

**NEWS AND NOTES:** As you read this issue of the new year hopefully your snow will be melting and temperatures will getting a bit more Spring-like. Weather has certainly been the topic of much discussion and news media coverage during the past two months. This is reflected in the number of reports received for this issue which were quite a bit lower than usual. A number of our usual reporters noted that they were spending much of the reporting period farther south. The editor managed to spend a long (5-day) weekend in South Carolina.

You should find a new auto decal attached to this issue. Thanks to the assistance of a member/subscriber who has a printing business in Augusta (Minuteman Signs). These decals are different than the older ones in that these will stick to the inside of your window and face outward. I don't recommend placing them in the rear window of your car if it has the tape-type of radio antenna and/or heating coil.

Some years ago people used to send in reports about where they had seen cars with the Society sticker on them. The most unusual was one seen on a car in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea. The reporter waited for the owner to show up and when asked about replied, "Don't know, Mate. It was on the car when I got it." Another decal was in a private locker on the space shuttle Challenger and was destroyed in the disaster.

As we enter our 45th year we have members in (alphabetically): AL 1, AZ 2, CA 7, CO 4, CT 11, DC 1, DE 1, FL 4, GA 2, IL 1, IN 2, MA 44, MD 4, ME 408, MI 2, MO 1, NC 5, NE 1, NH 9, NJ 6, NM 3, NY 18, OH 4, PA 16, RI 3, TX 1, VA 3, VT 1, WA 1, WI 4 and one each in Canada, Germany, and Spain.

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**SUBSCRIPTIONS AND RENEWALS:** If it is time to renew it will say so beside your name on the address label. Dues are for membership in the Sorrento Scientific Society of which the *Guillemot* is the official newsletter. Do not worry about membership obligations as we have not yet held a meeting, incorporated, elected officers, written by-laws or formed any committees. The *Guillemot* is defined as "an amateur, bimonthly newsletter concerning natural history in Maine."

We have two memberships, **Regular** which is \$5 per year and **Sustaining** which is any amount over the regular. It is the latter that allows us to have the newsletter printed and mailed as first class mail. Each issue costs about \$550 to produce and mail. We do not advertise the newsletter except by word-of-mouth, or via gift subscriptions. There have been occasional news articles about us that have also helped. A sample copy will be sent to anyone if you send along their name and address. The mailing list is never given out or used for any other purposes.

Additional auto decals are available for \$1.50.

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**ASTRONOMY:** In March we find **Mercury** racing ahead of us and swinging around the right side of the Sun. It is low in the morning sky and will disappear as it passes behind the Sun. Around the last week of April will come out behind in the left side and appear dim evening 'star' in the west and will be visible until mid-May.

**Venus** finally came out around the left side of the Sun and is the bright object in the west after sunset. It sets about 8:30 p.m. in March and a little later each night setting about 10:30 p.m. on May 1st.

By the time you get this issue of the newsletter the **Earth** will have reached Spring Equinox (12 hours of night and 12 hours of daylight) on 3/20.

Outward from us **Mars** is off to the left of the Sun and falling farther and farther behind each day. It is low in the west setting at 8 p.m. through both March and April.

We passed more distant **Jupiter** and it is also falling farther behind us each day. It is the bright 'star' that is high in the sky after sunset and through most of the night for the next two months; in April it will go down in the west about 2 a.m.

We are slowly catching up with **Saturn** and we can look around the right side of the Sun and start to spot the ringed planet. It will appear above the eastern horizon about 11 p.m. in mid-March and by the end of April will be the bright object in the east as early as 8:30 p.m.

**Uranus** and **Neptune** are outward from us and on either side of the Sun. Uranus is lost in the evening twilight at the end of March and Neptune will be up in the east but hidden in the morning twilight through May.

**Meteors.** No major showers until **April 23** when we have the Lyrids. Expect 15-20 per hour but many are very bright and leave glowing trails. This is "oldest" meteor shower and has been recorded yearly since 687 BC in Chinese astronomical records. **May 6** are the Eta Aquarids which are dust from Halley's Comet. They will be washed out by the moon that is only two days after full.

Some dates to look forward to: **3/21** the Moon is less than 1 deg. from Mars in the west this evening (*1 degree is the width of your little finger with your hand held at arms length*). **3/25** is National Waffle Day. **3/31** is National Bunsen Burner Day. **4/4** is a total eclipse of the Moon but don't look for it. It is far to the west and Maine is the only state that cannot see any of the eclipse. **4/8** the moon is close to Saturn an hour before sunrise. **4/9-10-11** Venus passes close by the Pleiades star cluster these evenings. **4/19** an hour after sunset a very thin new Moon is beside faint Mars on the western horizon. **4/21-22-23** very faint but Mars and Mercury will be close together on the western horizon 40 minutes after sunset.

We are in a period of very active planetary exploration this spring. The Messenger probe is in orbit around Mercury and sending back pictures and scientific data. Here on Earth we are being orbited by at least 1100 satellites and another 2465 inactive ones. On the Moon the Chinese rover Chang'e-3 (Jade Rabbit-3) has stopped roving but is supposedly still sending back signals. Outward from us on Mars we have the 10-year old Opportunity and the more recent Curiosity landers actively driving across the Martian hills and plains plus five orbiting spacecraft taking pictures and weather observations.

Between Mars and Jupiter, the Dawn space probe has gone into orbit around the dwarf planet **Ceres** just this past March 6th. There is a mystery here as pictures show two bright shiny spots beaming from a large crater that look just like headlights. Current theory is that it is exposed ice on the surface.

Jupiter has no space probes around it at this time but one called Juno is on its way and will reach the giant planet in 2016. Farther out the Cassini probe is orbiting Saturn taking pictures of the planet and its moons.

Nothing is headed inward to Venus at the moment and nothing is headed outward to Uranus and Neptune but the New Horizons space probe is approaching Pluto and will reach this most distant planet on July 14th. Even farther away is Voyager 2 which is 15 light-hours away and Voyager 1 which is 18 light-hours away (334 billion miles out) and has left the solar system and is now in interstellar space. Both spacecraft are still functioning and sending signals back to Earth.

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**WEATHER:** The weather was certainly a major news item during the first two months of 2015. Large eastern cities, New York and Boston set snowfall records with the latter receiving over 108 inches of snow as of 3/15. In Maine snow depths were greater than usual but did not break any records although they did come close. I still have difficulty finding accurate snow depth records in the various weather related websites. In the editor's yard in Bar Harbor there was 30 inches on flat ground on 2/28 which is a lot considering the ocean is just over 900 yards away.

Some temperature records were set with Bangor's Feb. average of 6 degrees breaking the previous record of 8 degrees set in 1994. Portland had 14 degrees (actually 13.8) which didn't reach their record low of 12.2 back in 1971. The lowest temperatures for the region would be in the -80 degree range about 14,000 years ago during the ice age!

|            | Augusta | Bangor | Bar Harbor | Caribou | Portland | Kittery | Frenchville |
|------------|---------|--------|------------|---------|----------|---------|-------------|
| Jan temp   | 17      | 15     | 18         | 9       | 21       | 22      | 7           |
| Feb temp   | 10      | 6      | 11         | 3       | 14       | 14      | 2           |
| Jan precip | 1.60    | 2.69   | 1.58       | 2.79    | 4.59     | 2.49    | 0.71        |
| Feb precip | 0.65    | 2.03   | 0.73       | 1.20    | 2.81     | 1.62    | 0.10        |

Temperatures are in degrees F. and precipitation is in inches of liquid after any snow is melted. All sources are local airports except for Kittery which is from a privately owned weather station.

Ocean temperatures are from various offshore buoys. Bar Harbor harbor was frozen over and their Feb. temperature was taken under the ice. Eastport's water temperature sensor remains inoperative. Buoy 024 is listed sort of "for the fun of it" and is located out near the edge of the Gulf Stream so it often shows wide ranges of temperatures as the eddies of the warm water pass near the buoy. Temps are in degrees F.

|         | Buoy 007 (12 mi. out of Portland) | Buoy 005 (79 mi SE of Portland) | Buoy 44034 (16 mi SW Schoodic Pt.) | Buoy 027 (15 mi S of Jonesport) | Buoy 024 (178 mi S of Schoodic Pt.) | Tide station ATGM1 Bar Harbor harbor |
|---------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1/31/15 | 40                                | 44                              | 42                                 | 44                              | 44                                  | 33                                   |
| 2/28/15 | 36                                | 39                              | 37                                 | 42                              | 39                                  | 29                                   |

We had an actual blizzard on 1/27 and the snow storms that produced our record snows followed on 1/31, 2/2-3, 2/9-10, 2/15-16, 2/20-21, and 2/23. As this is being written on 3/16 we have had another 3 inches of snow.

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**GEOLOGICAL:** Four small earthquakes were detected since the last issue. On 2/17 there was a magnitude 1.7 quake that occurred 2.5 miles deep under the St. Croix River six miles southeast of Calais. There was a 1.6 magnitude quake five miles down under a point six miles southeast of Eustis.

On 3/11 there was 1.4 trembler three miles deep about 9 miles west of Andover. This was followed an hour later with a 2.4 magnitude aftershock which is almost strong enough to be felt.

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**INVERTEBRATES:** On 2/6 a **Woolly Bear** caterpillar was seen after a warm sunny spell. On 2/19 a **Pseudoscorpion** was seen lowering itself on a thread from the ceiling of a house. Both reports were from Lamoine.

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**FISH, AMPHIBIANS, REPTILES:** None reported.

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**MAMMALS:** The carnivore family was the commonly reported. Fresh **Bear** tracks were seen in North Ellsworth after a warm day on 1/20 (SS). A few **Raccoons** were noted. They semi-hibernate and tend to make raids on bird feeders on the occasional warm evening.

A pair of **Coyotes** were seen crossing the ice on a bay in Harrington 2/13 (MAA). **Red Fox** were seen in Orono (EG), Bar Harbor (WT), Harrington (MAA), and Topsham (CJ). In the feline family there were **Bobcats** seen at Prospect Harbor (RB), Harrington, Etna, and Ellsworth (CW -excellent photos).

A **Skunk** made itself know at Owls Head on 2/1 (JW). A **Fisher** was seen regularly at Farmington in Feb. (SF).

A probable **Short-tailed Weasel** invaded a house in Ellsworth 1/23. **River Otter** were seen at Boothbay on 1/13 (AA).

**Snowshoe Hare** tracks were often seen in the woods but several reporters thought that numbers were lower than usual this winter.

**Red and Gray Squirrels** were noted by many feeder watchers. A **Flying Squirrel** was at a feeder in Winter Harbor (HK). **Chipmunks** started becoming active in early March with one at a feeder in Owls Head 3/3 (JW) and another at Lamoine 3/13 (DS).

**Deer** were well reported as many turned to bird feeders as sources of food due to the deep snow across most of the state.

Our most primitive mammal and another example of a southern species moving into Maine was a marsupial **Opossum** was photographed at a feeder in Cumberland on 3/8.

On 1/14 there were 250 **Gray Seal** pups counted on Seal Island NWR. Among the adults was an individual that had been tagged as part of the Sable Island, Nova Scotia population. Three adults and a pup were at Machias Seal I. on 1/29 and another pup was at Popham Beach SP on 3/1. A few **Harbor Seals** were noted on ice and tidal ledges from Lubec south to Popham off and on in Jan. and Feb.

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**BIRDS:** Weather played a big part during the past two months. Bare ground and mild temperatures the first three weeks of Jan. resulted in a number of species that were lingering after the fall migration and Christmas bird counts. All of sudden on 1/27 everything changed with a major snow storm, high winds, and cold temperatures. Within two weeks the temperatures dropped to the point that almost all freshwater was frozen as were tidal flats and many coastal coves and inlets. Many of

the lingering species simply vanished at that point. There was also a corresponding drop in the numbers of people out birding if the incoming reports are any indication. There are a few holdouts however and as you will see there are a few remaining autumn birds around at least until early March. As this is being written spring is only days away but the ground is still snow covered. Temperatures are moderating slightly and a few migrants are actually beginning to be reported.

Herb Wilson of Colby College is in his 20th year of documenting the **arrival dates** of a selected 120 species of birds here in Maine. If you are interested in participating in this study contact him via email at [whwilson@colby.edu](mailto:whwilson@colby.edu), look at his web site at [web.colby.edu/whwilson](http://web.colby.edu/whwilson), or call him at 207-859-5739 and request copies of his reporting form.

**Upcoming birding festivals:** The next newsletter will not be in the mail before mid-May so a list of birding activities will be given now.

**Feathers over Freeport** is scheduled for 4/25-26. Their contact web site (rather long) is: [http://www.maine.gov/dacf/parks/discover\\_history\\_explore\\_nature/activities/feathers\\_over\\_freeport.shtml](http://www.maine.gov/dacf/parks/discover_history_explore_nature/activities/feathers_over_freeport.shtml)

**Wings, Waves, and Woods** at Deer Isle, Stonington is May 15-17. Contact them via: <http://www.deerisle.com/calendar-of-events/>

**Downeast Spring Birding Festival** at Cobscook Bay in Whiting is May 22-25. Their contact is via: <http://www.cclc.me/page/911-3214/downeast-spring-birding-festival>

**Acadia Birding Festival** is May 28-31. Contact them at: <http://www.acadiabirdingfestival.com/>

Species accounts for the winter months of January and February are:

**DUCKS, GEESE:** A **Greater White-fronted Goose** was seen at Portland until 1/6. A **Pink-footed Goose** was associating with **Canada Geese** at Damariscotta on 1/19. The latter species was commonly seen along the coast but numbers dropped as water froze over in Feb.

**Wood Ducks** were at Skowhegan until 1/16 and one was at Warren until 1/18.

**Green-winged Teal** were in with flocks of **Mallards** at several locations until 1/21. One has

wintered in South Portland and was still being reported 3/12. **Black Ducks** and **Mallards** were reported all winter. Some Blacks were seen heading into a 50 knot wind at Machias Seal Island. on 1/29.

There were more wintering **Northern Pintails** this year than usual. Seen through Jan. and Feb. were birds at Clinton, Sanford, Bath, Westbrook, Phippsburg, and 12 other locations.

Three **Shovelers** were at Westbrook on 1/26 the day before the blizzard. A pair of **Gadwall** on the Spurwink River on 1/13 were that last to be noted while a single **Canvasback** was found in the Royal River at Yarmouth on 1/22.

Single **Ring-necked Ducks** were mixed in Yarmouth and Woolwich through Jan. with the last report being on 2/1. **Greater Scaup** were at York 2/3, South Thomaston 2/12 and Portland 2/28. This species used to be much more common in winter but less so in recent years. A **Lesser Scaup** was off the York town dock on 1/30.

The male **King Eider** that was found off the Cliff House in Ogunquit on 12/12 was still there as of 3/10. A female was off Portland Head Light on 2/20. **Common Eiders** were widely reported with the largest concentration being 540 at Blue Hill Falls (TB).

**Harlequin Ducks** were scattered all along the coast this winter. Fifty were of Machias Seal Island 1/16, another 15 at Schoodic Pt. 3/1, and on 3/10 a total of 69 were counted between the Nubble and Ogunquit. **Long-tailed Duck** numbers seem to be a bit lower this winter but small groups were all along the coast sometimes number up to 60 birds.

Both **Black Scoters** and **Surf Scoters** were widespread in Jan. but numbers decreased in Feb. with only a scattered few; all of them seen south of Penobscot Bay. No White-winged Scoters were noted in any reports.

**Common Goldeneyes** were found in almost all open coastal coves and rivers. There were more **Barrow's Goldeneyes** than usual this winter. From one to three birds were seen in most open water particularly at the downfall areas of dams and open parts of the Penobscot River and Pushaw Stream north of Bangor. Highest number were 14 at the foot of the dam in Benton on 3/10.

**Buffleheads** were found on almost all bodies of open moving freshwater rivers. Male displays were being seen the first week of March.

Up to 16 **Hooded Mergansers** were at Yarmouth in what little open water there was in late Jan. One was at Deer Isle on 3/11. In Jan. there were 70+ **Common Mergansers** on the Androscoggin River in Brunswick (CJ). Two remained in the Stillwater R. in Orono until 1/24 (EG). **Red-breasted Mergansers** dropped out of most rivers as they froze over but coastal birders continued to see them right to the end of Feb.

**GROUSE:** A few **Ruffed Grouse** were noted but the deep snow kept most observers out of the woodlots where they are likely to occur.

**CORMORANTS:** The last date for a **Double-crested Cormorant** was 1/16 for a bird in Port Clyde. **Great Cormorants** were regularly seen at Lubec, Schoodic, Bar Harbor and others were seen from the North Haven Ferry and down at Merrymeeting Bay.

**HERONS:** There were many lingering **Great Blue Herons** around through 1/25 but one at Weskeag Marsh on 1/28 the day after the blizzard was the last one seen.

**VULTURES:** The last fall **Turkey Vulture** was a bird at Tenants Harbor on 1/7. The spring birds started being seen on 3/1 at Topsham followed by birds at Freeport and Kennebunk on 3/9, Camden and Falmouth on 3/12.

**EAGLES, HAWKS:** Another sign of spring is the first **Osprey**. On 3/11 one was seen at Port Clyde followed by a second at Limerick on 3/13.

**Bald Eagles** were seen all winter. Twenty-five were at the Seal I. NWR during Gray Seal pupping time. There were 20 at a chicken dump in Etna and 32 were counted at the Augusta landfill. Prey animals noted were eels, red squirrels, and Black Ducks. Four were on a deer carcass in Harrington 2/12 (MAA). A pair were carrying nesting material at Veazie on 3/7 and nesting should be underway by the time you get this issue of the newsletter.

The last **Harrier** was at Biddeford Pool on 1/20. The deep snow precluded any attempts by others that tried to winter over.

A few **Sharp-shinned Hawks** were hanging around feeders in Jan. and two were on Monhegan I. 2/13. **Cooper's Hawks** were seen from Eastport to Kennebunk many of them

preying on feeder birds, all winter. **Goshawks** were at the U of M Orono campus on 1/7 (JL *fide* EG), one seen at Pownal 2/9, and after a lengthy struggle one took a crow in Harrington on 2/10 (MAA).

**Red-shouldered Hawks** were at Scarboro, and North Bath through 2/12. **Red-tailed Hawks** were seen at Southwest Harbor 2/2 (CK) and one at South Thomaston on 2/21 was being harassed by crows. A few **Rough-legged Hawks** were hanging around at Vinalhaven, Unity, Wells, and north at Riviere des Chutes (Easton) until 1/26. After the 1/27 storm one was at Yarmouth on 2/6 and the next wasn't seen until 3/7 at Rockport.

The last **Merlin** was a bird at Portland on 1/20. **Peregrine Falcons** were present all winter with birds at Topsham, Machias Seal I., Belfast, Bangor, South Portland, Cape Elizabeth, the Nubble light, and on the Casco bridge in Portland.

The rarity of this winter was a dark-phased **Gyrfalcon** that appeared at Ogunquit Marsh on 1/10, and moved to Wells on 1/18. Photos indicate that it was the same bird that was seen in Mass. in December. There were mixed reports with it being reported in Wells on 1/19, New Hampshire on 1/20, and then Wells again on 1/28. At times there were up to 50 birders gathered to see the bird and it was fairly well photographed.

**SHOREBIRDS:** During most of the year this is one of the most reported families of birds. Not so in the winter but there were still a few around.

Several **Ruddy Turnstones** remained at Ogunquit until 1/10. Ogunquit Beach was also the location of about 120 **Sanderlings** seen on 1/20.

**Purple Sandpipers** are our only winter resident shorebirds and a few were reported from various birding trips all along the coast, most of them east of Penobscot Bay.

From 12 to 30 **Dunlin** were seen at Winslow Park in Freeport 1/16, 24, and 2/7. Two were at Back Cove in Portland on 2/8.

Early spring arrivals were a **Wilson's Snipe** at Winthrop on 3/7 where it was limited to some mud next to what little open water there was. On 3/1 a **Woodcock** was found frozen to death next to a house in West Farmington. One seen at Waterville 3/10 and another heard at the Farmington site 3/11.

**GULLS:** Two **Bonaparte's Gulls** were at Sorrento on 1/15 (CWC) and up to 100 were in Passamaquoddy Bay at Eastport on 1/24.

Our more common resident gulls, **Ring-billed**, **Herring**, and **Great Black-backed** were included in many trip lists along the coast and particularly to various landfills throughout the winter months.

**Iceland Gulls** in all stages of plumage were present all winter. Up to 24 were along the Portland waterfront, with others at South Portland, the Augusta landfill, the Bath landfill, Belfast Bay, Phippsburg, and Owls Head. Our other white-winged gull, the **Glaucous Gull**, were also around in smaller numbers and in all plumage cycles. Birds were seen at Portland, South Portland, South Freeport, Owls Head, the Bath landfill, Monhegan I., and Wells Harbor.

**Kittiwakes** were off Machias Seal I. on 1/16, seen from the Vinalhaven Ferry 1/21, and the North Haven Ferry 1/24. There were no Feb. reports but then there weren't any birders venturing offshore either.

**ALCIDS:** It hasn't been a big winter for **Dovekies** with single birds at Ogunquit on 1/23 and one at Cape Elizabeth 2/13. A **Thick-billed Murre** was at Rockport Harbor from 1/10 to at least 1/18. Single birds were also seen at the Nubble Light in York 2/3, near the Falmouth town landing 2/13, off the Old Port in Portland 2/22 and off the Cliff House in Ogunquit 2/28.

Several thousand **Razorbills** were around Machias Seal I. on 1/24 while single birds were seen from the Vinalhaven and North Haven ferries the last week of Jan. Two were seen flying past Schoodic Pt. on 3/1 (WT).

**Black Guillemots** were seen here-and-there along the coast through Jan. and Feb.

**DOVES:** **Mourning Doves** were regular feeder visitors at many locations across the state. Courtship cooing was heard in Orono on 3/8 (EG).

**Rock Doves** (Pigeons) were mentioned only as prey of various avian predators.

**OWLS:** It has been another good winter for **Snowy Owls**. Not as many as last year but there are probably 20 or more being seen around the state. Biddeford Pool has two that have been seen starting on 1/10. Others are being reported from Fryeburg, Hermon, Monhegan I., Chebeague I., Presque Isle, Cross Lake, Cvr Plantation

Littleton, St. Agatha, Fort Fairfield, Rockland, South Portland, Hermon, Rangeley, Wells, Scarboro, Bangor, and the Portland airport. In Jan. at least 16 were in Aroostook County (BS).

In Jan. **Barred Owls** were seen in Benton, Kittery, and Caribou. Feb. birds were at Sorrento (CWC), Saco, Ellsworth (CW), Farmington (SF), Rockland, and Skowhegan. They will start to become more vocal in March as their breeding season commences.

On 2/24 a **Saw-whet Owl** was being harassed by crows in Auburn and another was found dead in a barn in Waldoboro. One was seen at Kennebunk 2/25 one in Bangor 3/7.

**KINGFISHERS:** Single **Kingfishers** were noted at eight different places prior to the 1/27 blizzard and the freezing weather that followed. There was only one report after that date, a bird at Freeport on 1/30.

**WOODPECKERS:** Small numbers of **Red-bellied Woodpeckers** remained through the winter months. Red-bellies were seen at feeders in Owls Head (JW), Topsham (CJ), Franklin, Bath, Cape Elizabeth (2 birds at that feeder), and Hollis.

Rare in winter, **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** were at Vinalhaven Island, the Evergreen Cemetery in Portland, and in Yarmouth. None of them reported after the onset of winter on 1/27. One in Kennebunk was seen from late Jan. until at least 2/11.

Both **Downy** and **Hairy Woodpeckers**, two of our regular residents were generally reported.

A **Three-toed Woodpecker** was seen down east at Trescott (FH), and a **Black-backed Woodpecker** was north at New Sweden on 1/23.

Unexpected, considering the weather and amount of snow, were several **Flickers**. On 1/28 one was at Rockland, two were seen at Rockport 2/1, one at Camden 2/2, and one at Bath 2/17. The one at Rockport was still there 2/25.

**Pileated Woodpeckers** were at Trescott (FH), Westport Island (SN), Kennebunk, Southwest Harbor (MPH), in Acadia NP (LH), Hollis, and Bar Harbor.

**SHRIKES:** No large numbers this winter but individual **Northern Shrikes** (has anyone ever seen two or more shrikes together in the winter) were at Ripley (SC), West Paris, Scarboro, and Cape Elizabeth prior to the 1/27 blizzard. After

that reports dropped off, (but so did the number of observers) with birds at Richmond, Lisbon, Fryeburg, and Acadia NP. the latter three sightings were in early March.

**CORVIDS:** There were **Gray Jays** at New Sweden on 1/23 and Saddleback Mt. 3/2 (LH). **Blue Jays** were present at feeders across the state right through the past two months. Some territorial calls started being heard the first week of March.

Deep snow forced a number of **Crows** to start foraging along the shore and intertidal areas in Feb. Over 100 were at Hulls Cove on Mt. Desert Island (LH), and over 300 were going into a night roost at Rockland on 2/5. Nesting material was being gathered in Lamoine on 3/8 (DR).

**Northern Ravens** were wide spread. A couple were on Machias Seal Island, twelve were together at Etna 2/6, and nine were feeding on a deer carcass in Harrington 2/12 (MAA).

**LARKS:** Before the 1/27 storm **Horned Larks** were seen at Clinton (23 birds) on 1/9 (BBa), nine were at Wells 1/18, and 12 at Fryeburg. Numbers decreased but there were still a few around where wind had swept fields bare. Keep in mind that the 1/27 blizzard so often referred to did not cover the whole state and northernmost areas escaped the brunt of the storm. Four larks were at Brunswick 1/31, another four at Pine Pt. in Scarboro 2/10. One was on Monhegan Island 2/12. The same day there were over 50 over in Fryeburg. Two were at Clarry Hill in Union on 3/6.

**TITS:** **Black-capped Chickadees** were giving their "fee-bee" calls in Presque Isle at -20 degrees on 1/14 (CK). Other early spring calls started being heard on 2/4 at Harpswell and Augusta.

The only **Boreal Chickadees** were seen at Lexington TWP 3/7. (*Lexington was incorporated as the 309th town in Maine in 1833 but surrendered its incorporation in 1885 and today is listed as a wild land plantation 2R1 BKP WKR which translates into "town 2 range 1 Bingham's Kennebec Purchase West of the Kennebec River"*).

**Tufted Titmice** were well reported entirely as feeder visitors.

**NUTHATCHES:** Both **Red-breasted** and **White-breasted Nuthatches** were around

Mostly noted as being "feeder" birds, a few red-breasted Nuthatches were seen in wooded areas where they were found with feeding groups of Black-capped Chickadees.

**CREEPERS:** **Brown Creepers** were seen in both January and February. Reports came from widely scattered locations from Topsham up to Stonington (DW) to Calais. Creepers are year-round residents in Maine but don't appear in reports that often. There is some minor migration with birds moving southward with the onset of cold weather. A bird banded in eastern Canada was found in North Carolina so they can move some distance.

**WRENS:** Only one species remained through the past two months. **Carolina Wrens** were coming to feeders, mostly in southern areas. One was out on Vinalhaven Island with others from Kennebunk up to Bar Harbor. Lingered Winter Wrens that were on Christmas counts in Dec. were gone before the new year.

**KINGLETS:** The **Golden-crowned Kinglet** is another resident species that seldom migrates. Reports are more common in spring and summer when they are more vocal. There were a couple of sightings this winter as they were found with small feeding cohorts of chickadees. Lack of reports this winter was most likely due to the lack of birders in the deep snow and cold.

**THRUSHES:** Our **Eastern Bluebird** is a pretty resilient bird and is regularly found all winter. This was no exception. There were no large numbers. Easternmost was a pair in Blue Hill on 1/17, two in Wells on 1/18 and four in Hope 1/19. After the storm on 1/27 one was in Rockland 1/31 followed by one at a feeder in Saco on 2/1. There were eight reports on 2/4 with all locations along the southern coast. Two showed up at a feeder in Waldoboro on 2/7 (RS), and a pair were seen at Scarboro on 2/24. We can certainly expect an increase in sightings as the snow cover decreases through March.

There are always a few **Hermit Thrush** that attempt to winter over. Before the 1/27 blizzard we had one in Westbrook, one in Gardiner, and one in Cumberland. After the storm on 1/28 one was hanging around the Samoset Inn in Rockport then one at a feeder in West Falmouth on 1/30 was the last date of any. Whether they moved on

or perished in the bitter cold of February in anyone's guess.

There was a major wave of **Robins** the second week of January. Flocks were all along the coast from Mt. Desert to Portland with some numbering well over 100 birds. Wherever there were apples or berried still on trees there were robins. On 1/29 at the tail end of the storm over 20 appeared out on Machias Seal Island. A few were reported the first week of February and most of them were gone soon after. A few of the dark "Newfoundland" variety were in with the large January flocks. As this is typed up on St. Patrick's Day there are some call notes being heard outside at Bar Harbor.

**MIMICS:** The last **Catbird** of autumn was at Auburn until 1/22 the last date it was seen.

There were reports of a few **Mockingbirds** scattered about. Two were in Brunswick 1/7 (CJ), one at the university campus in Orono 1/15 (EG), one was feeding with a flock of robins in Bremen 1/17 and single birds were on Monhegan I. 2/12 and Deer Isle 2/17.

A **Brown Thrasher** was in Cumberland 1/11 and one in Portland was seen from 12/14/14 until 1/16. Another was coming to a suet feeder in Topsham 1/30 and had been there for five days at that time.

**STARLINGS:** A few were mentioned in various reports. Most were seen coming to feeders but there were a few good sized flocks, in one case over 100 individuals seen along the coast in intertidal habitat and around Portland Harbor.

**WAXWINGS:** Back at Christmas count time there were only a few **Bohemian Waxwings** being seen. A much large incoming wave spread across the state during second and third week of January. With quite a few trees and bush still bearing old fruits there were a number of flocks that had 75 to 200 birds. By mid-February they covered the state with birds from northern Aroostook County south to Calais and down the coast to Kennebunk. Some were out on Monhegan I. One of the larger flocks had 240+ birds at Phippsburg on 3/1. A leucistic (semi-albino) individual was photographed in Jay.

In many instances they were in mixed flocks with **Cedar Waxwings**. There was an influx of this species centered on 1/16-18. On 1/26 a flock

of over 300 was present on the Colby campus in Waterville.

**WARBLERS:** Very of this family remained beyond the Christmas count period or the new year. A **Pine Warbler** at a feeder in Rockland had been there five weeks and was last reported on 1/22.

Six **Yellow-rumped Warblers** were seen on Vinalhaven Island 1/21 but this would be expected as this species regularly winters over where there is shelter and a supply of the waxy Bayberry berries which are common along the immediate coast.

A **Yellow-breasted Chat** was at Lincolnville way back on 1/2, the last date it was seen (BBa).

**SPARROWS:** This is always a late lingering family with a number of species that successfully winter over. At the risk of being too repetitious one must use the 1/27 blizzard and the continuous cold weather after that as the point where a number of sparrows disappear and/or numbers dropped.

**Eastern Towhees** were at Scarboro on 1/25 and Hallowell on 1/28. After the storm one was found in Ellsworth on 2/19.

**Tree Sparrows** were locally common with large numbers in the Fryeburg to Farmington area. There seemed to be lower than usual numbers along the coast in Feb.

A couple of **Chipping Sparrows** attempted to winter over; one was at Sorrento on 2/11 (CWC), one was at a feeder in Southwest Harbor on 2/12 (CK) and another at Portland 2/24.

A **Clay-colored Sparrow** was frequenting a feeder in Eastport from 12/6 and was still there as of 2/3.

Uncommon in winter and rare as a feeder bird there was a **Savannah Sparrow** at a feeder in South Portland 2/16. A bit earlier there were six counted during a trip at Parsons Beach in Kennebunk on 1/18.

A few **White-throated Sparrows** have been at feeders all winter but their numbers dropped rapidly after the heavy snow arrived in late January.

There was a big influx of **Dark-eyed Juncos** on 1/23. There were mixed reports about them with some observers reporting many at their feeders while others commented on the lack of them

Two **Lapland Longspurs** were seen at North Fryeburg on 2/26 and just after our regular reporting period one was at Clarry Hill in Union on 3/6.

Small flocks of **Snow Buntings** were common through the first half of January and were seen from Fryeburg to Bas Harbor (MPH). After the 1/27 storm all other reports came from Aroostook County and Fryeburg. It probably wasn't a lack of bunting in the rest of the state but a lack of birders after the storm.

**CARDINALIDAE:** Only the nominate species, the **Cardinal**, were reported so far this winter. There were some concentrations at feeders, seven at a feeder in Topsham (CJ), twelve at a feeder in Waldoboro (RS), 13 in Newcastle, and over 15 at a feeder in Owls Head (JW).

**BLACKBIRDS:** A single **Eastern Meadowlark** at Wells 12/15 was there until 1/18.

**Red-winged Blackbirds** were at scattered locations until 1/14. A couple in Topsham on 2/18 were the only February birds. Eight at York on 3/11 were the first spring arrivals and as this is being written on 3/17 there are several other arrival reports coming in.

Three **Rusty Blackbirds** at North Fryeburg were there from 1/12 to at least 2/26.

On 3/17 a **Grackle** found flying around inside the Macy's store at the Bangor Mall was the only one reported as of that date.

A **Baltimore Oriole** was at a feeder in Topsham on 1/4 (CJ) and one in Winter Harbor that was on the Schoodic Christmas count was present until 1/14 (SB).

**FINCHES:** This has not been a "finch winter" but most of our regularly expected species were being seen albeit in relatively low numbers.

**Pine Grosbeaks** started showing up increased numbers during the first week of January. Birds were seen in Oakland, Sunkhaze NWR, Harrington, Old Town, and they were listed as abundant in parts of Aroostook County (BS). Quite a few were on the U of M campus in Orono (multi obs. *fide* EG).

**Purple Finches** were at feeders in Topsham, Owls Head (JW), Bar Harbor (WT), Southwest Harbor (MPH), Pownal, and Harrington (MAA).

**House Finches** were also fairly common feeder birds across most of the state.

**Red Crossbills** were the most commonly seen of this group. Known to have attempted nesting every month of the year in Maine, one was carrying nesting material in Waterboro on 2/1. Twenty-five **White-winged Crossbills** in Sorrento on 2/5 were the largest flock noted (CWC).

**Common Redpolls** were at feeders all across the state right through January and February. A number of observers actually noted increased numbers at their feeders during the 1/27-28 storm. Mixed in were a few **Hoary Redpolls** with individuals seen at Trescott (FH), Ellsworth (photo -CW), Prospect Harbor (3 birds -RB), Waterboro, Eastport, Etna, and Harrington (MAA).

**Pine Siskins** were abundant this winter. Some feeding flocks numbered 70 to 100 or more. Sightings ranged from Aroostook County to Yarmouth.

**Goldfinch** numbers were quite a bit lower this winter but most feeders had a few. Higher numbers were 30 in Winter Harbor (HK), 65 in New Harbor, and 70 at a feeder in Wells.

Of interest is the continued increase in the numbers of **Evening Grosbeaks**. They were so abundant 40 years ago but numbers dropped to the point that a couple of winter went by when none were reported. This winter there were several at a feeder all winter at Trescott (FH), a total of 150+ at various locations around Aroostook County on 1/27 (BS) with 40+ at one feeder in the Caribou area. Feeders in Old Town at several in early February (*fide* EG), 24 were in Greenbush on 2/24. An individual that was xanthochromic (excessively yellow) was seen at Madawaska Lake in Aroostook County and another, most likely the same bird, was found at a feeder in Woodland (photo -BS).

**REPORTERS:** Anyone may send in reports for the newsletter. Please understand that not all reports are cited individually but all of them are necessary for interpreting and understanding the natural history covered in each issue. Everyone is busy and the editor appreciates the time spent writing and sending the reports. Initials of reporters are not used all of the time due to space limitations and some have asked that their initials not be used. The following people made this issue possible: AA Arne Aho, MAA Merle & Anne Archie, BBa Bruce Barker, BBo Bonnie Bochan, RB Roger Bowen, SB Seth Benz, SBr Sally Bridges, TB Tom Bjorkman, CWC C.W. Comer, LC Laura Cripps, SF Susan Foss, EG Ed Grew, FH Fred Hartman, LH Lois Hatch, LHa Lynn Havsall, MPH Margot & Paul Haertel, CJ Carol Jack, CK Craig Kesselheim, HK Hillary Kammerer, JL Jerry Longcore, NL Nancy Leavitt, CM Carol Muth, JM John Manter, SN Susan Nergaard, MO Mary Opdyke, DR Dartha Reid, BS Bill Sheehan, DS Doug Stewart, RS Rick Skoglund, SS Shirley Smith, CW Chuck Whitney, DW Diane Walker, JW Jeanie Wilson, WT Bill Townsend. NP National Park, SP State Park, TWP township. *fide* can mean "on the word of", second-hand, unconfirmed.

\* \* \* \* \*

The next reporting period is March – April 2015. Reports are due by May 10, 2015. **MAIL** reports to 12 Spring St. Bar Harbor, ME 04609, **PHONE** reports to 207-288-5654, or **eMAIL** them to wtownsend@roadrunner.com  
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