

Birding Reports (March 2011)

March 30-31: Turkey Vultures were seen at the junction of Hwy 371 and Co Rd 16. Additional new birds arriving to the region include Sharp-shinned Hawk, Common Grackles and flocks of Red-winged Blackbirds. The first Yellow-rumped warblers of the season arrived over the weekend, too (they tend to be the first warbler in the state). One of the state's most common shorebird, Killdeers has also arrived into the area. Fruiting trees are starting to attract Robbins, along with Juncos and Redpolls.

March 28: With recent snow and cold temperatures, northward migration appears to have halted some. Even local migrants were difficult to find. However several new species were found just south of Brainerd such as Bluebirds, Horned Lark and 2 Red-tailed Hawks. A few more Robbins, Geese, Great-blue heron were seen and one new arrival Red-winged Blackbirds. In Nisswa, I watched the channel and counted 13 Trumpeter Swans very close to highway 371. Watch for Robbins early in the year as they can be found on fruiting trees such as Mountain Ash and Crabapple. Some of the open water that we had last week refroze but will open again soon.

March 20-21: With more days of above freezing temperatures, a few more birds are now arriving into the area. Juncos, Robins, Sandhill cranes, Great-blue Herons and waterfowl can now be seen in the area. Great-horned Owls are nesting now and are the first to nest in the state. Common Redpolls are still visiting bird feeders at many locations; if you see a redpoll that appears "frosty" you might have a Hoary Redpoll.

The first waves of migrants that can be seen now through April are Ducks, Geese, and swans. Look for these birds where water opens first such as rivers and below dams. Highway 371 North between Brainerd and Pequot Lakes 6 Bald Eagles were seen. Of the 6 Eagles, one was on the ice at Hole in the Day Bay (Gull Lake). In Nisswa, 3 Trumpeter Swans were in the open channel that runs under 371 into Nisswa Lake. Also at this location, a Bald Eagles nest can be viewed it was active last year and looks like it will be again this year.

March 6: Aitkin County, early spring migrants: Great Gray Owl (1), Rough-legged Hawks (8- A new high day count for me!), Ruffed Grouse (2), Common Redpolls (75+), Northern Shrike (1), Common Crow, Northern Raven, Bald Eagle (1), Blue Jays, Black-capped Chickadee, Snow buntings (10) and the Horned Lark (7 - the first bird to migrate back in the state!).

March 2: The following birds were observed mostly at the bird feeders at the AmericInn Lodge & Suites in Pequot Lakes: Common Redpolls, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Black-capped Chickadee, Downy Woodpecker, Blue Jay and White-breasted Nuthatch. The Common Redpolls are probably the highlight as they are uncommon in some years.

— Judd Brink, bird guide/owner, [MN Backyard Birds](#)