

Fall was warmer than usual, especially in Nunavik, where temperatures were about 2 to 3 degrees Celsius above normal. Southern Québec was closer to normal. There was a large area of above-normal precipitation stretching through most of the province. The North Shore and the Gaspé Peninsula were blessed with an unprecedented number of rarities late in the fall. These immense regions are birded by only a handful of local observers at this time of the year, and one wonders what could be found there with tenfold as many observers.

### LOONS THROUGH SHOREBIRDS

A Pacific Loon at Saint-Fulgence 17 Nov was only the 2nd for the Saguenay region (CC). A count of 200 Greater Shearwaters made from the Magdalens Is.—Souris ferry 23 Oct was remarkable so late in the season (C. Roy). A Manx Shearwater feeding among a flock of Dovekies at Sainte-Thérèse-de-Gaspé 29 Nov established a new Regional record-late date by over a month (AC). Late Great Egrets included 4 at I. Dupas 4 Nov (JM) and one at Notre-Dame-de-Lourdes 10 Nov (R. Hanser, *vide J. Nadeau*). A very late Cattle Egret found at Cap-d'Espoir 24 Nov was killed by 3 Common Ravens 1 Dec (ph. AC, m. ob.). At least one, most probably 2 Black Vultures continued to wander near the tip of the Gaspé Pen., as evidenced by sightings at Gascons 30 Aug (MC), Gaspé 16 Sep–10 Oct (*vide D. Jalbert*), Cap-d'Espoir 16 Sep (GR), and Grande-Rivière 18 Sep (GR).

The 5 Black-bellied Whistling-Ducks at Saint-Félicien continued through 8 Aug (*vide GS*). Especially intriguing were several reports of probable Canada Goose x Chinese Goose hybrids in localities very distant from one another. Two were banded by Canadian Wildlife Service biologists at Opinaca Res. (James Bay) 21 Jul (ph. P. Brousseau, MR, B. Gagnon), one was on R. des-Prairies (Montréal-Laval) 9 Jul–6 Sep (ph. R. Bourget, m. ob.), an unbanded bird was at Bergeronnes 23–24 Aug (ph. F. Gagnon, SB, SD), and one appeared at Deauville, near Sherbrooke 29 Nov (FR). A Barnacle Goose in the Boucherville Is. 6 Sep (F. Riou, M. Guzzo) and one between Boucherville and Varennes 26 Sep (N. Desranleau) were probably the same individual. Singles also visited Victoriaville 12–23 Nov (ph. CR et al.) and Roxton Pond 23 Nov (M. Maheu, MB). Single Mute Swans were found at Les Cèdres 25 Nov+ (F. Rozon) and Beauport 10–12 Oct (JL, D. Houx et al.). A Tundra Swan discovered at East-Sullivan, Abitibi 1 Nov was rescued 9 Nov after the lake had completely frozen, but the bird later died (R. Gauthier). Several Eurasian Wigeons turned up in the Montréal area in Oct (*vide PB*). Three Harlequin Ducks were spotted at Sainte-

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Catherine 16–27 Nov (M. Poulin, M. Bertrand, RB, m. ob.). A probable Common Goldeneye x Bufflehead hybrid was carefully studied at Laval 9 Nov+ (ph. GL, ÉP).

Incredibly, a 2nd Regional Swallow-tailed Kite showed up almost exactly a year after the province's first—and moreover in the same region, at Tadoussac 8 Aug (ph. V. Laplante, P. Corbeil, L.

Gagnon). Season totals of Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon came to 178 and 129, respectively, at Tadoussac, both representing new highs for this hawkwatch (SD, SB). At the Montréal site, the fall hawk count proved to be one of the best of recent years. Counts were above average for all raptors except Broad-winged Hawk (BB, MM). A dark-morph juv. Western

**Red-tailed Hawk** (*B. j. calurus*) at Gatineau 28 Oct–30 Nov+ was the first documented by photograph in the Region and, according to B. K. Wheeler, was the farthest n. of any winter record for the subspecies in e. North America (A. Cloutier).

A **Clapper Rail** at Maria, *Gaspésie* 11–25 Oct was a stunning find, providing our first Regional record (ph. C. Lamarre, m. ob.). Counts of over 2000 Sandhill Cranes at Palmarolle, *Abitibi* 16 Oct (S. Gagnon) and 840 between Notre-Dame-du-Nord and Roulier, *Témiscamingue* 11 Oct (J. Fréchette, C. Schryer) were remarkable. Away from nw. Québec, a pair that summered at Saint-Gérard-des-Laurentides was joined by another pair 27 Aug+ (ph. M. Sokolyk), 2 were at Plessisville 25 Aug+ (P. Vignoul), 2 were at Cap-d'Espoir 3–15 Sep (PP), and 2 were at Hérouxville 17 Sep (A. Delorme, M. Goyer).

An American Avocet made a one-day appearance at Île Mignerons (Laval) 21 Sep (ph. ÉP, GL). A Spotted Sandpiper at Beauport 22 Nov provided a new Regional late date (J. Chateauvert, C. Lessard). A Mar-



This immature dark-morph Western Red-tailed Hawk (subspecies *calurus*) at Gatineau, Québec 24 November 2003 appears to represent the northernmost record of this form in the North American East at this season. Photograph by André Cloutier.

bled Godwit stopped at Baie-du-Febvre 6–7 Sep (J. Bourbeau), while a juv. Western Sandpiper visited Pointe-Yamachiche 14 Sep (MA. Montpetit, J. Coutu). A count of 22 Baird's Sandpipers at Val d'Or 28 Aug was surprising (LI). It was a very good fall for Buff-breasted Sandpiper, with at least 15 individuals reported throughout the Region (*vide* PB). The only Ruff stopped at Sainte-Martine 23–24 Aug (ph. SM et al.). There were several reports of Long-billed Dowitcher, including 8 ads. at Baie-du-Febvre 3 Aug (F. Grenon) and single juvs. at Saint-Simon, *Gaspésie* 31 Aug (JR. Lepage, D. Mercier) and at Saint-Méthode, L. Saint-Jean 14–15 Sep (D. Lavoie), where the species is still rare. A much sought-

after species, single Red Phalaropes were detected at Portneuf 28 Aug (ph. GL, SD), Trois-Pistoles 5 Sep (JPO, ML), and Tadoussac 10 Oct (RP, MM, P. Carrier-Moisan). Up to 4 were sighted from the Trois-Pistoles–Les Escoumins ferry 12 Oct (MR, FS), and one was noted at Sainte-Catherine-de-Hatley 9 Oct (FR).

**JAEGERS THROUGH OWLS**

There were several inland Parasitic Jaegers in the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean area 17 Aug–16 Sep, including an amazing one-day count of 9 at Métabetchouan–Saint-Gédéon 27 Aug (S. Boivin); one also reached L. Saint-Pierre 14 Sep (JM). An ad. Laughing Gull at Laval 1 Aug (ph. ÉP, GL) and one at Montréal the same day (J. Galowski) probably involved the same individual, while a second-year bird showed up at Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue 12 Sep (DB. Collinge) and another was at Pointe-à-la-Garde, *Gaspésie* 17 Sep (P. Beaupré, P. Dufour). A first-winter Franklin's Gull was photographed at Beauharnois 28 Oct (L. Simard). Reports of Little Gull were quite numerous across the Region (*vide* PB). Single Black-headed Gulls reached Trois-Pistoles 13 Aug (RF, RP, M. Bourassa et al.), Les Escoumins 20 Sep (SB), and Tadoussac 25 Nov (ph. SB, SD). A first-winter Mew Gull of the American race *brachyrhynchus* was photographed at Tadoussac 16–28 Oct (SB, SD), while another visited Saint-Charles 25 Oct–1 Nov (GC, O. Barden). An ad. California Gull was carefully identified at Grandes-Berges 16 Aug (SD, SB), while the appearance of single first-winter birds at Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue 5 Nov (BB, MM) and at nearby Saint-Lazare 13 Nov (M. Dennis) possibly involved the same individual. An ad. Iceland Gull of the *glaucoideus* subspecies at Tadoussac 26 Nov was apparently the first photographic documentation for the Region (SB). Sightings of Lesser Black-backed Gull in the Region continued unabated (*vide* PB). S. Québec hosted several Sabine's Gulls, including one at Pointe-Yamachiche 1 Sep (ph. C. Vachon, J. Gélinas), one at L. Magog 5–11 Sep (FR), 2 at Sainte-Catherine 7–8 Sep (RB), and one at Laval 2 Oct (MB). A first-winter Ivory Gull brightened Tadoussac 29 Nov (ph. RP, MM, S. Moisan). Caspian Terns

continued to be present on almost any expanse of water in the Montréal area, including R. des-Prairies, Ottawa R., Châteauguay R., Richelieu R., and even the Saint-Étienne marshes (*vide* PB). The center of abundance remained L. Saint-Louis, with the high count being 41 at Maple Grove 3 Sep (MB). A juv. Arctic Tern at Bedford 9 Nov represented a very rare fall sighting for the Montréal area (JG. Papineau).

A Razorbill near I. Sainte-Hélène (Montréal) 21 Nov (R. Guillet) and one at Sainte-Catherine 22 Nov (m. ob.) presumably represented the same individual. More Atlantic Puffins than usual were seen w. of their range along the St. Lawrence, including 4 seen from the Trois-Pistoles–Les Escoumins ferry 12 Oct (MR, FS), 3 at Saint-Vallier 20 Oct (GL, JB), singles at Tadoussac 22 Sep and 10 Oct (RP et al.), and at Les Escoumins 22 Nov (LM et al.). Nine Yellow-billed Cuckoos were reported in the Region throughout the season (*vide* PB). The continued presence of Great Gray Owls in the Lower St. Lawrence since the last winter irruption in 2001 has been intriguing. This fall, singles were at Rimouski 19 Nov (RP), Sainte-Félicité-de-Matane 22 Nov (JD et al.), and Sainte-Luce 23 Nov (RP).

**SWIFTS THROUGH FINCHES**

The 1610 Chimney Swifts going to roost at Mont Laurier 1 Aug were noteworthy (R. Lebrun). An imm. Red-headed Woodpecker at Saint-Joachim, near Cap Tourmente 30–31 Oct was the only one for the season (R. Lepage, GL, JB). Single Red-bellied Woodpeckers were found at L'Annonciation 19–22 Oct (J. & MC. Campeau, *vide* G. Gauthier) and at I. Goyer (Carignan) 9 Nov (E. Samson, A. Lacasse). Record-high numbers of 164 American Three-toed Woodpeckers and 105 Black-backed Woodpeckers were banded throughout the season at the Tadoussac banding station (CB). A Yellow-bellied Flycatcher at Beauport 14 Oct was record late (JF Rousseau), and a Willow Flycatcher singing at Cap Tourmente as late as 13 Aug also established a new record late date (GC). An Eastern Phoebe at Rimouski 27 Nov was very late and slightly e. of its range (RP). A Western Kingbird was identified at Montmagny 30 Oct (M. Huard). More exceptional at this season than in spring, 2 first-year White-eyed Vireos were reported: one was found at Île Charron (Boucherville) 30 Sep (Y. Gauthier), and the other was mist-netted at Tadoussac 31 Oct (ph. CB, SD, SB). A Cassin's Vireo, documented with an excellent illustration at Cap Tourmente 1 Oct, was a prize find and our 4th Regional record (JM. Giroux, JPO).

Although the number of Carolina Wrens

was down compared to the same period last year, a pair apparently nested at Saint-Hyacinthe, as shown by the presence of a family group of 6 or 7 there 25 Aug (F. Martin). An individual at Mont-Laurier 27–30 Oct was locally rare (A. Boisclair). A House Wren at Sept-Îles 12 Oct was considered a rarity for the North Shore (JFL, BD, CC), while a Marsh Wren at Saint-Fulgence 30 Sep was only the 3rd for the Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean area (GS). The only Northern Wheatear of the season showed up at LaSarre 16–23 Oct, representing the 2nd for Abitibi (J. Laferrière, C. Saint-Pierre). A Townsend's Solitaire at Sept-Îles 9 Nov was notable (JFL), but more exceptional was a Fieldfare in the same locale 13 Nov, furnishing our 8th Regional record (JFL). Out-of-range Brown Thrashers were reported at Rivière-Saint-Jean 3–5 Nov (YR) and at Lavernière 15 Oct (BV). A Blue-winged Warbler was record late by more than a month at I. Sainte-Hélène 12–22 Nov (SM, m. ob.). An out-of-range Golden-winged Warbler in the Magdalen Is. 2 Oct was also very late (DGG). The Northern Parula discovered at I. Sainte-Hélène 12 Nov survived through at least 5 Dec, a new record-late date by almost a month (SM, m. ob.). A Magnolia Warbler at I. Sainte-Hélène 5–11 Nov also established a new record-late date (SM). A Yellow-throated Warbler at Rimouski 30 Oct (D. Côté) and a Prairie Warbler at Grandes-Bergeronnes 11 Oct (SD et al.) represented additional good finds.

A Western Tanager brightened Port-Daniel 19–25 Oct (GR, PP et al.), and a Spotted Towhee at Sept-Îles 12–21 Nov was the first ever for the North Shore (ph. B. Poulin, BD, m. ob.). Single Clay-colored Sparrows at Cap Tourmente 13 Sep (LM, J. Goulet), Sept-Îles 4–12 Oct (BD, JFL, CC), and Chandler 18 Oct (PP, GR) were noteworthy. The Lark Sparrow now appears to be an annual visitor, especially in e. Québec, where singles were found at La Pocatière 2 Oct (ph. CG, CA), Betsiamites 19 Oct (R. Gilbert, A. Gosselin), and Tadoussac 19–20 Oct (ph. SD, SB, m. ob.). A Le Conte's Sparrow was considered late at La Pocatière 2 Oct (CA, CG). Single imm. White-crowned Sparrows of the *gambelii* race were found at Tadoussac 8–10 Oct (ph. SB, SD) and at Rimouski 12 Oct (JPO, ML). A female Black-

**SA** Unprecedented numbers of Dovekies were recorded in Nov in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and also in the estuary. Peaks of 690 and 1200 were estimated respectively at Tadoussac 21 Nov (SB, SD) and between Pointe-Saint-Pierre and Cap-d'Espoir, Gaspésie 23 Nov (MC et al.). But this was only the tip of the iceberg, considering that about 15,000 were tallied later in Dec at both Tadoussac (RP) and Matane (D. Desjardins, JD), and 22,000 were counted on the Percé C.B.C. (*vide* PP). In any case, since estimates were made from the shore, actual numbers were probably much higher. As expected, few birds were detected w. of the Saguenay R., and the only inland individuals were discovered at Saint-Fulgence 12 Nov (CC et al.) and Beauport 29 Nov (GL). One theory proposed to explain this influx is this year's abundance of arctic zooplankton, particularly the Hyperiid amphipode *Themisto libellula*, in the Gulf and estuary. According to M. Harvey, a specialist on zooplankton at the Maurice-Lamontagne Institute, the concentration of this amphipode has been shown to correlate positively with the volume of cold waters from the Labrador Current, which penetrate in winter into the Gulf by way of the Strait of Belle Isle. Whether this cold surge has expanded in recent years (following the more rapid melting of Arctic ice) remains a matter of speculation. Nevertheless, it appears that since 1994, *Themisto libellula* has shown peaks of abundance in 1998, 2001, and particularly in 2003. On the other hand, little is known about past influxes of Dovekies in the St. Lawrence waters, undoubtedly owing to a lack of adequate observer coverage. Although the species is known to be annual in the Gulf at this season and although it has occasionally been noticed in fair numbers, e.g. in 1982, this year's irruption appears to be one of the most significant ever. Notable irruptions occurred along the U.S. coast in 1932 and 1950. In 1950, a few birds even strayed w. to the Montréal area, suggesting a widespread invasion. None were documented in the estuary at the time, but it does not mean there were not any there. It is anticipated that the relation between the abundance of Arctic zooplankton and Dovekie irruptions in the St. Lawrence waters will be elucidated in the future.

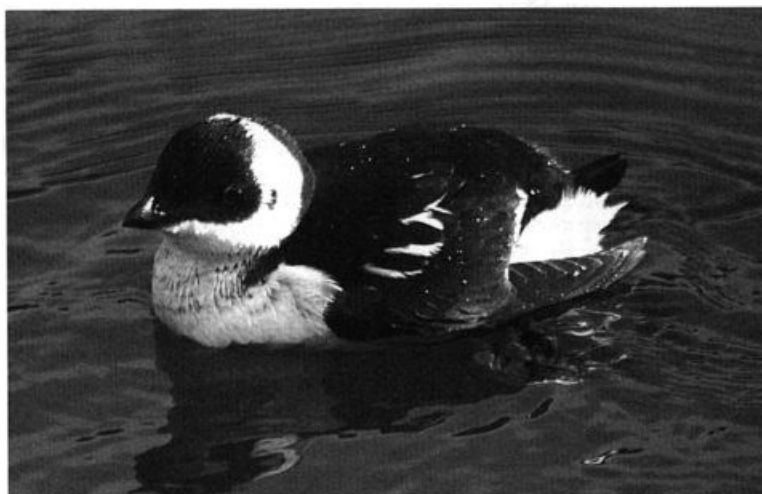
headed Grosbeak was identified at La Pocatière 21–22 Nov, providing our 3rd Regional record (ph. CA, CG). An imm. Indigo Bunting at Jonquière 18 Nov was the 2nd latest ever (J. McNeil), while singles at Grosse-Île 10 Oct (DGG, BV) and at Sept-Îles 3–4 Oct (CC) were significantly out of range. A total of 8 Dickcissels was impressive, while about 20 Baltimore Orioles that lingered through Oct–Nov in e. Québec and L. Saint-Jean represented a very unusual event (*vide* PB). A group of 5 Common Redpolls including 3 juvs. at Rivière-Ouelle 3 Aug provided an interesting record for the Lower St. Lawrence (CA, CG). This species has a history of sporadic

breeding in this region.

**Addendum:** Rare in the Outaouais region, a Yellow Rail was heard and seen at Luskville 22 May 2003 (D. Saint-Hilaire).

**Corrigendum:** The reported Barnacle Goose at Portneuf 17 Apr 2003 (N.A.B. 57: 319) should be deleted.

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This Dovekie photographed at Tadoussac, Québec in late November 2003 (here 24 November) was part of an enormous influx of the species into the St. Lawrence estuary in fall and winter. Photograph by Renaud Pintiaux.