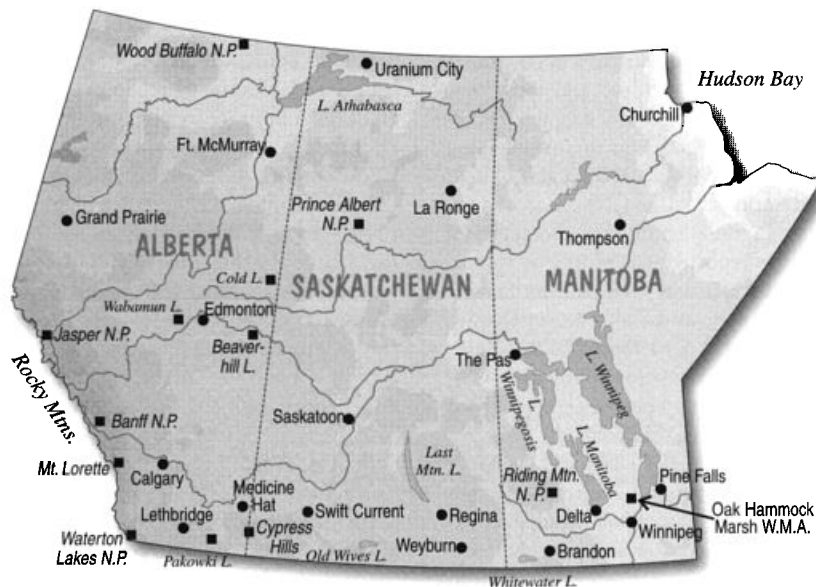


Prairie Provinces



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After a cold fall, the Region enjoyed a mild stretch that lasted until early January in Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Thereafter, it became very cold and windy in those two provinces; indeed, February was the coldest since 1979 in Manitoba. Alberta remained on the warm side of the jet stream for most of the winter, allowing many unusual waterfowl and passerines to linger there. Precipitation ranged from below to near normal Region-wide.

LOONS THROUGH RAPTORS

A late Pacific Loon was at Cold L., AB 8 Dec (TH). Alberta hosted five grebe species, including single Red-neckeds at Wabamun L. 3 Dec (SG, JK, DN, TT) and Cold L. 6–7 Dec (TH), 2 Eareds at Wabamun L. 1 Dec (RK, FW) and 4 in the Taber area 5 Dec (LB), and a Western at Wabamun L. 3 Dec (SG, JK, DN, TT), with 2 at Cold L. 5–13 Dec (RK). An American White Pelican on the Qu'Appelle R., SK survived at least into Jan (BL, DS), while 11 at Medicine Hat, AB 9 Dec dwindled to 2, last seen 21 Dec (DB). A Great Blue Heron survived at High River, AB 11 Jan—early Feb (GWt). An exceptionally late Turkey Vulture was noted near Weyburn, SK 14 Dec (BC).

A Greater White-fronted Goose wintered at Calgary, AB (*fide* MH), while a hybrid Greater White-fronted x Canada

Goose was in the Taber area 25 Feb (LB). Exceptional counts of late geese included 5000 Snow 1 Dec and 12 Ross's 5 Dec near Taber (LB). Unprecedented C.B.C. tallies of Canada Geese included 19,402 at Calgary, 8710 at Medicine Hat, and 8900+ at Coronach, SK. Uncommon in winter were a Canvasback at Cold L. 5–13 Dec (RK) and a Redhead at Minnedosa L., MB 28 Dec (MY). Alberta's 3rd Common Eider was a female at Cold L. 4 Dec (SG, JK, DN, TT). Also noteworthy were a Harlequin Duck on the Qu'Appelle R. 29 Nov–1 Dec (B&HS, BL) and a Surf Scoter at Cold L. 6–13 Dec (TH, RK), while 6+ Long-tailed Ducks in Alberta included one overwintering for the 2nd consecutive season at Fish Creek P.P. A Hooded Merganser was seen at Brandon, MB 28 Jan (M&CS), a Red-breasted Merganser wintered at Calgary (BW), and Ruddy Ducks occurred in Dec in all three provinces.

Single Sharp-shinned Hawks appeared at Saskatoon 17 Dec (HL) and Regina 8 Jan (DS). Though now "expected" in Alberta, wintering Cooper's Hawks remain unusual in Saskatchewan and Manitoba; singles were seen near Lebret, SK 6 Dec (BL) and at Landmark, MB 8 Feb (FG). Five Rough-legged Hawks were remarkably far n. near Grand Rapids, MB 2–5 Jan (BCh). Early migrant Golden Eagles appeared at Sheep River Valley, AB 7 Feb (WS) and Mt. Lorette, AB 14 Feb (PS).

COOT THROUGH WOODPECKERS

Eighteen American Coots were recorded on the Estevan, SK C.B.C. 23 Dec (*fide* GWe), while one at Regina lasted until 10 Jan (TR, m. ob.). Four Wilson's Snipe were found in Alberta (PC, MHu, TK), and one was at Saskatchewan Landing, SK 17 Dec (*fide* BL). Unusual numbers of lingering gulls in Alberta included 20 Ring-billed, 23 California, 87 Herring, and 5 Glaucous, all at Cold L. 15 Dec. Eurasian Collared-Doves maintained a toehold in sw. Saskatchewan, with reports from Eastend, Mortlach, and Swift Current, while 2 survived at Red Deer, AB from 2 Feb into Mar (m. ob.).

Owls failed to enliven the winter as they sometimes do. The highest count of Snowies was 10 e. of Calgary 24 Dec (TK). The 5 Northern Hawk Owls banded n. of Pine Falls, MB 5 Jan (J&PD) stood out among a handful of reports, while Great Gray Owls were particularly scarce. Short-eared Owls bucked the trend locally, with Saskatchewan reports totaling 15 birds

SA Not long ago, a winter warbler in the Prairie Provinces, even a Yellow-rumped, was almost unheard of. This season an unprecedented total of six species occurred, five of them in Alberta. A Cape May was at High River 13 Dec—early Feb (J&MM, m. ob.), and a Yellow-rumped visited Lethbridge 9 Dec (LB), while three species furnished first-time winter reports for Alberta. A **Palm Warbler** spent most of Jan at Calgary (RH, m. ob.), a **Northern Waterthrush** stayed at Edmonton from 7 Dec to the end of the month (JMD, BV, m. ob.), and a **Wilson's Warbler** was seen at Fish Creek P.P. 4 Dec (JB). A male **Black-throated Blue Warbler**, present at Saskatoon, SK since 24 Nov, was found dead 4 Dec (*fide* SS).

(m. ob.) and 12 near Vauxhall, AB 28 Dec (LB). A Northern Saw-whet Owl was a winter rarity at Winnipeg 20 Feb (LBI).

A Belted Kingfisher was at Saskatoon 10–26 Dec (MW, m. ob.), and 3 were reported in the Fort Qu'Appelle area, SK 1–16 Dec (SW et al.). Four Red-headed Woodpeckers, all immes., were found in Manitoba: one overwintered in Grosse Isle (KG), with other sightings at Stonewall until 1 Jan (*fide* KG), Grand Beach until 2 Jan (LV), and St. Malo 5 Feb (GWN). Even rarer were Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, with C.B.C. tallies of 2 at Edmonton, AB and one at Broadview, SK. Another was at Cold L. 7 Feb—2 Mar (TH), while one at Springside, SK survived on a jelly-and-suet mixture until at least 26 Jan (JP).

PASSERINES

A Loggerhead Shrike near Proven Marsh, MB in early Dec was well described (WV) but unconfirmed. Reflecting the species' continuing expansion, 1080+ Common Ravens were counted flying to a roost near Eden, MB 22 Jan (RD). Good details were provided for the Region's first winter **Carolina Wren** sighting at Winnipeg 7 Jan (RC). Also notable were single Winter Wrens at Writing-on-Stone P.P., AB 21 Dec and Mt. Lorette 22 Feb (PS), while a **Marsh Wren** at Banff N.P. 6 Jan (MM, PS) was a winter first for Alberta.

A Mountain Bluebird lingered at Saskatoon 18 Dec—10 Jan (MR, m. ob.). Manitoba has only two prior winter records of Hermit Thrush, but 5 were reported this season: 3 in different areas of Winnipeg on 1, 9 & 14 Dec (m. ob.), plus one at an unknown location 7 Jan (*fide* KD), while a feeder visitor in Winnipeg 6–9 Mar had doubtless wintered locally (S&KK). A Northern Mockingbird wintered at Edmonton (JMF, m. ob.). Few large flocks of Bohemian Waxwings were noted after Christmas, but s. Saskatchewan and Manitoba had more Cedar Waxwings than usual.

A few White-throated Sparrows normally overwinter in the south, but a flock of 18 at a downtown Winnipeg feeder in Dec was exceptional (WC,

RKo). As usual, a few Northern Cardinals appeared in Manitoba; farther out of range were females near Saskatoon 4 Jan (*fide* AH) and near Blackfolds, AB through Feb (D&KG, m. ob.). Outstanding among the icterid reports were 30 Red-winged and 20 Brewer's Blackbirds at Taber 2 Dec (LB), a flock of 13 Red-winged Blackbirds wintering at Grosse Isle (KG), and 11 Saskatchewan reports of Western Meadowlarks (m. ob.), plus 2 near Irricana, AB 22 Feb (TK et al.).

It was a relatively poor season for winter finches. Purple Finches are unexpected in winter, so several sightings in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, including some small flocks, were welcome. Apart from a few n. locales and some local movements in late Feb, Common Redpolls were scarce, while Pine Siskins were numerous only in cen. Alberta (*fide* MH). In contrast, American Goldfinches frequented feeders and unharvested sunflower fields from Edmonton and Medicine Hat to the Winnipeg area. Numbers in Saskatchewan were "unprecedented" (DH, BL), and numerous feeders in s. Manitoba had 30–40 daily visitors (DF, KG).

Observers (provincial compilers in bold-face): J. Bank, D. Baresco, L. Bennett, L. Blanchette (LBI), B. Carles, B. Chartier (BCh), W. Christianson, R. Clarke, P. Cram, R. Demey, K. De Smet, J. & P. Duncan, D. Fast, K. Gardner, F. Giesbrecht, D. & K. Gabert (D&KG), S. Gosché, M. Harrison, A. Hartley, T. Hindmarch, D. Hjertaas, R. Howland, M. Huston (MHu), R. Klauke, R. Koes (RKO), S. & K. Koolage, T. Korolyk, J. Kovacs, H. Lane, B. Luterbach, J. MacFarland (JMF), J. Martin-DeMoor (JMD), J. & M. McDonald (J&MM), M. McIvor, D. Nadeau, J. Popoff, T. Riffel, M. Rosta, M. & C. Sangster, D. Sawatzky, B. & H. Schmidt, S. Shadick, P. Sherrington, W. Smith, T. Thormin, W. Vanderschuit, L. Veelma, B. Vroom, G. Wagner (GWR), G. Walley (GWN), G. Wapple (GWE), F. Whiley, M. Williams, B. Wilson, S. Wilson, M. Yorke. ☺

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