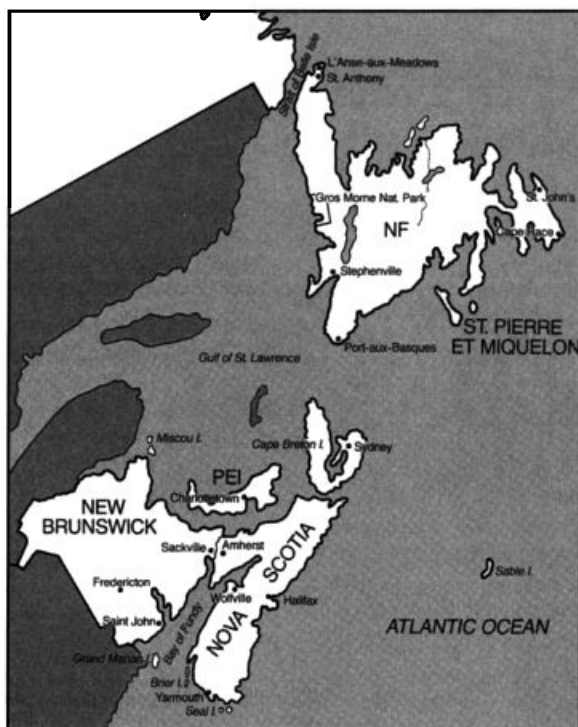


Atlantic Provinces



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The Region experienced a return to “old-fashioned” winter conditions, with well above-average snowfall in Newfoundland and Labrador and above-average snowfall in the Maritimes. The snow capital of Canada was easily St. John’s, NF, which received more than 600 cm (240 in) by the end of March, a total exceeded only by the winter of 1882. Until late December, it looked like winter would follow the pattern established in the 1990s—an often messy mixture of snow and rain with frequent and often prolonged mild spells in January and February. For example, on 18 December western Labrador received 10 hours of rain, which froze on contact, only the second time this had happened in December since about 1960. However, winter then took hold throughout the Region. Temperatures were not as cold as during recent winters, but they remained consistently below average. Birdwise, the highlight of the season was easily the bumper crop of Mountain Ash, which encouraged record

numbers of American Robin and Cedar Waxwing to winter. A few of each even survived the period in western Labrador, surely a first for that subarctic portion of our area. Finch numbers were mostly depressed, with the exception of Purple Finch, which was found in above-average numbers in southern New Brunswick and throughout Nova Scotia. Nova Scotia C.B.C.s also experienced record numbers of Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, and Dark-eyed Junco.

Abbreviations: AVP (Avalon Peninsula, Newfoundland); CSI (Cape Sable Island, Nova Scotia); GMI (Grand Manan Island, New Brunswick); CBI (Cape Breton Island, Nova Scotia); SPM (St. Pierre and Miquelon Islands, France); AV (Annapolis Valley, Nova Scotia); PEI (Prince Edward Island).

Loons Through Vultures

Red-throated Loons were sparse as usual, with a high count of 28 at CSI 16 Dec. Singles on the Miquelon C.B.C. 16 Dec and Miscou Island, NB 30 Dec (Robert Doiron) were notably late for those locations. A handful of Pied-billed

Grebes attempt to winter along the Nova Scotia coast every year. The latest reports were 2 in *Victoria*, CBI 6 Jan (DM), singles 18 Jan at Pleasant L. and Blanche, NS, and 3 at Gabarus, CBI 25 Jan (DM). Horned and Red-necked Grebe numbers were unremarkable. Wintering Double-crested Cormorants were above average in the Region: a “very unusual” number for winter occurred on the AVP starting in late Dec and continuing through Jan with a few (about 10) staying through the winter (BMT). Ten were found on the new St. Pierre C.B.C. 30 Dec. An imm. Black-crowned Night-Heron throughout the period at St. John’s survived on trout found in open streams, a first winter record for Newfoundland. Another imm. was present 15–24 Feb at Daniels Head, CSI (MN).

There is a small resident population of Turkey Vulture in sw. Nova Scotia, where there was a peak of 10 birds 13 Jan at Brier I. (BMy), and up to 5 around a farm at Chebogue (MN).

Waterfowl Through Raptors

An imm. **Mute Swan** that spent 1–31 Jan at Westport, Brier I. (v. o.) was deemed to be a genuine vagrant from the expanding New England population (IAM). It was first noted in late Dec on the nearby French Shore and eventually found dead in early Feb. Eurasian Wigeon numbers were normal, with high counts of 8 at St. John’s, 4 in Halifax, and 3 at Glace Bay. A count of 85 American Wigeon at Tufts Cove, Halifax 13 Dec was easily a Regional winter record (BMy). Two on the Miquelon C.B.C. 16 Dec were firsts. There was a late Dec influx of Wood Duck on the AVP, with 4 individuals, including one that survived the winter at St. John’s (BMT). American Black Ducks were found in above-average numbers, with 5383 found on New Brunswick C.B.C.s, 18,040 in Nova Scotia, and a record high of 571 on the Miquelon C.B.C. A count of 65 Green-winged Teal on the Saint John, NB C.B.C. 30 Dec was a Regional high. Tufted Ducks numbered 8 at St. John’s, 4 in Nova Scotia, and one at Saint John, NB. Greater Scaup Regional headquarters continues to be Pictou Harbour, NS, where 4441 were found on the local C.B.C. in early Jan. Harlequin Duck continues its road to recovery, with a Regional high of 68 found at White Head, GMI 8 Feb (BED). Chaleur Bay continues to boast the Region’s highest concentration of wintering Barrow’s Goldeneye, with a record 313 tallied on the Dalhousie, NB C.B.C. Two female Hooded Mergansers at St. John’s throughout the period provided a first overwintering record for the AVP.

There were two late reports of Osprey, one on the Halifax-Dartmouth C.B.C. 17 Dec and the other at Margaree, CBI on the remarkably

late date of 28 Dec. The annual Cyril Coldwell Eagle and Raptor Count in Kings, NS turned up 387 Bald Eagles 10 Feb. Reports of Cooper's Hawk numbered two in Nova Scotia and three in New Brunswick. A Red-shouldered Hawk near Mactaquac, NB 1–3 Jan (DG) was a good find. A respectable 94 Red-tailed Hawks was tallied on the Cyril Coldwell raptor count. There were "hardly any" Gyrfalcons found in Newfoundland (BMT) but at least 4 in Nova Scotia and a like number in New Brunswick. Only a few Peregrine Falcons were seen this winter, with two reports from New Brunswick, four from Nova Scotia, two on the AVP, and two at SPM. Peak count of about 10 Rough-legged Hawks came from the Tantramar Marsh, NB on various dates.

Ptarmigan Through Shorebirds

After last winter's tremendous invasion of Willow Ptarmigan in w. Labrador, numbers crashed back down to normal levels in 2000–2001, but numbers appeared to be up in Newfoundland, indicating the peak may occur there a year later. Interestingly, the precipitous decline in Gray Partridge numbers in the Annapolis Valley over the past 50 years is hypothesized to be almost entirely attributable to ingestion of lethal amounts of road salt taken in with grit (Paul MacDonald). A Sora at St John's 11–14 Dec (JS) was the only Regional report. Two American Coots at Saint John, NB 25 Jan (KMI) were perhaps the same birds that wintered there last year. Sandhill Crane is becoming almost passé in the Region, even in early winter, albeit still rare. One near Hampton, NB that persevered until early Jan (Richard Blacquiére) provided a first winter record for the province, while another survived until mid-Jan at Shubenacadie, NS.

The season's now seemingly annual Newfoundland/SPM **Northern Lapwing** was present at Ferryland from 30 Dec–5 Jan and enjoyed by many (John Wells et al.). A single Black-bellied Plover persisted at Grand Barachois, SPM until at least 2 Feb. Thirty-one were found on the CSI C.B.C. 16 Dec, with 21 still present 1 Feb. Four Semipalmated Plovers on the Glace Bay, NS C.B.C. 30 Dec were unique in the Region and record-late. A **Marbled Godwit** at Souris, PEI 25 Dec was apparently a first Regional winter record (KJM). The motherlode of Ruddy Turnstone, as usual, was at CSI, where 48 were found on 18 Feb (JN, MN). A maximum of 25 Red Knot was present at Grand Barachois, SPM in Dec and up to 2 Jan (RE). Sanderling were present in good numbers, such as 200 at Yarmouth 17 Dec, 76 at The Cape, CSI 1 Feb, 41 at Broad Cove, NS 29 Dec, 34 at Long Pond Beach, GMI

3 Jan, and 19 on the Miquelon C.B.C. 16 Dec. Three Semipalmated/Western Sandpipers were present at CSI 16 Dec (BMy). Lingered White-rumped Sandpipers were 3 at Schooner Pond, CBI to 4 Dec, one at Grand Barachois, SPM 5 Dec, and 3 at CSI 16 Dec. Several American Woodcock apparently attempted to winter in sw. Nova Scotia, perhaps with some success, as the latest report of these surprisingly hardy birds was of one at CSI 1 Feb (MN).

Jaegers Through Alcids

Jaegers seldom grace this seasonal report, but a late Pomarine was noted off CSI 16 Dec and a Parasitic at Brier Island 19 Dec (both BMy). An imm. **Laughing Gull** on the Port Hebert C.B.C. 17 Dec was a good find (DY, SF). Three Little Gulls at Campobello I. 26 Dec (Maurry Mills) was a high count for New Brunswick and also notably late. Black-headed Gulls went unremarked upon at their Regional headquarters in St. John's, but 275 were reported on Nova Scotia C.B.C.s, including 150 at Halifax 17 Dec. A Bonaparte's Gull 25 Jan+ in St. Pierre was considered fairly rare for winter (RE). At least 4 Common Gulls frequented St. John's Harbor, while singles were found at Eskasoni, CBI 26 Dec, Pictou Harbour through Jan (KJM), and Pocologan, NB 10 Feb (JGW). Last winter's Thayer's Gull returned to its Halifax Harbour haunts for a command performance (v. o.). An ad. **Yellow-legged Gull** at St. John's several times through the season (BMT, Paul Linegar, Jon King et al.) was deemed "pretty well an annual winter bird" by Mactavish. Lesser Black-backed Gull was tolerably common only in St. John's Harbor, where at least 10 different birds overwintered (BMT et al.). Black-legged Kittiwake was common in the lower Bay of Fundy during early winter, as evidenced by 10,000+ tallied off Brier I. 4 Dec (ELM, IAM) and 9500 on the C.B.C. there 19 Dec. Away from Newfoundland, single imm. Ivory Gulls were found at L'Ardoise, CBI 27 Dec (DM, SM) and Hunts Point, *Queens*, NS 25 Jan (Sandy Hiltz). The only tern of the season was a **Forster's Tern** found near Yarmouth, NS 1–4 Dec (MN). A flight of **15,000+** Dovekie passing White Head I, GMI in four hours 5 Feb was unprecedented for the Bay of Fundy (BED). They were also common along the Atlantic coast of Nova Scotia during Dec. Special aerial surveys documented up to 25,000 Razorbills at Old Proprietor Shoals, GMI during the winter. Forty miles across the Bay, 8600 were counted on the Brier I. C.B.C.

Owls Through Gnatcatcher

There was a minor invasion of Snowy Owls throughout the Region, although it was termed

"not a very good year" in Newfoundland (BMT). Peak numbers were four at CSI 16 Dec and a like number throughout on the Tantramar Marshes (v. o.) along the New Brunswick-Nova Scotia border. Northern Hawk Owl staged a minor invasion as well but nothing like that experienced farther west New Brunswick had about eight sightings, Prince Edward Island one, and Nova Scotia four, where they are very rare. One was as far s as Chebogue Point, *Yarmouth* 16 Jan. Deep winter snows were apparently the cause of considerable mortality of Northern Saw-whet Owls in the Maritimes. Reports of tame and/or emaciated (upon examination after death) Saw-whets around bird feeders began to surface in early Jan, especially in Nova Scotia. A dead Boreal Owl found at Sackville, NB 23 Jan was the farthest s. in the Region (*fide* Nev Gerrity). A dead Long-eared Owl found in *Lunenburg*, NS in mid-Jan indicated they may also have experienced some difficulties with deep snow. There were fewer reports than usual of Red-bellied Woodpecker, with about five each in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia and one in Prince Edward Island. An imm. **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** at Jollimore, *Halifax*, NS throughout the period was almost unprecedented in the province (ED). Reports of wintering Northern Flickers continue to increase, especially in Nova Scotia, but also in s. New Brunswick and e. Prince Edward Island. A Three-toed Woodpecker at Buctouche Dune, NB throughout the period was enjoyed by many. One at Mirande Lake, SPM 29 Dec was a first for those French islands (RE). It was an exceptional winter for Northern Shrike, with 105 on New Brunswick C.B.C.s, and 45 in Nova Scotia. It was even a "fairly good" season for the species in Newfoundland (BMT) Almost annual now in winter, at least 2 Carolina Wrens were found in New Brunswick, one at Fredericton, and one near Hampton. The only Marsh Wren for the period was at Wolfville, NS to 17 Dec. At least 3 Ruby-crowned Kinglets persisted into Jan at Alma, NB by making use of suet-peanut butter mixtures at local feeders (Rob Walker). A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher at St. John's until 7 Dec (Anne Hughes et al.) was unique in the Region.

Wheatear Through Waxwings

An undocumented Northern Wheatear was reported from Port Morien, CBI 31 Dec (Jim & Della Murrant). Only New Brunswick's 2nd, a female **Mountain Bluebird** was present 25 Nov–1 Dec at Pennfield Ridge, *Charlotte* (KMI). The Region's only Townsend's Solitaire pleased many observers 19 Jan–14 Feb at Melmerby Beach, *Pictou*, NS (Gary Murray et

al.). Two **Fieldfares** graced the Region. One briefly at Ferryland, NF 12 Jan (JS) did not linger. The 2nd, a long-staying bird at Fredericton, NB, was present 18 Jan–15 Mar for the province's 3rd record (DG et al). Local birders Don Gibson and Peter Pearce performed yeoman's service by keeping tabs on the bird and showing it to birders from as far afield as California. It associated loosely with flocks of American Robins and fed on Mountain Ash berries throughout the city. A **Redwing** at Marys Point, *Albert*, NB was well documented 1 Jan (DSC) for the province's first report. Despite intensive efforts by local birders over the next two months, it could not be relocated. One well described at Truro, NS

SA Who could overlook American Robins? Numbers were exceptional and likely unprecedented, even as far north as w. Labrador. The reason was a bumper crop of Mountain Ash (except on the island of Newfoundland), perhaps trying to make up for its almost complete failure in 1999. A total of 3370 were found on New Brunswick C.B.C.s, while Nova Scotia reported 3651. Peak C.B.C. counts were 571 at Shubenacadie, NS and 528 at Fredericton, NB. From all reports, this author estimates at least 25,000 were present in New Brunswick, mostly in the s. along the Bay of Fundy. They were uncommon in Newfoundland, although a handful persisted throughout the period in w. Labrador, surely a first for this sub-arctic portion of our Region. As an example of their resourcefulness, DSC et al. reported them feeding on intertidal mud flats of the upper Bay of Fundy in New Brunswick. Closer investigation revealed they were likely feeding on marine invertebrates, such as mud shrimp (*Corophium volutator*) and marine worms (*Nereis* sp.), fare usually reserved for shorebirds. Observation of similar behavior came from the Minas Basin of Nova Scotia. Flocks began to break up in mid-Feb, and by the end of the period, some reports of dead or starving birds surfaced in s. New Brunswick. However, the majority of these sturdy thrushes likely made it through.

by a single observer Feb 8 may have been the sought-after bird (Lyn Ferns).

Finally, to cap a truly interesting thrush winter, came three reports of Varied Thrush. A male at Mill Village, *Queens*, NS 22–24 Jan (SE, SC) did not stay, but another in New Glasgow was present 6 Feb+ (*fide* KJM). One, perhaps 2,

were present in two areas of Fredericton, NB 12–31 Jan (v.o.). Numbers of Bohemian Waxwing were low compared to the high levels found in winter 1999–2000. In St. John's, flocks of several hundred were present until mid-Jan, after which "all the berries were eaten and they had to leave" (BMT). On the other hand, Cedar Waxwings outnumbered Bohemians in Nova Scotia, while the opposite was true in New Brunswick. Nova Scotia recorded 1262 Cedars on its C.B.C.s, while New Brunswick tallied a respectable 1061. They were even found in w. Labrador at the very edge of their summer range, with about 25 on the Wabush-Lab City C.B.C. 16 Dec.

Warblers Through Finches

There were 397 warblers on the various Nova Scotia C.B.C.s, 372 of which were Yellow-rumped. Not surprisingly, Pine (9) and Orange-crowned (7) made up the bulk of the remaining warblers. One of the latter was present at St. Pierre until at least 21 Jan. A Nashville was on the CSI C.B.C. 16 Dec. Single Yellow-throated Warblers were attending feeders in St. John's 3–10 Dec and Riverview, NB 11–22 Dec. A Yellow-rumped Warbler on LaHave I., *Lunenburg*, NS 29 Dec was identified as an **Audubon's Warbler**, a first for Nova Scotia C.B.C.s (BMy). A rather late, quite yellowish Northern Waterthrush was found in Halifax 3–4 Dec (David Currie). Single Black-and-white Warblers were in Halifax to 3 Dec and 6–7 Dec in St. John's. Nova Scotia's first **MacGillivray's Warbler** lingered from the fall at Halifax until at least 4 Dec (BMy, ED et al.). A Yellow-breasted Chat lasted until 26 Dec at St. John's (Doug Phelan).

Perhaps surprisingly, more Eastern Towhees were reported in the Region this winter than during the previous fall. There were at least 6 at Nova Scotia feeders, 5 in New Brunswick, and 3 in Newfoundland. The only Clay-colored Sparrow reported was at a Shediac, NB feeder 5 Dec–1 Jan (Stuart Tingley). Single Grasshopper Sparrows were reported at Brier I., NS 3 Dec (IAM et al.) and MacArras Brook, *Antigonish*, NS 4 Dec (KJM). Newfoundland's 5th Sharp-tailed Sparrow, believed to be a Nelson's, was at Point Lance 16–20 Dec (BMT et al.). Record numbers of wintering Song Sparrows were found in Nova Scotia, as well as near-record numbers of White-throated Sparrows. Only the winter of 1976–1977 recorded more White-throateds in that province. More than 10,000 Dark-eyed Juncos were tallied, close to twice the previous high. Single male Yellow-headed Blackbirds were found at Apple River, *Cumberland*, NS 16 Jan and Moncton, NB 12 Feb. The imm. male

Bullock's Oriole first found in early Dec in Halifax survived until at least early Apr (v.o.) It is worth noting this was one of very few fully documented and satisfactory records ever for the Region.

Purple Finch was common in the Maritimes, especially in Nova Scotia and s. New Brunswick. Two were even found on the Wabush-Lab City C.B.C. 16 Dec, at the very edge of their summer range. A tally of 406 House Finch on the Moncton C.B.C. 16 Dec was a provincial high. It was a "very poor" year for all species of finch in Newfoundland (BMT), except for American Goldfinch, which was fairly common in urban areas (formerly rare). Elsewhere in the Region, there were moderate numbers of White-winged Crossbill in New Brunswick and Nova Scotia. Interior *Queens*, NS was the only area where Red Crossbill was common, with "hundreds" reported in late Jan at Kejimikujik N.P. (Becky Whittam). It was an off winter for Common and Hoary Redpolls, except in Labrador, where both were fairly common. Pine Siskin was found in above-average numbers on Maritime C.B.C.s, while American Goldfinch was at or near record highs, with 11,000+ on both New Brunswick and Nova Scotia counts. Evening Grosbeak numbers continue to be depressed, termed "below average" in New Brunswick (DSC) and "average" in Nova Scotia (DM).

Observers (sub-regional editors in bold-face): David S. Christie, Shirley Cohrs, Brian E. Dalzell, Fred Dobson, Elizabeth Doull, Roger Etcheberry, Sylvia Fullerton, Don Gibson, Matt Holder, Richard Knapton, Randy Lauff, David McCorquodale, Kenneth J. McKenna (KJM), Ian A. McLaren, Kenneth MacIntosh (KMI), Bruce Mactavish (BMT), Blake Maybank (BMy), Eric L. Mills, Susann Myers, Johnny Nickerson, Murray Newell, Don Gibson, Jytte Selno, David Young.

