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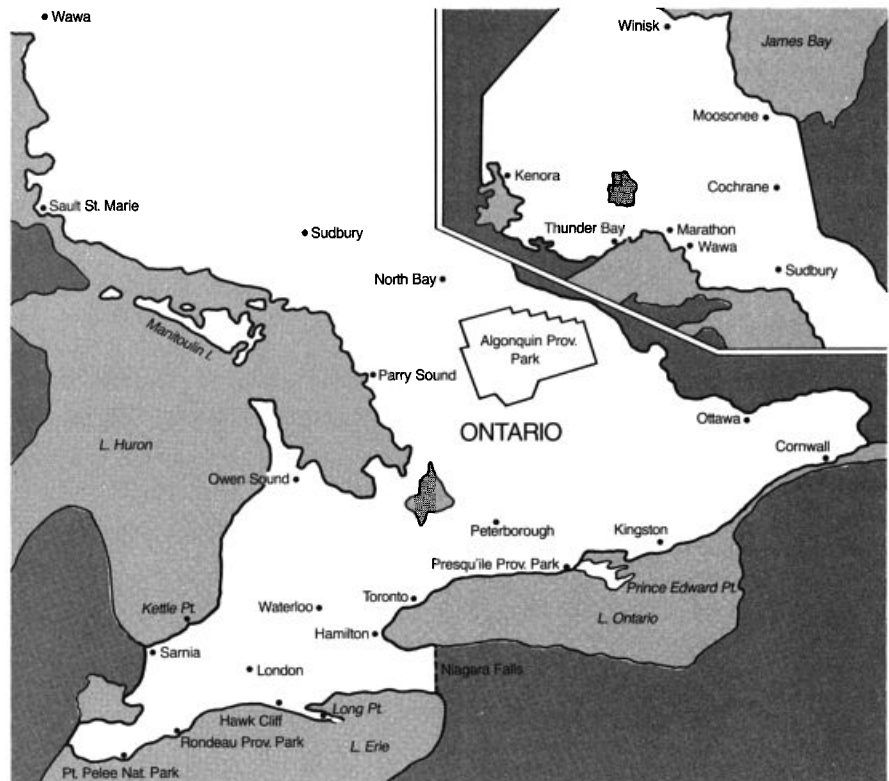
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# ontario region



## RON RIDOUT

For every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. While the negative influence of El Niño was felt over much of the west, many regions in the east enjoyed a beautiful winter. Ontario was no exception to the latter, with record-breaking temperatures, particularly in February. Several areas in the south received little or no snowfall. It was a season similar to those normally experienced much farther south.

The result of this was that individuals of several species normally found farther south successfully overwintered in the province, and early migrants were widespread from mid-February on. At the same time, several "winter" finch species moved south in good numbers, particularly Pine Siskins, redpolls, and for the first season in many, Evening Grosbeaks.

Notable rarities, though few in number, included Northern Fulmar and Spotted Towhee. All rarities mentioned in this report are subject to approval by the Ontario Bird Records Committee (O.B.R.C.).

**Abbreviations:** Pelee (*Pt. Pelee Nat'l Park and vicinity*). Algonquin, Presqu'ile, and Rondeau are Provincial Parks. Place names in italics refer to counties, districts, or regional municipalities.

## LOONS TO WATERFOWL

With most Red-throated Loons gone from the Great Lakes by mid-December, two different birds at Kingston Dec. 21–Jan. 11 (K.F.N.) and Oshawa Feb. 22 (TH, RP) were noteworthy. A Pacific Loon at Pinery P.P., *Lambton*, Dec. 3 (AR) was exceptional. A Common lingered until absolute freeze-up on L. Katchewanooka, *Peterborough*, Jan. 31 (PB). A Pied-billed Grebe at Lindsay Jan. 17 (DG) was exceptionally late, as was a Red-necked at Minden Dec. 21 (DT, RT).

The best bird of the season was a **Northern Fulmar** found dead in Hamilton Dec. 11 (JO), furnishing that area's 2nd record. Wintering Double-crested Cormorants continue to increase in s. Ontario, with at least nine on L. Ontario in mid-January (WE), while one at Ft. Frances Dec. 6 (DE) was exceptionally late that far north. A Great Cormorant at Kingston Jan. 11 (KE) was that area's 3rd this decade. A very late

**TABLE 1  
RESULTS OF THE EIGHTH ANNUAL  
LAKE ONTARIO MID-WINTER  
WATERFOWL INVENTORY  
JANUARY 11, 1998**

|                          |                |
|--------------------------|----------------|
| Red-throated Loon        | 1              |
| Common Loon              | 20             |
| Horned Grebe             | 4              |
| Red-necked Grebe         | 4              |
| Great Cormorant          | 1              |
| Double-crested Cormorant | 9              |
| Tundra Swan              | 105            |
| Trumpeter Swan           | 16             |
| Mute Swan                | 240            |
| Snow Goose               | 3              |
| Brant                    | 2              |
| Canada Goose             | 25,697         |
| Green-winged Teal        | 9              |
| Am. Black Duck           | 1891           |
| Mallard                  | 18,129         |
| N Pintail                | 57             |
| N Shoveler               | 61             |
| Gadwall                  | 859            |
| Am. Wigeon               | 42             |
| Canvasback               | 157            |
| Redhead                  | 2098           |
| Ring-necked Duck         | 50             |
| Greater Scaup            | 14,781         |
| Lesser Scaup             | 1436           |
| scaup sp.                | 400            |
| Harlequin Duck           | 3              |
| Oldsquaw                 | 59,805         |
| Black Scoter             | 8              |
| Surf Scoter              | 1              |
| White-winged Scoter      | 1218           |
| scoter sp.               | 97             |
| Common Goldeneye         | 22,546         |
| Bufflehead               | 3360           |
| Hooded Merganser         | 29             |
| Com. Merganser           | 22,168         |
| Red-breasted Merganser   | 718            |
| Ruddy Duck               | 15             |
| Am. Coot                 | 130            |
| duck sp.                 | 4393           |
| Mallard x Am. Black Duck | 8              |
| <b>TOTAL</b>             | <b>180,571</b> |

\* Compiled by William Edmunds

Great Blue Heron was seen at Ft. Frances Dec. 11 (DE). Ten Black-crowned Night-Herons at Hamilton Dec. 18 (m.ob.) was an exceptional count that late; several lingered through the winter.

Results of the L. Ontario Mid-winter Waterfowl Count are tabulated in Table 1. The record total was 180,571 individuals of 36 species. The Kingston area and the w. end of the lake were the main areas of concentration, though certain species seem to have leveled off or declined in the Kingston area. Perhaps the zebra mussel has peaked at that end of the lake. The very mild winter allowed a number of individuals of sev-

eral species to linger well beyond their normal departure dates. Birds in this category included five Brant at Wolfe I., *Frontenac*, Dec. 21 (K.F.N.); two Brant at Hamilton until Jan. 18 (KM); a Gadwall at Peterborough Jan. 20–Feb. 28 (GB); a Green-winged Teal at Huntsville Dec. 21 (RT, DT) and another at Kelley L., *Sudbury*, Dec. 27 (m.ob.); separate Blue-winged Teal at Hamilton Dec. 6 (DM) and Wolfe I., *Frontenac*, Dec. 21 (K.F.N.); 33 Ring-necked Ducks at Hamilton Jan. 25 (KM), most of which remained to period's end; a Red-breasted Merganser at Thunder Bay Dec. 26 (NE); and a Ruddy Duck there Dec. 25–26 (MK et al.).

February's record warm temperatures brought with them an unusual number of early arriving waterfowl. The list included two Am. Wigeon at Rondeau Feb. 15 (KB, JB); a Gadwall at Pelee Feb. 13 (AW, DW); two Green-winged Teal at Rondeau Feb. 22 (KB) and four at Hillman Marsh, *Essex*, Feb. 24 (AW); six N. Pintail at Erieau Feb. 14 (KB, JB); a Blue-winged Teal at Toronto Feb. 21 (NM); four N. Shovelers at Pelee Feb. 13 (DW) and one at Rondeau Feb. 15 (KB); three Ring-necked Ducks at Pelee Feb. 22 (FU); and eight Surf Scoters at Long Pt. Feb. 28 (RR).

Unusually high counts during the period included 3600 Tundra Swans at Rondeau Jan. 28 (JB); 1650 Redheads at Toronto Feb. 1 (RY) and 1000 or more at Cobourg Jan. 31 (CG); 50,000 scaup (mainly Greaters) near Port Dover Dec. 21 (m.ob.); and 12,000 Com. Goldeneyes off Burlington Feb. 1 (RC et al.). Numbers of migrating waterfowl at Long Point peaked on the very early date of Feb. 28 (SP, RR). Results of that aerial survey are summarized in Table 2.

Unusual waterfowl during the period included a Greater White-fronted Goose at Whitby Dec. 26–28 (m.ob.) and two at Queenston Feb. 22 (GBE, RK); a Ross's Goose at Whitby Nov. 7–Dec. 22 (m.ob.); a Tufted Duck at Selkirk Jan. 11–12 (JM, v.o.); a Com. Eider at Barrie Dec. 1–Jan. 10 (AM, m.ob.); at least seven different Harlequin Ducks at various locales, including one at Barrie Jan. 2 (m.ob.); five different Barrow's Goldeneyes, all in the south; and a hybrid Barrow's x Common Goldeneye at Stoney Cr. Dec. 28 (KM).

#### RAPTORS TO GULLS

Until 1997–1998, space in this report allowed for each wintering Turkey Vulture to be mentioned. At least 13 different birds were reported during the period in the south, and three were even as far north as

**TABLE 2  
RESULTS OF THE LONG POINT  
AERIAL WATERFOWL SURVEY  
FEBRUARY 28, 1998**

|                        |               |
|------------------------|---------------|
| Tundra Swan            | 402           |
| Mute Swan              | 81            |
| Canada Goose           | 546           |
| Green-winged Teal      | 16            |
| Am. Black Duck         | 466           |
| Mallard                | 559           |
| N. Pintail             | 39            |
| Gadwall                | 2             |
| Am. Wigeon             | 10            |
| Canvasback             | 51,766        |
| Redhead                | 21,897        |
| Ring-necked Duck       | 1973          |
| scaup sp.              | 13,951        |
| White-winged Scoter    | 86            |
| Surf Scoter            | 9             |
| Com. Goldeneye         | 1224          |
| Bufflehead             | 312           |
| Hooded Merganser       | 2             |
| Com. Merganser         | 1030          |
| Red-breasted Merganser | 2970          |
| Ruddy Duck             | 5             |
| <b>TOTAL</b>           | <b>97,346</b> |

Willisville Jan. 16 (FC). An Osprey at Gordon I., *Leeds Grenville*, Dec. 17 (PH) was record late there and furnished one of the province's few December records. Record CBC counts of Bald Eagles included nine at Long Pt. Dec. 20 (m.ob.), 11 at Thunder Bay Dec. 26 (m.ob.), and 12 at Rondeau Dec. 21 (m.ob.). Reports of Red-shouldered Hawks were scattered across the south, with one as far north as Huntsville Dec. 17–Jan. 18 (DT, RT). The last Golden Eagle of the period was well north at Atikokan Dec. 13 (DE). Once considered rare in winter, at least 13 Merlins were reported across the south, with one as far north as *Manitoulin* Dec. 20 (JL). Reports of Gyrfalcons were limited to birds at Peterborough Dec. 31–Feb. 15 (BS, m.ob.), Black Rapids, *Leeds Grenville*, Jan. 2 (WC), and Kelley L. Feb. 6 (CB).

An exceptionally late Sora was found on the Blenheim CBC Dec. 21 (JB). Remarkably, a Sandhill Crane spent the entire period at *Thunder Bay* (m.ob.). Up to 21 lingered well into January at Long Pt. (m.ob.) A very early Am. Woodcock returned to Toronto Feb. 22 (BR), while 21 were displaying at Pelee Feb. 28 (AW), an exceptional number for the date. Lingering littorals included a very late Killdeer at Mackenzie Beach, Thunder Bay, Dec. 30 (JA); a late Com. Snipe at Marathon Dec. 21 (NE), an injured Hudsonian Godwit at Dundas Marsh, which lasted until Dec. 10 (m.ob.), a Greater Yellowlegs at Presqu'ile Dec. 5 (J&JT); a Willet on Pelee I. Dec. 19 (DD), a

Least Sandpiper at Whitby Harbour Dec. 1 (GC); and a White-rumped Sandpiper at Rice L., *Peterborough*, Dec. 1 (BSt). Two Killdeer at Pelee Feb. 12 (AW) were the first of many early returning birds, including one at Toronto Feb. 22 (RS) and 15 at Erieau Feb. 28 (KB, JB).

Remarkable for December, a one-day total of jaegers included two imm. Pomarines, a Parasitic, and two unidentified birds at Hamilton Dec. 10 (JO et al.). A very late Pomarine was at Niagara-on-the-Lake Dec. 23 (PB). An imm. Laughing Gull at Queenston Feb. 28 (AA) furnished a rare winter record for the province. The only Black-headed Gull of the season was at Hamilton Dec. 6 (DM et al.). Niagara's California Gull remained through Dec. 31 (m ob.). Possibly the same bird turned up at Toronto Jan. 26–31 (RY et al.). *Middlesex's* first Thayer's Gull was found at London Jan. 15 (JMH). Up to 24 Lesser Black-backed Gulls were found in a variety of locations across the south throughout the period. Reports of Black-legged Kittiwakes totaled five, and were all from L. Ontario and the Niagara River.

**OWLS TO PIPITS**

After several winters of southern movements by owls, the winter was relatively quiet. Therefore, *Kent's* first-ever N. Hawk Owl at Chatham Dec. 2–4 (IW et al.) was even more remarkable. The nearest reported sightings were hundreds of kilometers away in c. and e. Ontario. A *Selasphorus* hummingbird, *Essex's* 2nd in as many years, hung in at a Tecumseh feeder until Dec. 21 (C&GF et al.). Six Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers met the recent winter average with an individual at Baltimore Dec. 21 (L&WW, AWi) the most northerly. The record warm winter allowed nine E. Phoebes to linger well into December. At least five, lasting through January or longer, included two at Pelee most of the period (AW, v.o.), one at Windsor through February (m.ob.), one at Rondeau until at least Jan. 24 (JB), and one at St. Williams Forest Station Dec. 20–Jan. 23 (S&CW, RR). A Tree Swallow on the Pelee I. CBC Dec. 19 (DD, THi) provided the province's first winter record in 5 years. An Am. Crow roost at Pittock L., *Oxford*, held an estimated 20,000 birds Dec. 15 (JMH), making it the 2nd biggest roost in the province, right behind the famous roost in Essex. A Com. Raven at Brighton Dec. 8 (DS) was unusually far south.

The Tufted Titmouse appears to be increasing across the south. At least 47 different birds could be found throughout the

winter in Windsor (FU), the Rondeau CBC tallied a record four birds, and individuals were farther afield at Thickson's Woods, *Durham*, Dec. 1 (m.ob.) and Joyceville throughout the winter (K.F.N.). A very late House Wren was at St. Williams Dec. 20 (MM), while a bird at Pelee Dec. 23 until at least Feb. 25 (JL, FU) furnished an exceptional wintering record. *Norfolk's* 2nd Blue-gray Gnatcatcher in winter was at St. Williams Dec. 20 (J&HBa). A female **Mountain Bluebird** discovered on the Pelee I. CBC Dec. 19 (EM, AWo) remained for the winter. The only Townsend's Solitaire of the period remained at Pelee Dec. 24–Feb. 1 (Bre, m.ob.), providing the area's 5th record. A Hermit Thrush that remained at Darlington P.P., *Durham*, throughout the winter (m.ob.) was another example of the mild winter allowing a normally migratory species to survive well north of its usual winter range. A count of 22 returning Am. Robins at Pelee Feb. 14 (AW) was notable for the date. A total of four different Varied Thrushes met the decade average with individuals at Kingston Dec. 1–Feb. 21 (NT et al.), Thunder Bay Dec. 15 throughout (JCl et al.), Niagara-on-the-Lake Jan. 2–3 (GBe, v.o.), and Kilbride from Jan. 18 on (D&JC, v.o.).

Several Mimids furnished exceptional winter records in n. Ontario. These included individual Gray Catbirds at Nipigon Dec. 15 (NE) and Thunder Bay Dec. 26 (NE), while one remained right through the winter at Atikokan (DE). A N. Mockingbird at Emo Dec. 6 (RS, DE) was exceptional, as was a Brown Thrasher that wintered at Thunder Bay (KP). Very late Am. Pipits were seen at Rock Point P.P., *Haldimand*, Dec. 21 (PT) and Kingston Dec. 28 (KE), while one at Rondeau Feb. 21 (JB, KB) was a record-early spring migrant there.

**WAXWINGS TO FINCHES**

Bohemian Waxwings staged an above-average incursion in e. and c. Ontario, though few made it farther southwest than Hamilton. Good counts included 150 at Uxbridge Jan. 2 (MW), 100 at Bolton Jan. 25 (m.ob.), and up to 500 in Kingston Jan. 1–Feb. 8 (K.F.N.). A well-observed **Loggerhead Shrike** seen at Rondeau Feb. 15 (JB, KB) furnished a record-early date for that park and quite likely for the entire province. A Blue-headed Vireo was record late at Pelee Dec. 13–16 (BM, v.o.). Lingering warblers included an Orange-crowned that wintered at Selkirk P.P. (JM et al.), and other individuals at Shrewsbury Dec. 21 (AW), Pelee Dec. 22 (RH), and Toronto Jan.

1–18 (DL, m.ob.); a record-late **Nashville Warbler** at Rondeau Jan. 11–18 (BM, JB, KB); Yellow-rumped at Huntsville until Jan. 30 (BL et al.) and Mills Twp., *Manitoulin*, Jan. 4 (DB); and lone Pine Warblers at Aylmer Dec. 12 (FH) and Haldimand Conservation Area, *Haldimand*, Jan. 3 (MJ).

After a "plethora" of three Summer Tanagers during the winter of 1996–1997, numbers returned to more "normal" with an individual that wintered at Sarnia (SR, v.o.). A male N. Cardinal managed to survive the entire winter at Thunder Bay (NE). The only Dickcissel of the winter was found on the St. Catharines CBC Dec. 21 (RK). Eastern Towhees wintered in several s. locations, with one as far north as Sudbury throughout the period. (BC, v.o.). A **Spotted Towhee**, the province's first in 2 years, was found at Harmony, *Perth*, Jan. 19 and remained through the period (I&MH, m.ob.).

Not surprisingly, reports of Chipping Sparrows were scattered across several s. CBCs, with some lasting well into January. One in the Algonquin Highlands at Dwight Dec. 22–Feb. 23 (RT et al.) was truly exceptional. White-crowned Sparrows occasionally winter in *Niagara* and the southwest. Individuals at Cranberry Marsh, *Durham*, Jan. 12–Feb. 13 (m.ob.) and Amherst I., *Lennox Addington*, Dec. 28–Jan. 21 (AS) were noteworthy. The only Harris's Sparrow turned up in the north at Stanley Feb. 1 (GW). The only report of an "Oregon" Dark-eyed Junco was of a wintering bird at Dorland, *Oxford* (JMH).

While uncommon in winter, E Meadowlarks are not unexpected, though five at Amherst I. Jan. 21 (BRi) was a notable tally. In keeping with the warm temperatures of February, Red-winged Blackbirds and Com. Grackles began arriving back in numbers as early as Feb. 10–12 in some locations. A female Yellow-headed Blackbird e. of Forestville Dec. 20 (JM, FD) was the only one reported. With less than 10 winter reports this decade, individual Baltimore Orioles at Brantford Dec. 27 (WL, KM, BMc) and Amherstburg Jan. 28–29 (A&RMu) were noteworthy.

The "winter" finch picture was a mixed bag of movements. Purple Finches moved south early and were relatively uncommon everywhere. Both crossbills were uncommon everywhere with a few scattered reports of both species as far south as Rondeau. The big movement was by redpolls and Pine Siskins. Common Redpolls were numerous across the province, partic-

ularly in s.c. regions, with many scattered reports of Hoarys mixed in. The farthest south of these was a bird at Port Stanley Feb. 21 (ASm). Practically every feeder across the s. and c. regions received its fair share of Pine Siskins as well. Evening Grosbeaks could also be found at a number of locations. For the first time in Ontario, many feederwatchers reported numerous birds which exhibited all the symptoms of *Salmonella* poisoning, particularly in red-polls, siskins, and Evening Grosbeaks.

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# appalachian region



## GEORGE A. HALL

It was a weird winter. Or was there a winter? Weatherwise the answer is no. How was the birding? Good or bad? It all depended on where you were.

All three months had above-average temperatures, resulting in one of the warmest winters on record. At the Pittsburgh weather station December was drier than normal, January much wetter, and February about average. There was little snow, except at higher elevations. Two major storms crossed the southern part of the Region, bringing up to 40 inches of snow. The ponds and lakes were generally ice free, and even Presque Isle Bay on Lake Erie stayed open. The heavy rainfall, coupled with the melting of mountain snows, produced some extensive flooding. Some of the worst weather occurred at the end of the period, but all in all it was a mild, open winter.

Birds? In the south, and away from lakes

and ponds, birding was dull. Birds had little incentive to patronize feeders. The mild weather did cause many species to remain well into December. Besides the usual "half hearty" species, several sparrows and warblers were found in late December and early January. The ice-free lakes produced nice lists of waterfowl in December. For example, 30 species of waterfowl were listed on the lake at Yellow Creek State Park, Pennsylvania. So most places had good Christmas Bird Counts, which included record numbers for many species. After the first of the year waterfowl numbers dwindled and the late migrants disappeared, leaving only the usual winter residents.

In November there had been suggestions of an upcoming influx of "northern invaders." But in the south this promise fizzled out. A few species, such as Red-breasted Nuthatch, were widespread and numerous. Pine Siskins and Evening Grosbeaks occurred Regionwide, but were spottily distributed. However, in the north there was