

Sightings

Reports in this column are tentative, subject to acceptance by state or provincial records committees. Birders are urged to submit documentation of significant sightings to the appropriate records committee for review. This page is compiled from hotline transcripts distributed by the National Birding Hotline Cooperative and from reports by volunteer contributors. You can read more about important bird records in *North American Birds*. To subscribe, contact the ABA's membership department at (800) 850-2473 or visit <www.americanbirding.org>.

MID-JANUARY—MID-MARCH: Probably the most notable report during this period was of two Tufted Flycatchers, one of which was well photographed on 24 February near Lake Mohave, south of Hoover Dam along Arizona's northwestern border. This distinctive, cinnamon-breasted species occupies fairly high elevations of the Sierra Madre, north to about central Sonora, Mexico. We are told there exists an Arizona sight report of this species that has never been reviewed, but as far as we know, the only two fully accepted ABA-area records are both from Texas, both from winter or early spring.

The presence of *two* vagrants so far from their normal range was an odd feature of the Lake Mohave sighting. A search of the area two days later failed to relocate the birds, and we are unaware of any subsequent sightings (both of the Texas individuals were present for more than one day). It's worth noting, however, that both of the Texas records also occurred far from the nearest point where a Tufted Flycatcher would be expected, and one of the Texas records (from Pecos County in 1993) occurred, like the recent Arizona sighting, at low elevation for this species.

The season's remarkable invasion of northern owls, especially Great Grays, remained evident throughout the period, the incursion most pronounced in northern Minnesota but with reports coming from throughout the Great Lakes region and even the Northwest, southeastern Canada, and northern New England. One team of veteran observers reported **226** Great Grays during 188 miles of driving in Minnesota's Aitkin and Pine Counties; a Minnesota hotline carried a report of **26 Great Grays in a single Aitkin County field**. Similar reports were plentiful. A Northern Hawk-Owl, well south of its normal range, lingered in Worth County, Iowa—reportedly just a second state record if acceptable.

Another large-scale movement of birds took place off the East Coast during this period: unusual numbers of alcids, especially Thick-billed Murres, penetrated as far south as the Carolinas. An apparent Black Guillemot was photographed in Delaware in late January, reportedly furnishing the first fully documented record of this species in the state. A pelagic trip out of Tybee Island, Georgia, in mid-February found 106 Razorbills, said to be the highest count ever for that state.

In Nova Scotia, the big news was a group of three **Pink-footed Geese**, present in Pictou County through much of this period. (The birds were suspected of being the same ones that had been observed earlier in the season on Prince Edward Island.) Described as "unbanded and very wary", these birds were considered good candidates for wild individuals arriving under their own steam.

A **Northern Lapwing**, an Old World shorebird that occurs casually in the coastal Northeast and eastern Canada, was found in Frederick County, Maryland, in mid-February, reportedly a first for the state. After lingering for several days, the bird disappeared, only to be rediscovered a couple of weeks later. Early

February brought a **Redwing** to Bucks County, Pennsylvania, where the bird was seen by many and well photographed. Casual in Newfoundland, usually occurring in the winter, this species might better be thought of as accidental in the East away from the Maritimes. Coincidentally, a Redwing was present in Olympia, Washington, this winter, persisting at least through mid-March.

Regular across much of the coastal Northeast, Iceland Gull gets progressively harder to find as you head south and west and remains a very rare bird on the West Coast. So a second-year "Kumlien's" Iceland Gulls well described in Santa Clara County, California, in February was notable. Other unusual reports of this species came from Arapahoe County, Colorado, in mid-February (a second-year bird), Alabama's Wheeler Dam in mid-January (and sporadically after that), and Johnson County, Iowa, in mid-March. Likewise rare to the south and west, a Little Gull was reported from the mouth of Ballona Creek, Los Angeles (subject of this issue's feature article) in late January, mixed in (as this species often is) with Bonaparte's Gulls. In late January, a **Slaty-backed Gull** was reported from San Mateo County, California.

Unusual was a mid-February discovery of a Gray-crowned Rosy-Finch at a feeder in Chippewa County, Michigan. The most migratory of the three rosy-finches, Gray-crowned is also the most prone to vagrancy, occurring casually in the Great Lakes region and having turned up as far east as Maine and as far south as Ventura County, California. A **Streaked-backed Oriole** at Brazos Bend State Park, Texas, was a state first if acceptable, and a **Roadside Hawk** at Santa Ana NWR joined the season's mind-boggling cavalcade of rarities in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. A Cape May Warbler visited a feeder in Spokane County, Washington, through much of this period, and in New Hampshire, a lingering Yellow-throated Warbler was likewise a seasonal oddity. A Common Black-Hawk spent most of the winter in San Joaquin County, California; the species is casual in the Golden State. A White-tailed Kite reported from Montana's Mission Valley was described as a potential second state record if acceptable. Perhaps an echo of last autumn's notable flight of Blue Jays (an abundant eastern bird apparently expanding in the West) was an early March report of this species from Humboldt County, California.



Iceland Gull in second-winter plumage. Photo by Matt Pelican.