

Idaho & Western Montana

December's weather fell into line with the past five consecutive mild winters but brought above-average precipitation to most areas. Although early January was frigid, the later two months of the season were judged to be about average for temperatures and precipitation. Clement December weather produced an impressive list of lingerers, but most of these disappeared and perhaps perished in the early January cold. As in the last five years, migratory winter finches were scarce or absent throughout the entire period. For most people, the season will be best remembered for several outstanding rarities such as Great Black-backed Gull, Northern Hawk Owl, Siberian Accentor, and Brambling.

Abbreviations: A.F.R. (American Falls Reservoir, Bingham and Power, ID); Latilong (area encompassed by one degree latitude and one degree longitude used in mapping bird distribution in both Idaho and Montana; L.M. (Lee Metcalf N.W.R. near Stevensville, MT).

EGRETS THROUGH OWLS

A tardy Great Egret at A.F.R. 20 Dec (JT) provided an unlikely first winter record for Latilong 27. As in last year, a White-faced Ibis lingered in Gooding, ID 20 Dec (LB), providing the Region's 2nd winter record. A Common (Eurasian Green-winged) Teal present in Bonner (EC) throughout the period was good news; apparently this subspecies has not previously been recorded in Idaho. Another first for the Region was a Blue-winged Teal that overwintered in Canyon, ID (m. ob.). In addition, reports were made throughout winter of 5 other Blue-winged Teal scattered across sw. Idaho. Only 5 Eurasian Wigeons were reported, less than half of last year's total. Another winter first for Idaho was a record-late Harlequin Duck near Kingston, Shoshone 8 Dec (LH). A total of 9 Long-tailed Ducks was found, which surpassed even last winter's excellent count. Ospreys stayed unusually late again in s. Idaho, with singles in Gooding 13 Dec (KF) and Boise 16–21 Dec (MC, DT). Montana's first White-tailed Kite remained at L.M. through 12 Dec (WT). Gyrfalcons came through in excellent numbers, with a total of 8 reported. A late Franklin's Gull in Pocatello 13 Dec (MCR) represented a 2nd winter record for Idaho. The tally of rare-but-regular gulls was fairly typical, with 4 Mew, 6 Thayer's, 5 Glaucous-winged, and 7 Glaucous reported. An ad. Lesser Black-backed Gull in Boise, ID 8–22 Dec (RLR, DT) added Idaho's 7th record. The bird of



the season was the Region's first Great Black-backed Gull in Boise, ID 13–22 Dec (ph. MC, †C&LW); the species is known from only a few midcontinental records (e.g., Colorado).

Although winter-period Greater Yellowlegs reports are not annual, no fewer than 3 were tallied in s. Idaho throughout the season. A Long-billed Curlew pushed the season in Gem 21 Feb (CS), representing Idaho's 2nd winter record. Unlike recent years, the only Dunlin reported was at Mann L., Nez Perce, ID 24 Jan (TG). Always rare in Idaho, a Snowy Owl was discovered in Kootenai 22–28 Jan (CC, EH). A highlight of the season was a crowd-pleasing Northern Hawk Owl that wintered at Elkhorn, Blaine, ID (KC, PWP). Extralimital Barred Owls visited s. Idaho, with one below A.F.R. 18 Dec–Feb 2 (CT) and another in Canyon 14 Jan (DH).

WOODPECKERS THROUGH REDPOLLS

For the 6th consecutive year, a hardy Lewis's Woodpecker wintered near Hamilton, MT (WT). Any winter-period sapsucker is unusual, but the flock of 4 Red-naped Sapsuckers found in Nez Perce 17 Jan (HK) was unprecedented. A well-documented Red-breasted Sapsucker that visited Mountain

David Trochlell

1931 Tallwood Lane

Boise, Idaho 83706

(dtrochlell@velocity.net)

Home 7 Dec (ph. SP) provided Idaho's 2nd record. Blue Jays made a poor showing in Idaho, with only 3 reported. Blue Jay x Steller's Jay hybrids showed up again, with 2 present in Coeur d'Alene, ID (NM) all season. Amazingly, lingering Gray Catbirds were found near Bozeman 20 Dec (PE, BK) and in Ravalli, MT 27 Dec–3 Jan (WT). Reports of Northern Mockingbirds are especially unusual in winter, so singles present in Idaho's Jefferson 22 Dec (DCL) and Gem 23 Jan–27 Feb (F&MZ) were newsworthy. The Siberian Accentor present in Park, MT since late fall remained throughout the period (SW).

A total of 9 Orange-crowned Warblers was reported in s. Idaho, a fairly typical winter tally. A Chipping Sparrow held over in Gem 8 Dec–29 Feb+ (F&MZ), providing an interesting first record of overwintering for Idaho. A record-early Sage Sparrow landed



There's no telling what will show up at your feeders during a winter cold spell. For Kuna, Idaho resident Neva Black, this past January's cold weather produced a male Brambling, which arrived 5 January 2004 (here 9 January) and stayed for five days, a second record for Idaho. Photograph by Ryan Brady.

in Fremont, ID 27 Feb (CW), a surprising winter first for Latilong 16. The tally of seasonally rare sparrows included at least 10 each of Savannah and Lincoln's Sparrows in s. Idaho, an unusually high count. Also interesting were reports of 7 wintering Swamp Sparrows in s. Idaho; the species has not pre-

viously been annual at this season. Even more unusual in the Region's n. was a Lincoln's Sparrow in Kalispell, MT 4 Jan (BT) and Swamp Sparrow in Bigfork, MT 20 Dec (DC). The tally of rare-but-regular *Zonotrichia* sparrows was lackluster, with only one White-throated, one Golden-crowned, and 10 Harris's reported. Rusty Blackbirds, rare but regular in both states, made a great showing. One was in Blaine, ID 3 Jan-15 Feb (KC, PWP), 2-4 were in the Helena Valley, MT 5-7 Jan

(BM, JS), and up to 12 were near Kalispell, MT 15 Jan-5 Feb (BR). Idaho's resident Great-tailed Grackle flock downsized to only one male in Ada 8-29 Feb+ (HK). Purple Finches are rare and irregular winter visitors to the Region's n., so 8 tallied near Kalispell, MT 4 Jan (BMi) was likely a record count. A

male Brambling, Idaho's 2nd, was present in Ada 5-10 Jan (NB, ph. RB). Although Common Redpolls were relatively common and widespread, the only Hoary Redpolls tallied were singles near Bigfork, MT 20 Dec (Lbt), in Blaine, ID 3 Jan-29 Feb (BS), and Kalispell, MT 4 Jan (LHi).

Contributors: (subregional editors in bold-face): **IDAHO:** Larry Barnes, Neva Black, Ryan Brady, Corinne Cameron, **Kathleen Cameron**, Earl Chapin, Darren Clark (DCI), Marty Collar (MCr), Mark Collie, **Kas Dumroese**, Kent Fothergill, Terry Gray, Lisa Hardy, Eula Hickman, Denise Hughes, Harry Krueger, Nancy Mertz, Stacy Peterson, Hadley Roberts, R.L. Rowland, Brian Sturges, Shirley Sturts, Colleen Sweeney, Joel Tinsley, David Trochlell, Chuck Trost, Cliff and Lisa Weisse, **Poo Wright-Pulliam**, Fred and Melly Zeilemaker. **MONTANA:** Lisa Bate (Lbt), **Dan Casey**, Paulette Epple, Liz Hill (LHi), Beth Kaeding, Bob Martinka, Brent Mitchell (BMi), **John Parker**, Bob Rost, John Shipley, **Don Skaar**, Bruce Tannehill, **Terry Toppins**, Wayne Tree, Sue Williams. ☺

Looking for a Birding Adventure? Go offshore with **Seabirding**



© 2002 Brian Patteson, Inc.

For more information contact

Brian Patteson

Seabirding

P.O. Box 772

Hatteras NC 27943

(252) 986-1363

<http://www.seabirding.com>

- Pelagic trips since 1986
- Departures from
Virginia Beach, VA
Oregon Inlet, NC
Hatteras, NC
aboard the best & fastest
boats available
- Friendly knowledgeable leaders
with extensive offshore
experience
- Chum for bringing the birds close
- Winter trips for Great Skua
and alcids
- Spring & summer trips for
Gulf Stream specialties
including rare *Pterodromas*
and tropicbirds
- Late summer trips for White-faced
Storm-Petrel

SONG BIRD COFFEE

SHADE-GROWN
COFFEE



SAVES TREES FOR MIGRATING BIRDS

BUY YOUR NEXT BAG OF
SONG BIRD COFFEE
FROM ABA SALES

800.634.7736

WWW.AMERICANBIRDING.ORG/ABASALES



American Birding
ASSOCIATION

YOUR PURCHASE SUPPORTS
THE ABA'S BIRDERS' EXCHANGE PROGRAM