

Jan-3 Feb (CJG, LS ph. et al.) could not be identified specifically, not even by Robin Restall, author of *Munias and Mannikins* (Yale University Press, 1997). The most likely species—based primarily on geography and the hypothesis that the bird was a vagrant from established populations in Cuba or elsewhere in the West Indies—was either a Chestnut or Tricolored Munia. However, the bird perhaps was more likely a local escapee.

**Undocumented report**

Details have not been seen for a Lazuli Bunting, the 8th Florida report, at L.A.R.A. 7 Jan.

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# Ontario



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This was the winter that wasn't. Temperatures in southern Ontario were 8.6 degrees Fahrenheit warmer than average and 2.0 degrees warmer than the previous warmest winter, which occurred 1997-1998. It was

somewhat dry in in most locations, though water levels finally began to rise in all the Great Lakes (except Lake Superior, which remained unchanged) after several years of declines. The effect of the warm winter on Ontario's birds was profound, with many records for numbers and for new species set in Christmas Bird Counts. Many transients and half-hardies, particularly waterfowl, lingered through December and even longer, though a few species such as Hermit Thrush were unusually

scarce. In Ontario, where "winter listing" is popular, it was a banner season. This was true despite the fact that most finches were noted in below-average numbers and the northern owls stayed in the north.

**Abbreviations:** H.F.N. (Hamilton Field Naturalists); K.F.N. (Kingston Field Naturalists); Frontenac; Long Point (Long Point Bird Observatory, *Haldimand-Norfolk*), Pelee (Pt. Pelee and vicinity, Essex); R.O.M (Royal Ontario Museum); Soo (Sault Ste Marie, Algoma).

**LOONS THROUGH WATERFOWL**

A high count of 50 Red-throated Loons (KO, AW) was made at Niagara-on-the-Lake 1 Dec. Thereafter, only a few singles were noted, mostly on L. Ontario. A **Pacific Loon** at the Soo 3 Feb turned out to be a one-day wonder. Horned Grebes were unusually plentiful. The counts of 197 on the Fisherville C.B.C., *Haldimand*, 87 on the Long Point C.B.C., and 90 at Kingston 15 Dec (K.F.N.) were all exceptional. The 6 Red-necked Grebes at Presqu'île P.P. 7 Dec (FH) was the highest number by 5 ever seen in one day in winter there. There were 19 Pied-billed Grebes at the Point Pelee marsh 18 Dec (AW) and 52 in the Erieau area 16 Dec (AW, MJ). At least one juv. Northern Gannet circled L. Ontario again this year, with observations at Stoney Creek 24 Dec (H.F.N) and Kingston on the 16 Dec C.B.C. Double-

crested Cormorants were recorded for the first time on several C.B.C.s, but the count of 52 on the Kincardine C.B.C. was high for a location that far north.

A Cattle Egret, record late for Ontario, lingered at Hillman Marsh, *Essex*, until 17 Dec, when it became an entry on the Pt. Pelee C.B.C. An American Bittern inhabited a ditch near Erieau until 16 Dec (GP). A **Glossy Ibis**, exceptional in winter, was observed near Thamesville 3-10 Dec (BDu). A Greater White-fronted Goose wintered in the area of Cranberry Marsh, Durham (m. ob.), and 2 more were at Bronte 5-12 Jan (H.F.N.). There were 2 Ross's Geese 9-14 Dec in the Cranberry Marsh area in company with 5 blue- and 15 white-morph Snow Geese (HC). A lone Ross's Goose was recorded in Kent 16-20 Dec (SC), one was on the Long Point C.B.C., 2 others alternated between Kingsville and Pelee 9-14 Dec, and 2 more were at Shrewsbury 3 Feb (JB). Brant were unusually widespread for the 2nd winter in a row. They were seen as far w. as Rondeau, where 4 were tallied 10 Dec (AW, FU). A Eurasian Wigeon was at Erieau 10 Dec-8 Jan (AW, FU et al.) in company with the huge mixed flock of waterfowl. Another at Hillman Marsh 24 Feb (DW) was record early for Ontario. Northern Shovelers remained in good



Another testimony, among thousands, to the mildness of the season, this Glossy Ibis tarried at Thamesville, Ontario 3-10 December 2001, here photographed on the final day of its stay. Photograph by Alan Wormington.

numbers, with 3 well n. at Ottawa 16 Dec. A Mallard was a first for the Algonquin P.P. C.B.C. 29 Dec. Three Harlequin Ducks were found on the Pt. Pelee C.B.C., 2 of which were present 1-17 Dec; the other, a young male, was seen 17-20 Dec. A pair lingered at Hamilton's Confederation Park to 27 Dec (DL, GL). A female Black Scoter was at the tip of Pelee 21 Dec (DW). A male Barrow's Goldeneye was on Amherst I. 5 Jan—9 Feb, while 4 were counted on the Ottawa C.B.C. 21 Dec, where they are more usual. .

### HAWKS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

The count of 34 Bald Eagles on the Atikokan C.B.C. 16 Dec was exceptionally high. Other big counts included 14 on the Long Point C.B.C., 9 at Navy I. 20 Jan (NM, SB), 11 at Kettle Pt 24 Feb (AR), 25 at Gore Bay 16 Dec (*vide* JL), and 19 at Mindemoya 15 Dec (*vide* JL). Four Northern Goshawks on the London C.B.C. 15 Dec was high but typical of the good numbers throughout s. Ontario. Golden Eagles were noted on the West Elgin C.B.C. 27 Dec, and another was at Port. Rowan 16 Dec (JM). A juv. Krider's Red-tailed Hawk was present at Sturgeon Creek near Pelee 16 Nov—15 Dec (MM, AW). A white morph at Ottawa was the most spectacular of the 3 Gyrfalcons seen intermittently there during the winter. The count of 86 Sandhill Cranes on the Long Point C.B.C. 15 Dec gave further indication of that species's ability to withstand Ontario winters. Twelve Northern Bobwhites in two groups were found at Walpole I. on the Wallaceburg C.B.C. 29 Dec. Christmas counters had a tally of 484 Wild Turkeys at the Ivy Lea bridge. The species had persisted there even before the widespread reintroductions. The London birders were very pleased with their count of 74 on their C.B.C. 27 Dec. Four Virginia Rails were noted 19 Dec by AW at the Pelee marsh, where 2 remained until 13 Jan. A Sora at Cambridge 20 Jan appeared to be overwintering. The count of 8200 American Coots 16 Dec at Erieau (AW, MJ) was huge.

An extreme oddity was the imm. **Black Vulture** at Echo Bay, Algoma dining on suet 23-26 Jan. A Black-bellied Plover at the n. edge of Peterborough remained until 7 Dec (*vide* DS) providing a new latest date locally. A **Black-necked Stilt** at Wallaceburg 27 Dec—2 Jan (LC, m. ob.) was seriously out of time and place. A Lesser Yellowlegs at Sturgeon Creek remained until 24 Dec (FU), thus record late for Pelee. A Willet near the Long Point causeway 2-16 Dec (AT) was only the 2nd ever seen in Ontario in winter. A Spotted Sandpiper at the mouth of the Rouge R. in early Dec remained until at least 26 Jan (CM). A Western

Sandpiper was at Rondeau P.P. 16 Dec (PAW) Purple Sandpipers were represented by individuals at Cobourg 1 Dec—24 Jan (MB), at Pelee 9 (SPi,AL) & 20-21 Dec (AW, HO) and again 2 Feb (DD), on Wolfe I. 13 Jan (BD), and at Niagara where they have become scarce the past few years 18 Dec (JI). An American Woodcock on the Burk's Falls C.B.C. was exceptionally far north.

There were 2 jaegers, thought to be Pomarine, at Hamilton 8 Dec (H.F.N.) and 2 others at Kettle Pt. 21 Dec (AR). A Black-headed Gull was observed at Queenston 1 Dec—17 Jan (RJ) and likely wintered because one in breeding plumage was seen after winter ended. Counts of Bonaparte's Gulls at the Niagara-on-the-Lake flyby remained very high, with 19,000 tallied 3 Jan (RJ). They were accompanied on that date by 5 Little Gulls (RJ). The record of a third-winter **Mew Gull** at Hillman marsh 26-28 Feb (AW et al.) became the 4th for Pelee. There were 2 California Gulls at Niagara 1-2 Dec and 20 Jan. An imm Sabine's Gull on the 16 Dec Kingston C.B.C. was an exceptional sight in winter. A Black-legged Kittiwake was at Morpeth 3 Dec (SC), and another was at Fort Erie 13 Jan (MM). Reports of Common Terns in winter are rare, but this winter we had 3: one was at L. Simcoe 15 Dec on the Orillia C.B.C., another at Long Point 15 Dec (MG), and there were 2 on the Woodhouse C.B.C. 16 Dec. Two Forster's Terns were found on the Rondeau C.B.C. 16 Dec. Counts of Snowy Owls were high in the Kingston area, with 43 reports in Dec, 49 in Jan, and 23 in Feb (K.F.N., *vide* RW). Rondeau had 12 on their C.B.C. 16 Dec. A Northern Hawk Owl was seen by many at Palmerston, *Grey* until 4 Jan, when it was killed by a vehicle, and another was at Bobcaygeon 30 Dec—28 Feb. There were 8 hawk owls at Atikokan (DE) and 9 between Timmins and Cochrane 19 Feb (SP). The tally of 43 Long-eared Owls 22 Dec on the Fisherville C.B.C. was reminiscent of the wintering groups of 50 or more in s. Ontario that were seen as recently as 30 years ago. A **Lewis's Woodpecker** (m. ob.) at Wooler (Northumberland) 5 Jan—28 Feb may have been the same one seen in Jun 2000 only 12 km away. Red-bellied Woodpeckers were in good numbers in the south, e.g. 18 on the St Catharines C.B.C. 16 Dec and 7 on the Kingston C.B.C. 16 Dec. They were seen as far n. as North Bay, where 2 individuals wintered. Three-toed Woodpeckers turned up at Algonquin P.P. 26 Dec (RP) and on the Atikokan C.B.C. 16 Dec.

### FLYCATCHERS THROUGH TANAGERS

An Eastern Phoebe remained at Blue Heron,

Pt Pelee 3-21 Dec. (m. ob.). A Blue-headed Vireo at Long Point became a reliable tick for the winter listers 8-21 Dec (RR). Two Rough-winged Swallows (WD) just above Niagara Falls were very late DATE. The 69 Tufted Titmice on the Wallaceburg C.B.C. 29 Dec was a new high count and further proof of that species's range expansion in the L. St. Clair region. The 3 Brown Creepers at Atikokan 1 Dec—28 Feb was 2 more than had ever been seen there in any winter. A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher was at the Sandbanks PP 2 Dec (m. ob.). A **Bewick's Wren** at Massey, Sudbury came to a feeder intermittently 21 Dec—28 Feb (E&AM). A Mountain Bluebird appeared briefly 7 Dec in the Soo. A **Townsend's Solitaire** was much appreciated by the many who saw it at Plum Tree Park, Mississauga 8 Dec—13 Jan (MC, LN); it was seen again after the winter period. Amazingly, the well-documented Toronto I. Swainson's Thrush on the Toronto C.B.C. 30 Dec (DB et al.) was the 2nd for that C.B.C. in recent years. Single Varied Thrushes were at Haydon, *Durham* 3-5 Jan (DSz) and at Nipigon 26 Jan—28 Feb (CHu), fewer than normal. All three mimids could be found in n. Ontario in mid-Jan: there was a Brown Thrasher in Marathon (KW), a Gray Catbird at Eagle R. (CE), and a Northern Mockingbird in Thunder Bay's Marina Park (m. ob.).

An extremely late Cape May Warbler graced the Thunder Bay C.B.C. 26 Dec (AH). Pine

Warblers are more usual in the winter, and these were reported at Campbellville 11 Jan (m. ob.) and far n. on the Marathon C.B.C. 16 Dec. The latter bird remained until about 25 Jan. An Ovenbird in Toronto 6-20 Feb (GBr) was not unprecedented there in winter. A Hooded Warbler was on the w. side tip of Pelee 5 Dec (AW), record late for Ontario. A female Summer Tanager attended a feeder at Deep River, Nipissing, 8-30 Jan+.

### WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

This winter's only Spotted Towhee was recorded on the highly successful Marathon C.B.C. 16 Dec and was seen until 13 Jan. A Lark Sparrow near Newburgh 1-22 Dec (K.F.N.) was seen by many. Nine Fox Sparrows along the Delaurier trail at Pelee 21 Dec (DW) was a high count for the late date. A single Fox Sparrow remained on Dacre Cr. In Toronto 1 Dec—28 Feb, although it was hard to find. A Lincoln's Sparrow visited a feeder and was recorded as count week on the Soo C.B.C. 15 Dec. A Harris's Sparrow turned up in Plover Mills near London for all of Jan and Feb (EH). Another was in sw. Leamington 16-18 Jan (JW, PW). A flock of 38 Lapland Longspurs was observed on the West Elgin C.B.C. 27 Dec. A **Smith's Longspur**, a first for Ontario in winter, was found near Hagersville 2 Dec (JMi), where it remained until 10 Mar, to the delight of Ontario birders. The only report of Dickcissel was at Port Britain, Northumberland, 26 Dec (KM). A male Rose-breasted Grosbeak was at Providence Bay, *Manitoulin* 13 Dec (EG). A Western Meadowlark was found dead at the Soo 2 Jan (\*Royal Ontario Museum) only one day after it was first found. Two Yellow-headed Blackbirds were among the thousands of Red-winged on the Wallaceburg C.B.C. and provided an extra bit of excitement for the many birders who had come to see the Black-necked Stilt. The 2 Brewer's Blackbirds near Long Point (DM) 23 Dec were the only ones reported this winter. Pine Grosbeaks were widespread in s. Ontario this winter, e.g. 160 on the Peterborough C.B.C. 16 Dec; there were even 5 at Pelee 1 Dec, where they are very seldom seen. Crossbills were generally scarce, but a few White-winged roamed s. Ontario. Evening Grosbeaks continued their decline of recent years and were very sparsely distributed.

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The careful reader of the regional reports will notice more and more firm records of western races of Red-tailed Hawk east of the Mississippi River. This *krideri* Red-tailed was photographed 11 December 2001 at Sturgeon Creek, Essex County, Ontario, where the pale "Krider's Red-tailed Hawk" is quite rare. *Photograph by Alan Wormington.*

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**SA**merican Pipits were especially numerous this winter. Some unusually large flocks were seen in Dec, e.g. 111 on the West Elgin C.B.C. 27 Dec; however, most birds remaining into Jan could safely be considered wintering birds in the experience of Alan Wormington. It was a very mild Dec, and there were very few pipit sightings prior to 24 Dec. On that date, the cold and snow finally arrived, and there were several observations of flocks of 50-100 moving s. in the next few days. Overwintering pipits in Ontario are normally rare—many winters go by with none at all in the province—but this winter there were 45 reported, mostly singles. Thirty-five of these were in sw. Ontario, 8 at Toronto, one at Kingston, and one s. of Hamilton. Whether or not this phenomenon was related to global warming, the mild Dec of 2001, or something else entirely is not known at present.