

in January (*vide* J. Larivée), Matane Nov. 29–Dec. 14 (N. Blouin, Y. Lemieux), and Baie-Comeau Jan. 25 (G. Létourneau). A late Brown Thrasher was at Aylmer Dec. 31 (P. Sauvageau). Two Am. Pipits were observed at Saint-Hyacinthe Dec. 16, a late date (R. Roy). Northern Shrike was noted in above-average numbers across the whole Region. Of interest was the report of a bird attacking and carrying a Rock Dove over 50 m before eating it at Sainte-Elizabeth, *Lanaudière*, Dec. 19 (CD). Two Yellow-rumped Warblers were at Havre-aux-Basques, *Magdalen Is.*, Jan. 12 (DGG), while a Yellow-throated Warbler (ssp *dominica*) briefly enlightened Chambly Dec. 9 (PB, GZ).

After an unprecedented fall movement, the N. Cardinal wave which swept across the whole Region did not lose its strength. Many birds reached n. localities and overwintered at Val-d'Or and Lac Malartic, *Abitibi*; Roberval, Chambord, Jonquière, Chicoutimi, and Ferland, *Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean*; Baie-Comeau, *N. Shore*; Saint-Louis du Ha-Ha! and Dégelis, *Témiscouata*; Trois-Pistoles, Bic, Rimouski, Sainte-Blandine, Sainte-Anaclet, Sainte-Luce, Les Boules, Matane, and Sainte-Félicité, *Lower St. Lawrence*; and Saint-Majorique, Bonaventure, and Grand-Cascapédia, *Gaspé Pen.* The N. Cardinal was also more abundant than usual in the s. part of the Region. An ad. male Rose-breasted Grosbeak, at Matamek, *Duplessis*, Dec. 23 (J. Boulianne *et al.*) was very late.

Single male Eastern Towhees overwintered at Saint-Georges, *Beauce* (L. Légaré *et al.*); Sillery, Québec City, (m.ob.); and Beupré, *Montmorency* (L. Vézina). One wandered to Saint-Jean-Port-Joli, *L'Islet*, Dec. 13 (JL) and a female to Pointe-Paradis, *Duplessis*, Dec. 2 (GC).

Rarely reported in winter, a Chipping Sparrow overwintered at the Montréal Botanical Gardens and another was reported at Notre-Dame-du-Lac, *Témiscouata*, Feb. 3 (R. Deschênes). A first for the Magdalen Is. was the wintering of a Song Sparrow at Cap-aux-Meules (V. Décoste). An "Oregon-type" Dark-eyed Junco was reported at La Pocatière Feb. 29 (C. Auchu), while one overwintered in Québec City (m.ob.). An ad. male Baltimore Oriole eating seeds and peanut butter at a feeder at Sept-Îles Dec. 1–8 (B. Poulin, N. Chouinard) was found dead Dec. 9.

Pine Grosbeaks were reported in above-average numbers in the Abitibi, Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, La Pocatière, and Lower St. Lawrence regions. Observers also noticed a decrease in the food crop in the boreal forest. Purple Finches, both cross-

ills, and Pine Siskins were absent from the Region, while redpolls, Am. Goldfinches, and Evening Grosbeaks were generally absent but reported in average numbers in a few localities.

Exotics

Two Ring-necked Pheasants recorded during the Magdalen Is. CBC were without a doubt escapees. A Eur. Goldfinch was at Saint-Bernard-de-Lacolle, *Richelieu*, in January and February (*vide* PB). Very surprising was the Collared Finchbill (*Spizixos semitorques*), an Asiatic bulbul, at a feeder in Cap-Rouge Jan. 4+ (G. Allaire, M. Tremblay); the bird survived to very harsh and cold weather, with many days of temperatures below -20° C., relying on seeds and fruits provided by feeder owners.

Addendum

A belated report of a singing male W. Meadowlark at Lemieux, *Plessisville*, June 10 (J.F. Rousseau) should be added to the last summer report.

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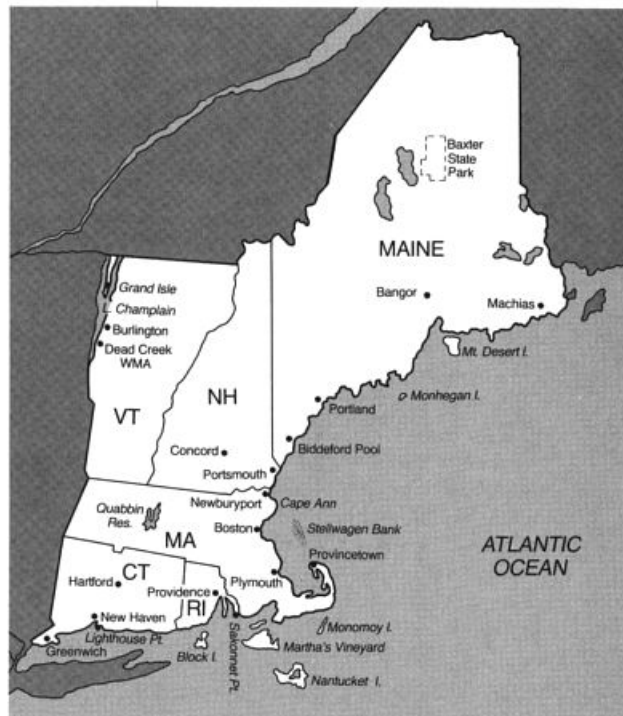
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New England Region

BLAIR NIKULA

The winter of 1995–1996 was another memorable one, though once again more for its weather than its birds. Snowfall totals across southern New England set new records: Over eight feet fell in Boston! In northern New England, snowfall was ample but closer to normal levels. Despite the abundance of wintry weather, temperatures averaged fairly close to normal for the period, punctuated by distinct warm spells during the last third of December and the last half of January.

Avian highlights were scant. The bird of the season was Great Gray Owl, which delighted observers in five of the six states. Northern Shrikes staged perhaps the largest incursion on record, while other irruptives in notable numbers included Bohemian Waxwing, Common Redpoll, and Pine Grosbeak. Lingerings species were exceedingly few—they must have known what the season had in store! Rarest finds this season were Long-billed Curlew, Rhode Island's persistent Black-tailed Gull, Northern Hawk Owl, Hammond's Flycatcher (from November), Townsend's Warbler, and Green-tailed Towhee. Fol-



lowing an oil spill off Matunuck, RI January 19, about 400 oiled seabirds, most dead, were picked up on area beaches.

This summary is my last; after 15 years it's time to pass the honor to someone with fresh perspectives. My thanks to the many unsung contributors who every season hustle to meet the tight deadlines, and do so knowing that their only recompense is the satisfaction of contributing in some modest way to our understanding of the avian world.

Abbreviations: C.C.L.&P.W.S. (*Cape Cod Lake & Pond Waterfowl Survey*); H.B.S.P. (*Hammonasset Beach State Park, Madison, CT*)

Loons to Ibis

A Pacific Loon on Block I., Dec. 18 (M&SC) was unique this season. Following their excellent fall showing, Pied-billed Grebes remained numerous into early December, exemplified by a record 179 on the C.C.L.&P.W.S., Dec. 2-3 (CCBC); however, most had disappeared by late December following a hard freeze. Horned Grebes were scarce along the coast; by far the highest count came from L. Champlain in S. Burlington, VT, where 81 were tallied Dec. 29 (T. Murin). The only sizable aggregation of Red-necked Grebes was in Cutler, ME, where 100 were present Jan. 7 (*fide* JD), while late inland birds were found in S. Hadley, MA Jan. 22 and Gill, MA Jan. 26 (*fide* SK). The season's token Eared Grebe was discovered at Cape Ann, MA on 3 dates Dec. 23-Jan. 13 (M. Lynch, v.o.).

The only significant count of N. Gannets came from Nantucket, where >4000 were estimated Dec. 30 (SP *et al.*). At least two Am. Bitterns overwintered at H.B.S.P. (*fide* GH), but few others were reported. The only tardy heron this season was a Snowy Egret in Scituate, MA Dec. 8 (D. Clapp). Black-crowned Night-Herons, inexplicably scarce in recent winters, overwintered in Stratford, CT, where as many as 10 were found (GH *et al.*), and a total of seven were noted at 4 sites in Massachusetts. A dark ibis in Eastham, MA on the startling date of Jan. 28 (C. Thomas) and reported as a Glossy, was undescribed and is best considered a *plegadis* sp.

Waterfowl

Five Tundra Swans again wintered in the Sebago L. area of Maine (*fide* JD), but the only others reported were a single in Gloucester, MA Jan. 1 & Feb. 11 (RL, v.o.) and two on the Flat River Res., RI Feb. 27 (J. Fedorko). Indicative of the species' inexorable increase in s. New Eng-

land was a concentration of 500 Mute Swans in West Haven, CT in January (GH). A Greater White-fronted Goose overwintered in Hartford, CT (J. Bair, v.o.), and singles (perhaps involving some duplication) were noted at 4 sites in Massachusetts and 2 sites in Rhode Island. Increasingly common at this season, lingering Snow Geese included several small groups of late migrants: 120 birds flying over Groton, MA Dec. 10 (C. Canner); 34 in Edgartown, MA Dec. 13 through at least the end of the month (V. Laux, v.o.); and 24 in Somers, CT Dec. 5 (C. Ekroth). Perhaps as many as 2 dozen were still present in scattered localities during the last half of the season. A Barnacle Goose, of typically uncertain origin, was in Seekonk, MA Jan. 21 (J. Zimmerlin).

A "Eur." Green-winged Teal appeared in White Brook, RI Dec. 27-mid-February (J. Murphy *et al.*), the 5th consecutive year there. Noteworthy counts of dabblers included 103 N. Pintail in Westport, MA Dec. 3 (M. Boucher); 80 Gadwall in Milford, CT throughout the period (*fide* GH); and record highs of 261 Gadwall and 176 Am. Wigeon on the C.C.L.&P.W.S., Dec. 2-3 (CCBC). One-two ♂ Blue-winged Teal were present again in W. Barnstable, MA Dec. 1-Jan. 6 (v.o.). Eurasian Wigeon numbered a slightly above-average 15± Regionwide: three in Connecticut, four in Rhode Island, seven in Massachusetts, and one in New Hampshire. Redheads were again scarce, except on Nantucket late in the season where 54 were present Feb. 25 (SP). A Tufted Duck in Plymouth, MA Jan. 27 (J. Hoye *et al.*) was unique.

A ♀ Com. Eider at Stamford, CT Feb. 8 (P. Dugan) was unusual that far west in Long I. Sound and perhaps wandered from the "largest flock ever in Rhode Island," estimated at 16,000 birds, at Newport, Jan. 23(DE). King Eiders have been hard to find for several years now, and this winter's total of only five birds, one in Maine, three in Massachusetts, and one in Rhode Island, may constitute an all-time low. Harlequin Ducks, on the other hand, were found in near-record numbers once again: 600 were estimated in a census around Isle au Haut, ME, Feb. 15 (*fide* AB); and a peak of 98 were recorded from Sachuest Pt., RI Jan. 20 (DE). A ♂ Harlequin in Milford Dec. 16 (L&M Aimesbury) was a rare Connecticut find. Barrow's Goldeneyes were found in only modest numbers along the coast, but wintered again at several sites along the Connecticut R. in Massachusetts and Connecticut. A ♂ goldeneye in Newburyport Jan. 7 & 13 was apparently a

Common x Barrow's hybrid (K. Griffis *et al.*). Many of the large numbers of Ruddy Ducks present during the fall lingered into December, e.g., 1704 in Middletown, RI Dec. 2 (DE). But most disappeared during the solid freeze mid-month, and only a handful were reported after the first of the year. Most notable among these were 25 in Stockton Springs, ME Jan. 13 (*fide* AB).

Vultures to Jaegers

The closure of the New Milford, CT landfill resulted in a dramatic reduction in the number of Black Vulture reports from that locale, with just a couple of reports totaling three birds (*fide* GH). More noteworthy was a Black Vulture in Lincolnville, ME from late December through at least Jan. 16 (*fide* JD). Highest seasonal counts of Turkey Vultures included 20 in Westport, MA Dec. 16 (R. Bowen) and 16 in S. Kingston, RI Dec. 23 (DK *et al.*). Lingering Ospreys were found at 3 sites in Massachusetts Dec. 1-2. Cooper's Hawks were again present in unprecedented numbers Regionwide, but N. Goshawks drew few comments except in Rhode Island, where about five birds was considered more than usual (*fide* DE.).

At least 2 dozen Red-shouldered Hawks were found in s. New England and one was as far north as New Castle, ME in mid-January (*fide* JD). Rough-legged Hawks were scattered across the Region, but it was not a flight year. There were as many as nine Golden Eagles seen in the s. half of the Region, surely a record seasonal total. At least 2 dozen Peregrine Falcons Regionwide was indicative of that species continuing prosperity.

Curiously, there were no Gyrfalcon reports from the n. half of the Region, but at least three were reported from the south: at H.B.S.P., Dec. 4 (D. Provenchar); in Falmouth, MA Dec. 12 (I. Nisbet); and at Plum I., MA Dec. 11 & Feb 19 (A. Knue, KA).

At least one Clapper Rail overwintered at H.B.S.P. (L. Rediker) and two were on Nantucket Feb. 24 (ER *et al.*), where a Com. Moorhen was found Dec. 31-Feb. 7 (G. D'Entremont, v.o.). Large numbers of Am. Coot lingered into early December 350 in Litchfield, CT Dec. 2 (B. Devine), 296 on the C.C.L.&P.W.S., Dec. 2-3 (CCBC), and 158 in Arlington, MA Dec 10 (K. Hartel). Two Sandhill Cranes remained in Spencer, MA through Dec. 2 (D. LaCroix, v.o.) and a single was on Nantucket Jan. 2 & 6 (ER).

In sharp contrast to all other groups, shorebirds were represented by a number of procrastinating individuals. A Lesser Golden-Plover on Block I., Dec. 18 (D

Finizia *et al.*) was the latest ever in Rhode Island and probably the Region. A Killdeer in Machiasport, ME Feb. 4 (*fide* AB) was either a very premature arrival or an especially hardy survivor.

Three Am. Oystercatchers overwintered in Westbrook, CT (GH *et al.*), and in Massachusetts singles were found in Hyannisport Dec. 26 (JS *et al.*), Harwich Jan. 9 (J. Chase), and on Nantucket Jan. 4 & Feb. 2 (B. Perkins). The rose-hip eating Upland Sandpiper in Bar Harbor, ME, first reported in November, remained through Dec. 12 (W. Frazier, ph.) establishing an exceedingly late date for the Region. Very rare at any time and equally unprecedented at this season was a Long-billed Curlew on Plum I., MA Dec. 6–7 (C. Ralph, L. Nachtrab *et al.*, ph.). Wintering flocks of Ruddy Turnstones included >50 in Westbrook, CT (GH *et al.*) and 25 at Sachuest Pt., RI Jan. 10 (JO). A Long-billed Dowitcher was found in Bridgeport, CT Dec. 27–Jan. 1 (GH *et al.*) and two were in Hyannisport, MA Dec. 26 (JS), an area where the species has been found fairly regularly at this season. A dowitcher sp. was still present there Jan. 1 (P. Trimble).

Following a modest easterly blow, 13 phalaropes (sp.) flew past Eastham, MA Dec. 10 (BN). Pomarine Jaegers regularly linger into December and this year's sightings, all in Cape Cod Bay during or just after easterly winds, included a flock of >20 in Orleans Dec. 2 (BN *et al.*), a single in Dennis Dec. 15 (RF), and 10 in Eastham Dec. 21 (BN).

Gulls to Owls

The season's only Little Gulls were two adults on Nantucket Dec. 30 (T. Maloney), while Com. Black-headed Gulls totaled a rather poor >25 Regionwide, with maximums at the traditional sites: eight (only) in Winthrop, MA and four at Watchemoket Cove, RI. Not so traditional was a Com. Black-headed well inland at Springfield, MA Dec. 16 and Feb. 15–29 (*fide* SK).

Bonaparte's Gulls generally disappear rapidly once the weather gets seriously cold, so it is no surprise that the only concentration this season was 800 on Nantucket Dec. 30 (SP *et al.*). Rhode Island's **Black-tailed Gull** was reported from Sachuest Pt., Dec. 4 & Jan. 14 (N. Logothest *et al.*). There were 17± Lesser Black-backed Gulls Regionwide, several at inland sites. Black-legged Kittiwakes were scarce along the coast, but an adult in Burlington, VT Dec. 17 (S. Morrical) was exceptional. Tardy terns included two probable Commons in Wellfleet Dec. 2



Great Gray Owl in South Hero, Vermont, February 22, 1996. One of about 15 in New England this season. Photograph/Rob Swanson.

(BN *et al.*), and a Forster's in S. Dartmouth, MA Dec. 3 (J. Hill).

Alcids were generally scarce. The dozen or so Dovekies reported were all in Maine and Massachusetts. Three oiled Com. Murres were found in Block I., Jan. 24 (M&SC) and a single was in Weymouth, MA Feb. 4 (M. Hall), while Thick-billed Murres numbered about a dozen Regionwide. Very few Razorbills were reported until mid-January, after which counts of >100 were noted from several locations in Massachusetts, with a peak of 720 in Provincetown Feb. 19 (S. Arena). A Com. Puffin was an unexpected sight from the Block I. ferry Dec. 1 (M&SC).

Snowy Owls were as hard to come by as in any winter in recent memory; fewer than 20 were reported Regionwide. A **Northern Hawk Owl** appeared sporadically in Bar Harbor, ME Feb. 11 through at least Feb 27 (*fide* AB), and there was an unconfirmed report from Presque Isle, ME. The heavy snows apparently made life tough for Barred Owls as there were scores of reports across the Region of birds at feeders, along roadsides, in urban areas, or otherwise exhibiting signs of stress.

Long-eared Owls were relatively numerous in Connecticut (10 birds at 3 sites) and Rhode Island (six birds at 3 sites), but six in Massachusetts and one in Maine were the only others noted. Short-eared Owls were somewhat more numerous than normal, at least in s. New England, where the highest count was seven in Middleboro, MA.

SA Great Gray Owls staged their largest incursion since 1978–1979: Fifteen birds were reported, most from Maine, though some lacked details or corroboration. Among the first, and certainly the most notable, was a bird at H.B.S.P., Jan. 14 (T. Harrington *et al.*), apparently the first confirmed Connecticut Great Gray in several decades. The only other Great Gray in s. New England was a very obliging bird in Rowley, MA Feb. 1+ (N. Sullivan), which was enjoyed (and, on a few unfortunate occasions, disturbed) by thousands of observers. For reasons that defy understanding, a local raptor bander decided to capture and band this bird, incurring considerable and much deserved condemnation. Vermont's two Great Grays were in S. Woodbury Feb. 20 (L. Gallison, ph.) and S. Hero Feb. 22 (R. Swanson *et al.*, ph.); New Hampshire's two were in Somersworth Jan. 9 (D. Tibbetts) and Rochester Feb. 28 (L. Driscoll *et al.*, ph.). Of the nine birds reported from Maine, by far the most cooperative was one in S. Thomaston Jan. 21 through late February (A. Hopps, m.ob.).

Woodpeckers to Shrikes

The season's three Red-headed Woodpeckers included an adult in Saco, ME Dec. 4 (*fide* JD); one of unspecified age in Holyoke, MA Jan. 20 (*fide* SK); and an immature in Guilford, CT throughout the period (*fide* GH). Red-bellied Woodpeckers surged northward again, some areas experiencing a noticeable influx early in December. Twenty or so birds in Maine—the easternmost in Hancock—provided an unprecedented total, while numbers in both New Hampshire and Vermont likewise appeared to exceed previous records. A Black-backed Woodpecker in Sharon, MA Jan. 21 through the end of February (N. Boucher, v.o.) represented an increasingly rare find in s. New England.

The **Hammond's Flycatcher** in Barrington, RI, first noted in late November, was last seen Dec. 6 (BG *et al.*). Lingering Tree Swallows, all in Rhode Island, included 25 at Napatree Pt., Dec. 3, with 15 still there Dec. 13 (CR), and two on Block I., Dec. 18 (CR). A Gray Jay in Pawlet, VT Dec. 24 (G. Brown, *fide* JP) had wandered S of the species normal range. The only wandering Boreal Chickadees were singles in Groveland, MA Feb. 17–19 (S. Charette, v.o.) and Wakefield, MA Feb. 18 (C. Neeley). A Marsh Wren at H.B.S.P., Jan. 10 (*fide* GH) was the only one reported after the first of the year, as was a Ruby-crowned Kinglet on Nantucket Jan. 12 (ER *et al.*).

Although decidedly scarce elsewhere in the Region, large numbers of Am. Robins wintered along the s. coast of Rhode Island, with a couple of counts exceeding 2000 birds (*fide* DE). A Brown Thrasher survived at a feeder in New London, NH through at least Feb. 7 (A&R Vernon) and singles were found at 2 sites on Cape Cod in late February. At least two Am. Pipits persisted at Fairfield, CT Jan. 21 (C. Barnard) and five were in Massachusetts during January. Bohemian Waxwings staged another major flight, though of a magnitude below that of 2 years ago. Flocks of >50–100 birds were widely noted throughout n. New England, with maximums of 200 in Maine and 250 in New Hampshire, surpassed by a report of 550 in Williamstown, MA in late February (T. Floyd, *fide* SK). Smaller flocks were noted elsewhere in Massachusetts, particularly along the coast, but none was found in Rhode Island or Connecticut. In contrast to their n. congeners, Cedar Waxwings were few and far between. Northern Shrikes appeared in record or near-record numbers everywhere—far too many to tally accurately, but dozens were found in every state and the Regionwide total easily exceeded 300 birds.

Warblers to Finches

Warblers provided very little excitement, except for a **Townsend's Warbler** in S. Boston, MA Dec. 4–5 (R. Donovan). The only notably late *parulids* included an Ovenbird in Newton, MA Dec. 19–20 (M. Linshaw) and a Yellow-breasted Chat at Sachuest Pt., RI in late February (*fide* JO).

Despite an excellent fall flight, apparently the only Dickcissel to tarry was an individual in Framingham, MA Jan. 1–14 (K. Hamilton). Rhode Island's first **Green-tailed Towhee** entertained observers in Perryville Dec. 4 through late February (BG, m.ob.). The variety of sparrows reported was the poorest in memory, the only highlight being single Lark Sparrows in Cumberland, RI Dec. 2 (JO) and Truro, MA Dec. 13 (H. D'Entremont). For the first time in a decade or so, virtually no Chipping Sparrows and only a handful of White-crowned Sparrows were reported. An above-average five "Oregon" Dark-eyed Juncos, all in Massachusetts, included three reported as the "Pink-sided" form.

A flock of 45 E. Meadowlarks in Matunuck, RI Dec. 12 (DK) was the largest winter flock in that state in several years. As usual, a few Baltimore Orioles lingered, the tidiest being three on Nantucket Jan. 8 (B. Manley) and a single in Providence, RI Jan. 3–13 (*fide* JO).

Pine Grosbeaks appeared in the largest

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numbers in several years, with flocks of ≤40 birds widespread across n. New England s. into interior Massachusetts. A few were found in n. Connecticut and at least one made it as far as Rhode Island.

Purple Finches once again were almost absent; the dramatic decline of this species in New England remains a puzzle. Only a few Red Crossbills were noted, from Maine s. to c. Massachusetts, with a wayward individual on Block I., Dec. 18 (P. Buckley). White-winged Crossbills were even harder to find: a flock of five in Ashland, ME and a single bird in Baker Valley, NH—both in December—were the only reported. Common Redpolls were widespread and numerous everywhere except s.e. coastal New England; peaks of 200 birds were recorded from both Maine and New Hampshire, though most flocks were <50 birds. A flock of 300 redpolls in Savoy, MA Feb. 15–29 included three birds identified as Hoary Redpolls (*fide* SK, ph.). Single Hoaries were reported from 6 additional sites: 2 in Maine, one each in Vermont and New Hampshire, and 2 in Massachusetts. Happily, details were provided for most of these birds. Pine Siskins were thinly scattered across n. New England and interior Massachusetts, but were virtually absent from the s. third of the Region. Evening Grosbeaks were

somewhat more widespread, but most flocks were quite small.

Exotics

Three Monk Parakeets were at a nest in Taunton, MA Jan. 14 (KA) and two were in Blackstone, MA Feb. 11 (B. Volke). A Eur. Tree Sparrow visited a feeder in Brighton, MA Dec. 1–Jan. 26 (R. Hastie, v.o.).

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