

Note: This bird was seen by several other observers, all of whom agreed as to the identification. In a recent review of albinism in grebes, Weller (**Auk**, 76:520-521, 1959) could find only two reports of albino Horned Grebes, both partial albinos. I am indebted to C. Chandler Ross, who has made an extensive search for albino birds in the literature and among museum specimens, for this reference. That albinism may often be correlated with differences in size and behavior is well known (see Lee and Keeler, **Auk**, 68:80-85, 1951). P. W. Post

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WINTER SEASON DECEMBER 1 - MARCH 31

DAVID B. PEAKALL

It was the worst winter for northern finches since 1956/57; most areas had to be content with a few Evening Grosbeaks and Purple Finches. Although the number of Purple Finches increased in late winter they did not approach flight proportions. Several regional editors considered that other passerine species were low in numbers including the Tree Sparrow. Passerine species reported in above average numbers were Cedar Waxwing, Northern Shrike and Goldfinch. In the Adirondacks the Goldfinch was the finch of the period. Although Bohemian Waxwings associate with flocks of Cedar Waxwings it is of some interest that only two were reported this winter.

The invasion of Snowy Owls which followed the four year rule, was fair to good. In most areas it did not reach the proportions of the 1960/61 flight. A detailed account will be published later. In many areas the fine fall flight of Rough-legged Hawks did not result in particularly high wintering populations; local upstate exceptions were the Lyndonville area of Region 1 and Albany-Catskill in Region 8. However, on Long Island the numbers recorded were considered to be the highest ever. The highlight of winter records of birds-of-prey was the occurrence of four gyrfalcons. One is detailed in the field note section. The scarcity of accipiters was again widely commented on.

Several areas reported high counts of Great Black-backed Gulls; on Long Island a new record high Christmas count was made and numbers on the Upper Hudson were considered "unprecedented". This species has been increasingly steadily over the last few decades. In the Great Lakes the species was virtually unknown until the mid 1930's. The average counts for those Christmas counts carried out regularly over the last twenty years are given in the table below. The Ring-billed Gull has also increased as a wintering species. There are considerable difficulties in comparing counts due to increasing coverage and more and better observers. However, the numbers of Herring Gulls reported have not significantly increased over the same period.

	1964-60	1959-55	1954-50	1949-45
Great Black-backed				
Long Island & New York City	590	354	214	71
Great Lakes	99	51	42	24
Ring-billed				
Long Island & New York City	605	239	222	44
Great Lakes	2652	2332	1068	325

The increase of the Mourning Dove as a wintering bird and the increase of the introduced House Finch have been chronicled in these summaries fairly recently. The number of Mourning Doves reported on the 1963/64 Christmas counts was 3533 from 44 counts compared to 2560 from 41 two years before. The average number for regular counts (see *Kingbird* 13(2):99) were Long Island 139 (compared to 118) and upstate 83 (compared to 31). A further northward expansion of the House Finch is recorded in the Hudson Valley and there was a large increase in the numbers recorded on the Christmas counts on Long Island.

There were, at least, as many rarities as normal. Among these may be noted a Boreal Owl at Rochester, Lesser Black-backed Gull at Ithaca and Elmira, two Harris' Sparrows in Region 8, Varied Thrush and Lark Sparrow in the Hudson Valley, and Brambling and Spotted Towhee on Long Island.

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It is regretted that the report from Region 4 was not received in time to be used in this summary.

REGION 1 — NIAGARA FRONTIER

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Winter in the Niagara Frontier was relatively mild during December, January and February. Long periods of cold temperatures were the exception and snowfall was erratic. There were many periods when the ground was mostly snow free. However, the weather pattern reversed in March; there was much cold weather, and snow accumulated to depths greater than in any other part of the winter.

The continuation of mild fall weather into early winter, combined with an excellent available food supply, apparently induced large numbers of blackbirds and sparrows to winter. To a lesser extent, the same might be said of some fruit-eating birds, like the Robin and Flicker. But the same abundance of available food must have also existed in the north country, for many typical winter birds, with the exception of those dependent on small mammals, were either very scarce or unreported.

Ice-free ponds, lakes and streams, especially in the southern tier, probably account for the number and variety of straggler waterfowl reported during December and early January. Likewise, the lack of open water during most of March resulted in an unusually poor waterfowl movement. The outlet of Chautauqua Lake provided habitat for more numbers and species of waterfowl than any other place in the Region, including the temporary sinks and ponds in the Oak Orchard area that were mostly frozen all month.

Most typical March migrant landbirds were about two weeks late in arriving in normal numbers. Several days during the first week were good for migration; however, it wasn't until March 26-28, and especially during the night of March 27-28, when large numbers of these birds moved into the Region.

It is always interesting to watch for the effects of man-made objects on the distribution and occurrence of birds. This winter, in order to stabilize ice in Lake Erie and prevent it from clogging water intakes in the Niagara River, an ice-boom was constructed from Buffalo to Fort Erie, Ontario where the river makes its exit from the lake. The engineers say it