

Northern Canada



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Northern Canada experienced typical weather conditions through the season—which meant bone-chilling cold spells for most areas. In the Yukon, record snow falls were recorded in the Whitehorse and Watson Lake areas, and Mayo reported the most severe cold conditions in the Region, with prolonged temperatures of -50°C . Weather in the Northwest Territories was not remarkably cold but stayed fairly constant throughout the winter season, with few if any significant thaws. Snowfall was generally below average for early winter, but January and February made up for that deficit, and deep late-winter accumulations were reported over much of the territory.

WATERFOWL THROUGH RAPTORS

A pair of Green-winged Teal at McIntyre Cr. wetland in Whitehorse 26 Dec (CE) provided the Yukon's first winter record in 70 years. Eight male Mallards, a female Long-tailed Duck, 25 Common Goldeneyes, and 5 Common Mergansers were at L. Laberge, s. Yukon 2 Dec (BD, CE). Two female Barrow's Gold-

eneyes were present on the Yukon R. at Whitehorse through the winter (BD, CE, HG, PS). Willow Ptarmigan were present in low numbers in the Ft. Simpson area, but the population appears to be on the increase there (DT) as well as at Norman Wells (RP); good numbers were reported on the C.B.C. at Yellowknife, NWT, with 158 on 2 Jan (*vide* RB); the Yukon's highest count was 27 at Haines Junction 28 Dec (*vide* DH). Four Sharp-tailed Grouse on the C.B.C. at Norman Wells, NWT 27 Dec (*vide* RP) provided the Region's only winter report. A Bald Eagle was seen on the C.B.C. at Marsh L., s. Yukon 19 Dec (*vide* HG), and 2 were noted at McIntyre Cr. on the Whitehorse count 26 Dec (CE).

SHRIKES THROUGH HOUSE SPARROW

A few Northern Shrikes were noted in s. Yukon, including an ad. at Porter Creek in Whitehorse 26 Dec (CE, PS), one at Haines Junction 15 Jan (MH), and one (likely an early spring arrival) at Haines Junction 26–27 Feb (LF). A pair of Great Horned Owls was reported 2 km e. of Mush L., Kluane N. P., s. Yukon 27 Feb (JB), and a Great Gray Owl was seen near Haines Junction 20 Feb (JB). In the Northwest Territories, single Great Gray Owls were reported from Norman Wells 4 (DF) & 22 Jan (DW) and from Ptarmigan Mine near Yellowknife in late Feb (TH). Northern Hawk Owls seemed scarce this winter; singles were reported at Haines Junction, sw. Yukon during C.B.C. count week (*vide* DH) and on the Norman Wells, NWT 27

Dec count (GS). A Northern Pygmy-Owl hunting at a feeder near Carcross in mid-Jan (ph. AB) established the Yukon's 2nd documented record for the species. Five American Three-toed Woodpeckers on 4 Jan provided a new high count for that species on the Ft. Simpson C.B.C. (DT). A dead female Black-backed Woodpecker (cause of death not known) was found at Haines Junction, sw. Yukon 3 Dec (JB).

The Nunavut winter is a harsh season for both birds and birders; Common Raven was the only species reported on the territory's two C.B.C.s: 17 at Rankin Inlet 29 Dec (BZ) and 17 at Arviat 1 Jan (MS). One observer from Iqaluit, Nunavut summarized the season's birdlife as "ravens, ravens, and more ravens" (MM)! Yellowknife, NWT remains the Common Raven capital of the world, with 1860 recorded on the 2 Jan count (*vide* RB)—just 92 short of setting a new record. A single Black-billed Magpie wintered in Norman Wells for the 4th consecutive year (RP), while Yellowknife's C.B.C. reported a new high of 26 magpies on 2 Jan (*vide* RB). The big fall movement of Red-breasted Nuthatches through s. Yukon likely accounted for a high count of 9 on the Haines Junction C.B.C. 28 Dec (*vide* DH). A tardy American Robin was at L. Laberge, s. Yukon 2 Dec (BD, CE). A Horned Lark, casual in winter, lingered at the Whitehorse dump at least through 26 Dec (ph. CE) to establish the Yukon's first Christmas Bird Count record. Flocks of Bohemian Wawings were seen in the Whitehorse area through early winter; a large flock was noted at Haines Junction, sw. Yukon 15 Jan (CD), and 19 were recorded on the Yellowknife, NWT 2 Jan count (*vide* RB).

The White-throated Sparrow first seen in late Nov at Whitehorse survived through 22 Jan to provide the Yukon's first winter record but subsequently disappeared (RE). Small numbers of Dark-eyed Juncos usually winter in s. Yukon and sw. Northwest Territories; 2 wintering at a Norman Wells feeder were a highlight of the 27 Dec C.B.C. (RP), and 2 seen on the Mayo, Yukon C.B.C. 29 Dec at temperatures of -50°C (*vide* MOD) were certainly testing the limits of survival. Four Snow Buntings were unusually late at Ft. Simpson 2 Jan (DT); despite much searching, observers could not relocate them for the local C.B.C. two days later. In sw. Yukon, flocks of Snow Buntings were reported in mid-Jan from Haines Junction (CD) and Destruction Bay (MF); one was noted at the Takhini Hotsprings Rd. near Whitehorse 22 Feb (DVV).

The ad. male Brewer's Blackbird that spent much of the fall feeding on the compost pile at the Whitehorse dump was last seen 23 Dec (ph. CE), just narrowly missing Christmas count day. Small numbers of Red Crossbills were seen at Whitehorse feeders through the winter; an observation of an ad.

female feeding a fledged juv. at a Granger feeder 15 Feb (TMK) left little doubt as to the species' hardiness. Four White winged Crossbills at Yellowknife 2 Jan (*fide* RB) represented the only Northwest Territories C.B.C. record this year. In the Yukon, Pine Grosbeaks' health raised concerns in Haines Junction and Whitehorse, where reports came in of sickly-looking birds and low numbers later in winter; Christmas counts found normal numbers; e.g., 119 at Teslin 16 Dec (*fide* CA), 200 at Marsh L. 19 Dec (*fide* HG), 163 at Haines Junction 28 Dec (*fide* DH), and 68 at Mayo 29 Dec (*fide* MOD). Both Pine and Evening Grosbeaks were present at Ft.

Simpson, NWT in typical numbers this season (DT), while the one Evening Grosbeak on the 2 Jan Yellowknife C.B.C. furnished only the 2nd record for that count (*fide* RB). Redpoll (mostly Common, some Hoary) numbers were fairly typical in the Yukon, with low numbers seen in Dec, increasing through Jan, with good-sized flocks present at most feeders by late Feb. Redpolls were noted in slightly above-average numbers at both Norman Wells (RP) and Ft. Simpson (DT). While House Sparrows have yet to gain any kind of foothold in the Yukon or Nunavut, small populations persist in Northwest Territories, as evidenced by counts of 38

at Ft. Simpson 2 Jan (*fide* DT) and 368 at Yellowknife the same day (*fide* RB).

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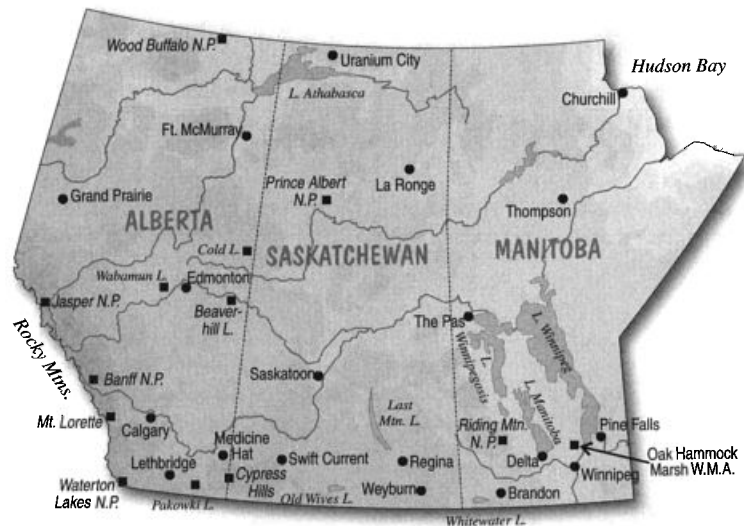
A bitterly cold January was flanked by milder weather in December and February; Alberta in particular enjoyed spring-like conditions late in the season, resulting in the arrival of some very early migrants. Manitoba and parts of eastern and central Saskatchewan endured heavy snows in late December, which interfered with a number of Christmas Bird Counts. Elsewhere accumulations were generally light, and much of the snow cover in southern Alberta and Saskatchewan had disappeared by the end of the period. A Region-wide influx of northern owls provided the major highlight of the season.

LOONS THROUGH FALCONS

Single Yellow-billed Loons lingered at Wabamun L., AB 3 Dec (FW, m.ob.) and near Innisfail, AB 7 Dec–7 Jan (RKL, FW, m.ob.). Notable late waterfowl in Alberta included a Wood Duck at Medicine Hat 15+ Dec (BV), and several groups of late American Wigeon: 46 at Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, Calgary 2 Dec (RW), 10 at Little Bow River Dam 6 Dec, and 4 at Pine Coulee 12 Dec (both TK). Manitoba's first winter Blue-winged Teal was at Oak Hammock Marsh 1 Dec (RK), and 4 Northern Shovelers lingered at Frank L., AB 12 Dec (BW). Two imm. Trumpeter Swans wintered at Wyndham–Carseland P.P., AB (RW, m.ob.). Extremely early at Taber, AB were 3 Snow Geese 26 Feb and 11 Tundra Swans 28 Feb (LB), a Northern Shoveler 28 Feb (LB), and 6 Redheads 26 Feb (LB). A Eurasian Wigeon at Frank L. 25 Feb (JMM, BE, JP) was the only one reported and was also early.

Between 17 Dec and 1 Mar there were an unprecedented 10 reports of Sharp-shinned Hawks in s. Manitoba (m.ob.), plus one at Swift Current, SK 5 Jan (*fide* TH), while a Cooper's Hawk was noted at Kleefeld, MB 29 Jan (DF). A Ferruginous Hawk at Maple Creek, SK 24 Feb may have been an early migrant (AH). Alberta reported fair numbers of Gyrfalcons, whereas only 3 were not-

Prairie Provinces



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ed in Saskatchewan and 2 in Manitoba. Saskatchewan had 8 Prairie Falcons; the lone bird in Manitoba was near Pipestone 21 Dec (IM).

CRANES THROUGH WOODPECKERS

A Sandhill Crane near Powerview 15 Dec was Manitoba's latest ever (RTa, JA). Also notably tardy were a Killdeer at Swift Current, SK 7 Dec (RDu), a Wilson's Snipe on the Ft. Walsh, SK C.B.C. 18 Dec (GW et al.), a Mew Gull at Cold L. 2 Dec (RKL), and a

Ring-billed Gull at Winnipeg, MB 20 Dec (DN). Six California Gulls arrived at Inglewood Bird Sanctuary, Calgary, AB on the early date of 28 Feb (RS). A Glaucous Gull at Wabamun L. 26 Feb had apparently wintered locally (RK_n, RK, RT). Eurasian Colared-Dove reports came from Pierson, MB, from Delisle, Maple Creek, Swift Current (14 on 21 Feb), and Weyburn, SK; and from Nanton (up to 11) and Grassy Lake, AB (m.ob.).

Snowy Owls were common around Ed-