

The season could best be described as near normal in most of the Region. Major low-pressure systems came along about every three weeks, closely following the Polar Jet Stream, which was locked into place for most of the winter. Storms typically moved up the east coast off Nova Scotia, then curved north over Newfoundland, along the coast of Labrador, and then out over the Labrador Sea toward Greenland. The result was generally above-normal amounts of snow in coastal and eastern Nova Scotia, with snowfall below normal in most of New Brunswick, normal in Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland, and above normal in coastal Labrador and northern Newfoundland.

Temperatures were a bit above normal until late December and early January, after which extremely bitter conditions set in, as usual, eliminating most half-hardy lingerers. During the period 12–16 January, record-low temperatures not seen in many years were experienced in southern New Brunswick and Nova Scotia, e.g., -25°C at Grand Manan Island, NB on 13 January. Temperatures for the remainder of the period, while cold, were slightly above normal. It was an excellent winter for most finches, with good numbers reported throughout the Region, especially in Nova Scotia. A total of 195 species of birds were reported from that province during the period (Blake Maybank), while New Brunswick tallied a respectable 158 (Stuart Tingley).

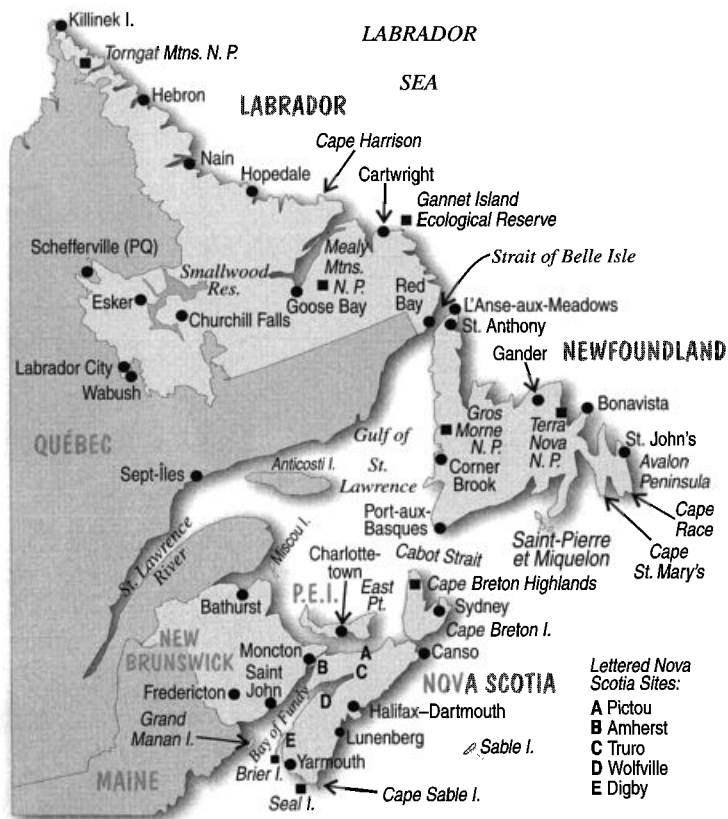
Abbreviations: A.P. (Avalon Peninsula, NL), C.B.I. (Cape Breton Island, NS), C.S.I. (Cape Sable Island, NS), G.M.I. (Grand Manan Island, NB), H.R.M. (Halifax Regional Municipality), NF (the actual island of Newfoundland), P.E.I. (Prince Edward Island), SPM (St. Pierre & Miquelon, France).

TUBENOSES THROUGH VULTURES

Rarely noted after Nov, 4–5 Cory's Shearwaters and 20–25 Sooty Shearwaters were off Canso, NS following a storm 8 Dec (TK). An imm. Brown Pelican was found 27 Dec wandering a road in s. Yarmouth, NS (Carla Allen); only the 2nd winter record for the province, the bird was eventually flown to a rehabilitation center in Florida. It had been banded as a hatch-year individual in North Carolina in the summer of 2003. Double-crested Cormorants now winter in small numbers on the A.P. of Newfoundland, with at least 10 birds there throughout the period (*vide* BMT). Six were found on the St. Pierre C.B.C. 27 Dec, while 22 in Pictou Harbour, NS 1 Jan were gone days later (*vide* KM).

An American Bittern lingered until 25 Dec at Tryon, P.E.I. (M. Lord). A healthy Great Blue Heron was notably far n. at Campbellton, NB 5 Jan (Margaret Doyle). A Great Egret at Big Island, Pictou, NS 1–2 Dec just made it into the period (Everette Baudoux). Remarkable for the season was an imm. Yellow-crowned Night-Heron Nov–14 Dec (Susan & Harry Jost) at

Atlantic Provinces & St. Pierre et Miquelon



Annapolis Royal, NS, a first C.B.C. record for Canada. Single Black Vultures were present 5–15 Dec near North Sydney, NS (DM et al.); Dempsey Corner, Kings, NS 9–10 Dec (AM); and Rocky Brook, York, NB 4 Jan (B. Norrad). Best counts of Turkey Vulture, as usual, came from sw. Nova Scotia, with up to 9 at Brier I. (June Swift) and 7 at C.S.I. 30 Jan (MN).

WATERFOWL THROUGH PTARMIGAN

Late in the period, Brant numbers began to build at the only two known wintering sites in the Region, with about 600 at C.S.I. 11 Feb (MN) and 420 at White Head, G.M.I. 17 Feb (Dwayne Sabine). Up to 7 Eurasian Wigeons were present throughout at St. John's, NL (BMT), while the high count for American Wigeon was 93 on the Halifax–Dartmouth, NS

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C.B.C. 14 Dec. The only Redhead was a drake at Brier I., NS, returning for its 2nd winter 16 Dec+ (EM et al.). Seven Canvasbacks on the Annapolis Royal, NS C.B.C. 14 Dec made for the Region's largest flock in many years.

Seven Tufted Ducks at St. John's was the high count for the Region (BMT), while 2 at the Trenton, NS power plant 12 Jan (KM) provided the high count elsewhere. A drake at

SA Certainly the sensation of the season was the ad. **Slaty-backed Gull** found and photographed in downtown Glace Bay, C.B.I., NS 26 Dec and present into early Feb in the nearby harbor (Alan & Cathy Murrant et al.). Commendably, the discoverers photographed the bird and quickly sent images to experts for confirmation before announcing the presence of the gull. It was very tame and readily accepted handouts with other gulls and waterfowl, allowing close approach. This is now the easternmost record of this Siberian species for North America.

Saint John, NB 11 Dec+ was likely returning for its 8th winter (Jim Wilson). Largest concentrations of Greater Scaup were all in Nova Scotia, with about 4000 in Pictou Harbour late in the period (KM), an estimated 500 at Crescent Beach, Lunenburg 12 Jan (James Hirtle), and 486 at Glace Bay, C.B.I. 31 Jan (Sara McLean). Late in the period, pack ice became a problem for the Cape Breton scaup, and at least one fell prey to raven (DM). The species appears to be wintering in "ever-increasing" numbers in Newfoundland, with 350 found at Trinity Bay near Clarendville on the west coast 17 Feb and 250 at Shoal Harbour, A.P. 22 Feb (*vide* TB).

An apparent hybrid male King Eider x Common Eider, probably the individual seen in two previous winters, was noted at St. Andrews, NB 17 Dec (Tracey Dean), and likely a few km away at Deer I. 29 Feb (Stuart Tingley). The largest flock of Common Eiders found in the Region was 7000+ reported at West Baccaro, Shelburne, NS 10 Jan (MN). An impressive assemblage of about 4000 Black Scoters at West Baccaro 11 Feb (MN) may represent a late-winter staging area, as only 450 were found there 22 Jan (JN). Bufflehead is a scarce species in Newfoundland, so a maximum of 23 at Traytown during the period was significant (*vide* TB). A nice flock of 16 Barrow's Goldeneyes at the head of tidewater on the St. Croix R. at St. Stephen, NB 3 Jan (Tom Moffat) is the largest number ever found in a system draining into the Bay of Fundy. It represents a previously unknown wintering location.

Reports of imm. Broad-winged Hawks, all lacking photographic documentation, came from Port Clyde, Shelburne 12 Jan–13 Feb (Sandy Hiltz et al.); Kentville, Kings 12 Jan (AM); Portuguese Cove, H.R.M. 21 Dec–4 Jan (Hans Toom et al.); Donagh near Charlottetown, P.E.I. 17 Dec (DM); and Ebenezer, P.E.I. in Jan (A. Page). Subregional editor Ulli Höger encourages all observers of Broad-wingeds to submit both photographs and written documentation on the species. Even rarer than the preceding species, a light-morph imm. Swainson's Hawk was well described by a careful and experienced observer at Barrington Passage, Shelburne 6 Dec (Joan Czapaly).

Gordon Parsons, a long-time hunter in w. Labrador, considered the past winter's Willow Ptarmigan flight there to be a "six" on a scale of 1–10 (with the winter of 1999–2000 being the most recent "10"). On a 240-km drive from Labrador City to Churchill Falls 27 Feb, he saw 150+. The birds were flighty and had probably

been "hunted hard." As an indication of how quickly they can withdraw back n. toward their breeding haunts, only 3 were found a week later on the same route!

SHOREBIRDS THROUGH ALCIDS

Two hardy Greater Yellowlegs were still present 2 Jan at Melbourne, Yarmouth, NS (PG). A tardy Spotted Sandpiper at Bear Pt., Shelburne, NS 20 Dec was a good find (Grant Milroy). A *hudsonicus* Whimbrel at White Head, Guysborough, NS 29 Dec was carefully checked to eliminate other possibilities (Randy Lauff, Stephen Bushell). The largest group of Ruddy Turnstones in the Region was 5 at Point La Haye, NF 8 Feb (*vide* TB). Up to 9 Semipalmated Sandpipers were present at C.S.I. 20–31 Dec (MN, JN). White-rumped Sandpiper was not



This juvenile dark-morph Gyrfalcon, here 30 January 2004, was present in the Memramcook River Valley, New Brunswick throughout the period, the first long-staying bird in the south of the province for many years.

Photograph by Alain Clavette.

reported from C.S.I. this winter, breaking a six-year streak. The only White-rumped of the period were 2 at Biscay Bay, NF on the Cape Race C.B.C. 14 Dec, where considered late migrants (BMT). A Dunlin at Point La Haye, NF 8 Feb was said to a first winter record for the province (*vide* TB). Up to 10 were present at Grand Barachois, SPM until at least 11 Jan (RE). High count for the Region was 250 at

C.S.I. 18 Jan (MN, JN). Sanderlings were most common at Port l'Hebert, Shelburne, NS, with 319 found on the C.B.C. 21 Dec, but down to 200+ 3 Jan (AD).

Very rare anywhere in the Region at this season was an imm. **Laughing Gull** at Back Oler Farm Marsh, near Lunenburg, NS 13 Feb (Shirley Cohrs). The only Little Gull reported was an ad. among kittiwakes off Blue Rocks, Lunenburg, NS 3 Jan (FL et al.). An ad. **Yellow-legged Gull** present in St. John's, NF 25 Dec+ was likely the same individual present the previous winter (m. ob.). The ad. Thayer's Gull returned for yet another winter to the harbor at Halifax, NS, being seen off and on throughout Jan and Feb (v. o.). An imm. was also there at Pier 9 on 1 Jan (FL), and another ad. was photographed at Glace Bay, C.B.I. 2 Jan (A&CM). At least 11 Lesser Black-backed Gulls were found in Nova Scotia, while 10 were found on the St. John's C.B.C. 26 Dec.

By the end of the period, Black-legged Kittiwakes had begun to return to breeding areas in Newfoundland, with 12,000+ reported in one hour passing n. past Cape Spear, A.P. 22 Feb (*vide* TB). The only Ivory Gull reported was an imm. photographed at Glace Bay, NS 26 Jan (A&CM). Two Forster's Terns were at C.S.I. until at least 10 Dec (MN). Dovekies were said to be abundant around S.P.M. in late Dec (RE). A massive flight in early Dec brought many thousands into the mouth of the St. Lawrence R. in Québec and lesser numbers into Chaleur Bay, such as 132 in the Pointe-Verte, NB area 2 Dec (Roger Guitard). Following the strong easterly gales of 6–7 Dec, dozens were reported wrecked within 25 km of the Northumberland Strait (*vide* Nelson Poirier), with one as far inland as Oromocto, NB 8 Dec (*vide* Don Gibson).

OWLS THROUGH WOODPECKERS

It was not a Snowy Owl winter. The only multiple reports were of 2 at C.S.I. 3 Feb (MN) and 2 at Stanhope, P.E.I. in Dec (D. Clark). Short-eared Owls were in good supply, mostly in a band across s. New Brunswick, n. Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward I. Good counts include 9 over the salt marshes at Moncton, NB 11 Dec (Jean-Sébastien Guénette); 7 at Falmouth, Kings, NS in early Jan (*vide* Bob Bancroft); 6 in the Memramcook R. Valley, NB 22 Dec (Roger LeBlanc); 5 at Pinkneys Pt., Yarmouth, NS 11 Jan (PG); and at least 10 throughout the period in ones and twos across P.E.I. (m. ob.). One at Memramcook, NB 22 Dec was attacked in the air by a Common Raven, releasing a sizeable "puff" of feathers (Alain Clavette). Another at St. Shotts, NF 8 Feb was considered uncommon in winter on the island (*vide* TB).

Red-bellied Woodpecker staged its best flight ever into the Region in Nov, with most (if not all) eventually settling in at feeders. No fewer than 10 were found in New Brunswick, including one as far n. as Pokemouche,

Gloucester, while at least 20 were tallied in Nova Scotia, mostly in the sw. but as far e. as Sydney, C.B.I. Newfoundland got only its 2nd record ever, with one found on the e. coast at Rocky Harbour surviving until early Dec (*vide* TB). We seldom have Yellow-bellied Sapsucker to report here, but 3 were found in Nova Scotia, none of which likely survived the winter: 19 Dec on the Amherst C.B.C., 22 Dec on the Sydneys C.B.C., and 11 Jan at Middle River, Victoria (*vide* Chuck Thompson). A female Northern Flicker at a Sackville, NB feeder was killed by 2 European Starlings 12 Dec (Kathy Popma).

VIREOS THROUGH WAXWINGS

A Blue-headed Vireo survived until 14 Dec at St. John's, NF (J. Selno). Two Fish Crows were apparently blown to sw. Nova Scotia by the blizzard of 19 Feb, with the first turning up at Shelburne 24 Feb (Peter McLeod) and the other at C.S.I. 29 Feb (JN). White-breasted Nuthatches flooded into the Region from the w. during the fall and were very common at feeders throughout the Maritimes. Carolina Wrens took a big hit last winter and were just about wiped out in the Region. The only report was of one at Fredericton, NB until 7 Jan (Don Gibson). House Wrens were reported from Nova Scotia at Spryfield, H.R.M. 14 Dec (FL) and at Doctors Brook, Antigonish 15–29 Dec (*vide* AH). One brave individual toughed it out at the St. John's, NF dump until at least 26 Dec (BMt). The only report of Blue-gray Gnatcatcher was an individual into early Dec at Canso, Guysborough (*vide* BM).

Surprising in such a harsh season, good counts of Hermit Thrushes were noted in the Region on several C.B.C.s: 5 at Halifax-Dartmouth, NS 14 Dec; 2 at Miscou I., NB 14 Dec; and singles at Tracadie-Sheila, NB 20 Dec and East Pt., P.E.I. 14 Dec. Five were found on the A.P., including one to 25 Feb at St. John's (BMt), and 2 were at Fredericton, NB 4 Jan. Some probably survived the period in NS, such as one at Port Joli, Queens 29 Jan (AD), another at C.S.I. 14 Feb (MN), and one at Bear River, Digby, NS 24 Feb (Maggie Rice). American Robins were generally scattered throughout the Region until early Jan, when they began a mass exodus (out of New Brunswick, for example). By early Feb, most had moved into Nova Scotia, and 2200+ were noted feeding on Multiflora Rose hips at Canning, Kings 8 Feb (Merritt Gibson). One came to a suet feeder at Goose Bay, Labrador 14 Feb (*vide* TB). The only report of Townsend's Solitaire came from Alma, NB 11 Dec (Doreen Rossiter).

A Northern Mockingbird at a feeder in Labrador City lasted until early Jan, when it was found dead of unknown causes (*vide* GP). Another that died there in late Feb 2002 was deposited with the New Brunswick Museum, where an autopsy revealed that it had died

from blunt force trauma (likely hitting a window) and that it was a female. Bohemian Waxwing was well distributed in the Region, even in w. Labrador, where good numbers remained throughout the period (GP). Peak numbers did not occur elsewhere in the Region until late Jan and early Feb, such as 1000+ at St. John's 9 Feb (*vide* TB); several flocks of 200–500 were noted along the s. shore of Nova Scotia 24 Jan–8 Feb (v. o.), and 1000+ were in Wolfville, NS 8 Feb (Jim Wolford). Although there were good numbers in New Brunswick as well, the Nova Scotia birds appear to have arrived mostly via Newfoundland, with reports coming first from C.B.I., then later from the eastern mainland of Nova Scotia. Cedar Waxwing was outnumbered about 10:1 by its larger cousin, with 50 in Pictou, NS 18 Jan being the most reported from one location in the Region (KM).



This apparent adult Thayer's Gull showed up for its fourth winter in the harbor at Halifax, Nova Scotia (here 19 December 2003), where it was present through the end of February 2004. There was some concern that this bird's mantle was too pale for Thayer's, but most experts felt it was well within the range of Thayer's seen in the West. Photograph by Richard Stern.

WARBLERS THROUGH FINCHES

Only the most outstanding warbler rarities will be mentioned here, as reports are now commonplace of many half-hardy species lingering into Dec in Nova Scotia and the Avalon Peninsula. For the 2nd year in a row, a Magnolia Warbler was found on the C.S.I. C.B.C. 20 Dec. A Cape May Warbler was found at Petit Riviere, Lunenburg 2–3 Dec (*vide* JH). Four reports of Yellow-throated Warbler included one at Canso, NS 1 Dec (TK), a white-lored individual at Yarmouth, NS 14 Dec (*vide* KM), one in St. John's 7–14 Dec (Marshall Iliff), and another at Gander, NF 17–19 Dec (K. Butler). Outstanding was a Canada Warbler well seen at Cape Miquelon, S.P.M. 20–21 Dec (Jacky & Christine Hébert). Newfoundland's 10th Townsend's Warbler was in St. John's 12–30 Dec (BMt et al.). A Yellow-breasted Chat survived at a St. John's feeder until 15 Jan (m. ob.).

An imm. male Summer Tanager at a feeder in St. John's 2–9 Jan, the 4th record for the province but first for winter, appeared in the

local media (*vide* BMt). A female Summer Tanager was present at a feeder in Greenwich, Kings, NS until 12 Dec (Terry & Heather Hennigar). Clay-colored Sparrow feeder reports included 3 at Canso, NS throughout the period (TK); 2 at Grand Pré, Kings, NS 26 Dec–18 Feb (*vide* Jim Wolford); one 19–23 Dec at Lewisporte, NF (Jared Clark); and another at St. John's 26 Dec (BMt). Northern Cardinal appears to be firmly entrenched in sw. Nova Scotia, where Murray Newell was able to identify 25+ attending feeders in Yarmouth. An imm. male Rose-breasted Grosbeak appeared sporadically at a feeder at McLeod Hill near Fredericton, NB 4 Dec–8 Jan (Jeannie Michaud). An Indigo Bunting at a feeder near Bathurst, NB survived some incredibly bitter weather 11–22 Jan (Marco Scichilone et al.), while another record-late individual "looked particularly robust" at a Renew's, NF feeder 3 Jan (BMt).

Small flocks of wintering Eastern Meadowlarks included 4 at Hartlen Pt., H.R.M., NS 16 Dec–18 Jan (m. ob.) and 6 at Canso, NS 13 Jan+ (TK). Farthest e. was an individual at Maine-a-Dieu, C.B.I. 3–14 Feb (DM). Farthest n. was one at Le Goulet, Gloucester, NB 12 Jan (Roger Dumaresq). New Brunswick's 2nd Bullock's Oriole in as many winters was an imm. male at a Saint John feeder 8–15 Dec (Dave Smith et al.). It was an exceptional winter for finches, with Bruce Mactavish's summation for Newfoundland applying to just about the entire Region: "Purple Finches, Common Redpolls, and Pine Siskins were abundant at feeders. White-winged Crossbills were fairly common in the woods (even in Labrador). Evening Grosbeak and Pine Grosbeak were present in moderate numbers." The latter species was reported especially common in n. New Brunswick (Mike Lushington) and is increasingly taking to feeders throughout the Region. American Goldfinches seem to be intimidated by redpolls and were present only in fair numbers, except the A.P., where said to be common (BMt). Hoary Redpoll was well reported everywhere there were Common Redpolls, even in sw. Nova Scotia, but were outnumbered at least 1000:1 by Commons, with the largest number reported being only 8 at Labrador City 1 Feb (GP), the only location where redpoll numbers were generally depressed.

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