

feeding station at Delmont, *Westmoreland*, Dec. 1 and again Jan. 16 (KB) represented one of very few Pennsylvania winter records. Extremely rare so far north, a Baltimore Oriole visited a feeding station at Dunn's Eddy, *Warren*, PA, Dec. 4–16 (D&KB).

Following last winter's major invasion, northern finches were notably scarce: The only Red Crossbills were reported from Meadville, PA, where a flock of 50 was seen Feb. 19 (IF). Although Pine Siskins were widely reported, numbers were usually small. Over most of the Region, Evening Grosbeaks put in little more than a token appearance; a few birds were found as far south as Elizabethton, TN, Dec. 21 (HPL); 50 at McConnell's Mill S.P., PA, Dec. 19 (DB) represented the season's high count.

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western great lakes region



JIM GRANLUND

It was another mild winter throughout the Region. The first two weeks of December were particularly warm, and water remained open well into the month. As a result, many water-related birds lingered well into December. In addition, other species remained, resulting in many record-late dates. Winter finally did arrive in the latter half of December and continued into January, resulting in near normal weather in Minnesota. But overall it remained mild in both Michigan and Wisconsin. All three states had a mild February. The mild weather also resulted in overwintering by many "half-hardy" species, such as American Robin, in large numbers. In contrast, typical winter visitors, such as finches and northern owls, were scarce to nonexistent in much of the Region.

LOONS THROUGH HERONS

Red-throated Loons are becoming regular in Michigan along the s. end of L. Michigan; this season reports included individuals in *Berrien* and *Muskegon*, the latest individual Dec. 30 (JW, JH) in *Muskegon*. Record late in Minnesota inland counties were Horned Grebes Dec. 16 in *Mille Lacs Lake* (KB) in the north and Dec. 22 in *Hennepin* (SC) in the south. Exceptional in Wisconsin was an Eared Grebe to Dec. 14 in *Milwaukee* (BD, DG, MK et al.). Michigan had another good winter for Red-necked Grebe with reports from 4 counties, the latest Dec. 30 in *Muskegon* (JH). A W. Grebe Dec. 13 in *Rice* (JL) provided Minnesota's 6th winter record; Wisconsin had a W. Grebe Dec. 20 in the Saxon harbor (JE). A Double-crested

Cormorant in *Otter Tail* (DM, SM) provided n. Minnesota's first overwintering record. Very unusual in Michigan, a Great Egret lingered to Dec. 19 in *Macomb* (MM), and less unusual were lingering Black-crowned Night-Herons Dec. 26 in *Holland*, *Ottawa* (JP), and to Jan. 17 in *Monroe* (SSa).

VULTURES THROUGH WATERFOWL

Turkey Vultures stayed well into December in Michigan and arrived back early, the first Jan. 26 in *Monroe* (PC). Wisconsin also had an early migrant Feb. 13 in *Dane* (CH). Michigan and Wisconsin reported higher-than-usual numbers of Greater White-fronted Goose, and all 3 states reported early arrivals; in Michigan the species was reported from *Allegan*, *Berrien*, *Branch*, *Saginaw* and *Washtenaw*, with highs of 19 Dec. 2 in *Allegan* (RBr) and 14 Feb. 9 in *Saginaw* (MW); Minnesota had its 3rd earliest arrival with seven in *Big Stone* Feb. 28 (DM, SM), only 4 days short of a record; Wisconsin had a record arrival with three White-fronteds in *Columbia* Feb. 10 (DT); this was followed by an impressive migration, with flocks of 10–80 recorded in the s. portions of the state. Once rare in the Region, Ross's Goose is now regularly reported from all 3 states. In Michigan, an individual was recorded Feb. 13 at Marysville, *St. Clair* (BW, BWi), and one–three were seen between Feb. 17–28 at Shiawassee N.W.R., *Saginaw* (MW, DP, BG), all are pending MBRC approval. In Minnesota, an individual was present to Dec. 19 in *Faribault*, while Wisconsin had two–three individuals between *Goose Pond*, *Columbia*, and ponds in *Middleton*, *Dane*, from Dec. 1–16.

Mute Swans appear to be increasing in Minnesota where 5 reports were received this winter, including birds in *Rice*, *Waseca*, *Winona*, and *Wright*. Trumpeter Swans are also increasing in Minnesota with maximum of 360 Dec. 23 wintering on the Mississippi R. at Monticello (ML) and an additional 166 counted Dec. 27 on the *Otter Tail* R. (DM, SM). Wisconsin had a flock of 25 Trumpeter Swans overwinter in *Polk*. Also in that state were impressive numbers of Tundra Swans in December, including a

spectacular 12,000 on the Mississippi R. in *LaCrosse* and *Vernon* (DK, FL, EN).

Because of the mild weather, excellent numbers of ducks lingered throughout the Region. Wisconsin reported "unprecedented numbers" of ducks along the Mississippi R. in December, mainly in *LaCrosse* and *Vernon* with estimates of 150,000–250,000 individuals. In this total were an estimated 3000 Gadwall Dec. 7, 4000 Am. Wigeon Dec. 4, 2000 Green-winged Teal Dec. 2, 150,000–180,000 Canvasback Dec. 14, 3000 Redhead Dec. 8, 5000 Lesser Scaup Dec. 10, and 1000 Ruddy Duck Dec. 8 (DK, FL, EN). Also unusual in that state was the number of overwintering species, including Wood Duck, Gadwall, N. Shoveler, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Hooded Merganser, and Ruddy Duck.

Minnesota reported the same large number of ducks on the Mississippi. In addition to the Wisconsin numbers, reports from Minnesota included 3000 Ring-necked Ducks and 1930 Ruddy Ducks Dec. 7 (KB). Also noteworthy in Minnesota were 11 N. Pintail and 55–60 Green-winged Teal which overwintered on Black Dog L., *Dakota* (PJ) and 8 reports of lingering Greater Scaup. A Blue-winged Teal Dec. 12 in *Houston* (RJ) furnished only the 2nd winter record for Minnesota in the past 10 years.

Michigan had similar reports of overwintering species and excellent concentrations of ducks into December, including 4000 N. Shovelers Dec. 5 at the Muskegon Wastewater System, *Muskegon* (JP). As with divers and dabblers, sea duck numbers were up Regionwide. Michigan had King Eiders from Dec. 12 to at least Dec. 28 near Union Pier, *Berrien* (RS, mob) and a young male from Jan. 2–22 at the Karn Plant, *Bay* (RZ, EK, RA, mob). Michigan reported Harlequin Ducks in *Houghton* Dec. 19 (JY, LM); near Harbor Springs, *Emmet*, from Dec. 19–21 (JWe); in *Presque Isle* to Jan. 3 (BGr); and near Union Pier, *Berrien*, to Dec. 16 (AB, KT). Minnesota had individual Harlequins Jan. 16 on the Mississippi R., *Monticello*, *Sherburne*, and *Wright* (KB, JD); Dec. 20 in Two Harbors, *Lake* (*fide* KE); and Dec. 16 on L. Minnetonka, *Hennepin* (*fide* AH). Wisconsin had a remarkable concentration of eight Harlequin Ducks in Milwaukee. Also in that state were one–two in Sheboygan and one Dec. 10 at Marinette (JRe).

Both Michigan and Wisconsin reported excellent numbers of scoters, mainly from the Great Lakes, but there were also a surprising number of inland records. Minnesota also had good numbers, including a record nine reports of White-winged

Scoters in December, all inland, and a record-late date for Black Scoter Dec. 12 at White Bear L., *Ramsey* (KB). Also in that state were an unusual number of Oldsquaw reports away from L. Superior, while in Michigan excellent concentrations were reported on L. Huron with 10,000 off *Presque Isle* Dec. 15 (BGr) and 6300 reported off *Iosco* Dec. 26 (RB). In Wisconsin a male Barrow's Goldeneye overwintered in Virmond Park and was joined by a 2nd male in January.

RAPTORS

It was a fairly quiet season throughout the Region in terms of hawks. In Michigan, an Osprey lingered to Dec. 5 in *Monroe* (TW, CP). Minnesota had only 8 reports of N. Goshawk this season, the lowest total since 1988. Rough-legged Hawks were more widespread than normal in Minnesota with reports from 52 counties, the previous high being 43. Also more common in the Region were Golden Eagles. Michigan had more reports of Merlins with individuals in 5 counties, while Wisconsin reported overwintering in *Douglas* (LL, SL) and *Ashland* (DV). The only Prairie Falcon report came from Minnesota where one was seen Feb. 6–10 in Minneapolis, *Hennepin* (SW, KB). Wisconsin had overwintering Peregrine Falcons in 4 counties, and Michigan had reports from 4 locations, including one n. of normal in Sault Ste. Marie.

GROUSE THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

A group of 24 Spruce Grouse in *Lake* Feb. 23 (DE) was one of the largest flocks ever reported in Minnesota. A flock of 35 Sharp-tailed Grouse reported near Sault Ste. Marie was an encouraging reversal for this declining Michigan species.

In Michigan, a Virginia Rail was found Feb. 20 in *Branch* (JG) while one Jan. 21 in Bloomington, *Hennepin*, MN (SC), furnished only the 7th winter record for the state. In Wisconsin, two were present in Madison Dec. 12 (PA). Minnesota had a new late date for Sandhill Crane with one Dec. 6 at the Sherburne N.W.R. (KL). This species also lingered and overwintered in both Michigan and Wisconsin with the latter state having an unprecedented 5960 on the L. Geneva CBC.

Minnesota had its first winter report of **Greater Yellowlegs** with an individual Dec. 5 in *Fillmore* (JS). Wisconsin had record-late dates of two at Horicon Marsh Dec. 1 (DT), one in *Ozaukee* Dec. 4 (SLu, TU), three in *LaCrosse* Dec. 4 (DK), and three through Dec. 14 in *Vernon* (DK). Remarkable for the

Region was a **Spotted Sandpiper** Dec. 16 in Grand Marais, *Cook* (KH, MH), also a first winter record for Minnesota. Providing a record-late date in Wisconsin was a **Ruddy Turnstone** Dec. 13–Jan. 1 in Sheboygan (TW, mob). A Baird's Sandpiper in *Grant* Dec. 1 (BD) tied Wisconsin's late date Michigan had a good number of Purple Sandpiper reports with up to two individuals Dec. 13–Jan. 1 at New Buffalo, *Berrien* (AB, mob) and up to four individuals Dec. 14–Jan. 1 in Muskegon (KT, GW, JP). Wisconsin had up to two individuals from December to Jan. 1 at Sheboygan (DBa, MB, SLu). Late Dunlin in Michigan included one to Dec. 5 at New Buffalo, *Berrien* (KT, AB, BM) and four Dec. 22 at the Karn Plant, *Bay* (MW). A **dowitcher** thought to be a Long-billed Dec. 2 at the Erie Power Plant, *Monroe* (WP) was a first winter report for this shorebird in Michigan. Likely an early migrant in Michigan was an Am. Woodcock Feb. 12 in *Clinton* (GB) while in Minnesota one was found in *Faribault* Feb. 27 (TB).

GULLS THROUGH TERNS

After the fall invasion of Franklin's Gulls it was not surprising that good numbers were reported into early December. In Michigan individuals were reported Dec. 2 in *Manistee* and Dec. 9 in *Saginaw* (DP); up to 9 were in *Ingham*, last seen Dec. 6 (BCo, KT). Minnesota had its first winter records for this species with individuals in *Waseca* Dec. 1 (KB, JD) and *Dakota* Dec. 5 (KB, SC). Wisconsin managed a single record of an individual Dec. 4 in *Jefferson* (BD). The only Little Gull report came from Michigan where an adult was seen in Muskegon Dec. 19 (CPu). Minnesota had record-late dates for Bonaparte's Gull with individuals Dec. 17 in Mille Lacs L., *Aitken* (CG, MG), and 4 Dec. 19 in Afton, *Washington* (BL).

A **Mew Gull** in Duluth, *St. Louis*, Dec. 13 (PS) provided Minnesota's 3rd record and 1st documented with a photograph. Presumably the same bird was seen on the nearby Superior landfill in Wisconsin Dec. 17 (KB) while elsewhere in that state two were seen in Milwaukee, one Dec. 12 and a different individual Dec. 13 (SLu, MK). All 3 states reported good numbers of Thayer's Gull with a noteworthy a record concentration of 11–12 Dec. 26 in *Dakota*, MN (KB). Michigan and Wisconsin also had a number of Iceland Gull reports. Lesser Black-backed Gull numbers increased once again with Michigan having 11 reports with up to four individuals in *Monroe*. Wisconsin had 4 reports with a maximum of four individuals in Milwaukee. Minnesota had 4 reports of



While this adult Mew Gull (center; in front of larger immature gull) was photographed at a Superior, Wisconsin, landfill December 17, 1998, it was also suspected of being the individual which became the third record for Minnesota, appearing in nearby Duluth four days earlier. Photograph/Karl Bardon

Lesser Black-backed, including a record-late date of a first-winter bird Jan. 4 in Ramsey and Dakota (KB, BS, DS).

A Nelson's Gull (Glaucous × Herring hybrid) was reported Dec. 22–30 in Dakota, MN (KB, SC, PB). In Michigan a Black-legged Kittiwake was reported Dec. 5 at the Erie Power Plant, Monroe (TW, CP), and another was found dead Dec. 14 at Escanaba (CT). Wisconsin reported one Dec. 1 and Feb. 1–5 in Port Washington (SLu) and again Feb. 6 in Milwaukee (WM). Wisconsin had yet another Ivory Gull; this year's bird was in Sheboygan Dec. 21 (JF). Very unexpected was a Common Tern Dec. 6–7 in Waussau (DB, LO), a record-late date for Wisconsin. Also late was a Forster's Tern in Michigan present to Dec. 16 at Saugatuck, Allegan (AB).

DOVES THROUGH SWALLOWS

Minnesota recorded its 2nd through 4th state records for Eurasian Collared-Dove with one overwintering at Lynd, Lyon (RSc); an individual at Alden, Freeborn, Dec. 13 (ABo); and two from Jan. 29–Feb. 26 in Jasper, Rock/Pipestone (RJ, RG et al.). Snowy Owls were scarce Regionwide. Minnesota hosted the only Northern Hawk Owls with individuals at Roseau, Roseau, Dec. 26 (fide BJ) and another at Sax-Zim bog, St. Louis, Dec. 27 (fide KE). Great Gray Owls were most numerous in Minnesota where 15 were reported from the expected locations. Wisconsin had a pair of Great Grays reported in Bayfield. All 3 states reported above average numbers of Long-eared and Short-eared owls. The only Boreal Owl reports came from Minnesota where birds began calling in late February in the n.e. portion of the state.

For the 2nd consecutive year Michigan

hosted a Rufous Hummingbird, this season an ad. male present to Dec. 15 in Ingham (fide TBl). A Red-headed Woodpecker in Chippewa, MI, Feb. 5–7 (DBe, SS) was n. of normal as was a Red-bellied Woodpecker that wintered in Ashland, WI (DV). Minnesota had an unusual number of overwintering Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers with as many as six in the Twin Cities area. Also in that state was the only Three-toed Woodpecker record for the Region, one Feb. 14 in Lake (fide KE).

Very unexpected so far north in Michigan was a lingering E. Phoebe Dec. 5 in Marquette (SSt). Also in Michigan was a Loggerhead Shrike Jan. 30 at Fish Pt., Tuscola (DD). Providing a 3rd winter record for Wisconsin was a White-eyed Vireo at Madison Dec. 19–20 (DF). A lingering Barn Swallow in Monroe Dec. 11–12 (WP, CP, TW) provided an unusual winter record for Michigan.

WRENS THROUGH WAXWINGS

Carolina Wren is rare in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan in any season, making one in Escanaba Dec. 3–25 (CT) very unusual. A Marsh Wren Jan. 5 in Hennepin (SC) provided the 6th winter record for Minnesota. Minnesota contributed the only Townsend's Solitaire reports with 3 sightings in Duluth in December (fide KE), one Dec. 20 in Lake (fide KE), and one Dec. 28 in Houston (AH, PH). American Robins were abundant throughout the Region with flocks of several hundred reported into January. Wisconsin had an excellent showing of 12 to 15 Varied Thrush while 11 in Minnesota were considered just average. Varied Thrush reports in Michigan, where the species is considered rare, included one Dec. 23 in Escanaba (CT), one from Jan. 9–11 in Lapeer (MS, TS), and one from Dec. 22–Jan.

19 in Ontonogan (JSi). A Gray Catbird in Hennepin (SC, m.ob.) provided Minnesota with its 3rd overwintering record while another in Mower Dec. 13–15 (RK, RKn) was considered noteworthy. Late in Wisconsin were five Am. Pipits Dec. 13 in Grant (PBr) and a report from Marquette Dec. 10–18 (DC). Both Minnesota and Wisconsin reported major invasions of Bohemian Waxwings with a peak count in Minnesota of 3500 in Cook Dec. 14 (BF). Michigan had more normal numbers.

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

An Orange-crowned Warbler Dec. 18 in Duluth, St. Louis (KE), furnished the 2nd-latest date for Minnesota and only its 3rd winter record. For the 2nd consecutive year, and only the 2nd winter record, a Yellow-throated Warbler was reported in Wisconsin, Dec. 22 in Richland (AC). In Michigan, two Pine Warblers visited a feeder in Ottawa from Jan. 1–31 (CPo, CPm). Constituting the 3rd winter record in Minnesota was an Ovenbird Dec. 1 in Washington (WL). A Com. Yellowthroat was considered late Dec. 12 in Milwaukee (DG).

A Savannah Sparrow of the Ipswich race was reported to Jan. 3 near the Port Washington Harbor, WI (TU, BC). In Michigan Savannah Sparrows observed at feeders included individuals from Dec. 23–25 in Muskegon (GW), Jan. 12–17 in Clinton (GB), and from Dec. 24 through the period in Jackson (DBr). Fox Sparrows were more numerous in Michigan with reports from 8 sites including overwintering at two. Wisconsin had overwintering reports from Jefferson (BD) and Sheboygan (AHO). A very rare winter record in Michigan was a Lincoln Sparrow Dec. 9–15 in Detroit (KO). All 3 states reported excellent numbers of Lapland Longspurs while both Michigan and Wisconsin had similarly high numbers of Snow Buntings.

A male Rose-breasted Grosbeak was reported at Pike Lake S.P., WI, Dec. 30 (fide BD). An Indigo Bunting at Chippewa Falls Dec. 8 (CK) provided only the 3rd winter record for Wisconsin. Minnesota had rare overwintering records of Brewer's Blackbirds in Becker (BB) and Crow Wing (WN, JB, SB). Wisconsin reported an uncommon number of this species with 500–1000 seen in December at Horicon Marsh. Wisconsin reported a Baltimore Oriole Dec. 29 on the Ephraim CBC while Minnesota had a "northern" oriole Dec. 20 in Douglas (SWs).

Winter finches, including Pine Grosbeaks, crossbills, redpolls, Pine Siskin, Purple Finch, and Evening Grosbeak, were

scarce throughout the Region. In contrast, Am. Goldfinches were found in excellent numbers in both n. Michigan and Minnesota.

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midwestern prairie region



KENNETH J. BROCK

For the second consecutive year the Region enjoyed near sub-tropical weather. Perhaps Robert Cecil captured the season most accurately with his comment, "this was about as close as we get to a nice winter." December temperatures were well above normal, and February brought almost spring-like conditions. Winter was compressed into a brief two-week period that began New Year's Day when the season's only major storm swept across the Region. The blanket of snow and subsequent bitter temperatures produced by this storm provided the season's only severe weather.

Mild temperatures kept all water open through the end of December. As a result, atypically high numbers of both water birds and passerines lingered in the Region until early January. Especially common and widespread were American Robins, which wintered in unprecedented numbers. However, it was the presence of a Purple Martin, two Barn Swallows, a Yellow-breasted Chat, and a colony of Sedge Wrens that characterized the winter of 1998–1999 as most extraordinary.

The early January storm and associated heavy snow cover also produced some unanticipated "yard birds." Scores of correspondents reported mixed flocks of Horned Larks, Lapland Longspurs, and Snow Buntings, searching for spilled seeds beneath their feeders. M. Stephenson's experience in west-central Ohio was typical; flocks of larks and buntings, seen afield January 2, were literally inside the city limits of Wapakoneta a few days later.

Warm February temperatures quickly melted the January ice, triggering the spring waterfowl migration. Thus, ducks lingered in the Region until early January and were back again by early February. It was indeed a short winter.

Abbreviations: Carl. L. (*Carlyle L. in Clinton, Fayette, & Bond Counties, IL*); H.B.S.P. (*Headlands Beach S.P., OH*); Jax.P. (*Jackson Park on the Chicago lakefront*); L. Cal. (*L. Calumet, Chicago*); R.E.D.A. (*Riverlands Environmental Demonstration Area, MO*); Spfld. (*Springfield, IL*).

LOONS THROUGH HERONS

Accompanying the warm winter and associated open water were above-normal numbers of loons and grebes. Red-throated Loons were remarkably widespread with reports from every state except Missouri. The season's best diver, however, was a **Yellow-billed Loon** that lingered in Bloomington, IL, Dec. 19–29 (RCh, †RHe, KMc, SF, GW, m.ob.). Among the common grebes, the peak counts were in s. Illinois where 99 Pied-billeds were at Newton L. Dec. 21 (JWa, SSi) and 100+ Horneds at Carl. L. Dec. 13 (DKa, JZ). Among the rarer grebes three Red-neckeds were reported in both Illinois and Ohio, and a singleton was seen in Indiana, providing an above-average season tally. East of the Mississippi R. single W. Grebes were found in *Henderson, IL*, Dec. 19 (AR, PR); at *Mississinewa Res., IN*, Jan. 1 (†Haw, BK, SSc); and at *East Fork S.P., OH*, Jan. 20–Feb. 6 (†HA, FR, ph.).

A fly-by N. Gannet, seen at H.B.S.P. Dec 12 (RHn, †NB), provided the Region's first record since 1994. Wintering Double-crested Cormorants have become quite regular in the Region; however, the 1000 birds counted at Rend L., IL, Dec. 19 (KMc, RHa) were extraordinary. Both Great Blue Herons and Black-crowned Night-Herons were plentiful across the Region. Highlights included 132 Great Blues at *Ottawa N.W.R., OH*, Dec. 6 (EP, CC) and an impressive 29 Black-crowneds along a power plant warm water outlet in *Lucas, OH*, Jan. 16 (DD). Additionally, among many tardy Great Egrets, one lingered in *Aurora, IL*, until Dec. 16 (†JDr).