Nova Scotia's Lesser Black-backed Gull!) and South Texas obtaining three records. Glaucous Gulls appeared out-of-bounds in Arkansas and New Mexico and an Iceland Gull turned up in northwestern Florida. New Mexico also obtained its first Mew Gull record, while North Dakota observers located the state's second Thayer's Gull. Inland Ivory Gulls appeared in Ontario (1), Niagara-Champlain Region (2), with two along the Hudson River in southern New York. Owing to the scarcity of Ivory Gull in northern Newfoundland, it was suspected that these birds arrived by an overland route. A reported Hoary Redpoll record in Iowa is awaiting judgment by the local records committee.

Southern Birds North—A Western Grebe at Adak, Alaska provided a first record west of Prince William Sound. A Brown Pelican found injured in Delaware was certainly out of place. A pair of American Oystercatchers at Point Reyes in California represented the northernmost Pacific Coast record. "Yellow-footed" Western Gulls (*Larus occidentalis livens*) at Imperial Beach stand as only the fourth coastal record for California.

Two Curve-billed Thrashers in Iowa seemed excessive while a Painted Redstart in San Diego represented a rare find at any season in California. The ever-wandering Great-tailed Grackle appeared in Davis, California, near San Francisco, where most of the other state records have appeared. A Boat-tailed Grackle in upstate New York, if correctly identified, provided an extraordinary record. A Blue Grosbeak established a second record for Oregon and a Cardinal continues to survive in Saskatchewan where it has been present for over a year.

Paleartic Birds to the Nearctic—Two Whooper Swans returned to Bronte, Ontario but they are now considered to be escapees. A Eurasian Wigeon reached first record status in Louisiana while there was speculation as to the origin of Barnacle Geese in Illinois, Maryland and South Carolina. Nine Tufted Ducks were reported from Southern California to the Northern Pacific Coast Region. A Tufted Duck in Ontario furnished a first provincial record. Really exciting were two Smews in Washington that represent only the fourth West Coast record south of Alaska. A Spotted Redshank registered a first Oregon record while a well-described Spotted Redshank in South Carolina by an observer familiar with the species in Britain was thought by other observers to be a Lesser Yellowlegs (!). A well-described small *Calidris* sandpiper near Vancouver, British Columbia was thought to be Temminck's Stint, and if so, represented a first continental record away from Alaska. A Black-tailed Godwit was a first for Florida and may have been the same individual that was present the previous winter in North Carolina. Three Ruffs in the Southern Pacific Coast Region continued to pull the whiskers of the cat that's hiding the major breeding area for this species in the New World. Two Slaty-backed Gulls appeared in Homer, Alaska and both Black-headed and Little gulls were re-

corded in California. A Mew Gull of the European race was discovered at Cape Hatteras for a first regional record. A Skylark returned for the third winter in California and a European Siskin in Illinois was considered an escape. A Fieldfare was considered the bird of the season in Ontario, where it spent two months feeding on mountain ash berries in a Toronto suburb.

Neotropical Birds to the Nearctic—Mississippi secured its second record of Olivaceous Cormorant. Once again Florida had a drake Masked Duck at Loxahatchee N.W.R., followed several days later by a female. Seven Hook-billed Kites were described as "easy to find" at Texas' Bentsen State Park and the ever-rare Aplomado Falcon appeared in the South Texas Region. For a current account of this elegant desert species, readers should refer to Dean Hector's paper in *Birding* (12:92-100).

Perhaps the bird of the season was White-collared Swift (*Streptoprocne zonaris*) found freshly dead (!) in coastal Florida. The bird was described as being "an adult female of a Mexican subspecies" and it obviously represents the first specimen for the United States. This wide-ranging, fast-flying, megaswift is widespread in the Neotropics, and perhaps its appearance in the United States is no less extraordinary than the recent records of Spotted Rails and Paint-billed Crakes. A Cave Swallow in the Tallahassee region of Florida was very unusual. Both Olivaceous and Coues' flycatchers in California were very fancy, as was the Tropical Kingbird (species?) in New Mexico. A probably-escaped Green Jay was 500 miles north of its range in Texas and another Clay-colored Robin was recorded in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of that state. Perhaps the best-documented report of Thick-billed Vireo was of an individual present for nearly a month in Everglades N.P.

PELAGICS

PELAGIC BIRDS IN recent years have become among the principal objects of special ornithological quest, particularly from a distributional and seasonal perspective. With the ever-increasing threat of pelagic oil spills or with the advent of offshore drilling (such as on Georges Bank off the New England coast), systematically obtained observations of pelagic distribution can provide

critical baseline data that is essential if the continued success of seabird populations is to be assured. Winter pelagic distribution has historically been the least well understood. Many party boat captains are inclined to take it easy during the winter season owing to a general decline in public interest in going offshore at that time of year, but perhaps more importantly because winter conditions are often decidedly unpleasant, particularly for those with a less than sturdy constitution.

Despite any timidity that observers might have about going to sea in winter, it is obvious from this winter's reports that there are rewards for those who do, and that gradually the composite picture of winter seabird distribution is coming together.

In Alaska, a Laysan Albatross in the Bering Sea was one of few winter records at the northern end of the species' range, while on Kauai Island in Hawaii, there were five active nests by early February. On Monterey Bay in the Middle Pacific Coast Region, a count of 20 Black-footed Albatrosses was high for the winter season. Also reported present off Monterey this winter were both Flesh-footed and Short-tailed shearwaters, but despite ocean surface temperatures being 1-2° C above normal, only five Manx Shearwaters were recorded. A single Short-tailed Shearwater was noted off southern California, and Guy McCaskie wisely points out that its status there is still poorly understood. Pacific records of Northern Fulmars suggested that off California the species was at or below "normal" numbers, and in the Northern Pacific Coast Region, usually an area rich in pelagic records, a few were picked up dead on Oregon beaches, but like other tubenoses, there were no other reports.

Shearwaters made headlines in the Central Southern Region when a dead Manx Shearwater was found, thus providing northwest Florida with its first record, and possibly (?) only the second Gulf Coast record. Additionally, a count of six Audubon's Shearwaters at Holly Beach, Louisiana was described as "almost unprecedented." Winter storm-petrels are always of potential interest and this season provided at least two surprises. Two Fork-tailed Storm-Petrels on Monterey Bay in early December provided the first winter record since 1976. Off southern California an inshore and out-of-season Leach's Storm-Petrel became one of few regional records. Re-

grettably, no mention was made as to whether the bird was of the white-rumped *beali* race or possibly one of the rarer dark-rumped forms from Mexico (Ainley, 1976, *Western Birds* 7:33-68). Two Wilson's Storm-Petrels on Georges Bank in December were well beyond the normal departure date.

Sulid reports included a remarkable Blue-footed Booby flying south (!) past Del Norte County in northern California in mid-January. Since the fall of 1980 was not a spectacular booby invasion year in southern California and because this record is about three months later than any other regional record, it stands as all the more bizarre. For other extralimital records, readers should see Larrison (1945, *Murrelet* 26:45) and Ellrott (1976, *Western Birds* 7:155-157). A count of 121 Blue-faced Boobies at Cockroach Cay, St. Thomas, Virgin Islands was deemed noteworthy. Of lesser significance was a Brown Booby off Galveston Island, Texas, along with eight Gannet records in those same waters. Unprecedented numbers of Gannets were noted off Florida with estimates exceeding 1000.

Jaegers were apparently not in evidence, there being only three Parasitics reported from the Gulf of Mexico and one in Delaware while a handful of Pomarine Jaegers were noted at Monterey Bay. Slightly more noteworthy, however, were two Pomarine Jaegers off Puerto Peñasco, Sonora, for one of very few (?) reports for the Gulf of California. Single Pomarines graced the Great Lakes in Pennsylvania and New York during December. Two skuas on Georges Bank, one identified as a Great Skua, were the only ones reported. Black-legged Kittiwakes, on the other hand, were remarkably widespread. In addition to the regular few along the Northern Pacific coast, they were recorded inland in the Southern Pacific Coast Region, the Southwest Region, the South Texas Region, as well as at somewhat more traditional locations in the Middlewestern Prairie Region. As many as ten kittiwakes were found off Cape Canaveral, Florida, but more distant, however, were two oiled birds in Hawaii, a month apart and both collected.

Pigeon Guillemot reports were perhaps thought to be slightly above average in the Middle Pacific Coast Region, and LeValley and Evens properly highlight the apparent mystery surrounding where the majority of the California population winters. Sowsls and De

Gange (1980, *Catalog of California Seabird Colonies*) suggest that, "Following breeding, Pigeon Guillemots largely disappear from the California coastline and do not reappear until just before the next year's breeding season. Their wintering range is presently unknown but we suspect that a northward movement of birds takes place." Black Guillemot was the only Alcid commented on in the East. They were noted in good numbers in southern New England away from traditional wintering areas. An individual seen off eastern Long Island was considered a good find while one in Long Island Sound on a Connecticut CBC provided one of few state occurrences. A rare Craver's Murrelet on Monterey Bay provided a first winter record for the region, and may have been attributable to warmer-than-normal water temperatures (Ainley, 1976, *Western Birds* 7:33-86). Good numbers of Ancient Murrelets were noted in their traditional haunts in the Northern Pacific Coast Region and the season's only Horned Puffin was a beached bird picked up dead near Newport, Oregon.

Manomet Bird Observatory's pelagic cruises on Georges Bank are providing a clearer picture of winter seabird distribution. On a December trip Northern Fulmars were considered common throughout except in coastal southern New England and Black-legged Kittiwakes were termed very common coastally and abundant throughout the Georges Bank area. Alcids were scarce and the most frequently encountered species was Dovekie. On a similar cruise in February Northern Fulmars were still common but kittiwake numbers had diminished substantially. Alcids were again scarce with Thick-billed Murre being most frequently recorded.

EARLY SPRING ACTIVITY

THE TRANSITION BETWEEN late winter and early spring is often a slow, tortuous process—one that stretches the patience and expectations of even veteran observers, much like Christmas morning affects a young child. This winter, however, ended practically overnight. A rush of early spring migration all across the country occurred in mid-to-late February when the unusually warm flow that was described earlier in this account made its way northward. A Double-crested Cormorant was a month early in Montana and all through the plains



Comorants. Drawing by Keith Hansen.

states and in the Prairie Provinces waterfowl of all types were moving by late February. Marsh Hawks and Sandhill Cranes similarly responded, with 55 of the latter in South Dakota by late February. Sage Grouse were dancing in the Mountain West in January and two mid-continent Pectoral Sandpiper records in February reflected premature migration. Other selected species for which abnormally early migration was noted in various regions include Common Crow, Sage Thrasher, Western Meadowlark, Dark-eyed Junco, Sage Sparrow, Tree Sparrow, and Lapland Longspur. Perhaps most optimistic of the early migrants was an Eastern Phoebe in Quebec in mid-February although an American Woodcock in Milwaukee displayed equally poor judgment. Large numbers of Northern Parulas were migrating at Casey Key, Florida on February 18th. Red Crossbills were suspected of nesting in South Dakota by February 22.

MISCELLANEOUS

AS WE PORED THROUGH the mountain of data that represents the winter season, we were occasionally struck by interesting bits of information that could not properly be placed in one of the preceding sections. Among these was the mention of a "blue" Ross' Goose in California, the genetic consequences of which have been discussed by

Kaufman *et al.* (1979, *Continental Bird-life* 1:112-115). A duck near Annapolis, Maryland, originally thought to be a Tufted Duck, was later identified as a Wood Duck x Ring-necked Duck hybrid. A young Caracara fishing for minnows in the Southwest was certainly no more surprising than the Burrowing Owl that walked through the drive-in line at an El Paso fast food restaurant. The sight of 50,000 Common Crows roosting on downtown buildings in Wichita certainly has a Hitchcock aura, while a Pine Siskin banded in the winter of 1977-78 in Kansas clearly did some traveling to be recovered at Great Gull Island, New York, in October 1980. An eight-year old Painted Redstart in Arizona could be pushing record status. Finally, reports from Cuba indicate that two very rare species are in precariously low numbers. A special search in November, 1980 was unable to locate any Zapata Wrens and located only one pair of Ivory-billed Woodpeckers where a dozen pairs were reported in 1959.

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