

# Ontario Region

## RON RIDOUT

There are few people alive who can recall a more brutal winter than 1993–1994. After a mild beginning the first half of December, temperatures plunged into the sub-zero Fahrenheit range and remained there into February, when a brief mild spell occurred. Snowfall in most areas was well above normal, and for the first time in recent memory the Great Lakes that the province borders on were mostly frozen. Only time will tell what effect these conditions had on the province's wintering birds, particularly those near the northern limit of their range.

Southward movement of northern raptors was lackluster across the Region. While some felt the number of Snowy Owls was elevated, the overall picture appeared near normal. Reports of other northern owls were almost non-existent south of their normal range. Winter finches presented a very different picture, with good movements of nearly all of the group. The most notable

were the redpolls, with large numbers of Commons everywhere in the south and dozens of reports of Hoarics.

Rarities during the period included Tufted Duck, at least two California Gulls, and Brambling. All reports of rarities are subject to review by the Ontario Bird Records Committee.

Abbreviations: Pelee (*Pt. Pelee Nat'l Park and vicinity*); P.E.Pt. (*Prince Edward Pt.*); Algonquin, Presqu'ile, and Rondeau are Provincial Parks.

## Loons to Ibises

December's mild first half encouraged many loons and grebes to linger. Red-throated Loons numbered 21 during the period. At least three different birds attempted to winter on L. Ontario. Three, considered to be spring migrants, at Pelee Feb. 19 (AW) were record early. A Pied-billed Grebe at Atikokan Dec. 14 (DG) was record late by 6 weeks, while 45 Horned Grebes at Colpoys Bay, Bruce Dec. 17 (SG) was a very high number for the date. An Eared Grebe, first found at Hamilton's Windemere Basin Nov. 14, remained until Jan. 23 (m.ob.). While it has been thought that almost all grebes leave the Region in winter, that may not be the case. Dozens of Horned and Red-necked grebes were found grounded on roads across the s. part of the province in late January and early

February. These birds must have been attempting to move farther south as the Great Lakes froze over but did not have the reserves to make it far. Despite rehabilitation attempts for several, few survived. How many more suffered a similar fate is unknown.

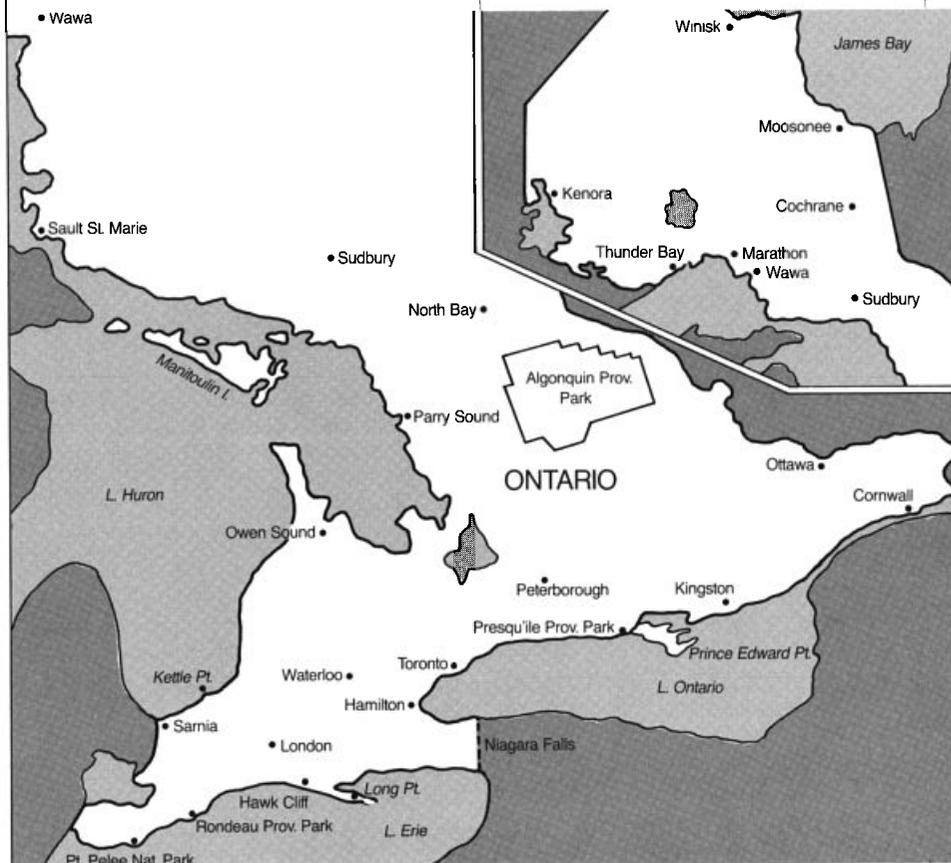
A first-winter N. Gannet, seen Dec. 15 (JHu) on L. Ontario off Hamilton, had moved to the Niagara R. the next day and remained there until Dec. 17 (RA *et al.*). Several Double-crested Cormorants tarried well into the period but one at Minden (*vide* DBa) and 16 at St. Catharines (*vide* MEH), both Dec. 19, were significant. A Great Blue Heron lasted until Jan. 4 in Peterborough (MHi) while a Green Heron near Fisherville Jan. 2 (JM) was a rare winter sighting. Observations of Black-crowned Night-Herons included one at Humber Bay, Toronto Dec. 1 (RY), two at James Gardens, Toronto Dec. 1–3 (RY), one at Wildwood L., Oxford Dec. 5 (JMH), and one at Niagara Falls Dec. 6 (RK, MJ). An *plegadis* ibis at St. Clair N.W.A., Dec. 15 (JH) was likely the same bird there Nov. 26.

## Waterfowl

The annual L. Ontario Mid-winter Waterfowl Inventory Jan. 9 recorded 132,859 birds of 32 species (WE). The record-high number probably reflected frozen water elsewhere in the Region. Leading totals were 33,999 Oldsquaws, 25,561 Canada Geese, 21,170

Greater Scaups, and 17,193 Com. Goldeneyes. Tundra Swans numbered a respectable 2938 at Long Pt., Dec. 7 (RK), and 41 on L. Simcoe near Keswick Dec. 5 (BB, *et al.*) was significant at that inland locality. A family of eight Trumpeter Swans, results of the Wye Marsh, Simcoe introduction program, spent the winter on the w. end of L. Ontario (m.ob.). Lingering Brant involved individuals at Hamilton Dec. 1–29 (WS *et al.*), Cobourg Dec. 1–8 (J&CG), Port Rowan Dec. 8 & 19 (AW, C&SW), Presqu'ile Dec. 9 (DS), and two at Kingston Dec. 19 (*vide* PG). The imm. Greater White-fronted Goose found near Arkona Nov. 21 remained in the Strathroy area until Dec. 8 (m.ob.).

A Blue-winged Teal shot at Hillman Marsh, Essex Dec. 20 (GH) was record late there. Several waterfowl attempted to winter at inland locales. Sightings included two Wood Ducks and a Green-winged Teal at Aurora Jan. 21 (DBu), another Green-winged Teal at Ottawa Dec. 5+ (BD, JHa), a N. Shoveler at Guelph Jan. 12 (CP), two Canvasbacks (PC) and a Redhead (TJ) at London Feb. 1 & 3 respectively, and a Ring-necked Duck at Cobocnk Jan. 8 (DT, RT).



The only mild spell of the winter occurred Feb. 18–20 and with it several ducks made their first return appearance. Arrivals at Pelee Feb. 18 included a record-early Wood Duck, 34 Am. Black Ducks, 11 Mallards, and six Redheads (AW). Northern Pintails appeared at Pelee (AW), Burlington (KM, WL), and Nanticoke (JM) February 19, while considerable numbers of Redheads—250 at Burlington (KM, WL) and 291 at Fort Erie (WW, MD *et al.*)—arrived. An Am. Wigeon at Port Hope Feb. 17 (J&CG) was the first reported and four N. Shovelers near Wheatley Dec. 24 (AW) were very early. A Hooded Merganser at Beachville Feb. 16 (JMH) was record early.

The congregation of ducks on w. L. Ontario totalled 10,000 Greater Scaup throughout the winter, 2000 Lesser Scaup at Hamilton's Windemere Basin Jan. 9 (RD *et al.*), a peak of 10,000 White-winged Scoters off Burlington in mid-January (m.ob.), and 8000 Com. Goldeneye off Burlington from mid-December+ (m.ob.). Similar concentrations are building as zebra mussels increase in L. Ontario near Kingston. Numbers reported included 10,000 Greater Scaup and 28,000 Oldsquaw off P.E.Pt., Dec. 18 (JE, RDW) and 3500 Com. Goldeneye at Kingston Jan. 9 (K.F.N.). Scattered among these concentrations on L. Ontario were at least 20 King Eiders, six Harlequin Ducks, and at Burlington a ♂ Tufted Duck Dec. 5+ (RD, m.ob.), an ad. ♂ Com. Eider Jan. 24+ (JLa, m.ob.), and a ♂ Barrow's Goldeneye Jan. 21+ (m.ob.). Rarities away from L. Ontario included an imm. ♂ King Eider at Nepean Dec. 13 (MHa), two Harlequin Ducks remaining from the fall period and seen Dec. 20 at Pelee (AW), a pair at Sault Ste. Marie throughout the winter (m.ob.), a female at Fort Erie Dec. 31+ (RK *et al.*), up to three Barrow's Goldeneyes at Ottawa through the winter (m.ob.), and, for the 8th consecutive year, presumably the same ♂ Barrow's Goldeneye returned to winter at Lakefield Dec. 31 (m.ob.).

### Vultures to Shorebirds

Not surprisingly, tardy Turkey Vultures were far less numerous than in past winters. Sightings included one at Rocklyn Jan. 4 & 23 (VB) and at least two that spent the winter around Port Stanley (m.ob.) and may have wandered as far north as Lambeth Feb. 6 (TM). Bald Eagles maintained their wintering numbers in the province. Sightings involved 120 birds with notable concentrations of 27 wintering at Ivy Lea (K.F.N.) and 20 at Indian Pt., *Manitoulin* Dec. 5 (JL), some of which may have moved S to the Douglas Pt. Generating Station, *Bruce*, to winter near the warm water outflow. Sixteen were there Jan. 27 (SD). Reports of 24 wintering N. Goshawks in the south reflected

the better-than-average fall passage. An uncommon winterer, 18 Red-shouldered Hawks were reported, with the most northerly at Owen Sound Dec. 18 (DF). A record-high 345 Red-tailed Hawks were counted around Fisherville Jan. 2 (JM *et al.*). Noteworthy subspecific Red-tailed sightings included a "Krider's" at Sarnia until Dec. 10 (DR, v.o.) and a "Harlan's" near Niagara-on-the-Lake Dec. 23–Feb. 10 (KR, v.o.). Golden Eagle sightings numbered 11, all in c. and e. Ontario. Observations of 22 Merlins were widely scattered across the south and as far n. as Ottawa Jan. 9 (LS). Reports of Peregrines involved two at Burlington Dec. 8–9 (PE), and individuals at Ottawa throughout the period (m.ob.), Westport Dec. 22 (KK, RDW), Elder Mills, *York* Jan. 22 (RTi *et al.*), and Kingston Feb. 5–11 (K.F.N.). A gray Gyrfalcon, seen near Port Rowan Dec. 18 (M&RTa), was the farthest south of the 19 reported.

Eleven Gray Partridge at Vandecar Jan. 16 (JMH) and 43 Wild Turkeys at Swea-burg Dec. 18 (JMH) were exciting considering how heavily *Oxford* is farmed. Tardy Virginia Rails were seen at Woodbridge Dec. 12 (DP), Jordan Harbour Dec. 19 (C&LWe), and Taquanyah C.A., *Haldimand* Dec. 30 (JM, HM). A Sandhill Crane seen over Brantford Dec. 23 (HE) was unusual for that locale, and though more expected at Long Pt., 14 birds there Dec. 5 (C&SW) provided a record count. Two remained well into January. Record-late lingering littorals included lone Black-bellied Plovers at McLaughlin Bay, *Durham* Dec. 1 (MM) and Wolfe Is., *Frontenac* Dec. 19 (K.F.N.) and a Hudsonian Godwit at Wildwood L., *Oxford* Dec. 5 (JMH). A Red Phalarope which remained at Presqu'île until Dec. 9 (DS) was also late, outlasting five Purple Sandpipers last seen Dec. 2 (CV). Four Purples dallied at Niagara Falls into January (KR, DC, MF). The first returning Killdeer arrived Feb. 18 at Stoney Pt. (MH, AK), followed by several elsewhere the next day.

### Gulls to Woodpeckers

At least two, possibly three Little Gulls seen on s.e. L. Simcoe Dec. 5 (RT, DT) furnished *Durham's* first winter record. Elsewhere, 30 were counted off Port Rowan Dec. 16 (RR) and three remained on the Niagara R. until Jan. 12 (GB). A first-winter Com. Black-headed Gull at Niagara-on-the-Lake Dec. 18 (RK, MJ) was the only one reported. Adult California Gulls were observed at Brantford Dec. 3–4 (WL, KM, PR) and Queenston Dec. 5 (RK, m.ob.). An adult seen at Hamilton's Van Wagner's Beach Dec. 14 (JJ) may well have been the Brantford bird. Lesser Black-backed Gull sightings numbered 18. Most notable away

from the usual locales were two at Stratford Dec. 19 (MC). A total of 290 Glaucous Gulls across the province was exceptional. High counts included 62 at Ottawa Dec. 19 (*fide* DSH), 37 at Toronto Jan. 13 (PSS), 36 at Thunder Bay Dec. 21 (NE *et al.*), and 34 at Sudbury Dec. 4 (CB). At least two, possibly three Black-legged Kittiwakes were seen on the Niagara R., with a lone bird at Niagara Falls Dec. 20 (CE) followed by two at Fort Erie Jan. 2 (WD, BP).

Despite the severe conditions, one Mourning Dove was found at Pass L., *Thunder Bay* Jan. 1 (*fide* NK) and four others actually wintered in the Thunder Bay area (NE). Movement of n. owls southward during the period was not extensive. Observations of N Hawk Owls included one each at Barrie Is., *Manitoulin* through the period (DB *et al.*), Sudbury Dec. 27 and Jan. 2 (CWh), and Echo Bay, *Algoma* Feb. 9 (m.ob.). Great Grays wandered S to Kingston Dec. 15 (RDW), North Bay in mid-December (RTI), Erinsville Feb. 6 (RW), and Bolingbroke Feb. 17 (C&JBo). The lone Boreal reported was at Purpleville, *York* Jan. 14 (DSt). An exceptional count of 100 Short-eared Owls was made near Fisherville Jan. 2 (JM, m.ob.). An extremely late imm. ♂ hummingbird at a feeder in Camlachie in early December was eventually enticed indoors, where it spent the winter feeding on nectar and fruit flies (JK). Though believed to be a Ruby-throated, Black-chinned could not be ruled out by the end of the period. Time and molt may tell the story. The most northerly Red-bellied Woodpecker was at Midemoya Dec. 1–31 (m.ob.), joined there by a second bird Dec. 18 (m.ob.). Wintering Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were recorded at Kingston Dec. 19 (*fide* PG), St. Thomas Dec. 27 (*fide* SP), Petrolia Jan. 1–19 (JC, DM), Burlington Feb. 12 (CBa), and Ridgeway Feb. 16 (RS). Three-toed Woodpeckers, well s. of range, included singles at *Peel* Dec. 19 (*fide* LM) and Beau-soleil Is., *Muskoka* Jan. 7 (HB). Lone Black-backed, in the south, were seen near Sunderland Jan. 1–3 (AB), Lansdowne Jan. 2 (JHg), Port Hope Jan. 9 (E&AS), and Charleston Lake P.P., Feb. 10 (LN).

### Flycatchers to Waxwings

Late E. Phoebes were seen at Dorland Dec. 4 (JMH), Leamington Dec. 20 (AW), and the latest survived the deep-freeze until Jan. 2 at Fisherville (JM). Horned Larks considered to be migrants included 1500 at Blenheim Jan. 9 (KB) and one at St. Joseph Is., *Algoma* Jan. 15 (EC, TW). Never fazed by the weather, the first Gray Jay nest of the year was found at Algonquin Feb. 26 (RT). Following a heavy fall passage, record numbers of Black-capped Chickadees were tallied on several CBCs in the south. Boreal Chick-

adees sometimes appear with these movements; however, only a few were reported s. of range and all were in the east. Tufted Titmice presented a far different story, with 42 birds observed, well above average. Many of the birds, first reported during the fall, managed to winter successfully. With 202 Carolina Wrens reported, numbers were lower than previous winters; however, the full effects of the frigid winter won't be known until spring. A House Wren seen at Rondeau Dec. 19 (KB) was the only one reported for the period, as was a Blue-gray Gnatcatcher at Mississauga Dec. 19–21 (LF). Both species are rare but almost annual early winter sightings in the south. Sightings of Hermit Thrushes were widespread but one at the Bruce N.P., Dec. 23 (RRu) and another that overwintered at the Dickson Wilderness, Waterloo (TC) were exceptional. Five Varied Thrushes, slightly below the long-term average, included singles at Gore Bay Dec. 7–Jan. 9 (BC *et al.*), Lindsay Dec. 28–Jan. 13 (*fide* DCa), Puslinch Twp., Wellington Jan. 1–Feb. 28 (WWa, v.o.), London Jan. 5–Feb. 11 (B&JEs), and Fanshawe C.A., near London Jan. 15 (C&SBd).

A Gray Catbird at Atikokan Dec. 14 (DG) was record late there by 4 days, though this was eclipsed by a Brown Thrasher there the same day, which remained until Jan. 7 (DE), making it record late by 7 weeks! Other mimids of note included single N. Mockingbirds at Sudbury Dec. 1+ (SLn), Copper Cliff Dec. 1–31 (JL), Parry Sound Dec. 19 (MK), and a Brown Thrasher at Cypress Lake P.P., Dec. 22 (DF). Very late Am. Pipits involved singles at Cobourg Dec. 8 (CG) and Wolfe Is., Frontenac Dec. 19 (RDW). Bohemian Waxwings were numerous across the province with the exception of the extreme southwest. Peak counts in traditional winter areas included 1438 at Ottawa Dec. 19 (*fide* DSH) and 809 at Thunder Bay Dec. 26 (NE) while, in the south, 300 at Pickering Jan. 4 (m.ob.) and 200 at Nobleton Feb. 11 (KC) were noteworthy.

### Vireos to Finches

Proof of the mild beginning to the period was the exceptional number and variety of lingering vireos and warblers. Single White-eyed Vireos were seen at Leamington Dec. 20 (SC) and Pelee Is., Dec. 22 (PAW). This year's Orange-crowned Warbler was at Turkey Pt., Dec. 18 (DAS). Observations of single Nashville Warblers came from *Peel* Dec. 19–20 (LF *et al.*) and Komoka Dec. 23 (TB). A Northern Parula at Ottawa Dec. 19 (BD, CT) was record late for the province. Two ♀ Black-throated Blues involved one at Toronto Dec. 5–8 (PSS) and another near Port Stanley Dec. 14–26 (RH) at the same

feeder where a male appeared a year earlier on the same date! Scattered sightings of Yellow-rumped were made, though one at Atikokan Dec. 18 (TN, DG) was a record 8 weeks late. The Yellow-throated Warbler, first reported at Sault Ste. Marie Nov. 12, lasted until Dec. 26 (m.ob.). Individual Pine Warblers were seen at Guelph Dec. 2–Feb. 19 (P&JGg), Brantford Dec. 9–11 (WL), Oakville Dec. 30–Jan. 9 (RTs), Fonthill Jan. 1–7 (RK), and Mississauga Jan. 10–15 (RE). Lingering Palm Warblers were discovered at Brantford Dec. 9 (WL) and near Simcoe Dec. 19 (*fide* MS). An Ovenbird managed to hang on at Toronto until Dec. 3 (RY, v.o.); one at Windsor that appeared in early December did even better by lasting until at least Jan. 7 (BL).

This winter's Summer Tanager appeared at a feeder in Blenheim Dec. 26–Jan. 8 (A&YP, v.o.). The push northward of N. Cardinals continued, with individuals n. to Terrace Bay Dec. 26+ (*fide* FL), Marathon in mid-December (*fide* WC), and New Liskeard in mid-December (*fide* SWE). The lone Dickcissel reported was at a feeder near Talbotville Dec. 27–30 (m.ob.). Observations of Chipping Sparrows fell sharply from the previous winter's 43 to 11 birds. One at Minden Dec. 19 (*fide* DBa) was notable. Virginiatown's Lark Sparrow, discovered Nov. 18, lasted until Dec. 13 (PRi). For the 2nd consecutive winter, a Grasshopper Sparrow, Ontario's 3rd winter record, was discovered, this time at Ottawa Dec. 19 (*fide* DSH). Also of note was a Lincoln's Sparrow at Kitchener Dec. 19 (*fide* JP). Two Song Sparrows and three Dark-eyed Juncos at Pelee Feb. 19 & 20 respectively were record-early spring arrivals (AW). Snow Buntings were widespread and numerous across the south, with flocks numbering as high as 2000 at Sunderland Jan. 1–8 (JMc), 1000 at Pickering Jan. 4 (EB), and 1000 at Niagara-on-the-Lake Feb. 13 (MEH, KR).

The only Yellow-headed Blackbird sighting came from Peacock Pt., *Haldimand* Dec. 30–Jan. 3 (JM *et al.*). Twenty-one Brewer's Blackbirds were seen, with a high of 11 at Long Pt., Dec. 18 (RR, v.o.) and individuals n. to Thunder Bay Dec. 26 (NE) and, for the 2nd consecutive winter, Ear Falls Jan. 2 (*fide* DSa). Despite the Arctic-like conditions, a Com. Grackle managed to overwinter at Moosonee (PF, EH). A ♀ **Brambling**, the second of 1993 in Ontario, appeared at a feeder in Hungry Hollow Dec. 24 and remained through the winter (PCh, m.ob.). Pine Grosbeaks were widely scattered and numerous across central areas and as far south as St. Williams, where 12 birds stayed Dec. 30–Feb. 5 (RR, m.ob.). Reports of White-winged Crossbills, s. of range, were thinly scattered and mostly of individual

birds. The redpoll story was vastly different. Many of the birds that moved S in the fall remained in the s. portion of the province throughout the winter. Flocks of Com. Redpolls numbering 5000 at Sweaburg Jan. 2



Providing the province's 2nd record for 1993 of this rare visitor, this Brambling (center, in profile, accompanied by House Finches) appeared at a feeder in Hungry Hollow, Ontario, on December 24, 1993, and remained through most of the winter. Photograph/Alf Rider.

(JMh) and 2000 at Guelph Jan. 9 (RvT) were exceptional, though many flocks in the hundreds were also reported across the south. Not so in the north, where observers lamented a paucity of almost all finches. With this massive irruption of Commons came a profusion of Hoary reports totaling at least 136 individuals of this difficult-to-distinguish species. Doubtless some were misidentified, but the bulk of the sightings were likely correct. Pine Siskins and Am. Goldfinches appeared to have moved out of the province by the winter period and most reporters cited fewer-than-usual numbers of both species. Though more numerous than in the last few winters, Evening Grosbeaks were not considered common anywhere.

### Corrigenda

AB 47:253, the date of the ♂ Tufted Duck at Hamilton's Windemere Basin should read: Dec. 31 through...; AB 47:410, the date of the two Am. Avocets at Port Elgin should be: May 2–5; AB 47:411, change the two different ♀ Blue Grosbeaks at Pelee May 13–20 and May 20 to May 13–20 and May 20–22.

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# Appalachian Region

## GEORGE A. HALL

It was quite a winter! Both the weather and the birding were of history-making proportions. Despite the horrendous weather, or maybe because of it, the birding was good, with many notable records—including three state firsts, and numerous local first or second records.

December was mild but wetter than normal, with some snow in the north. At Pittsburgh January was 151 degree days below normal. Sub-zero temperatures were reported throughout the Region, with an unofficial low of -38° F in Elk County, Pennsylvania. There were two major snowstorms with accumulations of 12 inches in the lowlands and much more in the mountains, as well as several lighter snowfalls. February was slightly colder than normal, with several light to moderate snowfalls. Total snow accumulation amounted to as much as 91 inches, and in the north the ground was snow-covered from just before Christmas to the end of the period. Some areas were hit with ice storms which caused much tree damage, and which was probably harder on the birds than the low temperatures and heavy snows. At the end of February there was still no sign of moderating weather.

The "northern finch" flight anticipated in November did indeed take place, and several other northern species had appeared in numbers by late December. The invasion was highlighted by an unprecedented flight of Common Redpolls. With the advent of the cold weather and the deep freeze in the north, higher-than-normal numbers of waterfowl began to appear in what open water did exist. In February Red-necked Grebes arrived in record-making numbers.

Populations of many resident birds were good, and many migrants remained in the Region dur-

ing the mild December so that most Christmas Bird Counts reported record numbers of many species. Robins, several sparrows, and other open-country species were especially common. As the season progressed and the weather deteriorated, the numbers of some species declined. This was particularly evident for the vulnerable Carolina Wren, and also possibly the Golden-crowned Kinglet. Although there were a few reports of proven mortality, it appears that survival was good. Indeed a number of spring migrants arrived to the snow-covered habitats in the last week of February, even though winter weather still held sway.

Abbreviations: B.E.S.P. (*Bald Eagle State Park, Centre Co., PA*); Ch.N.F. (*Chattahoochee Natl. Forest, GA*); G.B.W.M.A. (*Green Bottom W.M.A., Cabell Co., WV, formerly known as Glenwood Swamp*); M.C.F.H. (*Minor Clark Fish Hatchery, Rowan County, KY*); P.I.S.P. (*Presque Isle State Park, Erie Co., PA*); P.N.R. (*Powdermill Nature Reserve, Westmoreland Co., PA*); R.C.B.L. (*Robert C. Byrd Locks, Ohio River, Mason County, WV, formerly known as Gallopis Locks*).

## Loons to Waterfowl

Single Red-throated Loons were reported from P.I.S.P., Dec. 4 (JM), L. Arthur, PA Dec. 18 (GW), and Mapleton, PA Feb. 12-19 (m.obs.). An amazing 1077 Com. Loons in 80 minutes were seen flying W along the L. Erie shore at P.I.S.P., Dec. 11.

