

Morehead, KY until Dec. 24 (FB). The first northbound migrants appeared Feb. 20–22. Thirty-five E. Meadlarks were found in *Rockingham*, VA Jan. 31 (MGS). A Yellow-headed Blackbird was listed on the Nickajack L. CBC (JPa). Rusty Blackbirds were at B.E.S.P., Jan 31 (JPe) and in *Marion*, WV Jan. 7 (AW). Brown-headed Cowbirds at Warren, PA Jan. 6 and *Marion*, WV Jan 7 (AW) were unusual (TG), as was a Com. Grackle at Morgantown Jan. 23 (GAH).

### Finches

Purple Finches were in low numbers again this winter. It was not a crossbill winter. Five Red Crossbills were seen in Ch.N.F., Dec. 19 (JPa *et al.*); two were at Lineville, PA Dec. 19 (RCL, RFL), and one was seen at Black Moshannon S.P., PA Dec. 24 (HH). A single White-winged Crossbill was at Washington, PA Jan. 18–23 (SG), three were seen near State College, PA Dec. 19 (TF) and a flock of 50 was at Black Moshannon S.P., PA Dec. 24 (HH).

In the fall season the influx of Com. Redpolls had been called “the best in many years.” I now amend that to read “probably the best of which we have record—certainly the best in the lifetime of *American Birds*.” They arrived in mid-November and by the end of January had reached all parts of the Region as far south as Erwin, TN (GSw) and Toccoa, GA (RBU). Flock sizes varied from singles and pairs to 50–60. Along with the Com. Redpolls there were 4 reports of **Hoary Redpolls**. One at Ashton, WV Dec. 21 (ph., WA, SSm), providing a first state record; one at Middletown, VA Jan. 23 & 31 (RSi) and one at Monterey, VA Feb. 27 († EBr), providing first Virginia records, and two at Dan’s Rock, Md Feb. 5–28 (m.ob., *fide* MT). There were 2 unconfirmed reports from *Erie*, PA (JM).

Pine Siskins were in small numbers at scattered locations and were absent from many places. It was the best Evening Grosbeak flight in the past several years, but it was much smaller than the massive flights of a decade or 2 ago. Small flocks were noted at scattered locations as far south as Blairsville, GA (DF).

**Contributors:** Richard Almy, Wendell Argabrite, Elizabeth Armstrong, Carole Babyak, Brent Bailey, James Barker, Ralph Bell (RB), Dorothy Bordner (DB), Edward Brinkley (EBr), Paul Brown, Edward Brucker (EB), Nancy Brundage, Davis Bullock, Robert Bundus (RBU), Fred Busroe, Kathy Cain, Drake Caldwell, Linda Christenson, Wallace Coffey, Brian Cross, Marshall Daniels, Steve Danko, Dave Darney (DD), David Davis (DDv), Harriett DiGioia, Rusty Dunn, Jeanette Esker, Jamie Fenske, Gary Fields, Ted Floyd, Matt Fraker,

Dot Freeman, Walter Fye, Kenneth Gabler, Sayre Greenfield, Mike Griffith, Ted Grisez, Charles Handley, Jan Hansen (JH), Harry Henderson, John Heninger, Don Henise (DHe), Mozelle Henkel, Paul Hess, William Highhouse, David Hochadel (DH), Joyce Hoffman (JHo), Ray Kiddy (RKi), Rick Knight (RK), Don Koch (DK), Ed Kwater, Dave Kyler (DKy), YuLee Larner, Wayne Laubscher, Robert C. Leberman (RCL), Ronald F. Leberman (RFL) Ronald Lutz (RLu), Rick Lyle (RL), Anthony Marich, Larry McDaniel, Jerry McWilliams, Linda McWilliams, George Myers, Jerry Nagel, Mildred Nodes, Johnny Parks (JPa), Richard Peake, John Peplinski (JPe), Jim Phillips (JP), George Reese, Stephen Rotenborn, Ed Schell, Glenna Schwalbe, Paul Schwalbe, Gene Shaffer (GSh), Walter Shaffer, Robert Simpson (RSi), Michael G. Smith (MGS), Mike Smith (MS), Shelly Smith (SSm), Donald Snyder, Ruth Snyder (RS), Ann Stamm, Sally Stebbins (SS), Michael Stewart (MSt), Craig Stihler, Randy Stringer (RSt), Ruth Swaney (RSw), Glenn Swofford (GSw), Andy Troyer, Mary Twigg, Jim Valimont, Gary Wallace (GWA), Brenda Watts, Don Watts, Andy Weakes, Gene Wilhelm (GW), Holly Woodson, Lucine Wright, Chuck Yohn, Ruth Young.  
—George A. Hall, P.O. Box 6045, West Virginia University, Morgantown WV 26506-6045.

# Western Great Lakes Region

### JAMES GRANLUND

This season broke the string of mild winters the Region has enjoyed the past several years. It began rather quietly but became stormy by the commencement of the Christmas Bird Counts. In mid-January temperatures as cold as -40° F were recorded, and all three states received significant snowfall. There was a brief thaw in mid-February, but overall the winter was very cold and the snowfall well above the average of the past three years.

As might be expected under such harsh conditions, birders in all three states reported the season as being rather dull. Nevertheless, Wisconsin was able to add two new state records, a very unexpected Townsend’s Warbler and a less surprising Brambling. Neither Michigan nor Minnesota could match such luck and had to settle for good numbers of lingering species. All three states had few northern owls. Michigan had its best movement of redpolls in 10 years, as well as good numbers of Pine Grosbeaks and Bohemian Waxwings. As in past years, a few early migrants returned in late February. For



the most part, Christmas Bird Count data has been left out of the report to avoid duplication with the CBC summary.

### Loon to Herons

Wisconsin reported Com. Loons lingering to early December in Madison (PA, SR) and Dec. 22 in *Door* (BS). Also in Madison, two Red-necked Grebes were found Dec. 5 (RL), while in Minnesota a late migrant was found Dec. 18 in *St. Louis* (KE). Michigan had several records for this species, including two in mid-January in *Bay* (RW) and in Grand Rapids, *Kent* (SM). Michigan had its 2nd and 3rd definitive records for **Western Grebe** with individuals Dec. 7 in New Buffalo, *Berrien* (KM) and Jan. 22 in *Bay* (JS, RW). In Minnesota, an Am. White Pelican overwintered at the traditional location in *Freeborn* (PL, KLa). Also overwintering were several Double-crested Cormorants in Menasha, WI (DN). Great Blue Herons remained in all 3 states with an individual in *Ramsey*, MN (KB) considerably n. of normal. Very late for Michigan was a Great Egret Dec. 23 at Shiawassee N.W.R., *Saginaw* (DP).

**SA** The exact wintering status of grebes on the Great Lakes is problematic at best. Shorebound observers often see both Horned and Red-necked grebes sporadically throughout the winter along the coasts, sometimes in excellent numbers. But exactly how many are on the open waters beyond view has been open to question. This winter the severe cold of mid-January caused Lakes Superior and Huron to become completely covered with ice and Lake Michigan to nearly freeze-over. Coinciding with this event was what Doug McWhirter called the "Great Grebe Fallout" of 1994. Beginning around Jan. 18, Horned Grebes began appearing throughout the s. half of Michigan in parking lots, front yards, and other surfaces which must have resembled open water to these unfortunate castaways. Many were taken to animal rehab centers, where they either succumbed or were taken to open water. In addition, reports trickled in of birds showing up on inland streams and other open water. Along with the Horned Grebes, the Western, and two Red-necked Grebes stranded in Bay, one Pied-billed Grebe was also reported. Apparently this event was not replayed in Minnesota, although Wisconsin did report two Horned Grebes grounded Jan. 28–29 in Milwaukee. It seems reasonable that

**these grebes were wintering on the open waters of the Great Lakes but were forced inland as the ice formed. If true, more grebes winter on the Great Lakes than previously thought.**

### Waterfowl

Surprising numbers of waterfowl overwintered in the Region considering the severity of the winter. Both Wisconsin and Minnesota reported lingering Tundra Swans, while Michigan had overwintering birds at traditional locations. Providing a new arrival date of Feb. 20 for Wisconsin were two Greater White-fronted Geese found in a mixed flock containing Snow and Canada geese on Goose Pond, *Columbia*. Even more unexpected was Michigan's first winter record of **Ross' Goose** Dec. 19 at Erie Metropark, *Wayne* (PC). In Minnesota, a Wood Duck overwintered in *Beltrami*, particularly far n. for such a severe winter. Harlequin Ducks were reported in Michigan to Dec. 20 at New Buffalo, *Berrien* (KM), Jan. 9–12 at Muskegon (CV, KT), and two were seen sporadically during the period in Sault Ste. Marie. In Minnesota this species was reported Dec. 7 in *Hennepin* (KB, et al.), while Wisconsin had individuals Dec. 31–Jan. 1 at Manitowoc (CS) and at Milwaukee through the period (m.ob.). The ♂ **Barrow's Goldeneye** returned to its overwintering site in Michigan at Elk Rapids, *Antrim* (DJ), while Minnesota had a bird from Feb. 24–25 on the Mississippi R. at *Sherburne* (KB, et al.). In Michigan over the past 2 years large numbers of "sea ducks" have been building-up along the L. Michigan coastline of *Manistee* and *Benzie*. Some speculate this recent phenomenon is due to the presence of the introduced zebra mussel. Over 20,000 Oldsquaw, 10,000 White-winged Scoter, and 1500 Com. Goldeneye were present there by mid-February (BA, CF).

### Raptors to Rails

A Turkey Vulture returned Feb. 26 in *Polk* (fide PB), providing the 2nd earliest arrival date for Minnesota. Individuals in Michigan found in January at Pinconning, *Bay* (MW) and Davisburg, *Oakland* (ABy) quite possibly were attempting to overwinter. Rough-legged Hawks were reported as scarce in Wisconsin. All 3 states reported good numbers of Golden Eagles. Minnesota had 2 reports of Gyrfalcon, an ad. gray-morph Jan. 15 in *Roseau* (KB, PS), and imm. gray-morphs Dec. 11+ in Duluth, *St. Louis* (DEv) and late November–Dec. 5 in Grand Marais, *Cook*. Michigan had at least three different birds at traditional locations in the Sault Ste. Marie area Dec. 11+, while more unusual were singles Dec. 27 at the Karn Plant, *Bay* (MW) and Feb. 27+ in

Marquette (LT). Late for Wisconsin were five Virginia Rails which remained to Dec. 18 in Madison.

### Shorebirds to Gulls

A Killdeer Jan. 21 in *Crawford* (KB, BD) was considered late for Wisconsin, as was a Dunlin Dec. 4 at Sheboygan (DB, MB). A Purple Sandpiper Dec. 20 in New Buffalo, *Berrien*, MI (KM) was not particularly unusual but one Jan. 9–12 at Muskegon (CV, KT) was definitely late for the state. Once considered a true rarity in the Region, the **Mew Gull** has become increasingly more regular, particularly in Wisconsin. This season one–two individuals were seen intermittently at Milwaukee (DG, BD). Also regular are Thayer's and Iceland gulls. Minnesota reported a first-winter Iceland Dec. 10–17 in *Anoka* and *Hennepin* (KB, et al.). Apparently this individual was traveling 60 mi between its roost site and foraging area each day. Michigan had a first-winter Thayer's Gull Dec. 27 at New Buffalo, *Berrien* (KM). Wisconsin reported both Iceland and Thayer's gulls in Milwaukee and Two Rivers (DT, BB). The **Lesser Black-backed Gull** is still considered rare in Wisconsin, where one was seen from Dec. 7–13 in Madison (SR, DT, BB, KL), and in Minnesota, where an adult from fall in *Anoka* and *Hennepin* remained to Dec. 9. However, in Michigan the species has become increasingly regular; this season adults were seen Dec. 1–Jan. 18 at the Karn Plant, *Bay* (RW), Dec. 19–23 on L. Lansing, *Ingham* (MJ), and a first-winter Jan. 8 on White L., *Muskegon* (JG, LG, GW). Glaucous Gulls were reported in good numbers in both Wisconsin and Michigan, the latter reporting a high total of 16 Feb. 5 at Whitehall, *Muskegon* (JG, GW). A Great Black-backed Gull Dec. 18–20 in *St. Louis* (DEd) was noteworthy for Minnesota.

### Owls to Wrens

After a good fall migration of Snowy Owls in the Region, only Minnesota had any carry over into the winter. At least 51 new winter individuals, plus the 70 from the fall, provided Minnesota a record seasonal total of 121, overtaking the previous record of 1991–1992. The highest report for a single location was 20 in *Aitkin* (WN). Minnesota had the only N. Hawk Owl for the region, an individual in *St. Louis*. This was a let-down after the past 2 years when this species was found throughout the n. portions of the entire Region. Great Gray Owls were also basically confined to Minnesota, where about a dozen were reported. Michigan could muster only 2 records, singles Dec. 2 in *Marquette* (AP, NI) and Jan. 1 on Neebish Island, *Chippewa* (KO). At least three different Three-toed Woodpeckers were reported

from Minnesota. Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers are quite rare in midwinter in Wisconsin, making the individuals Jan 22 in *Sauk* and Jan. 30 in *Dane* (KB) noteworthy. An E. Phoebe Dec. 8 in *Hennepin* (RG) provided one the latest dates for that species in Minnesota. In like fashion, a **Barn Swallow** remained to mid-December in Madison, setting a similar date for Wisconsin. Because of the severity of the winter, both the Michigan and Wisconsin compilers expressed concern over the fate of their expanding populations of Carolina Wrens. In the latter state, numerous sightings in December dwindled to just a few reports after the cold weather of January, suggesting many may have succumbed to the conditions. In Minnesota this species has become regular, although certainly not as abundant as in the other states: *Winona* Dec. 5 & 22 (JK) and *Hennepin* Dec. 3 (*vide* SC). Winter Wrens lingered in Wisconsin to Jan. 4 in Madison (EH) and *Jefferson* (KH).

### Solitaire to Sparrows

The only Townsend's Solitaire reports for the Region came from Minnesota where four were seen in the Duluth area, two were present Feb. 13 near Jordan, *Scott* (AH), and one was present from the fall at the mouth of the French R. in *St. Louis*. The Varied Thrush made a major incursion into the Region, with reports from 7 counties in Minnesota, down from 12 last year; at least 12 individuals in Wisconsin, a major increase over the past few years; and at least four birds in Michigan, including singles in Grand Marais, *Alger* (LT, m.ob.), Prudenville, *Roscommon* (MP, ABy), and two in the vicinity of Chippewa L., *Mecosta* (SRo). Bohemian Waxwings were also much more common in the n. part of the Region with the high count for Michigan reaching >1000 at Lake Mitchell S.P., *Wexford* (MJ) and for Minnesota a staggering 2225 Feb. 6 in *St. Louis* (PB). There were a surprising number of lingering species in all 3 states considering the weather. Perhaps some individuals were trapped by the sudden onslaught of cold weather. In Minnesota noteworthy overwintering species included Brown Thrashers in *Ottetail* (DM, SM) and *St. Louis* (KE); Song Sparrow in *St. Louis* (KE); White-throated Sparrows in *Aitkin* (WN) and *Ottetail* (SM, DM). Also unusual in that state was a Swamp Sparrow to Dec. 16 in *Goodhue* (KB) and a Northern Oriole to Dec. 6 in *Dakota* (PB). Wisconsin had a number of lingerers: Yellow-rumped Warblers into December in several locations, Chipping Sparrow Jan. 4–19 *Weya-uwega*, *Waupaca* (DN), and a Field Sparrow in *Door* Jan. 10–18 (CL, RL). Noteworthy overwintering species included a Pine Warbler in Madison (RR, PSt); Rufous-sided Towhees in Park Falls and Madi-

son (IP), the latter of the "spotted race," Swamp Sparrow in Madison (PA), and a Harris' Sparrow in *Wautoma* (DN). But the best bird of the season was a first Wisconsin record for **Townsend's Warbler** the week of Dec. 5 in *Ozaukee* (MR). Unfortunately news of the bird did not get out until March, but diagnostic photographs were obtained. Michigan had many of the same species lingering well into the winter as well as some real "mind-boggling" reports. A **Bobolink** was found Dec. 18 on the Lapeer County CBC, while a **Yellow Warbler** was found the same date across the state on the Niles CBC, *Berrien* (KM); both constituted first winter records for the state. Also very rare was a Harris' Sparrow through the period in *Benzie* (KW) and a Common Yellowthroat Jan. 1 at Erie Metropark, *Wayne* (BA).

### Finches

Following the early arrival of winter finches during the fall, many observers anticipated a major irruption. For the most part they were disappointed. Minnesota characterized the finch movement as quite poor, with Pine Grosbeaks and crossbills being scarce, although White-winged strayed to *Brown* and *Hennepin*. Redpolls increased in the s.e. portion of Minnesota and in *Lyon* and *Pipestone* in the southwest, but were scarce elsewhere. Wisconsin had a bit better situation with Pine Grosbeaks being found in good numbers in the north and Com. Redpolls appearing in fine numbers in much of the state. A few Hoary Repolls were found scattered in with the Commons, but both Pine Siskin and Purple Finch were considered scarce. Red Crossbills were present in far northern parts of Wisconsin, while White-winged were scarce, as were Evening Grosbeaks. The Beliot Eur. Tree Sparrow appeared again this season and remained into March (IT).

Perhaps in compensation for the invasion that did not occur in Wisconsin, the state was rewarded with its first record for **Brambling**. A male in ad. breeding plumage appeared Jan. 17–25 at a feeder near Neenah, *Winnebago* (KK). As with the Townsend's Warbler, the news of the bird got to birders after it had left the feeder, although diagnostic photos were obtained. Michigan could not match such an exciting bird, but they did have the best winter finch movement in several years. Although Purple Finch, Pine Siskins, American Goldfinch, Evening Grosbeaks, and both crossbills were found in average to low numbers, the number of redpolls was awesome. Observers had Com. Redpolls appearing at their feeders, sometimes in numbers exceeding several hundred. Mixed in with the larger flocks of Commons were reports of a few Hoaries; however, the exact number is problematic because of the inden-

tification difficulty. To add spice to the invasion there were excellent numbers of Pine Grosbeaks throughout the n. half of the state, although only a few made it to the s. counties. Apparently the colonization of the region by House Finches is complete as none of the 3 compilers commented on this species except in Michigan, where it has become one of the most abundant species on CBCs.

**Observers:** Brian Allen, Philip Ashman, Parker Backstrom, Karl Bardon (KBa), Brain Boldt, David Brasser, Margaret Brasser, Kay Burcar, Adam Byrne (ABy), Steve Carlson, Phil Chu, Bob Domagalski, Kim Eckert, Dudley Edmonson (DEd), David Evans (DEv), Carl Freeman, Ray Glassel, Leonard Graf, Dennis Gustafson, Karen Etter Hale, Ellen Hansen, Anthony Hertz, Nick Ill-nicky, Don Jennette, Matt Johnstone, Ken Krake, Ken Lafond, Pat Lafond (PLa), Karl Legler, Ron Lockwood, Charlotte Luke, Roy Luke, **Doug McWhirter** (Michigan), Kip Miller, Steve Minard, Warren Nelson, Don Nussbaum, Karl Overman, Dave Peters, Mike Petrucha, A. Poisson, Irvin Probstern, Melvina Ralsten, Ruth Ringelstetter, Sam Robbins, Steve Ross (SRo), Joe Soenohl, Charles Sontag, Phil Stevenson (PSt), Barbara Stover, **Peder Svingen** (Minnesota), Louis Taccolini, **Daryl Tessen** (Wisconsin), Kevin Thomas, Iola Thomson, Carolyn VanOveren, Ron Weeks, Keith Westphal, Myles Willard, Gary Wright.  
—James Granlund, 6253 N. Westnedge, Kalamazoo Michigan 49004