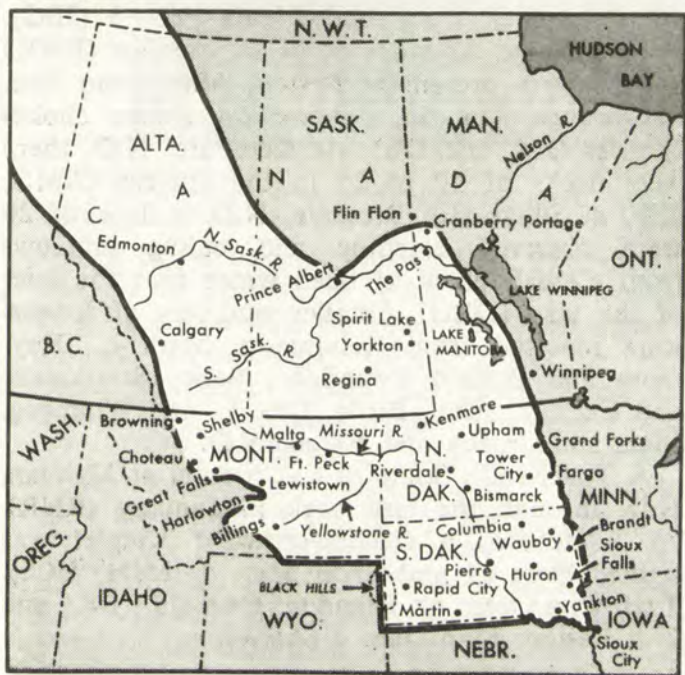


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NORTHERN GREAT PLAINS REGION / C. Stuart Houston

December and January were unseasonably cold at both Saskatoon and Fargo. Mean temperatures were 10° and 5° below normal, respectively, in December and 7° below normal in both centers in January. Snowfall at Saskatoon was above average.



WATERFOWL—As usual, almost every locality with open water had wintering waterfowl. These included a Canada Goose at Edmonton on Jan. 7 (RWT) and over 150 Mallard at Wabamun on Jan. 26, while at Calgary, Alta. there were over 5000 Mallards, 300 Com. Goldeneye, 2 **Barrow's Goldeneye**, 4 Bufflehead and 30 Com. Mergansers. At Saskatoon, a **Canvasback** wintered on the river through Feb. 15 (JBG) and at Regina, Sask. 2 Whistling Swans, 12 Lesser Scaup, 9 Com. Goldeneye, 1 **Ruddy Duck** and 2 Canvasbacks wintered. In Manitoba, only a few scattered Mallards were recorded. A Gadwall was at Jamestown Dec. 13 (DHJ) and at Fargo, 2 Am. Widgeon on Jan. 2 were a new winter record. At Tewaukon Refuge, Cayuga, N.D., a Com. Merganser flew over on Dec. 22 when no open water was present (EAA). There were 55 Com. Mergansers and 1600 Mallards on the Missouri R. below the Garrison Dam on Jan. 4 (WAB).

At LaCreek Refuge, S.D., there were 81 Trumpeter Swans on Jan. 1 (CAF).

HAWKS, EAGLES—Goshawks were sparsely scattered with only 14 sightings at 7 Canadian localities. Two Rough-legged Hawks wintered at Benton Lake Refuge, Great Falls (FWC) and several at Bowdoin Refuge, Malta, Mont. (JRA) but the species was absent at Bismarck, N.D. until Mar. 22 (WAB). Although 20 were seen at Lemmon, S.D. on Dec. 1 and 13 at Pierre on Dec. 9, they were less common than usual in South Dakota (DA, BJR, fide EMS). An imm. ♂ **Red-tailed Hawk** was studied at 15 feet at Regina, Sask. on Dec. 28 (RDR). Four Ferruginous Hawks at Lake Andes on Feb. 6 and 1 at Belle Fourche, S.D. on Feb. 12 (DA), were the only winter reports. Golden Eagles were widely distributed through Alberta and Montana, reported from Kenmare and Garrison Dam, N.D., but were absent from the Audubon Refuge, Coleharbor, N.D. for the first time in 11 years. Bald Eagles were reported from Calgary, Alta., Saskatoon, Nipawin and Kelvington, Sask., Rockvale, Mont. and Upham and Garrison Dam, N.D. Maximum numbers were 12 at Pierre on Dec. 29 and 25 at Lake Andes, S.D. on Feb. 6 (DA, BJR fide EMS). Prairie Falcons were observed widely throughout s. Alberta (RWF, WWS) and at Regina, Sask. (RDR, MB); one was sighted at Bismarck Jan. 23 (RNR) and another was observed at LaCreek Refuge, S.D. during February (CAF). Peregrine Falcons were reported only from Calgary on Jan. 18 (RP, fide WWS) and n.e. of Rosetown, Sask. on Dec. 31 (WER). Pigeon Hawks wintered at Edmonton and Calgary, Alta., Saskatoon, Yorkton and Moose Jaw, Sask. and Brandon, Man. These are not unusual, since this species has been present in 12 of the last 16 Christmas counts at Saskatoon, though two years ago Williams (AFN 23: 493) considered Kansas and Colorado as "farther north than usual." A gray phase Gyrfalcon was seen at Oyen, Alta. on Feb. 9 (MJH, JK), and others were noted at Cardston, Strathmore and Fort Saskatchewan, Alta. (WEM, WWS, RWF). One was sighted at 50 yards near Laura, Sask. on Jan. 16 (WER).

GROUSE—At Kelvington and Raymore, 8 and 10 Ruffed Grouse formed larger groups than usual, while at Sheho, Sask. they decreased as more bush was cleared by bulldozer. **Willow Ptarmigan** came south as far as Nipawin for the first time in over 20 years on Jan. 3 and were also counted at Cumberland House, Sask. (SDR). Another 30 were seen at Cranberry Portage on Jan. 6 and from there south almost to Mafeking, Man. (RWS). A **Greater Prairie Chicken** was identified on the Tewaukon Refuge count on Dec. 22 (HGT, fide EAA). At the Lake Ilo Refuge, Dunn Center, N.D. were 300 Sharp-tailed Grouse and 350 Ring-necked Pheasants (CMD). A count of 65 females along three lakes near Sioux Falls on Mar. 27 (HK) and a winter

count of 3000 on the LaCreek Refuge (CAF) indicated good pheasant populations in South Dakota. Nine Turkeys were reported from Rapid City, S.D. (EMS).

COOT, OWLS—Three Am. Coots wintered at Regina (MB). Snowy Owls were widely distributed throughout the Canadian prairies and at half the North Dakota localities reporting. Only at Rosetown, Sask., with 30 separate sightings, were they commoner than in previous years (WER); at Saskatoon, 38 were seen on 25 dates, only half the number of the previous year (JBG). Maximum concentrations were evident near Regina when 14 were seen between Regina and Avonlea, Sask. on Feb. 28, and when 8 were seen along 20 miles of highway west of the city on Mar. 28 (RDR, FHB). A single Barred Owl was reported at Fargo, N.D. on Jan. 18 (FJC). Two Great Gray Owls were seen south of Whitecourt, Alta. on Jan. 26 (MJH, JK) and no less than 7 Great Grays and 9 Hawk Owls were identified along a nameless road from Edmonton on Mar. 14 (REG, JAW). Four Great Grays were present north of Stead, Man. on Dec. 20 and 3 remained until Jan. 11 (RT). There were also sightings near E. Braintree on Mar. 20 and 27 (RRT, RWN). Six Hawk Owls were counted about Jan. 5 between Dauphin and The Pas, Man. (RWS). One Pygmy Owl was seen near Bragg Creek, Alta. on Jan. 20 (WWS).

KINGFISHER, WOODPECKER—A Belted Kingfisher found by a spring flowing into Rock L. near Glenora, Man. on Dec. 30 was an unexpected discovery (EB); another was present at Calgary through the winter (WWS). A Red-bellied Woodpecker attended a feeding tray at Stonewall, Man. for a month before it was found dead on Jan. 23 (KG) and another was present at Fargo, N.D. until Jan. 3 (WEL).

LARK, CORVIDS—Wintering Horned Larks were generally less numerous, but at the Benton Lake Refuge, Mont., their numbers peaked at 1200 on Jan. 9 (FWC). Both Gray Jays and Blue Jays were totally absent at Spirit L., Sask. for the first winter (JG), but 1 Gray Jay wandered south to Grenfell, Sask. on Jan. 11 (EKH) and another reached Reston, Man. (GT). A Com. Raven was an unusual visitor to Sheho, Sask. in February (WN), whereas none appeared at Brandon, Man. (JL). Piñon Jays were absent from Billings, Mont. (DT) and were in smaller numbers at Rapid City, S.D. (EMS).

CHICKADEES, NUTHATCHES, CREEPER, DIPPER—Black-capped Chickadees were rarely seen at Nipawin and were totally absent from feeding trays at Saskatoon, Regina, Moose Jaw and Val Marie, Sask. and Kenmare, N.D., yet they were in normal numbers in wooded areas south of Saskatoon and in the coulees of the Des Lacs Refuge, N.D. (AMG). Similarly, they were scarce in Rapid City, but numerous on Terry Peak ski slopes at 7000 feet elevation, west of Lead, S.D.

(EMS, NRW). White-breasted Nuthatches were present all winter at Brandon, Man. (JL) but were seen only once, at Regina on Feb. 14 (CP). Red-breasted Nuthatches were absent from most Canadian locations this winter and from Fargo, N.D. In South Dakota they were reported only from Rapid City and Pierre, yet s. of Columbus, Mont. an unusual concentration of 50 were present in a wooded draw on Dec. 6 (KH). Two Brown Creepers wintered at Black Diamond, Alta. with other observations from Regina, Sask., Brandon, Winnipeg and Sandy Hook, Man. and Fargo and Bismarck, N.D. Dippers were reported only from Black Diamond (JWJ), Calgary (WWS), and Rapid City (EMS).

THRUSHES, KINGLETS—In contrast to the usual situation where a few sick or confused robins live through only part of the winter, this year there were healthy groups surviving much further n. than expected. Just s. of Saskatoon, there were 28 Robins at one location on Dec. 31 and 28 at another from Jan. 25 to Feb. 6 (JBG). Four wintered 22 miles w. of Moose Jaw (EJK) and 13 were present at Reston, Man. from Dec. 27 through Jan. 28, feeding on frozen chokecherries (JM, fide DB). At Kenmare, N.D. there were flocks of 10 to 25 in the coulees (AMG, JEF) at Sullys Hill Preserve, N.D. a flock of 20 were observed catching and eating minnows from a small patch of open water near the inlet of the lake (DEG). Smaller numbers of Robins were reported from Kelvington, Spirit L., Raymond and Buffalo Pound L., Sask., Strathmore and Calgary, Alta., Birtle, Oak L. and Winnipeg, Man. and Crosby and Fargo, N.D.

A Townsend's Solitaire was present at Marndan, N.D. through the last week in January (RNR). At Edmonton, a Golden-crowned Kinglet was sighted Dec. 13 and 2 on Mar. 5 (MJH, HCS). Two were seen at Brandon Dec. 17 (BR) and 2 at Reston, Man. Jan. 4 (AEW).

WAXWINGS—Bohemian Waxwings appeared unusually late in the season and in much smaller numbers than usual. There were excellent berry crops in the northern forests and these may have helped explain the late appearance of Bohemians in the settled portions of the prairies. In Edmonton, a flock of 40 was seen as early as Dec. 13 (MJH) and good numbers by mid-January (RWT). At Erskine, Alta. 8 were seen on Dec. 10 and the largest flock of 54 on Mar. 3 (LML). In Saskatoon, the first small flock was seen in mid-December, but numbers did not build up until March, with an average count of 814 birds during the last 10 days of the month, still insufficient to eat all the Rowan berries in the city. Only a single small flock was seen in Regina (EC, fide MB) and four Saskatchewan centers reported none at all. Only Calgary, and Kelvington, Sask. reported them in normal numbers (WWS, SW). At Medicine Lake Refuge, Mont. a flock of 10 finally appeared on Mar. 13 (ONW). At Kenmare, there



Beaver Creek, s. of Saskatoon, Sask., where flocks of Robins wintered. Photo/John Waddington

was a single flock of 20 on Dec. 27 (AMG), at Medora, 5 on Mar. 5 (EAS) and at Jamestown, N.D. a single bird on Mar. 25 (PFS); none appeared at Bismarck, Grand Forks or Fargo. Small infrequent flocks did reach Rapid City, Prairie City, Highmore, Huron and Belle Fourche, S.D. (EMS). As if to compensate for the absent Bohemians, Cedar Waxwings, like the Robins, took advantage of the heavy berry crop to winter further north than customary. There were 50 in Calgary on Feb. 2 (WWS), up to 22 in Saskatoon through Mar. (JBG), 7 in Moose Jaw on Feb. 14 (EWK), 8 in Reston on Mar. 6 (DB), 25 in Winnipeg on Dec. 23 (HC) and 23 wintered in Brandon (JL). At Bismarck a record 346 were counted on Jan. 3 (RNR).

SHRIKE, HOUSE SPARROW, BLACKBIRD—Northern Shrikes were quite well distributed, particularly through the n. part of the Region. Both Brandon and Winnipeg noted a sudden drop in the number of House Sparrows in December (JL, HC). *Salmonella typhimurium* was isolated from some but not all of the dead birds examined. Four Rusty Blackbirds wintered in Calgary, only the second winter that some have done so (WWS).

CARDINALS, GROSBEAKS, REDPOLLS—A ♀ Cardinal was a daily visitor at a feeder at Sullys Hill Preserve through Mar. 26 (DEG) and a pair wintered in Grand Forks, N.D. for the first time (FFK). Two male Purple Finches at Prince Albert, Sask. on Feb. 28 represented a very early date for a species not known to winter this far north. At Sullys Hill Preserve there were scattered ob-

servations during December and January, but after Feb. 18, 7 Purple Finches attended the feeder daily. At Jamestown there were 2 sightings, one of 5 birds (DHJ), whereas they were absent all winter at Sioux Falls, S.D. (HK). Evening Grosbeaks were totally absent from most localities and uncommon at the remainder; the highest Canadian concentration was of 40 birds at Kelvington (SW). There was 1 report of 6 Evening Grosbeaks at Fargo on Dec. 2 (EGA) and a few flocks of 50 at Rapid City (EMS). Pine Grosbeaks were even more completely absent, with very few at Calgary, Alta. and at 4 Saskatchewan localities; the maximum number of 22 was seen at Saskatoon. Hoary Redpolls were reported only from Saskatoon, where a single bird was identified during the CBC on Dec. 26. Com. Redpolls were absent from most localities, with only 4 observations at Calgary and 6 observations from 4 Saskatchewan localities. The largest of three Manitoba sightings was of 43 at Pinawa on Jan. 3 (HC). A single bird was sighted at Upham, N.D. (RJK) and 50 were seen at the Audubon Refuge, Coleharbor (DCM), together with 5 birds seen at Bismarck on Dec. 27 (RNR).

OTHER FRINGILLIDS—Pine Siskins were noted Feb. 5 at Medora, N.D. (EAS) and were present only in small numbers at Rapid City until mid-February when they began to crowd other species from the feeders (EMS). A group of 13 Am. Goldfinches were present at a feeder 10 miles e. of Brandon from mid-December through Mar. 11, a new winter record for this part of

Manitoba (BR). At Fargo, there were more goldfinches than ever before, with 150 counted on Jan. 2 (EGA), while 117 were counted at Bismarck on Jan. 3 (RNR). The only crossbill record was of 2 Reds at Rapid City on Dec. 27 (EMS). An unusual winter record at Billings, Mont. was a **Rufous-sided Towhee** at a feeder Jan. 19 (KH), after 4 had been seen on the Jan. 2 C B C. White-winged Juncos showed an increase at Rapid City where they formed 65% of the junco population at one feeding station, and where 278 were counted on Dec. 27 (EMS). Snow Buntings were reported as decreased at many locations but at Calgary on Jan. 24, 12,500 were seen in two hours (WWS) and flocks of up to 1000 were seen at Rosetown (WER), Saskatoon and Kenaston, Sask. (PLB). The highest count in North Dakota was of 720 birds between Bismarck and Dickinson on Feb. 6 (WAB).

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SOUTHERN GREAT PLAINS REGION / Frances Williams

Winter was mild and very dry throughout the Region. The drought was most prolonged in western Texas, where only four inches of rain fell in 1970, and none at all during the first three months of 1971. Normally a mild winter leads to wintering farther north than normal by many species, but the drought and resulting lack of water and food counteracted the mild temperatures. Not only did all the playa lakes dry up, but also such large man-made lakes as Buffalo in the Texas Panhandle and North Concho at San Angelo, Texas went dry. At several localities this

left sewage evaporative ponds as the only habitat for water birds. This situation resulted in more reports of rare species, as it concentrated birds and bird watchers at the same locations.



LOON, GREBES, PELICANS—A Red-throated Loon was sighted in Roger Mills Co., Okla., Dec. 1 (GRo, RRo). Red-necked Grebes were reported at Cherry Creek Recreation Area, Arapaho Co., Colo., Feb. 28 (JRE); Colorado Springs, Colo., Mar. 20 (RAR); Potter Co., Tex., Mar. 12 (KS, PA). Unusual winter records of White Pelicans were at Great Salt Plains Nat'l Wildlife Refuge, Okla., Jan. 2 (KES) and Midland, Tex., Jan. 9 (TJ). Large migrating flocks of this species were noted in Hood Co., Tex., Mar. 27 (WP et al.) and Hulah Reservoir, Okla., Mar. 1 (WHL).

CORMORANTS, ANHINGA, BITTERN—Several flocks comprising up to 400 Double-crested Cormorants were observed in McLennan Co., Tex., Feb. 20 through Mar. (LMB). At Dallas, 300 were sighted on Mar. 20 (HN). A "large flock" was seen in Rogers Co., Okla., Mar. 28 (HG, DG). An Anhinga in Brazos Co., Tex., Mar. 26 was one of the few records there (KAA, GFC). Am. Bitterns wintered at L. Meredith in the Texas Panhandle (BAL et al.) and one was sighted in Pontotoc Co., Okla., Mar. 26 (WAC).

SWANS, GEESSE—Except for a single bird at Dallas, Dec. 31–Jan. 1 (PJ et al.), Whistling Swans were reported only from the w. part of the Region. Seven arrived at the Midland sewage ponds Feb. 18 and 1 was still present at the end of the period (M.N.). Four were seen at Ft. Collins, Colo., Mar. 17 (RAR). Others were noted at L. Carl Elting near Kenton, Okla., Dec. 28 (WMD), Larimer Co., Colo., early Mar. (DB), and Salt Plains Refuge, Jan. 3–11 (FLB). Snow Geese were more common than usual in w. Texas