

Storey). Pine Siskin: only a few reported. White-winged Crossbill: one near Washington Lake, Newburgh, Feb. 1 was the only report (BS). Rufous-sided Towhee: reports from 5 different areas. Three on RCC. Savannah Sparrow: one Jan. 28, Croton Pt. Tree Sparrow: numbers down. Most areas have half the usual counts. Field Sparrow: KM had two thru first two weeks of Feb. Fox Sparrow: two on RCC and five on MCC. Song Sparrow: eight at Croton Pt. Jan. 28. Lapland Longspur: one Dec. 26 Hamptonburgh, feeding with a flock of 12 Horned Larks. Snow Bunting: good numbers in Dutch thru period. About 50 wintered at Stewart Airport.

Pellwood Lake, Highland Falls, New York 10928

REGION 10 — MARINE

BARBARA J. SPENCER

The weather was relatively mild through December and January, following a warmer than usual fall. Sparse land bird migration left few birds to winter in the area. Most Christmas counts enjoyed favorable conditions although the Orient count on December 28 proceeded in 28 degree F. weather with almost gale-force winds out of the north. A protracted cold spell began February 7, freezing bays and harbors solid, concentrating lingering waterfowl in the open areas around inlets and displacing others into the ocean. Moderating temperatures during the last week in February moved the ice out gradually. Larger than usual numbers of Red-winged Blackbirds wintered in the area and were singing in early February. Returning migrants were not in evidence through the period.

GREAT GRAY OWL

The event of the season was the finding of a Great Gray Owl in Lloyd Harbor January 8 by David McNicholas, the first Great Gray Owl seen on Long Island since 1902. This bird, perhaps the southernmost individual present in a year marked by a widespread invasion of Great Grays, frequented a lightly wooded fringe along the edge of a salt marsh, and hunted over the marsh and in nearby Caumsett Park. It was seen eating Norway Rats. The responsibility of hosting such a rare and vulnerable species was assumed by the Huntington Audubon Society, coordinated by Sallie Ruppert. Guides, guards, and taxi service were provided to protect the bird and property owners from the encroachments of overzealous observers. The presence of the bird was not announced on the RBA tape until Tom Davis had made arrangements with the local police for parking, and supervision of the traffic generated by visiting birders and non-birders. Hundreds of people visited this fearless and accessible rarity.

The bird was present through February 6 when the bitter weather filled the marsh with ice. A dead Great Gray, picked up on the beach in nearby Centerport on March 12, was presumed to be the Lloyd Neck bird. On March 27, a woman called the Rupperts to report that the owl was alive and well in her backyard; apparently there were at least two Great Grays on Long Island although the possibility exists that the Centerport bird was washed ashore from some other area. The Lloyd Neck bird was last observed on March 28.

The role of the public press was problematic during this event. *Newsday* published, in rapid succession, at least three articles on the bird, arousing the interest of many sightseers who compounded the birding traffic manyfold, and brought the bird to the attention of some who did not have the owl's best interests at heart. This coverage seemed excessive to the point of irresponsibility. Remonstrations with reporters about concern for the owl's safety, and for the burdening of the residents with the pressure of so many visitors brought "I just work here" responses. It seems necessary to question the premise that all birding publicity is good for the birds or for birders. An article which appeared at a later date in the *New York Times*, recounting horror stories of birder's transgressions, seemed inappropriately placed, and damaging to the interests of birders in general. An article of this type should appear in specialized publications, not in the public press.

CHRISTMAS COUNT REPORTS

The Montauk Christmas Count, held December 16, tied its all-time high count of 130 species. New to the count was a Parasitic Jaeger. All-time high counts were made for Gannet, Double-crested Cormorant, Green-winged Teal, Canvasback, Ring-necked Duck, Ruddy Duck, Laughing Gull, Mourning Dove, Gray Catbird, and Red-winged Blackbird. Other birds of note were an Orange-crowned Warbler, Red-necked Grebe, European Wigeon, Peregrine Falcon, Little Gull, and Snowy Owl. Species in low numbers included Bobwhite, Blue Jay, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Dark-eyed Junco, and Tree Sparrow. Winter finches were virtually absent. Co-compiler Ben Trimble has provided participants with data from his computer on all of the Montauk counts since the first in 1920. The total number of species seen since that time is 202. From a rather modest start with 38 species the count has grown in number of participants, and in area covered, to reach its present size. The Quogue-Watermill count was also held December 16, and tallied 102 species, their third highest. First for the count were Peregrine Falcon, Red-bellied Woodpecker, and a Rose-breasted Grosbeak at a feeder. Also noteworthy were Blue-winged Teal, Ruffed Grouse, Dovekie, and Snowy Owl. The Captree count was held December 17 with adverse wind conditions. They found 105 species including a Black-headed Gull, a Saw-whet Owl, and a Northern Shrike. A count of 22 Blue Jays was an all-time low. The 26th consecutive Central Suffolk count was held Dec. 26, under favorable conditions. A total of 124 species was recorded, their fourth highest. Two species new to the count were Common Gallinule and Marbled Godwit. Other birds of interest were kittiwake, Little Gull, Red-bellied Woodpecker, and Lark Sparrow. Species found in good numbers included Gannet, Gadwall, Bufflehead, Ring-billed Gull, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Am. Robin (highest ever), and Cedar Waxwing. Species low in numbers included White-winged and Common Scoters, Hooded Merganser, Bobwhite (lowest since 1961), Blue Jay (lowest since 1957), Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, and Starling (lowest since 1961), Red-winged Blackbird, cowbird, Purple Finch, Savannah Sparrow and Tree Sparrow (lowest ever). The Central Suffolk count has recorded a total of 197 species over 26 years.

The Orient count, held December 28, experienced very adverse conditions with almost gale force winds. A total of 93 species were found with numbers

low and no rarities. The Northern Nassau count participants found 102 species. New to the count was an Iceland Gull. Of interest was a Northern Shrike, and a Red-headed Woodpecker; a high count of fourteen Screech Owls reflected early morning work by members of Huntington Audubon. A Starling roost under the viaduct in Roslyn was estimated to contain 10,000 to 15,000 individuals, occupying about half of the available roosting spaces, when Ralph Cioffi made his observations at dusk. Are there other large roosts on Long Island? Southern Nassau also counted on December 30. A total of 120 species was found. New to the count were Turkey and Ruff. Four Northern Shrikes were a new count high. Of interest were ten Western Sandpipers, a Red-necked Grebe, Louisiana Heron, Little Blue Heron, and Long-billed Marsh Wren, a new high number of Tufted Titmouse (55) was reached. Low in number were Shovelers (2) and E. Meadowlark, with only one found.

Positives for the season include: 1) good numbers of waterfowl on the various Christmas counts, 2) an "invasion" of Northern Shrikes, 3) although loons and grebes have seemed scarce to some observers, Montauk's count of 246 Common Loons was the second highest in their history, Red-throated Loons (67) the sixth highest, while the number of Horned Grebes (219) was second only to an amazing 2000 seen in 1957, a year that saw large numbers of loons as well. Many of the previous years reported these birds in single or two digit numbers.

Winter negatives: 1) decreasing numbers of Bobwhites, 2) lack of winter finches, 3) low numbers of Blue Jays, probably attributable to different migration patterns this year, 4) few kinglets, Winter Wrens, and other small birds in many localities. Inspection of long-term Christmas count data shows wide fluctuations in the numbers of wintering birds; trends are very difficult to detect with any confidence.

Rarities include: Barrow's Goldeneye, Burrowing Owl, Great Gray Owl, Varied Thrush, Wheatear, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Boat-tailed Grackle.

Christmas count compilers: Montauk, Robert O. Paxton and Benjamin Trimble; Captree, Frances File and Anthony J. Lauro; Quogue-Watermill, David Larsen; Central Suffolk, Gilbert S. Raynor; Northern Nassau, Herbert Roth; Orient, Paul Stoutenburgh; Southern Nassau, Richard Sloss and Cornelius Ward.

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LOONS-DUCKS: Gannets were moving in large numbers along the coast in mid-Dec. with 1200 or more at Montauk on Dec. 16. A Red-necked Grebe wintered in the Montauk area where it was reported by many observers. Another was in Jones Inlet Feb. 22 (BJS). Two immature Little Blue Herons were seen at Tobay Jan. 1 (AJL). A Louisiana Heron Dec. 16 at Jamaica Bay was the latest regional report (W. Reilly), who also saw seven late Glossy Ibis in the same location. Whistling Swans regularly winter at Hook Pond; 13 were there Dec. 2 (GSR), 15 on Dec. 26 (AR, HR). The numbers declined during Jan.; the swans disappeared entirely during the Feb. freeze. Two Whistlers were seen Jan. 6 at Mill Neck where they are not regular (RC). About 50 Snow Geese flying west over the West Pond at Jamaica Bay Feb. 3 may have wintered in the area (PG) as did two or three near Mecox. A

"Eurasian" Green-winged Teal was present during Jan. at Hempstead Lake (RH *et al.*). Up to four European Wigeons were in the Mecox area by Dec. 26, (AR, HR) while another was at Montauk. 500 Northern Shovelers Jan. 4 at Willow Lake, Queens Co. (G. & M. Dremeaux) was a remarkable number. A drake BARROW'S GOLDENEYE was found at Lake Montauk Jan. 10 (GSR), and was also seen Jan. 27 (A. Keith). A drake Harlequin Duck was present to Jan. 8 at Fire Island Inlet, then a pair was seen Feb. 3 through the period (AJL). Two Harlequins were present on Gardiner's Island Dec. 16 (N. Proctor), and a female was at Shinnecock Inlet Jan. 13-20.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Goshawks were widely reported, one wintering in Prospect Park, Brooklyn. Four Sharp-shinned Hawks were seen on the Northern Nassau count, three on Captree, and one each on the Montauk and Central Suffolk counts. No Cooper's Hawks were reported. Red-tailed Hawks wintered in good numbers in the area with a maximum of 31 Dec. 15 on the Staten Island count. A Red-shouldered Hawk wintered at the Muttontown Preserve (AL). Several Peregrine Falcons were present during the period. One wintered at Jamaica Bay (S. Chevalier *et al.*), three were sighted Dec. 16: one on Gardiner's Island (N. Proctor), one on the Quogue-Watermill count, and one was seen at Sand's Point (G. Quinn). Another was found at Sagaponack Jan. 27 (JA), and one at Hempstead Lake Jan. 28 (A. Wollin, SBD). Two Merlins were found on the Central Suffolk count Dec. 26, one on the Captree count Dec. 17, and one on the Montauk count Dec. 16. Clapper Rails seemed scarce this year on eastern Long Island; a Virginia Rail seen at Calverton Jan. 20 was a good find (GSR). A Common Gallinule was present on the Carman's River Jan. 13 (APC), and one was reported on the Central Suffolk count. A late Willet was seen at Jones Beach Dec. 3 (T. Burke). A high count of 40 Greater Yellowlegs was made Jan. 1 at Hempstead Lake. Seven Purple Sandpipers in Glen Cove Jan. 27 were noteworthy (RC). A Short-billed Dowitcher Dec. 8 at Jones Beach, identified by call, was extremely late (PAB). Three Long-billed Dowitchers were at Jones Beach Dec. 8 (PAB), two were at Jamaica Bay Dec. 15 (W. Reilly) and two were present until Jan. 12 at Hempstead Lake; three seen Feb. 2 at Tobay (called "keek" when flushed) appear to be a first Feb. record (GSR, RA). A Ruff found Dec. 16 (EL) at Hempstead Lake stayed through Jan. 28, a first winter record. A Marbled Godwit was at Moriches Inlet Dec. 26, 30 and Jan. 1 (GSR). A light-phased sub-adult Parasitic Jaeger lingered until Dec. 16 at Montauk Point (THD *et al.*). A second year Glaucous Gull was at South Haven Park Jan. 13 (APC), and another was at Shinnecock Inlet Jan. 16 (RA). Iceland Gulls were uncommon this winter. One was at Montauk Jan. 27 (GSR, RA), and an adult was there Feb. 25 (AJL). One in Hempstead Harbor off Glenwood Landing was rare for the north shore (BJS). An individual identified as the *kumlieni* race was at Mastic Jan. 15 (RA), while the *kumlieni* spending its third winter at the restaurant at Jones Beach is now fully adult. Lesser Black-backed Gulls were noted in several locations; an adult was seen at Montauk Point Dec. 26 (AR, HR), a sub-adult Jan. 28 at Jones Beach (AJL), and an adult at Sea Cliff Feb. 24 (BJS). The only Black-headed Gull reported was an adult seen at Captree Dec. 17 by a number of observers. Laughing Gulls were present in unprecedented numbers at Montauk into the middle of December, with 85 counted on Dec. 16; the previous high for the Christmas count was two. Little Gulls were hard to find, with one imm. seen Dec. 16 in Napeague Harbor (AJL), and one on the Central Suffolk count Dec. 26. Alcids went almost unreported, with a murre (sp) seen in flight Dec. 16 at Ditch Plains (T. O'Connor) and a Dovekie, also seen in flight in Shinnecock Inlet the same day.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Screech Owls are undoubtedly more common than the numbers usually reported indicate. One found dead on Fire Island (D. Ford) was the first recorded on the outer beach in years, while a record 14 on the Northern Nassau count represented extra effort made to locate them. Eight to ten reports of Snowy Owls from Dec. 11 through the period may have represented fewer birds as these large owls move about over wide areas. Most unusual was one Jan. 14 on an East River island off 96th Street, Manhattan (E. Mills). A BURROWING OWL present from Dec. 3 to Feb. 1 at JFK Airport (S.

Chevalier, AR, HR) roosted in a storm sewer pipe! The famous Lloyd Neck **GREAT GRAY OWL** was well-observed and photographed by many between Jan. 8 and Feb. 6. Other reports of Great Grays were unconfirmed. Long-eared Owls wintered at Muttontown (AL), Brentwood (FF), and at Jamaica Bay (RA, GSR, DL). Red-bellied Woodpeckers are well distributed throughout the area in small numbers. Ten were reported Dec. 23 on the Bronx-Westchester count, three were in Prospect Park, three in Forest Park, three at Alley Pond Park, three Dec. 3 on the Southern Nassau count, six the same day on the Northern Nassau count, and single individuals reported from various locations on the eastern end of the island where they are fewer in number. A Red-headed Woodpecker wintered in Central Park. Two were found on the Queens count Dec. 16, and one on the Northern Nassau count Dec. 30.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: A Western Kingbird was present at Jamaica Bay to Dec. 24, and was seen again Jan. 24 (WW, D. Brandt), "catching insects." 45 Tufted Titmice were found Dec. 16 on the Queens count, twice the previous high. Northern Nassau reported 85 on Dec. 30 below the high of 109 in 1974. These birds are far more common in the wooded areas on the north shore than they are further east. Carolina Wrens seemed low in all areas except on Gardiner's Island where they numbered 66 and did not seem to reflect the effects of recent hard winters. The total number on the Montauk count, 70, tied the previous high. A male **VARIED THRUSH** was seen briefly in Plandome Dec. 8 (O. Dunning), and another, or possibly the same bird, was enjoyed by many at a feeder in Mastic Jan. 3 through Mar. 2 (Mrs. Anderson, AJC). Two Hermit Thrushes were at Jamaica Bay Feb. 9 (GSR), while a Swainson's Thrush there Dec. 29-Jan. 1 may be the first fully documented winter occurrence in our Region (JA, THD). Four, possibly five Eastern Bluebirds were seen in Easthampton Feb. 18 (RA). A **WHEATEAR** was found at Great Kills Park, Staten Island, Dec. 30 (H. Atlas). The largest flight of Northern Shrikes in many years produced numerous reports. The wintering population may have exceeded 20 with at least six noted regularly along the Jones Beach strip and the connecting causeways. At least two observers independently saw five in one day (AJL, THD). The season's only Loggerhead Shrike was seen in Far Rockaway Dec. 15 (R. Kelly).

VIREOS-WARBLES: A male Black-and-white Warbler was seen Dec. 8 in Sands Pt. (BJS). An Orange-crowned Warbler was found on Gardiner's Island Dec. 16 (N. Proctor), one was at Jones Beach Dec. 30 (I. Cantor), and another at West Gilgo Jan. 7 (AJL). A late Black-throated Green Warbler was present in Marine Park, Brooklyn Dec. 10 (J. Lamoureux). An Ovenbird was found in Pelham Bay Park Dec. 18 (H. Martin), and a Yellow-breasted Chat was present at a feeder in Blue Point from Nov. through Jan. (AJC).

WEAVERS-SPARROWS: A male **YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD** was seen Jan. 7 at a feeder in Westerly, Staten Island (C. Fallon). Northern Orioles were reported at a feeder in Elwood (R. Benjamin) Jan. 8, and at Montauk Dec. 2 (GSR). Two males and a female **BOAT-TAILED GRACKLES** Dec. 6 in Canarsie (WW) were apparently the same three birds present in Broad Channel Dec. 16-19 (I. Cantor *et al.*). A Rose-breasted Grosbeak was at a feeder in Quogue Dec. 16 for the count, while a tailless male was seen at a feeder in Westerly, Staten Island Jan. 7 (C. Fallon). Evening Grosbeaks were around in scattered numbers, 30 were at a feeder in Hauppauge (FF). Few Pine Siskins were reported; a maximum of 50 were seen at Captree Jan. 7 (AJL). 68 Am. Goldfinches at a feeder in Glen Cove Feb. 23 were a large number (F. McDonough). Three Red Crossbills were reported on the Montauk count, and 18 were at Muttontown Dec. 30 (AL). Pine Grosbeaks and redpolls were unreported. An "Oregon" Junco was present at a feeder in Classen Pt., Bronx, Jan. 8, on and off through the period (R. VanScoy). A Lark Sparrow was seen Dec. 3-4 at Great Kills Park, Staten Island (W. Framm), and a Chipping Sparrow was seen at a feeder in Amityville for a couple of weeks in early Jan. (AJL).

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