



Among a wintering flock of over 600 Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches at Exshaw, Alberta, there were several of the “Hepburn’s” subspecies and at least one albino! This image was captured 27 February 2002. Photograph by Terry Korolyk.

Screech-Owl called in temperatures of  $-30$  degrees C in Winnipeg 27 Jan (RN). After last fall’s influx of Snowy Owls, a fair number remained; 43 were banded in Saskatchewan in Dec and Jan (MS, DZ, BT). Only se. Manitoba experienced a strong “echo” of last winter’s Northern Hawk Owl and Great Gray Owl incursion. A Long-eared Owl was in the Swift Current, SK area 29 Dec (*vide* WH). Seventeen Short-eared Owls were seen in Saskatchewan (RW, CB, DH), and about 10 in Alberta, while 3 in Winnipeg 26 Jan were the only ones in Manitoba (RP, JS, AW). A female Red-bellied Woodpecker, Saskatchewan’s 7th or 8th, overwintered in Regina (TR, m. ob.).

### PASSERINES

Black-capped Chickadees and Red-breasted Nuthatches staged a major incursion in the Region. High numbers, often doubling previous records, were found on numerous C.B.C.s. Unusually late were a Winter Wren at the Cave-and-Basin marsh in Banff N.P., AB 2 Dec (J&MM), 2 Eastern Bluebirds at Treherne, MB 4 Dec (AM), and 3 Mountain Bluebirds on two Saskatchewan C.B.C.s 5 Jan, with one at Pike L. remaining through 3 Feb (DN). In Alberta, a Hermit Thrush wintered at Lethbridge (*vide* D&TD), and another was at St. Albert until at least mid-Dec (DS, m. ob.). More American Robins than usual remained across the south of the Region. Eight Varied Thrushes were tallied in Saskatchewan and 4 in Manitoba.

Bohemian Waxwings were numerous in sw. Manitoba and cen. Saskatchewan, but scarce in Alberta except for a flock of 4000 in Calgary 26 Feb (TK). Cedar Waxwings were well above normal in all three provinces, with

Saskatchewan reporting “unprecedented” numbers (BL et al.). A Yellow-rumped Warbler videotaped at a Lockport feeder 18 Jan represented the first midwinter warbler record for Manitoba (GM); it likely perished during bitter cold that night. Another exceptional lingerer was the **Summer Tanager** at Dauphin, MB 21 Nov—14 Dec (D&JM, BW).

Rare winter sparrows included single Chipping Sparrows at Kutawagan L., SK 26 Dec (*vide* WH) and in Winnipeg through the period (RP), a Clay-colored Sparrow about 23 Dec at La Ronge (*vide* WH) and another through winter in downtown Winnipeg (WC, m. ob.), and lone Swamp Sparrows at Cave-and-Basin marsh 2-12 Dec (KB, m. ob.) and at Harris, SK 18 Dec (WR). Notable were about 1000 Lapland Longspurs at Cookson Res. 17 Feb (BL, JC) and 10,000 Snow Buntings near Strathmore, AB 24 Feb (TK). A female Rose-breasted Grosbeak in Saskatoon 1 Dec was exceptionally late (PhT). Rarely reported in winter was a Brown-headed Cowbird at Taber, AB 17 Dec (LB); 4 others were tallied on C.B.C.s.

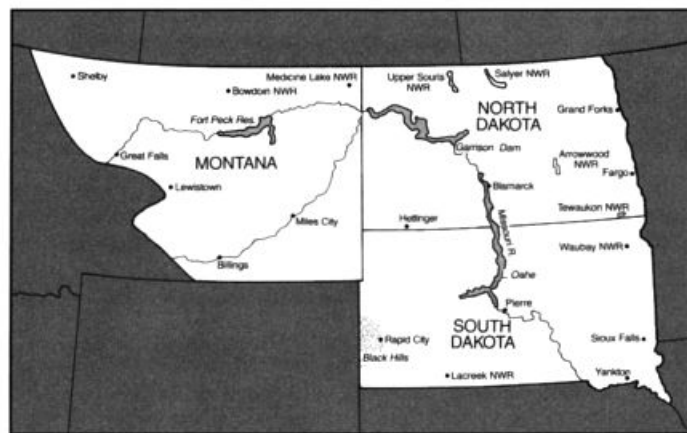
A spectacular overwintering flock of 600+ Gray-crowned Rosy-Finches at an Exshaw, AB

feeder included one albino and a few individuals of the “Hepburn’s” subspecies (CH, TK, m. ob.). One at Hodgeville, SK 12 Feb was locally rare (MP). White-winged Crossbills irrupted over a wide front, from the Alberta Foothills through Saskatchewan to sw. Manitoba, while Common Redpolls were especially common in Saskatchewan, and American Goldfinches were high in s. Alberta

**Observers** (provincial compilers in boldface) K. Barker, L. Bennett, C. Bjorklund, W. Christianson, A. Courcelles, S. Courcelles, J. Cummings, C. Cuthbert, D. & T. Dolman, R. Ebel, B. Ewart, D. Fast, F. Fast, W. Gierulski, C. Hansen, W. Harris, **M. Harrison**, D. Hjertaas, R. Jensen, P. Jones, R. Klauke (RKL), R. Koes, T. Korolyk, F. Lahrman, H. Lane, **B. Luterbach**, G. Machnee, D. & J. McDonald, J. & M. McDonald, A. McMaster, D. Nadeau (DNa), D. Neves, R. Nickel, R. Parsons, M. Priebe, W. Renaud, T. Riffel, B. & H. Schmidt, W. Smith, M. Stoffel, D. Stokes, J. Swartz, Peter Taylor, Phil Taylor (PhT), B. Terry, T. Thormin, D. Vujnovic, B. Walley, A. Walleyn, R. Wang (RWg), G. Wapple, R. Wapple, F. Whiley, D. Wilson, G. Yaki, D. Zazelenchuk.



# Northern Great Plains



**Ron Martin**  
16900 125th Street SE  
Sawyer, North Dakota 58781-9284  
(jrmartin@ndak.net)

The winter weather was a continuation of the fall, with mild temperatures and little precip-

itation. With snow cover light or nonexistent, access to C.B.C. circles was unusually good. Most of February was particularly warm, and north-bound migrants were noted by the middle of the month. Glasgow, Montana had a record high of 66° Fahrenheit on 22 February. However, the last week of February brought very cold weather, and

many migrant waterfowl had moved back south by early March. Numerous lingering species were noted, and the semi-hardy species had a banner season. White-winged Crossbills were widespread, and Snowy Owls staged the largest invasion in recent memory.

**Abbreviation:** p. a. (subject to review by the appropriate state records committee).

### LOONS THROUGH DIVING DUCKS

Two Common Loons that lingered until 2 Dec on Devil's L. provided only the second record for that month in North Dakota (EEF). The 2nd latest for North Dakota, 2 Horned Grebes were on L. Sakakawea, *Mercer* 16 Dec (DNS). A **Western Grebe** through the period at Nelson L., *Oliver*, ND furnished the first wintering record for the state (CDE). In South Dakota, a late Clark's Grebe was tallied in *Fall River* 1 Dec (TJ).

Large numbers of Canada Geese wintered at the n. edge of the Region, with reports of over 10,000 at L. Elwell (HM) and Ft. Peck (CC), MT, and also at Garrison Dam and Bismarck, ND. Unusual were 3 Greater White-fronted Geese at Ft. Peck, MT through most of Feb (CC). Also at Ft. Peck, 9 Tundra Swans were noted most of Feb, a first for the area that time of year (CC).

Late scoters in South Dakota included a White-winged Scoter in *Charles Mix* 11 Dec (p. a., RM) and a Surf Scoter 3-15 Dec in *Hughes* (p. a., RDO, KM). Very unusual away from Garrison Dam in the winter, 8 Buffleheads were at Tewaukan NWR 21 Dec. The 2nd highest count for North Dakota, 2420 Common Goldeneyes were tallied at Devil's L. 2 Dec (EEF). Casual away from the Black Hills, a **Barrow's Goldeneye** was reported from *Charles Mix* 12 Dec (p. a., RM).

### RAPTORS THROUGH GULLS

As might be expected in a warm, open winter, raptor numbers were notable throughout the Region. Bald Eagles peaked at 40 in *Ramsey*, ND 2 Dec (EEF), and 72 were noted on 14 North Dakota C.B.C.s, a new high count. A Red-shouldered Hawk wintered in *Day*, SD in the same area where one was present in 1999-2000 (DRS). Rough-legged Hawks were again present in large numbers in the n. part of the Region. The 67 individuals tallied on 17 C.B.C.s constituted a new high for North Dakota. Notable numbers were reported for several n. Montana locations. Golden Eagles were easily located throughout North Dakota, and 26 were noted on nine C.B.C.s.

A **Sandhill Crane** remained to mid-Feb along the Red R. in Fargo, ND/Moorhead, MN. This provided the first winter record for North Dakota (TM, JS), whereas one seen 22 Feb in *Kidder*, ND

provided the earliest ever spring migrant report for the state (GK). A late Killdeer was at Ft. Peck, MT 19 Dec (CC), and an early migrant was in Sioux Falls, SD 18 Feb (JE). Providing the earliest report for South Dakota, an American Woodcock was in *Yankton* 23 Feb (SVS).

Late away from the Missouri R., 12 Bonaparte's Gulls were in *Fall River*, SD 18 Dec (JLB). Only the 2nd report for South Dakota, an ad. **Mew Gull** was at Pierre 1-11 Dec (p. a., RFS, JSP). The same or another ad. Mew Gull was seen down river in *Yankton* 22-25 Dec (p. a., DS). An **Iceland Gull** at Pierre 17 Dec+ provided the 3rd report for South Dakota (p. a., RDO, KM). In North Dakota, an ad. Iceland Gull at Garrison Dam 16 Dec furnished about the 14th report for the state (p. a., REM, DNS). Late away from Garrison Dam, a Thayer's/Iceland Gull was seen 13-15 Dec at Grand Forks, ND (p. a., EEF, DOL). Casual at Ft. Peck, an imm. **Glaucous-winged Gull** was seen there for a couple of weeks in late December (p. a., CC).

### DOVES THROUGH RAVEN

**Eurasian Collared-Doves** continued in Mayville, ND, and 2 in Napoleon 10 Feb provided about the 14th report for the state (p. a., CDE, JPL). In South Dakota, the species was reported from four counties, with high counts of seven in *Hughes* 20 Jan (p. a., JSP) and 6-8 in *Butte* 28 Feb (p. a., JLB). Unusual in n. Montana, Mourning Doves wintered at three locations (TP, DP, HM, LS).

Providing the first winter report for South Dakota, a **Barn Owl** was in Pierre 18 Dec (p. a., DB). Undoubtedly the bird of the season was **Snowy Owl**, with probably the largest invasion in decades. At least 10 were reported from n. Montana. South Dakota had sightings in 13 counties, with a high of 10 s. of Pierre 19 Feb (DB). The largest numbers were in North Dakota, with reports from 45 of 53 counties and a season total of >500 individuals. A peak of 51 individuals was tallied 11 Jan in *Grand Forks* (EEF). There were four February reports of Northern Saw-whet Owl for North Dakota, and the species was found in four locations in the Pierre, SD area.

At the edge of their range, 15 Pinyon Jays wintered at a feeder in Dearborn, MT (MS). The number of American Crows wintering in North Dakota continues to increase. Common Ravens are also increasing in North Dakota in winter, with 56 on four C.B.C.s being well above the previous high. Icelandic State Park led the way with 46 on 18 Dec. In Montana, two December sightings at Benton L. were a first for the refuge in winter (SM).

### WRENS THROUGH GROSBEAKS

Casual in winter away from the Black Hills, a

Winter Wren was in Pierre, SD 9-15 Dec (p. a., DB). A **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** at Mayville, ND 26 Dec furnished the latest observation for the state (p. a., RMK). Record early for North Dakota was a Mountain Bluebird in *Burleigh* 14 Feb (WW). Early for South Dakota, a single was in *Stanley* 17 Feb (KM). Townsend's Solitaires were scarce in their usual wintering grounds in the Little Missouri drainage of North Dakota, probably due to a poor berry crop. Perhaps correspondingly, good numbers were noted in the e Dakotas.

Lingering Gray Catbirds were at Long Lake N.W.R., ND 20 Dec (GK) and in *Pennington*, SD 17 Dec—20 Jan (JLB). Casual in winter, a Northern Mockingbird was noted in *Hughes*, SD 23 Feb (EDS). Bohemian Waxwings were very scarce, especially after the first of the year Yellow-rumped Warbler numbers were unprecedented in South Dakota, with 5 reported from four widely scattered counties.

A Swamp Sparrow in *Hughes*, SD provided the 3rd wintering record for the state (p. a., KM). Unusually high numbers of *Zonotrichia* sparrows were noted this winter. A flock of a dozen White-throated Sparrows wintered on the University of North Dakota campus in Grand Forks (DOL). In South Dakota, 14 White-crowned Sparrows were in *Hughes* 18 Feb (RDO).

Red Crossbills were noted at six North Dakota locations, with a peak of 49 at Denbigh Exp Forest, *McHenry* 2 Dec (REM). White-winged Crossbills made a strong showing across the Region. The species wintered at three locales in n. Montana, and they were reported from eight South Dakota counties. In North Dakota, the peak was 30 in New Town 14 Jan (RS) The species was reported from 11 of 14 counties sw of the Missouri R., an area where suitable habitat is in very short supply. Common Redpoll numbers were strong in Montana and North Dakota, with the usual scattered Hoary Redpolls in the mix. Evening Grosbeaks were extremely scarce

**Contributors** (state editors in boldface) MONTANA: **Charles Carlson**, Harriet Marble, Stephen Martin, Dwain Prellwitz, Thora Prellwitz, Mike Schwitters, Linda Sibley. NORTH DAKOTA: **Corey D. Ellingson**, Eve E. Freeberg, Gregg Knutsen, Robert M. Kruger, David O Lambeth, Jack P. Lefor, Ron E. Martin, Tom Musachia, Rita Satermo, Jean Strandness, Dan N Svingen, Wendy Willmuth. SOUTH DAKOTA Doug Backlund, Jocelyn L. Baker, Justin Enger, Todd Jensen, Ron Mabie, Kenny Miller, Ricky D Olson, **Jeffrey S. Palmer**, Robb F. Schenck, Dennis R. Skadsen, Eileen Dowd Stukel, Dave Swanson, Steve Van Sickle.

