

Sightings

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BY RICK WRIGHT, WITH THANKS TO JON DUNN AND PAUL LEHMAN

Mid-January to March

PHENOMENA: Though there were no accepted California records until last winter, at least ten **Slaty-backed Gulls** have been identified there this winter, most at Half Moon Bay; individuals of this possibly increasing species were also found in Ontario and Newfoundland, the latter a first for Newfoundland and Labrador, if accepted. A **Mew Gull** in Rhode Island was thought by some to be a possible “Kamchatka” Gull, a potential first away from western Alaska. A possible **Western Gull**, its identification still being researched, was found on a pelagic trip off New York in mid-February. Meanwhile, eastern Pennsylvania’s Lake Galena hosted more than 180 **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** in January.

Southeast

A state first if accepted, 5 **Cackling Geese** (likely *hutchinsii*) were in Twiggs Co., Georgia, in late February. A male **Tufted Duck** was reported on Lake Dardanelle, Arkansas, in February. South Carolina birders enjoyed **Harlequin Duck** and **Common Eider** at Huntington Beach, in January, while a Virginia **Pacific Loon** lingered into February. Exceptional in winter anywhere north of South America, an **American Golden-Plover** was reported in Florida in February. An unseasonal **Ruff** was in Maryland in January, with another photographed in South Carolina in February. Volusia Co., Florida, hosted 2 “Kumlien’s” **Iceland Gulls** in February, and a California Gull visited Georgia’s Tybee Island at the end of the month.

A female **Allen’s Hummingbird** was banded in Tallahassee, Florida, followed by an adult male in late February. Hard on the heels of Alabama’s first **Costa’s Hummingbird**, a female **Calliope Hummingbird** was banded there in January. A **Snowy Owl** delighted travelers at Virginia’s Dulles Airport. The Orange Co., Florida, “kingbird roost” hosted a **Groove-billed Ani** in January.

An **Ash-throated Flycatcher** discovered on the Jamestown, Virginia, CBC, was seen for two weeks. A vocal **Tropical Kingbird** was in Apalachicola, Florida, in January, while a **Couch’s Kingbird** spent the month in Louisiana. A **Vermilion Flycatcher** lasted into February in Stewart Co., Georgia. Dozens of **Cave Swallows** wintered in South Carolina; another was in Macintosh Co., Georgia, in February.

A **Varied Thrush** visited a Louisville, Kentucky, feeder in February; that state hosted two **Indigo Buntings** in mid-January. A **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** visited Missouri’s Ozarks in January.

Northeast

Two **Pink-footed Geese** were found on the Connecticut River in February. Greater **White-fronted Geese** were widely reported, with

as many as 10 in Bucks Co., Pennsylvania; Pennsylvania birders also found a **Barnacle Goose** in late February. Two **Black Brant** continued into February at South Amboy, New Jersey, and a **Barnacle Goose** was on Long Island in late January. A Eurasian “Common” (Green-winged) **Teal** was near Lancaster, Pennsylvania, in January. 1-2 **Tufted Ducks** were found in Nova Scotia and Vermont. A **King Eider** was in South Hero, Vermont, in March.

Single **Gyrfalcons** were in Seneca and Cayuga Cos., New York; Seneca Co.’s **Pacific Loon** continued into March. A **Sora** on Long Island January 21 was late or befuddled. An **Ivory Gull** briefly visited Wheatley Harbor, Ontario, in mid-January, and a California Gull was in western Pennsylvania in February. A “European” **Herring Gull** was photographed in Newfoundland in late February. The same New

York pelagic trip that produced the possible **Western Gull** tallied a very impressive 1,675 **Dovekies**. A **Northern Hawk Owl** continued in Orleans Co., New York, through January and a **Great Gray Owl** near Milford, Maine, in February; late January brought at least 6 **Great Grays** to the Ottawa area.

Boreal Chickadees attended feeders in Orange and Plympton, Massachusetts, while Delaware experienced an incursion of **Black-capped Chickadees**. A **Fieldfare** discovered on Prince Edward Island in January was relocated in early February (see “Birding Landscapes”). A **Varied Thrush** was on its way to successful wintering in Boston, as was

at least one of Connecticut’s two **Townsend’s Solitaires**. The first for the Niagara area in 40 years, a **Sage Thrasher** was discovered in icy Ontario in late February.

Noteworthy parulids included a **Yellow-throated Warbler** in Nova Scotia mid-January; a **Cape May Warbler** survived into late January in Vermont, and an “Audubon’s” **Warbler** was in New Hampshire in February. Two **Ovenbirds** and a **Black-throated Blue Warbler** were discovered in Massachusetts mid-month.

A **Western Tanager** was on Cape Cod in January; 2-3 continued into February in Maine. New Hampshire and Nova Scotia birders found single **Painted Buntings** at feeders. A female-type **Bullock’s Oriole** was still present in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, at the end of February. A **Golden-crowned Sparrow** was in Nova Scotia in February. At least 5 **Hoary Redpolls** were reported from Maine, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Massachusetts.

Midwest

If questions of origin can be satisfactorily answered, a **Pink-footed Goose** photographed in Nebraska’s Rainwater Basin in January will be the farthest inland of any of North America’s few definite records. Three juvenile **Brant** on the Mississippi River in January will be Iowa’s 9th if accepted. A drake **Harlequin Duck** was in Nebraska waters near Gavin’s Point Dam in early March. A **Ferruginous Hawk**, casual in Missouri, was near Kansas City in late January. As many as 7 different **Gyrfalcons** were tallied in southwest North



Painted Bunting, Nova Scotia. Photo © Hans Toom.

Dakota in late January, with more than 5 in central South Dakota in February. An Osprey was in Chicago January 30.

Two Ruffed Grouse in northwest Missouri in January had probably wandered from a restocking project. At least 3 alternate-plumaged Franklin's Gulls attempted to winter in Missouri. Extremely rare in winter, single California Gulls were in Cook Co., Illinois, and Wayne Co., Michigan, in February. An adult **Glauous-winged Gull** was photographed in Lake Co., Illinois, at the end of the month.

Iowa's first winter White-winged Dove was in Dickinson Co. in January. An **Inca Dove** visited Springfield, Missouri, mid-February, with another reported from an eastern Nebraska feeder in March. A late-February Great Gray Owl was said to be the first ever in Norman Co., Minnesota. A Fish Crow in Chicago was out of range in early February; an early-January Tufted Titmouse in North Dakota was one of very few ever found in that state. Hypothetical in North Dakota, a Carolina Wren was reported near Devils Lake in February. A Green-tailed Towhee, present for several months in North Dakota, persisted into January, while a bright male **Bullock's Oriole** visited a Livingston Co., Michigan, feeder in February.

Southwest

A female Black Scoter spent several February days in Mesa, Arizona. 2 Black Brant continued through February in Laramie Co., Colorado; a Yellow-billed Loon in Mesa Co. provided the state's first west-slope record.

Unprecedented in winter, a Short-tailed Hawk was in Arizona's Chiricahua Mountains mid-January. Parker Canyon Lake, Arizona, produced a Heermann's Gull at the same time. Mew Gulls were reported from Colorado and New Mexico in January and February. A splendidly photographed adult **Royal Tern** was a great find mid-February at Willcox, and will be Arizona's first if accepted. A Ruff was wintering at the Salton Sea.

Dusky-capped Flycatchers continued at Ramer Lake and Wister, California, into February. A Thick-billed Kingbird spent a third winter in Yuma, Arizona. A female-plumaged Rose-throated Becard at Patagonia Lake, Arizona, was very unusual. A *fusca* **Brown-chested Martin** photographed there February 3, if accepted, will be Arizona's first and the ABA area's third.

Colorado's third **Long-billed Thrasher**, if accepted, remained in El Paso Co. through February; the state's fourth appeared in Denver late in the month. In Arizona, single Rufous-backed Robins were reported from Mesa, Sierra Vista, and Superior, and a Rufous-capped Warbler was reliably found in Sycamore Canyon into March.

The Calipatria, California, **Smith's Longspur** was still present in early February.

A Streak-backed Oriole was in Patagonia, Arizona, in late January; the Gilbert individual continued into February. A Baltimore Oriole was reported from Yuma in early February, while the returning adult male Orchard Oriole lingered into March in Tucson. A male **Yellow Grosbeak** with a deformed bill in Albuquerque in mid-January was particularly unexpected at that season, though New Mexico's first accepted record was also from late fall; the bird was still present into mid-March.

Texas

A Hook-billed Kite seen at Bentsen in early March was described as "nearly black." An adult Harris's Hawk was near Lubbock in Feb-

ruary. A male **Costa's Hummingbird** was photographed in Rockport in late February. A Ruddy Ground-Dove was reported from Laguna Grande, near Weslaco, in February. Two Dusky-capped Flycatchers were wintering in the Lower Rio Grande Valley. A cooperative Yucatan-type Jay at San Ygnacio is very likely an escaped cagebird. A Rufous-backed Robin east of Austin in mid-January was unexpected, as was a "Slate-colored" Fox Sparrow on the Katy Prairie in early February. The 2 Sabal Palm **Gray-crowned Yellowthroats** were still present in late February.

Far West

Single "Bewick's" Tundra Swans were in Vancouver and at Orgeon's Lower Klamath NWR in February. The Eugene, Oregon, **Falcated Duck** lingered into March. Tufted Ducks were found south to Vallejo and San Francisco, California. Two adult Yellow-crowned Night-Herons continued at a roost in Imperial Beach, California, and as many as 5 Reddish Egrets were wintering in Orange Co.; a Little Blue Heron visited Del Norte Co. in February.

An adult Slaty-backed Gull was in Renton, Washington, and single Iceland Gulls were reported from Kent, Washington, and Kelowna, British Columbia, in February; the Half Moon Bay, California, flocks produced a "Vega" Herring Gull. A Lesser Black-backed Gull was in Penticton, British Columbia.

As many as 40 Snowy Owls were found between Ninepipe NWR and Big Fork in Montana in late January; good numbers continued into early March. One in Solano Co., California, mid-January, was a good find; as many as sixteen Snowies remained in Delta, British Columbia, the end of February. A Broad-billed Hummingbird continued in Orange Co. into February, as did a male Costa's Hummingbird in Oregon. Two Tropical Kingbirds persisted in Long Beach, California, while the San Diego Co. Thick-billed Kingbird continued into February.

Four Blue Jays were near Portland, Oregon, and 3 near Spokane, in late January. With early arrival increasingly the norm, late-January Barn Swallows in coastal British Columbia were almost expected—unlike the 2 early migrant Cliff Swallows in Vancouver at the same time. A locally rare Rock Wren was on Vancouver Island in late January. A Northern Mockingbird wintered in Nanton, Alberta. Calgary birders reported record-early arrivals for Mountain Bluebird and American Robin.

A Painted Redstart was still in San Dimas, California, in late January, while the individual at the San Diego Zoo was on its way to successful wintering in mid-February. A Palm Warbler was reported in early February from Cowichan Bay, British Columbia, and a very surprising **Mourning Warbler** in Van Nuys, California, in late January. Juneau hosted a wintering Orange-crowned Warbler. A **Blue Grosbeak** visited Portland, Oregon, in late January; an Orchard Oriole was still in San Francisco C., California, in mid-February. A long-staying Northern Cardinal, Montana's third, was still in Nashua in late February. A Spotted Towhee at Buffalo Lake in late January was Alberta's second winter record ever. Two Common Grackles were reported in Calgary in late January; a Brewer's Blackbird was photographed in southeast Alaska. From the north, 2 Snow Buntings were near Arcata, California, in January, and a **Brambling** spent the last days of the month in Duncan, British Columbia.