



Guillemot

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NEWSLETTER OF THE SORRENTO SCIENTIFIC SOCIETY, 12 SPRING ST. BAR HARBOR, ME 04609-1330

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NEWS AND NOTES: Welcome to another year of the Guillemot. As many of you know, it is the official newsletter of the Sorrento Scientific Society which got its name as the editor lived in that town when the first issue was produced. A summer resident, Mildred Hughson had found a dead Barred Owl and given it to the local biology teacher (me) and had told friends that it was given to the "Sorrento Scientific Society". At the time there were hearings about a possible oil refinery in Machiasport. The editor attended and discovered that many people testifying didn't know a spruce tree from a spruce grouse. It was decided to establish this newsletter for the purpose of informing people of what was around them in terms of natural history. The Society exists in name only with the purpose of producing this newsletter. We have managed to prevent any organization, the electing of officers, the forming of committees, having meetings, etc. We did have a picnic each summer for several years but it eventually became too difficult due to summer traffic and other events to continue. It was regularly held at the farm of Gavin and Ruth Watson in Sullivan until they tragically passed away.

Volume 1 number 1 was mailed in late January 1972 to 74 people. The names were selected from birding acquaintances along with a list of people given to me by the late Bob Patterson of Somesville. I had purchased mimeograph stencils, 10 reams of paper and 80 8-cent stamps for a total expenditure of \$21.19.

Seventy subscriptions were purchased out of the 74 copies mailed. Of those 70 people three are still subscribing. Today we have 558 "members". Listed alphabetically, members are located in AZ 1, CA 5, CO 3, CT 9, DE 1, FL 3, IN 2, MA 25, MD 4, ME 421, MI 2, MN 1, MO 1, NC 4, NE 1, NH 10, NJ 7, NM 2, NY 16, OH 5, PA 14, RI 3, TX 1, VA 2, WA 1, WI 4, Canada 1, and Germany 1. A few of these are duplicates as the issues are listed for both winter and summer addresses. The mailing list is never given out.

The editor used to be able to get this issue in the mail within a week of the close of the reporting period but this has slipped to 2-3 weeks just due to the amount of material that arrives for each issue. Only two issues have been early, one in 1975 when the editor was headed to Antarctica on a research trip and one in 1985 when he was in Houston interviewing for the teacher position on space shuttle flight STS-51.

We still get requests for the possibility of printing more scientific papers but the whole purpose of the newsletter remains as a report on the local natural history written for the general public to enjoy and perhaps learn something about nature in Maine.

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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 any 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 this latter that allows us to have the newsletter printed and mailed as first class mail. Each issue costs about \$500 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.

Auto stickers with the Society logo are available for \$1.50. New subscribers get one with their first issue.

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ASTRONOMY: Mercury is racing ahead of us in orbit and swinging around the right side of the Sun in late March. Visible low in the east at sunrise it will quickly disappear in the glare and pass behind the Sun on April 26. It will reappear low in the west after sunset in early May.

Venus is also ahead of us and to the right of the Sun. This makes it a morning "star" that is very bright in the southeast about 4 a.m. It will remain like this throughout the spring, summer, and fall this year.

Here on **Earth** we reached Spring Equinox on March 20 with the daylight hours exceeding the nighttime hours for the next three months.

We catch up with and pass **Mars** on April 8. The red planet rises in the east right at sunset in late March and will be in the sky all night through April. It will be highest and due south on 4/8.

Jupiter falling farther and farther behind us. It is already the bright "star" high in the south right after sunset and sets in the west after midnight at the end of March and at midnight through April into early May.

We are also catching up with **Saturn**. It rises in the east about 10 p.m. on 3/31 and earlier each evening rising at 7:30 p.m. on 4/30. This gives us three planets, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn visible in the late evening sky through the next several months.

Uranus is off to the right of the Sun and is lost in the glare of the setting sun by the end of March. Faint **Neptune** rises in the east about 4:30 a.m. on April 1.

Meteors. The Lyrids will reach a peak of 15-20 per hour in the early morning hours of 4/23. A last quarter moon will rise at midnight but the sky should be fairly dark for early morning observations.

The **Eta Aquarids** which is dust from Halley's Comet should produce about 10 per hour after 2 a.m. on 5/6.

There is a prediction of a possible meteor shower sometime on May 24. Times are uncertain, the moon will not interfere, so be on the lookout. This would be dust from Comet Linear.

On 3/5 a 102 ft. wide asteroid passed between the Earth and the Moon and the next day a smaller 32 ft. one passed just 47,771 miles overhead.

Some dates to look forward to are: 3/30 is the new moon. 4/8 Mars is due south and highest this evening, 4/12 Saturn is only 0.7° from Neptune at dawn, 4/15 is the full moon and a total eclipse. The first since 2011, for those of use in Maine it will begin at 1:20 a.m., be totally eclipsed from 3 a.m. to 4:25 a.m. and still be partially eclipsed when it sets at sunrise. On 4/17 the moon is close to Saturn tonight. 4/20 is Easter Sunday. On 4/26 an hour before sunrise the old crescent moon in to the left of Venus. 4/29 is the next new moon and an eclipse of the sun if you happen to be in Antarctica or the southern Indian Ocean. May 10 finds Saturn directly outward from us, highest in the sky and due south at midnight. 5/14 finds the moon very close to Saturn tonight.

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WEATHER: This has certainly been a topic of discussion around Maine and most of the eastern U.S. the past two months. January was pretty close to average for winter weather but in February is started getting colder with a number of snow and ice storms passing just to our south. As March arrived the weather has not changed and as of 3/18, the temperatures are well below average. How much, and when will they moderate remains to be seen and will be reported in the next issue.

	Augusta	Bangor	Bar Harbor	Caribou	Portland	Kittery	Frenchville
Jan temp	19°	19°	22°	12°	22°	23°	9°
Feb temp	21°	18°	22°	13°	22°	24°	11
Jan precip	3.10 in.	3.20	2.89	3.99	4.05	2.94	2.00
Feb precip	1.70	1.99	2.27	2.23	4.70	2.55	0.92

Actual snowfall amounts remain elusive. Precipitation is the liquid amount including melted snow. Kittery and Frenchville are listed as they are the two mostly widely separated stations, south to north, in Maine.

	Buoy 007 (12 mi. out of Portland)	Buoy 44034 (16 mi sw Schoodic Pt.)	Buoy 037 (60 mi. south of Mt. Desert)	Tide station ATGM1 Bar Harbor harbor	Tide station PSBM2 Eastport harbor
1/31/14	40°	40°	40°	34°	Inoperable
2/28/14	37°	39°	40°	32°	37

There is a camera on buoy 007 that can be viewed at: www.ndbc.noaa.gov/cams.shtml It takes pictures once an hour during daylight.

Thunderstorms rumbled across the state during a snowy cold front passage on 2/22.

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GEOLOGICAL: On 1/16 a 1.9 magnitude earthquake occurred 3 miles deep at a point 1 miles south of Windham. On 2/6 there was a 2.0 magnitude earthquake also 3 miles deep at a point 9 miles NW of Rumford.

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INVERTEBRATES: The media has been noting a population explosion of **Green Crabs** and their possible effect on soft shell clams and other marine organisms. A number of reporters noted loons feeding on these crabs.

Black Beach Spiders were first seen out and about on Machias Seal Island on 3/9. A **Woolly Bear** caterpillar was found over at Schoodic on 1/17 (RM).

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FISH: A **Bass** weighing 6.82 lb. was taken from Winnegance Pond in West Bath on 2/8. Also taken from there was a 1.59 lb. **Crappie**, a 3.24 lb. **Pickrel** and a **Brook Trout** weighing 2.31 lbs. was caught at Pleasant Pond in Phippsburg. It has been four years since a record freshwater fish has been caught in Maine. That was a 9 lb. 2 oz. Brook Trout caught through the ice at Mousam Lake on Jan. 8, 2010.

The upcoming elver (baby **Eels**) season has been a major topic in the news as of early March.

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AMPHIBIANS: None were reported during Jan. and Feb.

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REPTILES: A **Brown Snake** was reported sunning at St. George on 3/9 (AB).

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MAMMALS: Quite a few reports with most of them noting our usual residents. Carnivores noted were **Coyotes** which started being very vocal at the end of Jan. and into Feb. (CP, JW). One in Winter Harbor was seen wagging its tail as it tamely approached a family dog. **Red Fox** were seen at several places, Winter Harbor (JW), Bar harbor (LH), Sorrento (CWC), and Topsham (CJ). In the feline family there were **Bobcat** at Topsham and one was seen sitting under a bird feeder (CJ, RB). Exact locations of some of the fur-bearers is kept a bit vague but that is the editor's choice.

The March 13 edition of the Lincoln County News has a picture of a possible **Mountain Lion** that was taken by a game camera in Jefferson. Date of picture was not listed and the picture itself is not 100% clear enough to positively identify the animal.

Skunks made themselves know at Winter Harbor and Cherryfield (JW, HK).

Long-tailed Weasels were noted as they checked out squirrel tunnels in Ripley (LC) and around bird feeders in Trescott (FH). A **Mink** was seen in Ripley 2/11.

River Otter were noted at Old Town (EG), Trescott (FH), and on the river at Topsham (CJ).

Just outside of our reporting period, an unidentified **Bat** was seen flying in Topsham on 3/12.

White-tailed Deer were well reported and a few **Moose** were noted with many of the latter identified only by their tracks in the snow.

Snowshoe Hare reports were mixed with some noting them as abundant and others as nearly absent.

In the rodent family; **Porcupines** were seen at Prospect Harbor, Brunswick, and Bar Harbor. The earliest **Chipmunk** report was dated 2/28. **Red** and **Gray Squirrels** were everywhere there were bird feeders. **Flying Squirrels** were night visitors to bird feeders in Winter Harbor 1/13 (JW), and Lamoine 1/21 (DR). **Deer Mice** were caught in Sorrento (CWC) and appear to have been the prey of a number of **Snowy Owls** based on owl pellets seen.

Gray Seals had their pups on Seal Island in Jan. and most have already left and the internet monitoring cameras turned off already. Over 400 **Gray Seals** with their pups were counted on Mt. Desert Rock on 2/8 (*fide* ZK). One on Machias Seal Island had a large shark bite injury. **Harbor Seals** in Sorrento have slowly increased from 17 to 25 by 2/26 (CWC). **Harp Seals** were noticeably absent most of the winter but on 3/7 one was at Wonsqueak Harbor (JW).

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BIRDS: There are several birding festivals coming up in May and June. Just in case the next newsletter is too late there are listed here. For those of you who are internet savvy the website is listed and events are listed there. Or just Google the name. For those of you who are not, the phone numbers are listed also.

4/30 – 5/1. Feathers over Freeport. 207-865-4465

5/16-18. Wings, Waves, and Woods. Deer Isle-Stonington area. www.deerisle.com/calendar. 207-348-2455.

5/23-26. Down East Birding Festival. Cobscook Bay area. www.cclc.me/birdfest 207-733-2233 ext. 330.

5/29-6/1 Acadia Birding Festival. Mount Desert area. www.acadiabirdingfestival.com 207-233-3694.

6/7 Aroostook State Park Birding Festival. www.parksandlands.com 207-768-8341.

Registration is open for all of these and some of the more popular field trips are filling up rapidly.

This year is the 21st year of the **Migratory Bird Arrival Project** at Colby College in Waterville. Last year over 200 birders submitted data for the project. All one has to do is record the first day that you see any of about 140 migratory birds in our part of the state. 2013 data sheets have already been mailed to participants but there is always a need for more observers. Contact Herb Wilson, Dept. of Biology, Colby College, 5739 Mayflower Hill Drive, Waterville, ME 04901. You may email him at: whwilson@colby.edu

DUCKS: Usually one of the most reported families in winter, the duck reports were fewer than usual. This was most likely due to bad weather, impassable roads, and ice which kept observers out of the field.

Brant were limited to southern shores with birds at Cape Elizabeth starting on 1/5. A few were at Biddeford Pool and Kennebunkport by early Feb. and on 2/25 a small flock was seen flying past Machias Seal Island toward Grand Manan.

Canada Geese were scattered all along the coast especially where there were open tidal flats. Up to 100 were in a flock at Phippsburg 2/12.

The first **Wood Ducks** were a pair at Kennebunk on 3/10. Single **Green-winged Teal** were at Vinalhaven 1/15, Saco 1/30, and Cape Elizabeth 2/23.

Black Ducks were present wherever there was open water as were **Mallards**. Some flocks of the latter numbering over 200 birds.

In January single **Pintails** were found at Vinalhaven, Westbrook, Fairfield, Camden, and one in Presque Isle which was unusual for the location at that date. The Fairfield and Westbrook birds were still present on 2/28 with one showing up at Phippsburg the same day.

Three **Northern Shovelers** were at Westbrook from 1/14 to at least 2/23. A female was found at the Bass Harbor Marsh on Mt. Desert I. 3/10 (RM).

A single male **Gadwall** was found at Rockland on 1/29, another at Scarboro 2/23 and three males at Eastport were seen from 3/3 to 3/9. **American Wigeon**, all single birds, were at Camden harbor 1/21, Somesville (on Mt Desert I.) 1/25 (CK), and another at Eastport 3/3.

Ring-necked Ducks, all single birds, lingered at Camden to 1/20 then one at Phippsburg 2/12, and one down east at East Machias on 3/4. **Greater Scaup** were a bit more common with birds from Ogunquit to Sorrento with dates from 1/5 to 3/12. Numbers ranged from single birds to 33 at Sorrento.

Lesser Scaup were at Biddeford Pool in January, Ogunquit and Newagen in Feb. and Portland and Rockland the first week of March. Numbers ranged between 1 and 4 birds.

Common Eiders were seen all along the coast but there is no question that numbers are considerably lower. Blame is being placed on either green crabs which are eating all the food, or global warming or a combination of both.

A single male **King Eider** off Ogunquit on 1/30 was the only one reported.

Harlequin Ducks ranged from Ogunquit (100 were counted between there and the Nubble) east to Machias Seal I. where they were becoming quite vocal on 3/9. Up to 12 were around Schoodic Pt. 2/19 (CW). Small flocks of **Long-tailed Ducks** were seen all along the coast with 80 at Blue Hill Falls being the largest group reported (TB).

Black Scoters were the most common of this group. On 1/5 there were 200 off Cape Elizabeth. Numbers dropped slowly and none were reported after the last week of Feb. Seven **Surf Scoters** seen from the Vinalhaven Ferry on 1/11 were the only ones reported. **White-winged Scoters** were at Sorrento on 1/24 and in Blue Hill Bay 2/15.

Common Goldeneyes were reported throughout Jan. and Feb. along the coast and up rivers if there was open water. Over 200 were in Frenchman Bay around Sorrento. The Kennebec river at the base of the Shawmut dam in Fairfield was the source of many winter duck and gull reports. **Barrow's Goldeneyes** were quite common this winter albeit in small numbers. The largest count was of 27 in the Stillwater river at Orono on 1/22 (EG). Others were seen at Belfast, Saco, Fairfield, South Freeport, off Reid SP, and east to East Machias.

Buffleheads were noted all along the coast and coastal rivers. Courtship behavior was being observed the third week of Feb.

In January there were **Hooded Mergansers** at Orrington BBa and Yarmouth. February saw birds at Spurwink, Yarmouth, and Sabattus.

Common Mergansers frequented open running water. Birds were on the Stillwater in Orono 1/12, and the Androscoggin at Topsham 1/17. Three were at the base of the Shawmut dam on 1/30.

All **Red-breasted Merganser** sightings were on coastal waters at Belfast, Yarmouth, Blue Hill Falls, and Ogunquit right through the end of Feb.

A **Ruddy Duck** was lingering at Belfast 1/15 (BBa) and another at Cushing on 1/20.

GROUSE: **Ruffed Grouse** were more obvious this winter as deep snow covered the ground forcing may to go higher in the vegetation to feed on buds thus making them more visible. A **Spruce Grouse** walking down the road in Winter Harbor on 3/3 was the only one reported (JW).

In Dec. there were 1717 **Wild Turkeys** reported on 22 of the 26 land-based Maine Christmas Counts.

LOONS: **Red-throated Loons** were seen from Ogunquit east to Lubec through Jan. and Feb. Single **Pacific Loons** were off Ogunquit 2/2, Biddeford Pool 2/4 and 2/15. **Common Loons** were quite common all along the coast all winter.

GREBES: Only **Horned** and **Red-necked Grebes** were mentioned in any reports and then just as part of various trip lists.

CORMORANTS: Although there were a half dozen **Double-crested Cormorants** listed on three Christmas counts in Dec. none appeared in any reports from the past two months. **Great Cormorants** were noted up and down the coast and up the Androscoggin River. Birds on Machias Seal Island were showing breeding patches on 2/25.

HERONS: Only **Great Blue Herons** were seen this winter and then only until the second week of Jan. Sightings dropped off after that as coastal marshes became frozen. Arriving birds are starting to be reported as of mid-March.

VULTURES: **Turkey Vultures**, relatively new summer residents are starting to linger into the winter months. On 1/22 one was seen at Phippsburg. This was followed by one that was in the Otter Creek section of Mt. Desert (BG) where it was coming to a feeder on 1/25. On 2/10 there was one at the Bar Harbor airport, 2/11 saw one at Lucerne, 2/23 at Rockport, 2/28 Bangor (JM), with a number of sightings on 3/1-3.

HAWKS, EAGLES: **Bald Eagles** were well reported through the past two months. Up to 20 were at the Hatch landfill in Augusta at times. Prey included Black Ducks and Mallards. Nesting material was being carried at Orono on 2/10 (EG). The eagle camera in Bar Harbor is on line and the web address is:

<http://www.briloon.org/oae/webcams/eaglecam1>
It will say the site is Brookfield, Maine. There was an eagle on the nest in pouring rain and wind as this is being typed on the first day of Spring.

Harriers were seen at Winterport on 2/5 and Orono 3/12 with several reports arriving after that.

Sharp-shinned Hawks were here-and-there usually in the vicinity of bird feeders starting in late

Feb. **Cooper's Hawks** were fairly common with birds at Deer Isle (BBo), Kennebunk (where one was after robins), Minot, with window hits, none of them fatal, at Hudson and Portland. A **Goshawk** was at Town Hill on 2/27 (CMu) and Franklin 3/7 (AET).

Red-shouldered Hawks, uncommon in winter, were at South Freeport 1/4, and Dresden 2/2. Single **Red-tailed Hawks** were seen from Trescott south to Weskeag marsh in Thomaston in both Jan. and Feb.

One of the most commonly reported hawks this winter was the **Rough-legged**. Dates ranged from 1/1 at Sorrento to 3/10 at Biddeford Pool. Birds were seen at those locations and Belfast (SB), Lamoine (ZK), Warren, and Bath.

An exciting bird this winter was the **Golden Eagle**. One was found at the landfill in Bath on 1/12. Seen by many birders it was still present on 2/10. On 1/22 a game camera in Lexington TWP (east of Kingfield) took excellent color pictures of an adult bird (*fide* RS). On 2/1 another was found at York and remained there until 3/3 and on 3/4 one was reported in Gorham. Whether or not these were different birds or one or two moving around remains to be seen. The Bath bird might still be around but we had to set a cutoff date for reports for this issue.

A **Kestrel** was lingering in South Portland on 1/28. **Merlin** were seen in Bar Harbor, Trescott (FH), Sorrento (CWC) in Jan., Southport on 2/2, and Monhegan on 3/9.

Peregrine Falcons were fairly common if one looked for them. Birds were at Belfast (SB), Mt. Desert Rock on 1/23 (*fide* ZK), Bangor, Camden, East Machias, South Freeport, the Nubble lighthouse. One settled in at the Rockland waterfront and was feeding on pigeons. One on Machias Seal I. arrived on 2/25 and was feeding on **Purple Sandpipers** and **Snow Buntings**. On 2/24 the first birds arrived at the nest site on the Precipice in Acadia NP and on 3/7 were showing territorial aggressiveness toward climbers so the Park Service closed the trail.

RAILS, COOTS: An **American Coot** was found in Camden Harbor on 1/20 and had wintered successfully until at least 3/4. Not quite as successful were **Purple Gallinules**. One was found dead at Trenton on 1/8 and another dead bird was found at Kettle Cove in Cape Elizabeth 1/28.

SHOREBIRDS: **Dunlin** lingered at South Freeport and Chebeague I. with 1/31 the last date noted. **Sanderlings** were seen at Ogunquit 1/28, Wells 2/1, and Biddeford 2/23. Ten birds were the maximum number reported.

Purple Sandpipers were regular winter residents all along the coast. Some flocks were extensive with 300 on Seal Island (off Matinicus) 2/3, and over 100 at Sorrento, and Biddeford.

Ruddy Turnstones made occasional forays up the coast with birds at Biddeford Pool and Freeport seen several times through Feb.

A sign of spring perhaps were **Killdeer** found at Scarboro Marsh 2/23, and Biddeford 3/11. A **Woodcock** was found at Jonesboro on 2/23 (MAA).

GULLS: There were increased numbers of "white-winged" gulls this winter. **Iceland Gulls** in all stages of plumage were found along the coast, inland at Clinton, and at various landfills all winter. Likewise, **Glaucous Gulls** were being found in the same locations. Both species were found together at the Portland waterfront and the Bath landfill much to the delight of birders and photographers.

A **Bonaparte's Gull** at Owls Head on 1/21 was the last report until 3/4 when they began moving back in along the coast from Kittery to Eastport.

Our resident gulls, **Ring-billed**, **Herring**, and **Great Black-backed** were regularly reported all winter.

The most debated gull this winter was an immature gull that was reported to be a **Thayer's Gull**. It first appeared at the Shawmut dam in Fairfield on 1/20 and was there until at least 2/6. On 2/2 another similar bird was found at either Portland, South Portland, or Westbrook...reports were rather mixed as to location, perhaps more than one bird?

Photos were analyzed and the general conclusion was that it was not a Thayer's. But what was it? No precise answer was found with the possibilities of it being a darker than normal Iceland, or a hybrid with a cross between a Herring Gull and a Lesser Black-back being suggested. There were even some confusion as to whether people were looking for an immature or an adult.

Lesser Black-backed Gulls were at the Shawmut Dam and the Augusta landfill.

Kittiwakes were seen from the Vinalhaven Ferry and off Schoodic Pt. in Jan.

ALCIDS: One to two **Dovekies** were off Pemaquid Pt. 1/25, Cape Neddick 1/28, and Ogunquit on 2/9. A **Common Murre** was at Seal Island 2/3 while **Thick-billed Murres** were at Vinalhaven, and Ogunquit the first week of Feb.

Razorbills were more common with birds seen all winter from Biddeford to Schoodic Pt. and offshore at Seal I. and Machias Seal I. where birds were rafting and displaying on 3/9.

DOVES: **Mourning Doves** started cooing during the third week of Feb.

OWLS: There was a greater number of reports for this family than any other this winter with the vast majority of them involving one species only: the **Snowy Owl**. This was certainly the winter for this occasionally eruptive species. Far too many to cite all the locations but there were some areas where birds seemed to be concentrated. Of the eight at Biddeford Pool on 1/6 one was still there on 3/11.

Airports were favored locations probably due to the open areas resembling their tundra habitat. South of here there were 56 trapped and released at Logan airport in Boston. Two of three at the Bangor airport were trapped but the two at the Bar Harbor airport and three at Owls Head remain undisturbed.

For a map of sightings in Maine go to the website: [/bit.ly/18ZvbAS](http://bit.ly/18ZvbAS) and for a collection of pictures of Maine snowies go to the Natural Resources Council website: www.nrcm.org and at the bottom key "happenings" and then look for "snowy owl photos".

****NOTE. Like it or not, much of Maine's natural history news, sightings, etc. is now placed on internet sites, sometimes as it is happening. If you are not computer or internet savvy, go to your local library. They can connect you with these resources and you can sit down and read them as you would a book [yes...it just isn't the same but that is the way it is getting to be] ****

There were other species of owls seen. An **Eastern Screech Owl** was watched as it sat eating a vole under a bird feeder in Waldoboro on 1/28 (RS).

Great Horned Owls started becoming vocal in mid Feb. **Barred Owls** also started "singing" at Pretty Marsh on 2/15 (CP).

Seen and photographed by many was the **Hawk Owl** that was found at Lincoln on 11/12/13 and still there as of 3/4/14.

A **Long-eared Owl** was found dead at Biddeford on 1/6. **Saw-whet Owls** were calling at Dixmont on 2/7 (BBa) and Augusta 3/3 (NF).

KINGFISHERS: Found on six of the Christmas bird counts in Dec. numbers dropped rapidly as the cold and snow arrived. One at Yarmouth 1/4 and another at Rockland harbor 2/3 were all that were reported after the count period.

WOODPECKERS: A single male **Red-headed Woodpecker** was found in Bath on 1/12 and was still being seen on 3/8. On 2/12 one was found in Bar Harbor near the location of one last winter (MO).

Red-bellied Woodpeckers were not that common but were still seen at a few feeders scattered from Wells in the south (PH) to Franklin in the east.

Two immature **Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers** were photographed at Kennebunk on 1/30 and wintered successfully until at least 3/3.

Downy and **Hairy Woodpeckers** were well reported and were becoming territorial the first week of March.

Two **Three-toed Woodpeckers** were reported, one at North Ellsworth on 1/13 (ShS) and one at the Telos Gate at T5R11 WELS on 2/8.

A number of **Flickers** attempted to winter over with birds at Portland, Popham, Sidney, Falmouth, and Bremen through 1/18. All reports ceased at that date however and the next to be reported was a bird at Holden on 3/2.

Pileated Woodpeckers were becoming vocal the third week of Feb.

CORVIDS: A **Gray Jay** came to a feeder in Winter Harbor on 1/19 (JW), two were seen in Milford 1/30 (BBa), and several were in the vicinity of the Telos Gate in T5R11 on 2/8.

Blue Jays were most often mentioned in lists birds at feeders.

In January over 1000 **Crows** were seen flocking daily in Brunswick. These flocks persisted until late Feb. when they started breaking up with the approach of spring. In one incident several crows were seen fighting on the ground with one being killed. Later the others came back and ate it. Perhaps a crow version of the Donner party?

On 2/11 a **Fish Crow** was seen and heard in Bangor.

Ravens were well reported especially as they started becoming more vocal the first of Feb. A pair arrived on Machias Seal I. 2/25.

LARKS: Small groups of **Horned Larks** were seen at Cape Elizabeth, Warren, and Biddeford Pool on Jan., Kennebunkport on 2/23, and Popham 3/4.

TITS: **Black-capped Chickadees** were regular feeder birds across the state. Spring territorial "fee-bee" calls started being heard in mid Feb. The only **Boreal Chickadees** to be mentioned were those around the Telos Gate during the 2/8 trip to the North Woods area.

Tufted Titmice were calling as early as 1/29 in Topsham and 2/15 farther east in Franklin.

NUTHATCHES: The numbers of **Red-breasted Nuthatches** continue to be down while the opposite is true of the **White-breasted**. This is the

opposite of about 15 years ago. Both species were fairly well reported. On the Christmas count Red-breasted totaled 391 birds while White-breasted totaled 1079. Both species were tallied on 25 of the 26 land-based counts, Red-breasted being missed only on the Lewiston-Auburn count and White-breasted only on the Schoodic Pt. count.

CREEPERS: **Brown Creepers** were mentioned only as ticks on various trip lists.

WRENS: A small number of **Carolina Wrens** continue to winter over. Found mostly at suet feeders they were seen at 8 locations throughout Jan. and Feb. One was singing at Waterville on 3/13. Just weeks earlier there were 55 counted during the Christmas count period.

A **Marsh Wren** was hear calling at Falmouth on 1/18.

KINGLETS: Dozens of **Golden-crowned Kinglets** were tallied during the Christmas counts but only three were listed in any Jan. and Feb. reports. An oversight most likely.

THRUSHES: **Eastern Bluebirds** seemed pretty resilient this winter. In January there were several small flocks. Some were associating with cedar waxwings. In Whitefield several were hanging around their summer nest boxes. Oddly, there were no February reports but on 3/7 one showed up at a feeder in Kennebunkport and as this is written on 3/12 there are several spring sightings being reported.

On the 1/5 Matinicus Island Christmas count a single **Townsend's Solitaire** was found and photographed.

Wintering **Hermit Thrushes** were at Kittery on 2/17 and Lubec 2/20. This species regularly winters over in well protected habitat.

Robins were present all winter. On 1/15 there were 300 at Brunswick and in Feb. there were being found as far east as Lubec. Of 400 at Augusta an estimated 15% were the dark Newfoundland type. On 2/7 one appeared on Mt. Desert Rock and on 2/25 on Machias Seal Island.

******NOTE.** *Mt. Desert Rock was occupied by a group of College of the Atlantic students doing Gray Seal studies in Jan. Machias Seal Island has a manned lighthouse and is occupied all year.*

MIMICS: A couple of **Catbirds** attempted to winter over. One was on Deer Isle from Nov. until at least 1/10. After a night of -10 degrees and snow it was not seen again (BBo). On 1/29 one was found at South Freeport as it associated with robins and a

bluebird and another was photographed at York Beach on 2/17.

Northern Mockingbirds were found at the U of M campus in Orono (EG), Bangor, and Portland this winter. A freshly dead beheaded **Brown Thrasher** was found at Cape Neddick 2/25 and though to possibly be the prey of a Great Horned Owl.

STARLINGS: Present virtually everywhere in varying numbers even out on Machias Seal Island.

WAXWINGS: **Bohemian Waxwings** were a shadow of the numbers of last winter. During the Christmas count period in Dec. there were 128 tallied on six of the counts. Numbers increased a little in Jan. and they became a bit more widespread with birds from Caribou, east to Lubec, and south to Kennebunk. A flock of 120 at Plymouth was the largest number reported (BBa).

By comparison there were 411 **Cedar Waxwings** noted on 11 Christmas counts. They were being seen all across the state; depending on food supply of course. Flocks were larger with over 100 regularly seen with 500 at Winterport on 2/5.

WARBLERS: Not many lingered this fall and only three species were found on the Christmas counts in Dec. Two species made it into the Jan. - Feb. reporting period. An adult **Pine Warbler** was seen feeding on suet at a feeder at Kittery Point on 2/2. The second species, **Yellow-rumped Warbler** is a regular winter resident in small numbers. Able to feed on the waxy Bayberry fruits, it is often found on south-facing protected shrubbery along the coast. This winter individuals were found from Schoodic Pt. south to Biddeford.

SPARROWS: One of the few birds to be recorded on all land based Christmas counts was the **Tree Sparrow**. Numbers seemed to be a little below average according to reporters. They continued to be recorded all through January and February with plenty of them still being seen when this is being written in mid-March.

A **Chipping Sparrow** was at Eastport back on 12/26 and another was found associating with tree sparrows at Newcastle on 2/10. "Chippies" were abundant years ago when horse power was the main means of transport. They fed extensively on grass seeds found in horse dropping along the road. With such a food supply available year around I wonder if they were regular winter residents a century ago of did they still migrate south as they do today?

Savannah Sparrows dropped out of the area quite rapidly with the onset of winter. They were found on only four of the Christmas counts. Several

were found all winter at the Flood farm in Clinton (BBa).

A few **Fox Sparrows** lingered into the December bird count period. None were noted in January and February and one at Ft. Foster in Kittery on 3/4 might have been an early spring arrival although that was the location of one of the Christmas count birds.

An injured **Lincoln's Sparrow** came to a feeder in Portland until 1/5 but disappeared soon after.

A **Swamp Sparrow** was at a feeder in Cape Elizabeth from December until Feb. 9 which was the last date mentioned in any reports.

White-throated Sparrows are regular wintering birds albeit in small numbers. They were found on 26 of the 27 land based Christmas counts (only Caribou missed them) with one count, Portland, recording 88 individuals. In addition to the counts areas they were reported from eight other locales all through Jan. and Feb.

Slate-colored Juncos were found on all of the 27 land based Christmas counts in Dec. Numbers decreased in January although a few were reported around feeders throughout the month. Very few were noted in February but the first week of March a number of observers started reporting arrivals and by 3/15 they were being seen across the state.

Lapland Longspurs were at Falmouth 1/18, Wells on 2/10, Scarboro Marsh 2/25, and Popham 3/4. In a couple of cases they were mixed in with Horned Larks.

Snow Buntings were quite common all winter. Flock sizes varied but there were several that numbered 75 to over 100 birds. They were seen from Scarboro to Caribou and east to Lubec.

CARDINALIDAE: Members of this family dropped out of the state very rapidly this fall and winter. The nominate bird, the **Cardinal** was well reported on the Christmas counts and they were regulars at feeders all through Jan. and Feb. and were found from Kittery to Calais.

BLACKBIRDS: It wasn't until early March that the "first of year" reports of **Red-winged Blackbirds** started being received. The first was at Boothbay on 3/8. On 3/12 there were seven "first sighting" reports from across the state. On 3/14 several fairly large flocks were being seen.

Rusty Blackbirds were the members of this family that tended to linger here-and-there this winter. There were five at Town Hill on 1/16 (CMu), two at Dixmont 1/24 (BBa), and one out on Seal Island 2/3.

*****NOTE. *There is a considerable decline in the population of Rusty Blackbirds that is producing some concern. You can participate in a population study by reporting sightings to the following website: [//rustyblackbird.org/outreach](http://rustyblackbird.org/outreach) then key the Rusty Blackbird blitz tag.*

Grackles were seen at Southwest Harbor on 2/22 (CK), and one was at a suet feeder in Lamoine on 2/28 (DR).

A bird seen and photographed at York on 1/25 was called a **Bullock's Oriole**. The photos produced an online discussion as to the actual identification. It seemed to have characteristics of both Bullocks and Baltimore. The general impression was that it was probably a Baltimore but the chance of a hybrid was also bantered around.

FINCHES: This was certainly not a "finch winter". Nine species were noted but no large numbers of any of them. **Pine Grosbeaks** were seen mostly during excursions into the North Woods areas. Many were noted there on 1/25 (BS), several were at the Telos Gate on 2/8. Eight were at New Sweden on 2/28. One was found road killed in Dover-Foxcroft on 3/8 (REE).

Purple Finch were also seen in the North Woods area. Some started showing up at feeders in Kennebunk on 2/23. A half dozen were at a feeder in Bar Harbor from 2/12 on. Others were at feeders in Dover-Foxcroft and Rangeley also in Feb.

House Finch numbers are slowly increasing after a small die-off of five years ago. Predominantly in urban areas most reports came from Portland, Topsham, Brunswick, Bangor, and Bar Harbor.

Two **Red Crossbills** were seen picking up grit from a roadway in Ashland on 1/25 (BS). On the 2/8 trip through the Telos Gate several were also seen along with the only White-winged Crossbills that were reported for this issue.

On February 1 a single Common Redpoll was seen with Black-capped Chickadees and Goldfinches at a feeder in Waterville.

Pine Siskins were also scarce this winter. A few were seen around Six Mile Gate of the Maine North Woods area on 2/3. A couple were seen occasionally at a feeder in Winter Harbor (HK) and on March 13 others showed up at a feeder in Cumberland.

American Goldfinches were the only member of this family that was relatively abundant this winter. Seen across the state they sometimes numbered as many as 60 or more at times.

Evening Grosbeaks were at a feeder in Caribou on 1/24. The first week of February saw a number of reports from Mapleton, Chapman, and Castle Hill, all of these locations in Aroostook County.

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114TH CHRISTMAS COUNT (TRIVIA)

There were 28 counts in Maine, 27 land and one pelagic.

A 29th count (Orono-Old Town) had no figures submitted as of 3/20.

•Total species for Maine seen on count days 142. This does not include birds seen on count week but not on count day.

•Birds for which there was only one single bird seen: Pink-footed Goose, Brant, Ring-necked Pheasant, Spruce Grouse, Broad-winged Hawk, American Coot, Killdeer, Thayer's Gull, White-winged Dove, Short-eared Owl, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Townsend's Solitaire, Pine Warbler, Eastern Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, Dickcissel, and Pine Grosbeak.

•Birds seen on only one count but more than one individual: American Wigeon, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Scaup, Fulmar, Puffin, Field Sparrow, and White-crowned Sparrow.

•Birds seen on all 27 land based counts: Mourning Dove, Downy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, American Crow, Black-capped Chickadee, Tree Sparrow, Slate-colored Junco, and American Goldfinch.

• Birds seen on all but one land based count: Hairy Woodpecker, Red-breasted Nuthatch, and Starling.

•Species totaling over 20k individuals: American Crow 21,009

•Totaling over 10k: Herring Gull 13,903 and Black-capped Chickadee 11,974

• Other high totals: Mallard 9543, Common Eider 8947, Black duck 6544, Mourning Dove 6409, and Blue Jay 4628.

•Count with highest number of species was Greater Portland with 89. Count with lowest number of species was Jordan Basin (the pelagic count) with 18. The lowest number for a land based count was Caribou with 24.

•When do people count? Sat. 12/14 with 7 counts, followed by Sat. 12/28 with 6, Sat. 12/21 with 4, Sun. 12/29 had 3, with two each on Monday 12/16 and Wed. 1/1, with one count on each of 12/26, 27, 1/4, 5.

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: JA Joan Ashley, MAA Merle & Anne Archie, TA Tom Aversa, AB Ann Boover, BBA Bruce Barker, BBo Bonnie Bochan, RB Roger Bowen, SB Seth Benz, TB Tom Bjorkman, CWC C.W. Comer, LC Laura Cripps, REE Robert & Ellen Elliott, NF Norm Famous, BG Babette Gwynn, EG Ed Grew, FH Fred Hartman, LH Lois Hatch, LHa Lynn Havsall, MH Margot Haertel, PH Pam Hunt, SH Susan Highland, CJ Carol Jack, AK Alice Kelley, CK Craig Kesselheim, HK Hilary Kammerer, ZK Zack Klyver, CMo Chip Moseley, CMu Carol Muth, JM John Manter, RM Rich MacDonald, SN Susan Nergaard, MO Mary Opdyke, CP Charlie Pugh, DR Dartha Reid, BS Bill Sheehan, DS Doug Stewart, RS Rick Skoglund, ShS Shirley Smith, SuS Susan Smith, AET Anita & Eugene TeHennepe, WT Bill Townsend, CW Chuck Whitmey, JW Jeanie Wilson.

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The next reporting period is March – April 2014. Reports are due by May 8th. MAIL report to 12 Spring St., Bar Harbor, ME 04609, PHONE them to 207-288-5654, or eMAIL them to wtownsend@roadrunner.com.

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