

REGION 10 — MARINE

THOMAS M. DAVIS AND LEE MORGAN

Boston has had it for years. Buffalo was the first in this state, but finally a Rare Bird Alert telephone service has been initiated in the prolific New York City region. By dialing Area Code 516, then 485-2170, you will receive a two minute recording detailing current noteworthy observations from the area outlined in John Bull's "Birds of the New York Area." Birders wishing to report rarities should telephone details to one of the following people:

In New York City — Tom Davis (212) 847-0860; 6-7:30 PM, weekdays.

Nassau and Suffolk Counties — Mona Boch (516) 581-4630; 7 AM — 9 PM, every day.

Westchester, Putnam, and Rockland Counties — Bob Arbib (914) 698-0188; 6-10 PM, weekdays, and all day Saturday and Sunday.

Northern New Jersey — Richard Kane (201) 759-8262; 7-10 PM, every day.

CHRISTMAS COUNTS

For the first time, count data is presented separately from the main body of the winter report. The editors feel this will make year-to-year comparisons easier, but we have a further reason for such separation. The care taken to validate count sightings is lower than at other seasons. The competitive spirit, the "piling-on" to pad lists detracts much from the credibility of many rarities. We do not mean to imply that *all* rarities are "count-inspired" and therefore suspect, but merely that the informal competition lowers normal standards of acceptance. At any rate, as has so often been said, "Christmas Counts are fun."

Data from 7 local counts was made available for this report:

1. Brooklyn — 12/26-80 spp.: Rarities included 6 Double-crested Cormorants, a Pigeon Hawk, and a Red-bellied Woodpecker. A count of 100,000 Herring Gulls is quite likely erroneous, as it exceeds their previous high by threefold.
2. Bronx — 12/27-107 spp.: Count highs included 1607 Canada Geese, 8 Ruddy Turnstones, 825 Mourning Doves and 62 Vesper Sparrows. Reported rarities were Lesser Black-backed Gull (see column for details), and an adult Broad-winged Hawk, that sounded more like a Red-shouldered from the sketchy description reported.
3. Captree — 12/26-130 spp.: Still 1, with no outstanding rarities, numbers not available.
4. Central Suffolk — 12/26-120 spp.: Rarities included Snowy Egret, Pigeon Hawk, and *Northern Waterthrush*. High counts included 907 Mourning Doves, 234 House Finches (still spreading eastward on Long Island), and 52 Vesper Sparrows.
5. Montauk — 1/2-127 spp.: Rarities included Eared Grebe (E. Mills), Pectoral Sandpiper (2 observers but no details) and a *Pheucticus* grosbeak (D. Ford). Highs included 25 Rough-legged Hawks (some duplication?), 30 Carolina Wrens (*all* on Gardiner's Island) and 121 House Finches (previous high 66).
6. Northern Nassau — 12/27-109 spp.: Sole rarity a Snowy Egret. Count highs included 1114 Mourning Doves, 133 Mockingbirds, 1141 Robins (twice the previous high) and 636 House Finches.
7. Smithtown — 12/27-94 spp.: No outstanding rarities or counts — rather unpretentious, but honest-looking.

Rarities included in this report are Arctic Loon, Tufted Duck (2), Skua, Lesser Black-backed Gull (4), Ash-throated Flycatcher, Bell's Vireo and Brewer's Blackbird. Little Blue Heron and Willet were reported for the first time in midwinter. Glossy Ibis continues to arrive earlier each year, and an Oregon Junco set a new late date.

Observers frequently cited: PB—Paul Buckley; WF—Walter Friton; MH—Myrna Hemmerick; SH—Steve Hopkins; MK—Michel Kleinbaum; DP—Dennis Puleston; WR—William Reeves; AW—Alvin Wollin.

LOONS—DUCKS: **ARCTIC LOON**: Jan 26 Pt Lookout (Kevin Malone) — "As it passed within fifty feet of where I was standing, I noticed the following field marks: the bill was noticeably straight and thin and the bird never held its head on a slightly upward angle as is typical of a Red-throated Loon. The head and the top part of the back of the neck was a dark slate-gray; also, this dark coloration appeared to extend farther down on the sides of the face to below the eye. The back of the neck appeared *black*, being conspicuously different than the head and back. The back of the bird was uniformly dark gray but was not in any way spotted like a Red-throated. Instead, it had a very noticeable light edging which gave it a scaled effect." Extracted from a longer field note. It is difficult to put the stamp of approval on this species in winter plumage, but collecting suspected Arctics would likely prove their occasional occurrence.

Little Blue Heron: 3 adults Dec 3 Tobay (AW) — extremely late; Jan 12 Jones (O. Dunning, A. Summers) — first midwinter record. Glossy Ibis: arr Mar 13 (6) at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge (H. Johnson) — earliest Regional record. Whistling Swan: pair wintered on Lower Carmen's River (DP et al); also wintered at Mill Neck (mob). Blue Goose: 1 wintered at Southaven with 6 Snow Geese (mob). European Teal: 3 drakes reported — Jan 9 into Mar Belmont Lake State Park (mob); Feb 11 Mill Neck (B. Spencer); Mar 28 Tobay (M. Boch). **TUFTED DUCK**: what may well be the same drake as last year returned to a small pond near Oakdale in Jan (R. Griffin et al), present to early Mar; also a drake was seen on the East River off Ward's Island from late Jan-Mar 14 (B. and W. Baumann, E. and L. Mills, D. Finch) — possibly the same drake that has frequented the Hudson River since 1966.

HAWKS—OWLS: Turkey Vulture: Dec 30 Glen Cove (R. Johansen); Feb 15 Pelham Bay Park (H. Honig) — early migrant. Golden Eagle: Feb 8 Islip (DP). Black-bellied Plover: 110 Dec 16 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge (WF) — late for such large numbers. Willet: Jan 30 Shinnecock Inlet (WR) — first midwinter record. Knot: 50 Nov 30 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge (WF); 15 Jan 31 Mecox (fide WR). Marbled Godwit: Nov 30 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge (WF). **SKUA**: Nov 27 Pt O'Woods Fire Island (SH) — seen harassing Herring Gulls close to shore the day of a big Gannet movement — observer previously familiar with this species. Iceland Gull: max 9 plus Feb 13 Central Park reservoir (E. Mills) — includes 2 adults and 2 "kumlieni." **LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL**: four reports — adult Dec 27-mid Jan Pelham Bay Park (PB, MK et al); sub-adult Jan 3 Jones (L. Morgan) — bill and legs noted; adult Jan 30 Jones (A. Lauro); adult Feb 3 Pt. Lookout (B. Spencer) — "sitting in parking lot, close range, with Great Black-backs." Black-headed Gull: adult Feb 15 Central Park reservoir (Mrs. E. Mills) — "first here in 2 years;" also reported from Montauk, Jones Inlet and Staten Island Ferry. Bonaparte's Gull: 2000 plus were present at Fire Island Inlet through the month of March (mob) — an adult Little Gull was also reported with this flock.

GOATSUCKERS—STARLING: Western Kingbird: Dec 3 Jones (AW). **ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER**: Dec 5-7 Larchmont (Sidney Bahrt, Robert Arbib, Helene Tetrault, Nancy Ross) — photographed by S.B., copy on file at AMNH where confirmed by John Bull and Dr. Wesley Lanyon, first State record.

VIREOS—SPARROWS: Baltimore Oriole: 5 Long Island Jan-Mar feeder reports received **BREWER'S BLACKBIRD**: male Dec 30-Jan 1 North Pelham (Dr. Alex-

andra Klo's) – “seen at feeder – purplish head, greenish cast to body, iris white.”
Dickcissel: Dec 20-Feb 27 Malverne (A. Brandebury). Pine Grosbeak: only report –
2 males Mar 28 Pt. O'Woods, Fire Island (SH). Oregon Junco: Apr 5 Setauket
(MH) – “dark slate-gray hood, darker than Slate-colored's, sharply contrasting
with dark brown back; sides pinkish brown,” latest Regional record.

Addendum: accidentally deleted from January report – *BELL'S VIREO*: imm
female Sep 26 Fire Island Light (D. Ford, PB et al) – collected for AMNH.

Note: Please have spring reports in by June 8.

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