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Québec



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There were two seasons during the period. The first half of the winter was balmy with almost no ice on rivers and no snow on the ground, at least in the south, until mid-January. The second half was much more frigid, although there was no large amount of snow on the ground at any time. In summary, average temperatures ended up above normal despite a cold February, and overall precipitation was below average. The avifauna of early January seemed more like that of late November in southern Québec. The mild conditions of early winter resulted in a lot of late migrants trying to winter in the Region.

WATERFOWL THROUGH HERONS

A group of 4 Greater White-fronted Geese (2 ads., 2 imms.) lingered at Lévis 2-27 Dec (OB, MR, ph.); one was at Sherbrooke 9 Dec (SR, Y. Charette), while up to 2 at Chambly 4 Dec-10 Jan provided the Region's 2nd record ever for Jan (R. Chartier et al.). Thousands of Snow

Geese were reported in s. Québec until late Dec, while 2 wintered at Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu (*vide* PB). A Ross's Goose at Saint-Stanislas-de-Kostka 17 Dec provided a new Regional record-late date (SR). Cackling Geese were widely reported in Dec; one lingered at Saint-Mathias until 10 Jan (RB et al.) and another at Laval as late as 14 Jan, providing a new record-late date for the Region (GLa, ÉP). Canada Geese were ubiquitous in s. Québec, including the Gaspé coast, until mid-Jan; probably one of the most notable sightings was a lone bird in Mont-Tremblant Park 7 Jan (L. Cadieux). A Mute Swan turned up at La Malbaie 17-25 Jan (S. Tremblay). At least 4 Wood Ducks, 50 Gadwalls, 3 Green-winged Teal, and 2 Ring-necked Ducks appear to have successfully wintered in s. Québec (*vide* PB). A male Wood Duck at Val d'Or 22 Jan was only the 2nd found in Abitibi in winter (A. Lefebvre). A flock of 52 Harlequin Ducks at Gascons 11 Feb was certainly noteworthy (A. Couture, Y. Cyr), but 30 at Bergeronnes 18 Feb was a truly exceptional number for that location (MD). The three scoter species were reported more regularly this winter in the Gaspé Pen. (*vide* PP), while a Surf Scoter at Bergeronnes 18 Feb was remarkable (MD). Wild Turkeys now seem well established n. of the St. Lawrence R. especially in the Rigaud-Saint-Rédempteur area, where 56 were counted 25-27 Feb (P. Tarasof, N. Felx). An escaped Lady Amherst's Pheasant strutted around Bonaventure for a few weeks from 10 Feb+ before it was captured (F. Leblanc).

Late Horned Grebes included singles at Saint-Fabien-sur-Mer 6 Jan (G. Gendron) and at Longue-Pointe-de-Mingan 13 Jan (C. Leblanc). Ten Red-necked Grebes at Gascon 10 Jan were noteworthy (D. Lavoie, JRL), while one at Old Harry 6 Jan was apparently the first in winter for the Magdalen Is. (C. & J. Roy). One of the most curious sightings of the winter was a Northern Fulmar flying over

a highway at Saint-Pierre-Montmagny 27 Dec (C. Auchu, C. Girard). The observers kept track of the bird from their car and could even record its speed as 70 kph. Rare in midwinter, single Double-crested Cormorants were located at Old Harry 4 Feb (JC. Richard) and at Carleton 10 Feb (CL). Great Blue Herons were still widely reported in Jan, but one at Val-des-Monts 5 Feb appeared to be the latest (*vide* C. Lewis).

VULTURES THROUGH OWLS

Single Turkey Vultures at Disraeli 7 Jan (D. McCutcheon, R. Jacques), Roxton Ponds 9 Jan (M. Gauthier), and Saint-Gabriel-de-Brandon 10 Jan (R. Prévost) were late. Bald Eagles were numerous almost everywhere in s. Québec, including in the Gaspé Pen. Late or likely wintering Northern Harriers included singles at Saint-Basile 1 Feb (RB), Yamachiche 11 Feb (S. Houle, J. Bouvette), and Saint-Clet 20 Feb (W. Grubert). Single Cooper's Hawks were e. of their winter range at Pabos 23 Jan (PP, G. Roy) and at Amqui late Dec-mid-Feb (R. Lang). No fewer than 5 Red-shouldered Hawks were detected in Feb, including 3 at Laval 10 Feb+ (LS, P. Simard, GLa, J. Bégin); these birds appear to have been very early migrants. A *calurus* Red-tailed Hawk showed up at Gatineau for the 3rd consecutive winter (A. Cloutier et al.). Rough-legged Hawks were found wintering in good numbers as far n. as in the L. Saint-Jean area and in the Abitibi region, where up to 14 were tallied n. of L. Abitibi in Jan (*vide* LI). An American Kestrel at Saint-Narcisse 24 Dec was the latest ever for the Lower St. Lawrence region (R. Bélanger).

A record-late Virginia Rail amazed birders at Sainte-Anne-de-Beaupré 20-21 Jan (F. Shaffer, C. Maurice). Several American Coots lingered until mid-Jan, including one at Saint-Mathias 13 Jan, one at Île aux Fermiers 14 Jan, and 4 at Saint-Louis-de-Gonzague 14 Jan (PB). Three Sandhill Cranes present since last

summer continued at Dundee as late as 25 Dec, providing a new Regional record-late date (AQ, ES, AL). Totally unexpected was a Dunlin spotted at Saint-Irénée 11 Feb (A. Côté). A Wilson's Snipe at Saint-Ulric 17 Feb was at a new winter location (S. Mercier). Considering the scarcity of Dovekies this winter, a bird at Saint-Siméon 19 Feb was quite unexpected, especially so far upriver (MD). A Thick-billed Murre visited Percé 3 Dec (JRL et al.), while a Razorbill at Beauharnois 5 Dec was out of range (MD). A Eurasian Collared-Dove was an everyday visitor to a feeder at Gallichan (Abitibi) early Dec+, establishing our 2nd Regional record (S. Rivard, vt., v.r.). The bird appeared very wary and showed no sign of having been kept in captivity. The three irruptive n. owls were very scarce s. of their breeding range. Short-eared Owls were present locally in small numbers across sw. Québec, and 2 even successfully wintered at Pointe de Chambord, a first for the *Saguenay-Lac-St-Jean* region (R. Bouchard, J. Rousseau, L. Chiricota et al.).

KINGFISHER THROUGH WARBLERS

Belted Kingfishers surviving deep into winter were spotted at Grand-Calumet I. (*fide* DT), Lac-des-Écorces (G. Normandin), and Rivière-Bleue, *Témiscouata* 29 Jan (M. Beaulieu). The female Red-bellied Woodpecker found in Nov at Sainte-Hedwige remained there throughout the winter period, while a male was in nearby Mashteuiatsh 1-28 Feb+ (H. Volland et al.); another female wintered at Caplan, *Gaspésie* (C. Saint-Denis). Surely a product of last summer's successful nesting for the Châteauguay Red-bellied Woodpecker pair, up to 4 birds were counted 27 Dec (ES, AL). Of note were single Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers at Hudson 30 Dec (J. Reeves), Thivierge 2 Jan (CL), and Île Sainte-Hélène (Montréal) 12 Dec–25 Jan (PB, m. ob., ph.), the latter 2 furnishing only the 4th and 5th Jan records for the Region. Result of a good fall flight, both American Three-toed and Black-backed Woodpeckers were found with relative ease across s. Québec, more often than not peeling away bark from beetle larvae-infested *Larix* spp. While fairly common in winter in s. Québec, 3 Horned Larks at Palmorolle 21 Jan represented only the 2nd winter record for Abitibi (LI).

Carolina Wrens were reported in average numbers by twenty-first-century standards, one of which was as far e. as Saint-Jean-Port-Joli 29 Jan–3 Feb (M. Deschêne). Rarely living up to their name in Québec, hardy Winter Wrens were reported at Ruisseau Robitaille 3 Jan (P. D'Amours), a first in winter for

Gaspésie; at Cap Tourmente 22 Jan–11 Feb (S. Cloutier, m.ob.), where the species is now annual in winter; and at Châteauguay 28 Jan+ (J. Laplante). Surely aided by the warm weather into early Jan, late Ruby-crowned Kinglets were spotted singly at Laval 4 Jan (GLa, ÉP), Île Sainte-Hélène (Montréal) 16 Dec–25 Jan (PB et al.), and most remarkably at Haldimand (Gaspé) 4 Feb (O. Deruelle, G. Gélinas). Five Eastern Bluebirds were at Saint-Timothée 27 Dec (ES, AL); up to 4 bluebirds at Baie-Saint-Paul 10-21 Jan (M. Guillemette, L. Prudhomme, m.ob.) provided



This female Bullock's Oriole, a rare species in Québec, attended a feeder at Saint-François-de-la-Rivière-du-Sud 9 December 2006 (here) through 13 January 2007. Photograph by Mario Lavoie.

a surprising first Jan record for Charlevoix. A very late Swainson's Thrush was at Beauport 8 Dec (GLo, J. Bernier), but its tougher relative, Hermit Thrush, was not to be outdone, with at least 8 birds reported into Jan. Gray Catbirds were reported in the Region for a 3rd straight winter, with birds at Rock Forest 10 Dec (R. Côté, *fide* B. Turgeon), Laval 4 Jan (GLa, ÉP), and Sainte-Foy 18 Jan (P. Savard). A Brown Thrasher wintered at Québec City (T. & G. Clermont-Drolet), while one remained at Saint-Benoît-Labre through 28 Jan (G. Martel). Typically locally common even in the worst of years, Bohemian Waxwings were virtually absent throughout the Region this winter, with only a few scattered reports despite the bumper crop of Mountain Ash berries.

Yellow-rumped Warblers were reported far more often than usual beyond the relative "mildness" of Dec, with birds at Laval 5 Dec–3 Jan (GLa, A. Rizi), Lachine 15 Jan–11 Feb (S. Pelletier), Rosebridge 5 Jan+ (J. Dion, S. Dumaresq, m.ob.), Sainte-Marthe-sur-le-Lac 23 Jan (JCC), and throughout the period

at Sept-Îles (B. Duchesne, C. Couture et al.) and Pointe-du-Lac (JP. Vallée, *fide* JG). The Black-throated Gray Warbler at Île Sainte-Hélène (Montréal) endured the cold to a record date of 16 Jan (PB). Winter Pine Warblers were once again restricted to the Gaspé Pen., with singles at Saint-Anne-des-Monts through 15 Dec (S. Tremblay), Barachois 16 Dec (JW, DC) and 2 at Gaspé 7 Dec–21 Jan, although only one persisted past Christmas (D. Gagné, m.ob.). Late Common Yellowthroats were at Pointe des Prairies Park, Montréal 3 Dec (DO, DD) and Saint-Eustache 11 Dec (J. Coutu, S. Vanier). A Wilson's Warbler at Yamachiche Pt. 9 Dec was surprising (MBo).

TOWHEES THROUGH CROSSBILLS

A Green-tailed Towhee was a serendipitous find during a Montréal C.B.C. at a Rivière-des-Prairies feeder 17 Dec–3 Mar (ES, S. Robert et al., ph.). This represents only the 2nd Regional record, the first dating back to Oct. 1957. Up to 9 Chipping Sparrows were reported, including successful overwintering at Gaspé, where 4 birds were present (P. Bélanger, m.ob.), Saraguay Wood, Montréal (DD, DO), and Yamachiche (MBo, *fide* JG). A Field Sparrow was at Les Cèdres 30 Dec (C. Geraghty, B. McDuff), while another at Saraguay Wood, Montréal 28 Jan+ was confirmed to have survived through winter (DD, DO). The Lark Sparrow at l'Anse-au-Griffon present since 24 Oct was last reported 16 Jan, a new record-late date (J. Lacasse, *fide* D. Jalbert). Two Fox Sparrows were reported past Dec: at Penouille 18 Jan (C. Dufort) and Boischatel 8 Feb (MR). Excluding the not-so-rare Song Sparrow, noteworthy *Melospiza* sparrows were represented by a Lincoln's at Neuville 10 Dec (M. Darveau) and a Swamp at Hudson 3 Feb (JCC). Abitibi hosted 2 Harris's Sparrows this winter: a hatch-year bird at Preissac 9-12 Dec (N. Blanchette, ph.) and an ad. at Obaska 18-20 Feb (C. Bédard, F. Martel et al., ph.). White-crowned Sparrows showing features inconsistent with typical *leucophrys* were noted at Saint-Jérôme through 5 Feb (S. Auger, ph.) and Lévis until 19 Jan (S. Bégin, L. Plante). A male Dark-eyed Junco of the rarely recorded *oreganus* subspecies group was at Rawdon 26 Jan+ (L. Poulin, ph.).

A late Rose-breasted Grosbeak was at Saint-Léon-de-Standon 5-14 Dec (C. Rochefort, G. Morissette, ph.). Wayward Eastern Meadowlarks were reported from Jonquière 9 Dec (M. Tremblay, D. Gervais et al., ph.) and Percé 1-3 Jan (DC, JW). A few male Yellow-headed Blackbirds were detected among roaming cowbird flocks in Montérégie, starting with 2 at Saint-Timothée 2 Dec (AQ), one of which

remained in the vicinity until late Jan; another was at Howick 3 Feb (J. May, LS); and finally one was at Sainte-Julie from mid-Feb into Mar (G. Veilleux, ph., m.ob.). A few Rusty Blackbirds were seen into Feb, but sizeable flocks of 14 at Lachenaie 17 Dec on the Longueuil C.B.C. and 40 at Saint-André-Est 15 Dec (LS, É. Normandeau) were unusual. A well-studied female **Bullock's Oriole** was at Saint-François-de-la-Rivière-du-Sud 9 Dec–13 Jan, only a 3rd documented record for the province (M. Lavoie, m.ob., ph.). Five Baltimore Orioles were reported in Dec, one of them making it to 17 Jan at Chandler (R. Garrett, m.ob.). White-winged Crossbills remained abundant throughout the boreal and mixed forests; ads. gathering nest material were reported in Feb, and a male was seen feeding 2 juvs. as early as 9 Feb in the Gaspésie Park (R. Guillet).

Addenda: Two **Trumpeter Swans** were photographed at L. Duparquet (Abitibi) 8-15 Oct 2006, furnishing the 8th Regional record since 1990 (J. Lecours, *fide* D. Lepage). A **White-winged Dove** accompanying Mourning Doves made a brief pause at a Saint-Anne-de-Baupré feeder 17 Nov 2006 (C. Tremblay, M. Lagacé, *fide* GLo).

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New England



Pamela Hunt

The New England weather once again lived up to the old Yankee adage: if you don't like it, wait a minute. Or in this case a few weeks. The season started out exceptionally warm, with record temperatures through early January. In fact, December as a whole was the first or second warmest on record in all states except Maine. The southern portion of the Region pushed the 70-degree mark on 6 January, only to plunge into typical colder temperatures a week later, but the month as a whole still averaged in the warmest 20%. February picked up where January ended and actually averaged among the coldest 25% on record. December was dry, es-

pecially in the south, and the lack of snow was again cause for concern. January was about normal in terms of precipitation, although snow was still scarce. In February, two major snowstorms finally coated the ground in our accustomed winter color. Taken as a whole, the season was in the top 20% in warmth and bottom 20% in precipitation.

As for avian phenomena, there was no repeat of last winter's profusion of half-hardies, and given the exceptional warm early in the season, it is reasonable to assume that all the catbirds and thrushes in 2005-2006 were not lured to linger by the New England climate. Otherwise wouldn't they have been even more common this year? Granted, this is an oversimplification, but the point is that while temperature may allow birds to survive, it is rarely likely to put them here in the first place. The exception may be when birds feel the urge to reproduce. This season there were two breeding records. One was nest-building behavior by White-winged Crossbills in Maine and Vermont, an activity that has never been tied to temperature and is not unexpected in midwinter. In contrast, a female Ruffed Grouse with downy young in December—which survived into early February—is perhaps more indicative of what is possible when winter gets put on hold. One wonders how many grouse try to pull off a clutch in the wake of the brief fall drumming season but normally fail once December's icy grip sets in.

Winter 2005-2006 showed few if any broad patterns in bird distribution. Except for White-winged Crossbills (which stayed up north), there was no movement of winter finches or Bohemian Waxwings. In terms of rarities, New Hampshire hosted its second Eared Grebe and second and third Slaty-backed Gulls. Connecticut had its first Lazuli Bunting and the Region's first winter Cave Swallow. Among the usual plethora of surprises in Massachusetts were a Black-throated Gray Warbler and third state record of Bell's Vireo. A Sooty Shearwater off Cape Cod in early January is also worthy of note. Geese made the news in Rhode Island, with a single site hosting both Pink-footed and Barnacle, among more mundane fare. Maine had the honor of hosting three Western Tanagers in December.

Abbreviations/locations: Eastham (Barnstable, MA), Gloucester (Essex, MA), M.V. (Martha's Vineyard, Dukes, MA), P.I. (Plum Island, Essex, MA), Ptown (Provincetown, Barnstable, MA), Rockport (Essex, MA), Rye (Rockingham, NH).

WATERFOWL THROUGH VULTURES

It was the "Winter of the Goose" in Rhode Island in 2006-2007, with seven species reported on Aquidneck I., Newport Jan-Feb. Maxima during this period were as follows: 2500 Canada Geese (including 6 apparent Giant Canada Geese), 4 Greater White-fronted