

evident that many trees and shrubs are growing good to heavy crops of cones, catkins, seeds and berries. Get ready for a good finch winter.

- Pines:** White Pine is growing a moderate to heavy (not bumper) crop of cones in most areas. Red Pine is also producing many cones. Perhaps some of the pine forms of the Red Crossbill will move into Algonquin Park by late summer and remain there for the winter. Many other species, such as Red-breasted Nuthatches, will benefit from a good crop of White Pine cones.
- Spruce:** White Spruce is producing a heavy crop of cones. Good news for White-winged Crossbills, Pine Siskins and Red-breasted Nuthatches.
- Balsam Fir:** A heavy crop of cones. At one time, I didn't think that the seeds of Balsam Fir were an important winter food for finches, chickadees and Red-breasted Nuthatches. I thought this because most of the cones break apart in fall and release their seeds. However, Dennis Barry of Whitby, Ontario pointed out to me that hundreds of fir seeds get lodged in the thick crowns of Balsam Fir, thus providing a lot of food for gleaning winter birds.
- Hemlock:** Eastern Hemlock is growing a good crop of cones, which should attract White-winged Crossbills and the small-billed form of the Red Crossbill (*sitkensis*) and Pine Siskins this winter.
- Tamarack:** This native eastern larch is loaded with cones, which is more good news for White-winged Crossbills.
- White Birch:** A bumper crop of seed catkins is developing. If redpolls leave the boreal forest, they'll have lots to eat in central Ontario, but the crop is likely good in the north so it's my bet that redpolls will stay farther north this winter.
- Mountain-ash:** Both wild and European Mountain-ashes are producing heavy crops. Pine Grosbeaks came south last winter, but they will stay in northern Ontario this winter if mountain-ash crops are heavy there too. As well, Bohemian Waxwings should remain in the north this winter.
- Cherries, maples and many other fruit/seed trees and shrubs are growing good to heavy crops helped by the fact that there were no killing frosts during the critical flowering stages. This should keep Cedar Waxwings and Black Bears happy this summer. An abundance of seeds also should cause an increase in small mammals because they'll have lots to eat, perhaps reflected in a year or two by more Barred and Northern Saw-whet Owls, which are the two most common owls in central Ontario.**

Finch forecasting is fraught with unknowns, but I'm reasonably certain that Algonquin Park and central Ontario will have good numbers of finches this winter. Expect to see White-winged Crossbills, Red Crossbills, Pine Siskins, Evening Grosbeaks, and probably some Purple Finches. The heavy birch crop north of Lake Ontario will stop and hold the redpolls if they come south. Red-breasted Nuthatches also should be plentiful this winter in central Ontario. However, there will be lower numbers of finches if the big seed crop is widespread from Ontario to Nova Scotia.

Happy winter finch watching!

Editor's Note: Why not test this system of forecasting in your area and send the results to the editor?

NEWS FROM ABOUT:

An exciting report of an Eskimo Curlew was received from Martha's Vineyard in an article by E. Vernon Laux on the Birdchat web site. An experienced shore birder, John Nelson and his son Andrew, both