

# atlantic provinces region



IAN A. MCLAREN

Winter began early and snow accumulated in northern and elevated areas, but La Niña's gift to southeast Newfoundland and much of the Maritimes was mild, often rainy, weather. In those parts, many lakes stayed open or froze episodically, and almost no snow stayed in coastal areas. The CBCs analyzed here will be mostly published only regionally. Unattributed sightings are *vide* subregional compilers.

**Abbreviations:** CBI (*Cape Breton I., NS*); CSI (*Cape Sable I., NS*); GMI (*Grand Manan I., NB*); Lab. (*Labrador*); Maritimes (*NB, NS, PEI combined*); PEI (*without locality, Prince Edward Island*); SPM (*the French Islands of St.-Pierre-et-Miquelon*).

## LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL

On CBCs loons and grebes remained above average in s.e. New Brunswick and below in Nova Scotia. Exceptional late-winter counts of Com. Loons and Red-necked Grebes around SPM probably reflected open waters. As usual, a few Greater Shearwaters lingered into early December around GMI (BD). A few Double-crested Cormorants are now routine in Nova Scotia; six post-CBC birds off SPM and another Jan. 7 at Witless Bay, NF, extended the trend. Again trendy were 235 N. Gannets on Nova Scotia CBCs. Despite the mild winter, unexceptional numbers of Great Blue Herons survived in Nova Scotia; a hardy one did so at Branch, NF (*vide* TB). Only  $\pm 10$  Turkey Vultures were noted in Nova Scotia, less than half last winter's total. Four were found in New Brunswick, the latest Feb. 20 at Maces Bay.

Two imm. **Greater White-fronted Geese** first noted Jan. 26 at Economy, NS (F. Spalding et al. ph.), flew off high n.w. in March, seeming to confirm the unreliability of their distinctly orange bills as a mark of Greenland origin. As usual, a few Gadwalls wintered in Nova Scotia, but 25 at S. Rustico, PEI, Feb. 7 (S. Tingley) were unprecedented. About 10 female and three male Eur. Wigeons wintered around St. John's, NF; the lone female detected among six males in Nova Scotia and one male in PEI suggests that females are more difficult to find and to identify than males. Numbers of Am. Black Ducks were above average on Maritime CBCs. Just as pleasing was the decline of Mallards to 15% of the Am. Black Duck total on New Brunswick CBCs (40% last year) although they remained about the same (17% vs. 15%) in Nova Scotia. A N. Shoveler wintering at Spaniard's Bay, NF, was unusual; a few in Nova Scotia less so. An outlying concentration of N. Pintails has been wintering in St. John's, NF, and numbered  $\pm 250$  this year, including several hybrids with Mallards (BMT); small numbers stayed in PEI and Nova Scotia but, suggestively, a transient 18 feeding on a rocky seashore Dec. 31 in Halifax, NS, included such a male hybrid (IM). The usual scattering of Green-winged Teals included about ten male Commons in St. John's, NF. Unusual in Nova Scotia were a male Redhead Dec. 20–21 at Pomquet, and two more plus a female from Jan. 1 on at Trenton (CB, KM et al.). Fewer than usual Ring-necked Ducks wintered in Nova Scotia; two on SPM Dec. 7 (RE) were unexpected. Tufted Ducks, now routine, included a female through winter and a male briefly in St. John's, NF; four males and a female from January on in Nova Scotia; and a male to Dec. 6 at Dalhousie, NB, and another at Saint John, NB, from Dec. 27 through its 3rd winter, joined by a female in late January. An apparent imm. male hybrid with Greater Scaup in early January in Dartmouth, NS (FL, IM et al.), did not stay for critical photos of developing vermiculations (racially distinct) that might have suggested an Icelandic origin. Lesser Scaups continued their upward trend in Nova Scotia but were scarce elsewhere. About 75 Harlequin Ducks on the Cape St. Mary's, NF, CBC were the most since the 1980s (BMT), an unprecedented 14 were off St. Pierre, SPM, Feb. 14 (*vide* RE), and CBC totals rose further in

New Brunswick; the closed season may be working. Scoter numbers on CBCs showed no marked changes from last year's. Both goldeneyes remained exceptionally common in n. New Brunswick's open waters and contributed largely to the record CBC total of 361 Barrow's. A Common  $\times$  Barrow's hybrid Jan. 10 at Saint John, NB, may be the first documented ( $\dagger$ J. Wilson) for the Region. Whereas Com. Eiders were rated "very low" (DCu) on Nova Scotia CBCs, 5000 around St. Andrews, NB, "boosted the provincial total to a record" (DC).

## RAPTORS THROUGH ALCID

Numbers of Bald Eagles on Maritime CBCs somewhat exceeded last year's, as did this year's census Feb. 7 in Kings, NS (483, 46% immatures). Sharp-shinned Hawks were substantially depressed on New Brunswick CBCs but held their own in Nova Scotia. In Nova Scotia, a Cooper's Hawk on the Halifax/Dartmouth CBC (C. Stevens, P. Serwylo) and another at Pubnico Feb. 7 (MN) were unusual at any season. A record 25 N. Goshawks on Nova Scotia CBCs were reassuring for this provincial "code yellow" species. A Broad-winged Hawk on the Sussex, NB, CBC (details?) and another Feb. 9 at Wellington, NS ( $\dagger$ FL), added to several winter records in recent years. As usual, a Golden Eagle wintered around Shepody Mt., NB, but an imm. Dec. 19 at Chance Cove, NF (C. Brown), was unexpected. Peregrine Falcons continued their recent wintering trend with  $\pm 10$  widely scattered in the Region. South of traditional sites in n. Newfoundland, two Gyrfalcons wintered in n. New Brunswick (v.o.), and a single CBC bird occurred in Dartmouth, NS ( $\dagger$ K. Allard).

Both native grouse on Maritime CBCs increased somewhat from last year. A novelty were up to 25 Spruce Grouse lured to mixed seed at a site near Wabush, Lab. (*vide* CD). Willow Ptarmigan staged a major invasion in W. Labrador with 500 not uncommon during a day's wilderness snowmobiling (CD). Seven (established?) Sharp-tailed Grouse were at Cable Head, PEI, Jan. 17 (A. Gray). A **Virginia Rail** Jan. 8–9 at Aquaforte, NF, provided a first provincial sighting for BMT et al.; one Dec. 17 at Wolfville, NS (MH), was less unusual. A Com. Moorhen at St. John's, NF, to Dec. 26 (TB et al.) was both rare and latest ever for the province. The usual Am. Coots lingered

in all provinces with individuals surviving the winter in Dartmouth, NS, and St. John's, NF.

Discounting some that appeared during late February in all provinces, at least five Killdeers survived the winter in Nova Scotia. As usual CSI, NS, sustained most of the other routine shorebirds, which on Feb. 28 included 15 Black-bellied Plovers, 25 Red Knots, 100 Sanderlings, and 20 Dunlin (BMy et al.). Less routine were a Greater and four Lesser yellowlegs, both record late on Jan. 4 at Eel L. estuary, *Yarmouth*, NS (MN). Outstanding was a **Common Redshank** found in early March near Terra Nova N.P., NF (K. Butler et al.), and said by locals to have been present since early February. It had probably arrived in fall since migrants didn't reach Iceland until mid-March this year (*vide* Y. Kolbeisson). This was the first in N. America following the five that appeared in s.e. Newfoundland during spring 1995. Almost as unexpected was a godwit found Dec. 19 on the CBC in the PEI NP, understandably listed as Hudsonian. Almost certainly the same bird was critically identified Jan. 29 as an ad. **Black-tailed Godwit** (J. Clements, R. Cooke). It remained around S. Rustico through the season (v.o., ph.). Less mind-boggling were the following: a Red Knot at Pt. LaHaye, NF, supplying a rare midwinter record for that province (BMT); on CSI, NS (MN et al.), were the Regionally latest ever Semipalmated Sandpiper (identified from appearance and voice) until at least Feb. 14, three White-rumped Sandpipers to Feb. 4, and a Long-billed Dowitcher to Jan. 4. A few Com. Snipe lingered throughout, including on SPM; the latest was Feb. 20 near St. John's, NF (*vide* TB). Two Red Phalaropes were unusual Dec. 2 at GMI, NB, but one off Halifax Harbor, NS, Feb. 13 (†FL) was remarkable.

Two Little Gulls remained in s.e. New Brunswick until Dec. 2 (FH), and one made a brief, unseasonal appearance Feb. 13 near Antigonish, NS (R. Knapton, RL). Mew (Com.) Gulls included a first-winter and two ad. in St. John's, NF, through winter, and adults (same birds?) along coastal *Pictou*, NS, Dec. 12 and Jan. 31 (CB, KM). The 247 Black-headed Gulls on Nova Scotia CBCs were the most ever. Some 5150 Bonaparte's Gulls were still foraging between Deer and Campobello Is. Dec. 30 (FH); a few wintered in Nova Scotia. Convincingly described Thayer's Gulls in Nova Scotia were an adult Jan. 23 and a first-winter Feb. 12 at Lunenburg (both †EM) and an adult Feb. 22 in Halifax (†FL). Two first-winter Eur. Herring Gulls (*argenteus* or *argentatus*) were identi-

fied by BMT Feb. 7–17 in St. John's, NF. More tantalizing were "possible" ad. Yellow-legged Gulls at the St. John's dump: one Feb. 10 & 13 and two Feb. 17. Identification remains pending further information on the Azores *atlantis* (BMT, PL). Do many remember when we would have been excited by "12 identifiably different" (BMT) Lesser Black-backed Gulls wintering in St. John's, NF, one in New Brunswick, some eight in Nova Scotia?

Other Dovekie observations pale beside "possibly thousands" off St. Pierre, SPI, Jan. 2 (B. Letournel) and 4000 south of GMI, NB, Jan. 21 (BD). All the regular alcids first appeared inshore in some numbers in Nova Scotia in late January, and oiling was involved Feb. 6 on the coast near Glace Bay. Around GMI, NB, storm-displaced Com. Murres peaked Dec. 28 at 10% of last winter's 23,000, whereas 30,000 Razorbills in early January somewhat exceeded last winter's total (BD).

#### DOVES THROUGH WAXWINGS

Mourning Doves continued their steady increases on Maritimes CBCs; three on the Wabush, Lab., CBC were exceptional. Snowy Owls were even scarcer this winter than last except possibly in n. Newfoundland. The only reported N. Hawk Owls were near Antigonish, NS, Dec. 2 (*vide* RL) and in n. Newfoundland Jan. 22 (*vide* TB). Some 19 wintering Short-eared Owls near Truro, NS, plus a few elsewhere in the Maritimes, were more than usual. Owl enthusiasts might envy CD's report from Wabush, Lab., of Boreal Owls beginning to call mid-February.

Open water sustained a record 19 Belted Kingfishers into at least late January in Nova Scotia. Two Red-headed Woodpeckers were in Nova Scotia and four in New Brunswick through much or all of winter. Red-bellieds may have faltered; one or two in New Brunswick and singles in PEI and Nova Scotia were reported through winter. Exceptional numbers of N. Flickers survived away from Maritimes feeders. Pileated Woodpeckers on Nova Scotia CBCs doubled from last year but seemed unremarkable in New Brunswick.

A **Say's Phoebe** Dec. 3–9 at Woodside, Kings, NS (MH et al.), was a provincial 3d or 4th for December. Northern Shrikes were uncommon throughout except in n. New Brunswick. A Blue-headed Vireo remained to Dec. 20 in Halifax, NS (FL et al.). A **Eurasian Jackdaw** in St. John's, NF, from Dec. 31 was thought to be the same one seen sporadically since 1995. Exceptional among

the usual laggard wrens were a Carolina at a St. Stephen, NB, feeder until at least early January and a House into late January at St. John's, NF. Newfoundland's 2nd **Mountain Bluebird** was present Dec. 31–Jan. 24 in St. John's, and Nova Scotia's 4th and 5th were found Jan. 3 at Port Morien, NS (C Murrant), and Jan. 18 on CSI, NS (MN et al.), both staying into February. They outclassed two wintering E. Bluebirds in Nova Scotia A **Fieldfare** turned up Jan. 2 and (same one?) Feb. 13 in St. John's (PL et al., ph.). More exciting was Newfoundland's 6th **Redwing** at Ferryland Dec. 29 (BMT, J. Wells, D. Fifield). American Robins more than doubled on CBCs from last year in Nova Scotia, and 5000–10,000 were along the Bay of Fundy coast, NB, in early January. Gray Catbirds survived at feeders near Dartmouth (P. MacLeod) and Pubnico, NS (v.o.). A Brown Thrasher in Salvage, NF, another in Caraquet, NB, and at least one of three in Nova Scotia survived the winter. Bohemian Waxwings appeared in large numbers only in n. New Brunswick (e.g., 1473 on the Shediac CBC); small flocks of mainly late-winter waxwings elsewhere in the Maritimes were mostly Cedars.

#### WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Early winter warblers included 16+ Orange-crowneds, a Nashville, a N. Parula, and a Black-throated Blue in Nova Scotia, single Yellow-throateds in St. John's, NF, Antigonish, NS, and Miramichi City, NB, two Pines in PEI, nine in New Brunswick, and 16 in Nova Scotia; single **Prairie Warblers** Dec 6 in St.-Pierre, SPM (P. Asselin), and at Renewes, NF, Dec. 29 (latest provincial record); nine Palms in Nova Scotia, a Regionally latest ever **Bay-breasted Warbler** to Jan. 4 on CSI, NS (†MN et al.), five Black-and-whites in St. John's, NF, and one in Dartmouth, NS; two Com. Yellowthroats in New Brunswick and nine in Nova Scotia, a Wilson's Warbler in Nova Scotia; and single Yellow-breasted Chats in St. John's, NF, and Moncton, NB, and two in Nova Scotia. Of these, three Orange-crowneds in Nova Scotia, the Yellow-throated in Miramichi City, NB, and one Pine in New Brunswick and four in Nova Scotia survived all winter.

An imm. Summer Tanager spent a week in mid-December near Wolfville, NS (v.o.) Single E. Towhees straggled at Cape Broyle, NF, near Dartmouth, NS, and at St.-Simon and Ste.-Irénée, NB, at least the last surviving the winter. Open terrain kept many sparrows away from feeders. Among the less common finds were two Field Sparrows in Nova Scotia; single **Clay-colored Sparrows**

on the Sackville, NS, CBC and Dec. 20 at Bouctouche, NB; a Lark Sparrow in St. John's, NF, until at least Jan. 15; two Vesper Sparrows through the winter in Nova Scotia; and a White-crowned Sparrow on the Wabush, Lab., CBC. An imm. Rose-breasted Grosbeak Jan. 3 near Halifax (P. Leblanc et al.) was upstaged by two imm. male **Black-headed Grosbeaks** appearing at feeders (v.o., ph.). The first spent January in Fredericton, NB, and the 2nd stayed from early February through the period in Antigonish, NS, 200 mi due east. A Blue Grosbeak lingered to Dec. 27 at Avonport, NS (E. Urban), and an Indigo Bunting at Mary's Pt., NB, into early December. Of about five Dickcissels each in s.e. Newfoundland and s.w. Nova Scotia, two at Pubnico, NS, remained through February. Worth noting was a female Red-winged Blackbird wintering in frigid Labrador City (CD). Single Yellow-headed Blackbirds were at Alma, NB, in December and at Enfield, NS, through winter. Despite the mild weather, no Baltimore Orioles were reported by late winter. Of two meadowlarks in New Brunswick and six in Nova Scotia, only one wintering on GMI, NB (BD), and two in Pubnico, NS (v.o.), were claimed as Easterns.

On CBCs Purple Finches were up in the Maritimes, as were House Finches in New Brunswick where they now reside n. to Miramichi City. Pine Grosbeaks numbers were somewhat depressed. Red Crossbills increased in Nova Scotia but not notably elsewhere whereas huge crops of spruce cones in w. Newfoundland and the Maritimes evoked an abundance of White-winged Crossbills, which were singing and courting in late winter. Most Com. Redpolls stayed north, accompanied by a few Hoarries in Wabush, Lab. (CD), and appeared elsewhere mostly in late winter. Pine Siskins and Am. Goldfinches increased somewhat from last year's Maritimes CBCs whereas Evening Grosbeaks decreased substantially.

**Observers (subregional compilers in bold-face):** Todd Boland, Calvin Brennan, **David Christie**, David Curry (DCu), **Brian Dalzell**, Cheryl Davis, **Fred Dobson**, **Roger Etcheberry**, **Sylvia Fullerton**, Carl Haycock, Matt Holder, **Andrew Horn**, F. Huttemann, Randy Lauff, Fulton Lavender, Paul Linegar, **Bruce Mactavish** (BMt), **Blake Maybank** (BMy), **Dan McAskill**, Ken McKenna, **Eric Mills**, Murray Newell.

**Ian A. McLaren**, Biology Department, Dalhousie University, Halifax, NS B3H 4J1 (IAMLar@is.dal.ca)

# québec region



## YVES AUBRY, NORMAND DAVID, and PIERRE BANNON

**D**ecember, as well as the whole year, was warm. More extraordinary was the report of a grand total of 132 species found during December in the Montreal area, an all-time record. In contrast with December, January was very snowy and cold at first, but the end of the month saw a return to above-normal temperatures. February was quiet for birds despite mild temperature and lack of snow.

### LOONS THROUGH ALCIDS

A Com. Loon remained at Alma until Feb. 1, setting a record-late date for this area (SB et al.). A Red-necked Grebe at Port-Daniel Jan. 19 (EA) represented a 2nd winter record for the area. A total of 275 Great Cormorants were counted at Port-Daniel Feb. 6 (EA) while a very late Double-crested Cormorant lingered at Havre-Aubert, *Magdalen Is.*, until Jan. 19 (G. Chiasson). A Great Blue Heron on Duberger R. all winter (P. Otis et al.) provided a first for the Québec City area.

A flock of 12 Tundra Swans remained at Saint-Lazare until mid-December and then moved to Saint-Thimothée until the end of the month (m.ob.). Three more adults were found at Saint-Paul-de-l'Île-aux-Noix Feb. 19 (G. Garneau et al.), coinciding with an early migratory passage in Ontario. An imm. Mute Swan was seen at L. Memphrémagog, Dec. 26–29 (*vide* P. Landry, v.t.) while another strayed at FarmBPoint, *Outaouais*, Feb. 27 (M. Dallaire).

Five Canada Geese overwintering at Chandler (JRL, M. Garant, R. Garrett) represented a first for the Gaspé Pen. Of two

imm. Snow Geese which attempted to overwinter at Auclair, *Témiscouata*, only one remained after Jan. 11 when it joined a mixed flock of domestic and wild ducks (M. Beaulieu, D. Deschênes). A single Ross's Goose found among a flock of 3000 Snow Geese at Saint-Louis-de-Gonzague Dec. 13 (PB) established a record late departure date.

Noteworthy ducks for the season included a possible Mallard × Am. Wigeon hybrid at Lévis, Dec. 1–10 (JL et al.); an ad. male Blue-winged Teal at Boucherville Dec. 19 (M. Picard), which set a new record-late date for the province; and a male Ring-necked Duck at Chandler from Feb. 14 to the end of the season, a first wintering record for the Gaspé Pen. and one of the few for the province. A male Canvasback at Baie-Sainte-Catherine Feb. 16 (RB et al.) represented an early sighting in a remote locality for the species. Some reports of

**SA** As part of a study of the eastern population of the **Barrow's Goldeneye**, CWS biologists (D. Bordage, M. Robert, CM, C. LePage) have carried out aerial inventories in the St. Lawrence Estuary (from Baie-Saint-Paul northeastward to Pointe-des-Monts on the n. shore and from Rivière-du-Loup northeastward to Matane on the s. shore). Thus 2437, 1702, and 2634 Barrow's Goldeneyes were found Jan. 26 and Feb. 10 & 16 respectively, mostly near Baie-Comeau, Baie-des-Rochers, La Malbaie, Cap-à-l'Aigle, Baie-Sainte-Catherine, and Baie-de-Mille-Vaches. These results underscore the importance of the St. Lawrence Estuary for Barrow's Goldeneyes in e. North America, which number some 4000 individuals only. Almost all other Barrow's Goldeneyes of that population winter in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, mostly in Quebec (ca. 1000), but also in New Brunswick (ca. 400) and Prince Edward Island (ca. 100) whereas a few winter elsewhere in the Maritimes and in Maine. For all intents and purposes, the St. Lawrence therefore shelters nearly all of e. North America's Barrow's Goldeneyes during winter.