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# The KINGBIRD

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## EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE IN NEW YORK STATE

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### The Spreading of Eurasian Collared-Dove in the US

Smith (1987) and Romagosa and McEneaney (1999) give accounts of the history of collared-doves in Florida and the Caribbean as well as their spread in Europe. Collared-doves (*Streptopelia sp.*) have long been kept as domesticated birds and two populations of feral Ringed Turtle-Doves (*S. "risoria"*) existed in Florida as early as the late 1920's. Eurasian Collared-Dove (*S. decaocto*) appeared in Florida in the early 1980's. These birds are believed to be the descendants of birds released in Nassau, Bahamas in 1974. Their spread in Europe is an indication of what we should expect in the United States. Over approximately a century, Eurasian Collared -Dove has radiated from a restricted range around the Black and Aegean Seas, to throughout the whole of western Europe and is still expanding its range in eastern Russia.

This species is also expanding rapidly in the United States. Romagosa and Labisky (2000) show that on Florida CBCs, it increased from 4% in 1986, the first year the it was correctly identified, to 82% in 1996. Over this same time frame, it has spread from Florida, and by 1999 had been sighted as far as California, Oregon, Montana, and Saskatchewan and Ontario in Canada (Romagosa and McEneaney 1999). The main direction of colonization in the US is northwest from Florida. The species has spread extensively in the midwest (Brock 2001a, b, and c) and has bred in Iowa (Brock 2001c). Breeding has been observed in the southeast in Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina (Davis 1997), and in Virginia (Iloff 2002). Iliff (2002) points out that its spread along the East Coast is much slower than in the midwest and Gulf Coast. Given its history in Europe, it is likely that within a century of its introduction, it will breed across most of North America.

Eurasian Collared-Doves are owned and traded by pigeon breeders in the US although they are not as popular as Ringed Turtle-Doves. Sightings of Ringed Turtle-Dove escapes are uncommon although there are a few reports in *North American Birds* outside of Florida in the past six years. It is likely that Ringed Turtle-Dove is not reported because it is considered exotic. It is possible that some US sightings of Eurasian Collared-Doves could be escapes but the rapid expansion involves an independent population.

Smith (1987), DeBenedictis (1994) and Romagosa and McEneaney (1999) discuss the identification of Eurasian Collared-Dove. This last reference provides a convenient table of physical and vocal differences between it and

Ringed Turtle-Dove. The best field marks are the gray coloration of the undertail coverts, the coloration of the outer rectrices, and the vocalization differences. ( See Figs. 1 & 2)

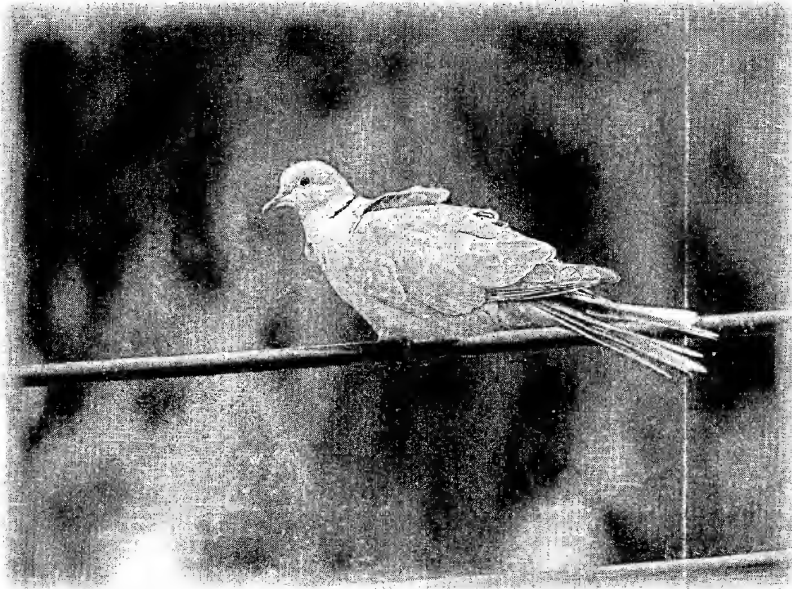


Fig. 1 – 16 Jun 2002 © Kevin and Jay McGowan

### Sightings In Nearby States

The Pennsylvania Records Committee has accepted two records for this species from photographic evidence: 28 Jul 1996 from Crawford Co, and 7 May 2000 from Berks Co. There are two records under review: one from Erie Co present from 25 Nov 2000 to 28 Feb 2002, and a nesting pair photographed on 9 May 2001 in Franklin Co. Nesting also occurred in 2002. It is known that at least in Lancaster Co., the Amish breed and sell Eurasian Collared-Doves (*Pulcinella pers. comm.*).

The first accepted record for New Jersey is 7 Sep 1997 from Cape May Point (Walsh, et al. 1999). Since then, there has been at least one additional record from Cape May (Boyle 2002). The only reported New England sighting was provided without details from Newbury, VT (Hunt 2001). The first report for Delaware was a bird seen at a feeder in Selbyville, DE, 11-13 Aug 1998 (Paxton, et al. 1999). By the spring of 2002, a colony of four to five Eurasian Collared-Doves has since become established in this same town (Burgiel, et al. 2002). The first Maryland record was a bird observed and photographed at a feeder in mid April 2002 at Port Deposit (Iloff 2002).

## Sightings In New York State

Eurasian Collared-Dove has been found a number of times in New York State. A sighting occurred on Long Island in 1996. This bird was observed at a nursery on the East Hampton-Amagansett line (Suffolk Co.). It was still present the following year and P.A. Buckley confirmed its identity about 12 Jun 1997. The sighting was never reported in *The Kingbird*. A second sighting occurred at Jeff Stenson's feeder on Staten Island (Richmond Co.) and was photographed on 2 Feb 2000 and dismissed as a probable escape (KB 50:199). Other sightings in the Long Island area have probably occurred but no others are recorded in *The Kingbird*.

The first sighting away from the coast was made at Derby Hill by Marge Rusk on 5 May 2001 (KB 51:712). This report is awaiting evaluation by NYSARC. A second upstate Eurasian Collared- Dove record occurred in Hamlin, NY on 8 Jun 2002. This bird has remained in the same location throughout the summer and into the fall.

### The Hamlin NY Eurasian Collared-Dove

Surprisingly enough, the excitement with the Eurasian Collared-Dove began with the sighting of a White-winged Dove (*Zenaida asiatica*). In the early evening of 8 Jun 2002, Mike Davids was driving west on Church Road in Hamlin, Monroe Co., NY and discovered a White-winged Dove sitting on top of a telephone pole about one-half mile east of Walker-Lake Ontario Road (NYS Rt. 260). When he got home, he notified local birders, and a few went out looking for the dove. In searching for the White-winged Dove, Brett and Sheryl Ewald found a Eurasian Collared-Dove in the front yard of a farmhouse near the corner of Church and Walker-Lake Ontario Roads. While they, Mike, and others were watching the Eurasian Collared-Dove around 7:30 p.m., Julie Claffey pointed out the White-winged Dove when it started singing nearby. The area around this intersection is open farmland, with the immediate area around the farmhouse surrounded by mature spruce and deciduous trees. Both dove species were identified by their songs. The Eurasian Collared-Dove exhibited the gray undertail coverts that separate it from Ringed Turtle-Dove.

Over the course of the next week, many people came to see the two birds, which were always in the same vicinity. The first night, and for the first few days, they both sang repeatedly, making them easy to find. The Eurasian Collared-Dove spent its time around the farmhouse, alternating between the deciduous trees in front of the house, the spruce trees by the road, the utility pole in the farmyard, and the deciduous trees near the house across the street. The White-winged Dove was more localized to the deciduous trees in front of the farmhouse. On several occasions they interacted, with the Eurasian Collared-Dove chasing the White-winged Dove off its perch. Throughout its time in this location, the Eurasian Collared-Dove also interacted with Mourning Doves, chasing away any that landed nearby. Sometimes, these interactions were accompanied by a harsh, nasal call. The White-winged Dove was last seen by Dave Tetlow on 18 Jun, ten days after it first appeared.

For the first several days, the Eurasian Collared-Dove was also observed landing for short periods of time in a specific section of a spruce tree along the road. On the third day (10 Jun), a Mourning Dove nest was discovered concealed in the vicinity of these spruce trees, containing two older juvenile Mourning Doves, which left the nest the next day. After that, the Eurasian Collared-Dove was not noted to spend time in that particular area of the spruce tree.

During June and July, it was obvious that the primaries and tail were molting. Observations on a number of days in July and August revealed that it was spending more time near the intersection of Church Road and Walker-Lake Ontario Road, several hundred meters to the south of the farmhouse. It would move between different telephone poles and wires, chasing away any of the Mourning Doves that landed nearby. It was no longer singing at this time. It was approachable to about thirty feet, but would fly upon any attempt to move closer. The bird was still present in the vicinity of the farmhouse at the time of this writing (1 Nov 2002).

Editor's Note: As of 1 Jun 2003 the Eurasian Collared-Dove is still present.

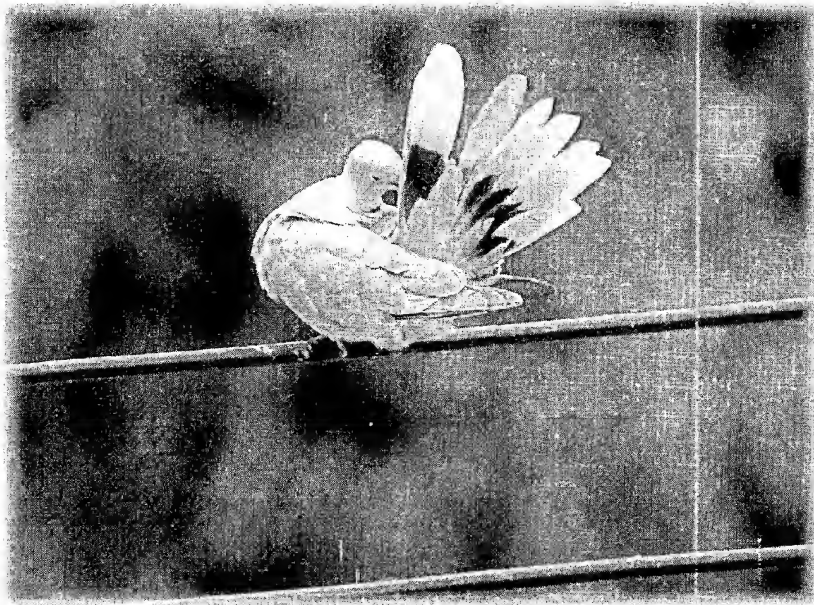


Fig. 2 – 16 Jun 2002 © Kevin and Jay McGowan  
Note the gray undertail coverts.  
Although not dark, they are noticeably darker  
than the white-tipped tail feathers.

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## THE CHANGING STATUS OF PACIFIC LOON IN NEW YORK STATE

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The Pacific Loon (*Gavia pacifica*) breeds across arctic North America as far east as Baffin Island, but is named for its winter range on the continent's western coast. It occurs in the interior of North America and on the Atlantic Coast only as a rare vagrant..

On 1 Mar 2003 I discovered one at Captree State Park, Suffolk County. Captree is the eastern tip of a barrier beach island, and is sheltered by the western tip of Fire Island, another barrier beach . The two islands separate the Great South Bay from the Atlantic. The bird, in basic plumage, was feeding in the calm waters of the bay, often quite close to shore. It remained through at least 16 Mar, during which time it was seen by dozens of birders and photographed by many.

DiCostanzo (Levine 1998) lists only seven accepted NY records of Pacific Loon, the latest one being in 1993, but comments on almost annual sight records from NJ, MA and RI, but not in NY. It now appears that the status of Pacific Loon may be changing, becoming more similar to that of our neighboring states.

The Captree bird was not the first Pacific Loon reported in downstate NY this winter. One, also in basic plumage, appeared on the Montauk (Suffolk County) CBC (Benson, Burke, Shriber) 14 Dec 02 and was last reported from that area on 27 Dec. Nor was it the most recent – this time a bird in alternate plumage was found in the East River off Manhattan at 23rd St. by Anne Lazarus on 1 May. It stayed until 2 May and was seen by numerous birders who responded to the immediate Internet posting, in this case Metro Birding Briefs, which has become standard procedure on unusual sightings.

That all three sightings might be the same individual cannot be ruled out. However, a different bird was certainly involved in an upstate report from Cayuga Lake by J McGowan, B Prentiss (NYSBIRDS-L) of another alternate-plumaged bird on 28 Apr 03. In addition there was an earlier upstate report of a basic-plumaged individual from Bear Creek (Wayne County) by R. Spahn on 30 Oct, 5 Nov and 13 Nov (*Kingbird* 53:49).

Since 1993, NYSARC has accepted six more records – one report in 94-95, one in 95-96, two in 96-97, none in 97-98, and two in 98-99. Pending review are one report in 98-99, one in 99-00, none in 00-01, and this winter's five (possibly seven if the Wayne County report is of multiple birds) reports. Even if some of these reports are not accepted by NYSARC, there still appears to be a rather dramatic increase in frequency of occurrence in recent years, and it seems fair to say that Pacific Loon is now annual in NY with the records and reports split evenly between coastal and interior.

Reasons for this increase in sightings could only be speculative, but certainly the increase in popularity of birding is a likely candidate. That

only alternate plumage sightings were accepted by Bull (Bull 1974) also contributes to the apparent change.

Pacific Loon was split by the AOU from Arctic Loon (*Gavia arctica*), in 1985. Though ID on many records is clouded by uncertainty as to which member of this pair is involved, Arctic Loon has never been recorded in eastern NA. Nonetheless, four of the recent NYSARC rulings were accepted as "Arctic/Pacific", accentuating the difficulty of separating basic-plumaged loons. To my knowledge, no one has claimed an Arctic ID for any of this year's birds, and many report specific Pacific field marks. The Captree bird had entirely dark flanks above the waterline all the way to the rear, lacking the white rear flank patch characteristic of Arctic Loon.

For a specific detailed treatment on the field separation between Arctic and Pacific Loon, I refer you to the Birch/Lee article in *Birding* Vol 29:107-115.

Separation of Pacific Loon from other loon species remains a challenge, especially when the bird is a great distance from shore, on rough water or in poor weather. The Captree bird, in contrast, offered an ideal viewing experience. Visible in photographs (Fig. 1) are a small, slender and evenly tapered bill, rounded head, strikingly bi-colored plumage, lack of white around the eye, and the cleanly separated half -white and half -dark neck. The chinstrap, an often emphasized field-mark, was very thin and pale, and could be easily missed.

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Pacific Loon, Captree State Park, New York  
2 Mar 2003 © Angus Wilson

## **Puzzling Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*) on Long Island, New York.**

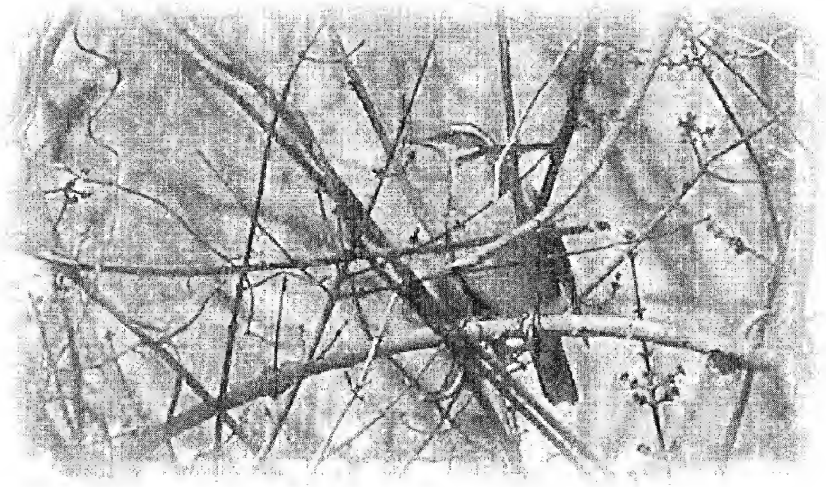
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On Saturday 15 Mar 2003, Alvin Wollin discovered a Varied Thrush (*Ixoreus naevius*) in Hempstead Lake State Park in Nassau County, Long Island. This is a traditional site for finding early spring migrants, with such spring records in the past of of Yellow-throated and Townsend's warblers. The news spread among local birders and a small crowd gathered in the park the following morning. The thrush was still present and was heard giving brief bursts of song on several occasions. Despite these vocalizations it remained very secretive, providing only a handful of brief views, generally when it flew up from the undergrowth into the bare branches of the taller trees. On Monday morning, it was seen again briefly and then was heard singing but not seen on the subsequent Wednesday and Thursday mornings.

Varied Thrush is a beautiful and uniquely patterned medium-sized thrush breeding in the evergreen forests of northwestern North America. One or two are reported in New York most years, usually at feeders during the winter. The distinctive combination of a broad orange supercilium, orange throat and underparts, dark facial mask and complex pattern of bars on the dark wings readily identified the Hempstead bird as a Varied Thrush. In flight, it showed a striking underwing pattern consisting of two broad pale bars formed by the white underwing coverts and white bases of the primaries and secondaries. The fact that it was heard singing led to a general assumption among observers that it must be an adult male.

During one of the thrush's brief appearances on Sunday, I managed to take three photographs ( Fig.1) as it perched momentarily on a high branch before flying further down the patch of woodland. Only two of the images were in focus but both clearly show the breast, which appeared to be uniformly orange and without any evidence of a dark breast band. This was a big surprise to everyone because according to the literature, male Varied Thrushes always show a prominent dark breast band. Even first-winter males show a solid dark band and only differ from older males in having browner greater wing coverts, crown and tail feathers. Most females also show an obvious breast band, even in first winter plumage (Pyle 1997; Clement 2000; George 2003). This presents a puzzle! What age and sex was the Hempstead bird? To learn more, I posted the pictures on the web and sought input from members of the ID-Frontiers discussion group. Although many West Coast birders contributed their thoughts and experiences, none had seen a Varied Thrush without at least a hint of a brownish breast band. This conclusion was confirmed by review of Varied Thrush specimens at the American Museum of Natural History. All of the specimens in the collection showed a readily apparent breast band (Dale Dyer and Manny Levine, pers. comm.).



Varied Thrush, Hempstead Lake State Park, New York  
16 Mar 2003 © Angus Wilson

Although a relatively common species in appropriate habitat in its breeding and wintering ranges, Varied Thrushes can be quite secretive, preferring dark and shaded areas of woodland in which to feed and to sing. Consequently, many aspects of the species' biology have not been studied (George 2003). Males sing from the tops of tall conifers and are most active on rainy days when they are hardest to observe. Whether female Varied Thrushes are capable of giving song (perhaps a less-developed version of male song) remains an open question. There is precedent in other thrushes and singing by females is surprisingly common in passerines as a whole. Most New York birders will have encountered singing female House Finches (*Carpodacus mexicanus*).

Expert opinion was that the darkness of the upper parts and fact that the bird was singing tips the balance towards a male – hormonally at least – but this remains speculation. Two subspecies (*naevia* and *meruloides*) of Varied Thrush have been described, but this is unlikely to explain the unfamiliar plumage. Both subspecies are very similar in appearance and according to the literature, do not differ significantly in the intensity of the breast band. Intriguingly, the only record of Varied Thrush from Europe involved a bird with abnormal pigmentation (Madge et al. 1990). Identified as a first-winter male by its pointed tail feathers and well-defined breast band, this unusual individual lacked all of the normal orange tones. All the more remarkable, there is only a single specimen of this plumage variant and a few sight records, all from California. Whether aberrations in plumage are more frequent in vagrants, perhaps correlating in some way with perhaps underlying defects in navigation, remains an open question.

In summary, the most parsimonious explanation of the Hempstead Lake Varied Thrush is that it was a male – hormonally, at least – with aberrant plumage. There was nothing to suggest a hybrid. Further research on the breeding grounds is needed to determine whether females sometimes sing and to determine the frequency of birds of either sex that lack a breast band. Earlier in the year, another Varied Thrush was observed several times at a private feeder in eastern Long Island. Photographs provided by Mike Cooper show a strong, but not quite complete, dark breast band, confirming that it was a different bird.

### **Acknowledgements**

Congratulations to Al Wollin for a great find. Thanks also to John Fritz, Lloyd Spitalnik, Andy Guthrie, Tom Burke and Tony Lauro for rapidly spreading the news amongst local birders. Many correspondents from across the US and Canada provided supplementary information on the aging and sexing of Varied Thrushes and their contributions are gratefully acknowledged.

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## YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT IN MID-MANHATTAN AT 42ND ST & 6TH AVE

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On 25 Oct 2002, John J. Collins reported on the Metro Birding Briefs web site that he had found a Yellow-breasted Chat (*Icteria virens*) in Bryant Park, a small urban oasis on 42nd St. in midtown Manhattan. From this and subsequent reports from other birders, it seemed that this bird was unusually accommodating for the species and rather easily seen because of the limited vegetation in the park. I was personally excited to see this bird as this species is one I like to refer to as my "albatross." I'm sure most birders have one or more species that elude them, and in the case of the Yellow-breasted Chat, I had seen only one in my life. True to form, three brief trips to Bryant Park in the weeks following the initial posting got me only a quick sighting of the bird in flight. Thus, I was delighted to receive a last-minute call asking me to work in Bryant Park the week of 18 Nov, setting up the Holiday Market. I'm an electrician in the entertainment industry – theatre, TV, fancy weddings, special events, you name it – and among the benefits of my job is the frequent opportunity to work outdoors and to occasionally travel to new birding locales. In this instance, I was delighted to be paid for the privilege of spending a week with a Yellow-breasted Chat.

My luck with this species changed almost immediately. On day one, I found the bird perched openly at the south end of the park, next to the path we used to unload equipment. Remarkably, it seemed unfazed by the noisy forklifts. In fact, the next day I observed the bird at length while a lift rumbled but five feet away.

The job kept me working in the park for seven straight days. Thanks to my daily postings on NYSBIRDS-L, many visiting birders knew me by name, and I was hard to miss anyway, being the only birder with a brace of imposing electrical devices on his belt. Particularly thrilling was the opportunity to share this bird with my non-birding co-workers. I'm very open about my non-vocational passion, and at first my observations were greeted with some amusement. As I "pished" a Winter Wren into view, one gentleman stated in his classic Brooklyn patois, "Who knew you wuz for da' boids?!" But my colleagues quickly became excited by the diversion of a relatively flashy bird they had never seen before, nor were likely to again. They looked for pictures online, bought field guides, and phoned their spouses and children to keep them posted on the continued antics of the chat.

One of the greatest joys of birding is sharing the experience with the non-converted, and the Yellow-breasted Chat almost never failed to delight. On my final day in the park, I noticed the excitement of a pair of photographers with what looked like Hubble Space Telescopes on tripods. I radioed my colleagues, who joined the small crowd of birders in the center of the park to observe the chat hopping around some tables and chairs within a few feet of the flabbergasted crowd.

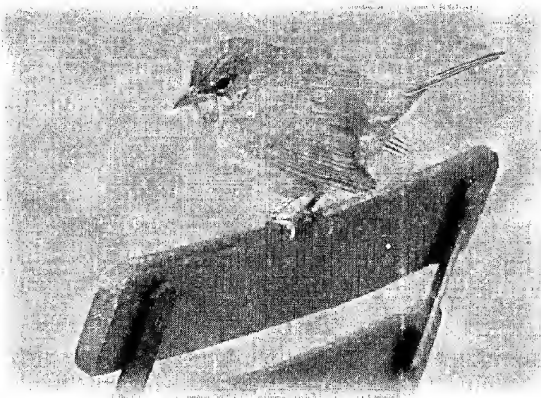
I can only speculate as to the bird's diet while in Bryant Park. I saw it pecking at fallen flower petals, and eating the remains of a fruit salad left behind by the lunchtime mob, while others observed it snacking on leftover potato chips from a nearby café. One afternoon, I watched the chat dipping its head into a piece of square steel buried in the earth as a sleeve for instructional sign posts. It was drinking deeply from rainwater captured within. The bird would drink for a few moments, raise its head to peer inquisitively at me, and determining that my proximity posed no threat, dip in again.

I was far too busy to use even my pocket binoculars to observe the bird. Even so, my close-range, naked-eye viewings, with reinforcement from some wonderful photographs passed on by Karen Fung and Carl Vornberger, lead me to believe it was almost certainly a first-year bird, most likely a female, based on the observations that the bird had a pink lower mandible, some dark feathering across the upper breast, and a relatively thin supraloral line. The age might explain the rather atypical behavior of this individual – it had not yet learned the expected anti-social characteristics we associate with the species.

I could not help but develop a sense of kinship with this bird, and one occasion encapsulated the “Chat Experience” for me. In the middle of a grueling 18-hour day, during which it rained almost constantly, I caught my breath and dried off a bit near a large power distribution module. It was dusk, and I would have been hard pressed to identify any creature more than ten feet from me, but the bird landed on the module, only five feet away, and nervously shifted about for a few seconds before flying off. I was heartened by the moment, and inspired to suffer through what turned out to be another eight hours of work. This instance, and all of those throughout the week, was remarkable not only in itself, but also in the context of the previous difficulty I had had in even spotting this species, let alone achieving such intimacy.

After completing the job on 24 Nov I visited Bryant Park a few days later without spotting my old friend. On-line reports had the bird present for a few days after that date, but gone long before the heavy snow and deep cold of early December. I can only hope that natural instincts took hold, and the wonderful Yellow-breasted Chat of Bryant Park headed comfortably south after gracing so many with its beauty under such uncharacteristic circumstances for so long.

Yellow-breasted  
Chat  
Bryant Park, NYC  
© Karen Fung



## DOCUMENTING RARE BIRDS – A NEW YORK PERSPECTIVE

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Many people think that if the members of a records committee believe a sighting, then it will be automatically accepted. Thus, the thinking goes, if an experienced birder writes up a rare bird, his or her report has a better chance of being accepted than one submitted by a less experienced birder. Along the same vein, if Joe Birdpro, one of New York's top birders, identifies a bird, then it will be accepted purely because he said it was so. Or, if a rare bird is reported all over the Internet and has been for weeks, then it is a done deal. Not necessarily!

First of all, the records committee needs to receive a report. Without it, there can be no record. Many sightings believed to be correct are lost simply because no report was ever submitted. Secondly, the report will be judged on the quality of the documentation, not on who the observer is. *This cannot be over emphasized!* Thus, if a report is submitted carelessly, with the assumption that acceptance will be automatic, the record most likely will be in jeopardy. The birder who has seen her life LeConte's Sparrow and who does a thorough detailed report is much more likely to have the report accepted than the vastly more experienced birder who by contrast, jots down a few "key" characters but who does not even provide sufficient detail to establish that the bird was in fact a sparrow!

All this is not to say that experience counts for nothing. However, it in no way replaces the need for as complete a description as possible. The records committee may well believe a sighting to be correct but they still need to receive adequate documentation in order to accept it. Remember, the reports are archived for future researchers who may have no knowledge of the observers' skills.

### What is Documentation?

As used here, documentation is evidence in support of an occurrence of a species, whether it is an individual or a flock, at a particular time and place in New York State. This evidence can take many forms but should minimally include a written report by the observer giving the circumstances of the sighting and a description detailing exactly what field marks, etc. were seen. Other evidence may include the observer's field notes or field sketches, photographs, video, tape recordings, measurements (birds in the hand, typically for banding), or a specimen. Even feathers, pellets, or casts of footprints can provide supporting evidence.

There have already been some excellent articles written on the subject of documenting rarities. "How to Document Rare Birds" by Donna Dittman and Greg Lasley (1992) is a very thorough account that I highly recommend. The article originally appeared in *Birding* (Vol. 24, No. 3) and is now available through the New York State Avian Records Committee's (NYSARC's) web site:



<http://www.birds.cornell.edu/fnysbc/NYSARChome.htm>. In order to provide a background for some of the discussion to follow, it is appropriate to briefly summarize the major points of Dittman and Lasley's article:

1. take field notes and do field sketches
2. photographs and tape recordings usually are the best means for birders to provide tangible proof of a bird's occurrence
3. the written report is the foundation of the submitted documentation, even for those reports also well supported by photographs or tape recordings
4. look beyond the "Peterson" field marks and describe the entire bird, including behavior and vocalizations
5. written reports should not only include a thorough description but should also include comments on how similar species were ruled out

### **Field Notes and Sketches**

"Written documentation provides the foundation for non-specimen records including those well supported by photographs or tape recordings." (Dittmann and Lasley 1992). The importance of taking field notes, therefore, cannot be over emphasized. The best way is to record them while the bird is under observation or immediately after it is lost from view. The longer you wait to take notes, the more the details will become lost or hazy in your memory. The unfortunate truth is that birders taking field notes where 1 bird (western New York and adjacent Ontario) are almost as rare as the birds they are chasing! It is true that notes taken when you get home are much better than those written the next day. However, notes taken on the spot or back at your car, *i.e. in the field*, invariably are superior.

Field notes should include as many details as you definitively observe. Field sketches are a great way to convey a large quantity of information. They should be annotated with notes and arrows pointing to the appropriate part of the bird, indicating those features which were consciously observed. Field notes do not have to be neatly printed and field sketches certainly do not need to be done by an artist. They should, however, be included with your report. Field notes constitute original data and should always be saved, no matter how messy or dirty they become. If legibility is a problem, provide a key explaining your scribbled comments or transcribe your notes at home.

Field notes should always be written before consulting a field guide. The human mind is an amazing tool but it is also easily deceived. After consulting the field guide, field marks you did not even see may suddenly seem obvious! So, even when a bird is under view for an extended period, it is preferable to take field notes before looking at the plate. While keeping your nose out of the field guide may seem extreme, it provides two important advantages. One, it maximizes the time spent actually studying the bird and two, it keeps the observer as objective as possible. Therefore, he or she can concentrate exactly on what is observed in the field without being unduly prejudiced by what the field guides say *ought* to be seen.

## The Description

The description is the single most important element in most rare bird reports. Size, shape, plumage, soft parts (legs, bill, eyes, and areas of exposed skin), vocalizations, and behavior should all be included.. A complete description is the result of careful study in the field. Look at every part of the bird and only record what you actually see. A familiarity with bird topography, shown in the front of all field guides, is helpful not only for clarity in your report but also as a reminder to look at all parts of your rare bird.

Many reports focus on the plumage, often neglecting the equally important features of size and shape. One recent NYSARC report of an American Avocet did not describe or mention the distinctive bill nor was the bill even shown in the field sketch provided. In most cases size and shape are fairly simple to convey by comparing your rarity to nearby birds and/or common species that are not present for direct comparison. For example: "The Lark Bunting was much larger than a Song Sparrow seen nearby and it had a more robust chunkier look. The bill was very conical, similar in shape to that of an Evening Grosbeak or Indigo Bunting but with a size in between those two species. The tail was notched."

If you know or have some sense of the age or sex of a bird, indicate this right up front. It helps the reviewers focus on the most relevant details. You should go further by explaining what specifically led you to your age/sex determination, especially in difficult cases - this can be done later on in the report if you wish. Direct comparisons made to birds nearby, or better, right next to your rarity, are more compelling than those from memory. For example: "The Hoary Redpoll was the same size as the Common Redpolls it was with. It was also the same shape except for the face and bill. The forehead appeared straighter up and down than on the Commons, making the face appear flat. The bill was very tiny, the same length up and down at the base as from tip to base."

When writing a rare bird report at home, you should have field notes for reference. If you did not take any field notes or make sketches, then you still should not look at the plate or text in the field guide. However, it can be very helpful to refer to the topographical sketches at the front of the guide so that you can use the proper terminology when writing about different parts of your bird. This will simultaneously prompt you to remember certain features and make your report clearer. In a desire to make your report complete, however, you should never include description of features that you did not specifically observe in the field. For example, if your notes describe the back feathers but not the scapulars, then state that you did not specifically notice the scapulars. Or, if you realize that you may have been looking at the scapulars and called them the "back" in your notes, then simply explain this. The members of NYSARC are not sticklers for form or proper terminology. They realize that people have different ways of saying the same thing. However, they are very concerned about accuracy and objectivity.

Many birders identify birds by their "Peterson" field marks. This system of identifying birds by noting one or two simple features or field marks, was instituted by Roger Tory Peterson many years ago, and is still the basis of field identification today. For example, a tanager with wing-bars is a Western. A

sparrow with a red cap and a “stickpin” on its breast is a Tree. A red shorebird with a down-curved bill is a Curlew Sandpiper in breeding plumage. The Peterson field guide is what I used to learn the birds. I still consider it an excellent guide for beginners, as it greatly simplifies the identification process. Unfortunately, these field marks are not always diagnostic. While critical identification features should be emphasized in a rare bird report, exhaustive detail is always preferable to a bare-bones description that mentions only the few key field marks. A thorough description will often indicate additional features which you may not even have realized were important.

The shortcomings of the “Peterson” field mark system were illustrated by an aberrant male Red-winged Blackbird at Jones Beach a few years ago. The bird had large blocks of white on the wings and tail and a creamy throat patch. Local birders called the rare bird alert, reporting an unidentified exotic, “probably of African origin!” When veteran birders arrived, they could tell instantly that it was actually a Red-winged Blackbird. It was identical in shape, habits, and calls to the other Red-winged Blackbirds it was with and differed only in the aberrant plumage. Even some quite experienced birders are still using field marks only and pay little attention to the gestalt of the bird itself.

A complete description can make the report more believable by discussing your identification process. What made you first think that you were looking at something unusual? What tipped you off to your identification? What convinced you? Laying out what your thought processes were in the field can be very helpful to a reviewer, all of whom are active birders themselves and are likely to relate to the particular circumstances you describe.

### **Considering Similar Species**

If your description is very thorough, it will have ruled out all other bird species. Usually, however, it is still necessary to discuss similar species, comparing the bird you saw to the ones it is most likely to be confused with. Failure to discuss the possibility of similar species is one of the most frequent reasons given for turning down a report, especially if the main descriptions are weak. Highlighting the field marks you saw which are not shown by the look-alikes greatly improves your report, and reveals that you are aware of and considered all other likely possibilities. The combination of a thorough description and careful consideration of similar species is particularly important when those species are *very* similar to your rarity. Some reporters prefer to compare similar species right along with the description. This is perfectly acceptable. Just do not overlook any other similar species!

It is also useful to write a few words about your prior experience with the species in question and its look-alikes. Whether or not a species is on your life list actually reveals very little about how familiar you are with the species. How many times you have seen it and at what times of the year are a lot more insightful. For example, having experience with breeding-plumaged adults in the spring may be very different from having experience with juveniles in the fall.

## Fear of Rejection

As discussed above, the most frequent reasons for non-acceptance are an incomplete description and failure to consider similar species. Occasionally, reports are turned down for what might be considered surprising or even “off-the-wall” reasons. These might include failure to consider a leucistic form of a more common species, exotic possibilities (cranes, waterfowl, pelicans, bishops, weaver finches to name a few), or hybrids (waterfowl, gulls, falcons are some examples). While these “odd birds” occur only rarely, they still are a legitimate concern. The average birder may have neither the experience nor the knowledge to think of such possibilities, which is all the more reason to provide as thorough a description as possible.

What do you do if, despite all of your best efforts, your report is not accepted by the records committee? First and most importantly, do not be discouraged! Try to learn from the experience. Ask yourself, “Did I see everything necessary to completely rule out my bird being any other species and was this reflected in my report?” Read the reasons for non-acceptance given by the reviewers and try to see how you could have improved your documentation. Any very active birder who documents every rarity he or she sees will likely have one or more of them rejected. But rather than accuse the NYSARC of playing favorites or being incompetent, try to understand why your report was turned down. This analytical approach can improve your field skills as you become better and more prepared for observing and documenting a rare bird in the future.

## Digiscoping

Photographs of birds have long been a great asset to the documentation process. However, obtaining detailed photographs has usually required a close approach to the bird or very heavy and expensive telephoto lenses. Although some birders have successfully used SLR-cameras to take pictures through a spotting scope, the newer digital cameras have revolutionized this method. Digital cameras are very compact high-quality optical instruments. They can be simply held up to the eyepiece of a scope to quickly capture a detailed image of a rare bird. The image must then be downloaded into a computer from which it can be printed out, posted on a web site, or e-mailed to the NYSARC Secretary. Moreover, easy to use software, such as Photoshop, allows the user to lighten or darken an image or even sharpen it. This can greatly increase the details that are visible in the photo. However, you must avoid the temptation to alter the image to show details that you did not observe in the field. The process of using digital cameras to take photographs through a scope has become increasingly popular and is widely known as digiscoping. This revolutionary technology (Stanford 2002, Wood 2002) is exciting to records committees and birders alike for the improved ease of documentation it promises.

Lesser quality or small images are better than none at all, especially if they are accompanied by a thorough description. When cropping photos, avoid cropping them too tightly as it is often helpful to leave other species and/or clues

of habitat in the photo. For example, a common gull species shown next to your rare gull might allow a reviewer to compare their relative size, shape, and mantle shades, etc.

## The Review Process

The procedures of the NYSARC are described in the committee guidelines (*Kingbird* 48:116-119, *Kingbird* 50:25-27). When you send in a rare bird report, the NYSARC Secretary makes copies and sends one to each of the seven members. How long it takes to review a report depends on several factors that include the thoroughness of the description, whether or not all similar species were considered, the difficulty of the identification, the variability of similar species, and the degree of rarity. The length of time a reviewer spends on your report varies from a few minutes to, in rare cases, several hours or even longer. The reviewers are not allowed to consult one another about any first-round report. They can, however, seek outside opinions. After all reviewers have returned their decisions (i.e. accept, not accept, accept identification but questionable origin, or abstain), the Secretary tallies the votes. If a decision according to the guidelines is not reached, the report is recirculated along with each of the reviewers' comments for a second round. If necessary, the process is repeated for a third and final round of review. In the second and third rounds, in addition to reading each other's comments, the committee may consult one another about a report.

After a decision has been reached, the Secretary or the Chair will send a notice of decision to the submitter of the report. If the report has not been accepted, in accordance with a recent change in the Guidelines, a summary of the reasons for non-acceptance will be included with the notice. If new information comes to light about a sighting, a report can always be revisited. If you feel strongly opposed to the non-acceptance vote, you can write to the committee requesting a new review but you must also explain why you believe the committee's reasons for non-acceptance are invalid.

Special rules apply for species not previously recorded in the state. To be added to the official New York State checklist, a report of a first record must be unanimously accepted by the committee. In addition no species may be added to the official NYS checklist as the result of a single observer report without either an unequivocal photograph, video, sound recording, or specimen.

No matter how many years have passed since you saw that rare bird, a report can always be submitted. However, in such cases field notes or photographs become even more important. It is usually best to complete your documentation as soon as possible after the sighting and send the report to the Secretary right away.

## Conclusion

Some will tell you that taking field notes and documenting rarities is tedious and time-consuming, or that it takes the fun out of their hobby. I will tell

you that it gives scientific credibility to your birding and that it can also give you a sense of satisfaction by making an important, lasting contribution toward a better understanding of the status and distribution of the birds within our state. Personally, I look forward to seeing rare birds as much for the opportunity to document them as for adding a bird to one of my many lists.

Documenting your rare bird sightings requires a little time and effort. Some people will find that it takes longer than others, depending on a number of factors, not the least of which are the species involved and the reporter's attempt to be thorough. However, it is really not all that difficult and can even be fun. In addition to contributing to the scientific record, documenting your sightings can make you a better birder with a more critical eye. Give it a try the next time you see a bird on the NYSARC review list. Even if it is a bird seen by hundreds of other birders, if nothing else your report can serve as good practice for the day you become the discoverer of a rarity! More likely, however, you will be making an important contribution. Consider this - only three reports were received for the Broad-billed Sandpiper, at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Reserve, NYC in 1998, yet it was seen by almost 1000 birders! Therefore, you need not worry about flooding the NYSARC with tons of reports. Multiple reports can provide details that collectively prove the identification, they may corroborate certain important features, or they may extend the range of dates that a rarity was known to be present. For these reasons alone, the committee encourages the receipt of multiple reports for every rarity!

### **Acknowledgements**

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## YELLOW- RUMPED WARBLERS GORGING ON CLUSTER FLIES

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On 15 Oct 2002, I hiked up the base of Hurricane Mountain in Essex County, Town of Elizabethtown, at an elevation of approximately 1000 - 1500 feet, sat down on a boulder to rest, and noticed a little bird perched at the edge of a roof, alternately flying to and sitting on a wire leading to the house. I didn't have my binoculars with me at the time. At first I thought it was an Eastern Phoebe since it was flicking its tail. I approached and saw that the bird had faint yellow flanks. And then it launched itself from the wire, fluttered its wings and fanned its tail as it easily caught an insect on the wing. There it was -the yellow rump patch- identification confirmed, a Yellow-Rumped Warbler (*Dendroica coronata*).

So what were the insects it was feeding on? I thought I'd need my binoculars to determine that, so I ran back down the road to retrieve them from home. Returning, I approached closer to this old wooden house, built in the 1800's, now used primarily as a summer retreat, having neither electricity nor central heating. On moving closer I detected a huge Bald-Faced Hornet nest under the eaves. Could it be intercepting wasps entering and leaving the nest? I considered that possibility only briefly. During spring and summer the nest would be a swarm of activity, but by October the wasps have dispersed. Whatever the bird was feeding on was very abundant. The warbler sallied forth and then darted under the eaves to pick off a few insects, and more were gathered from the clapboards. It briefly perched at the edge of the roof looking up and down, and from side to side before swooping down to catch its own reflection in the window, as it snapped up a few insects on the window sill. By now it was quite obvious to me it was feeding on the ubiquitous Cluster Fly (*Pollenia rudis*).

Yellow-Rumped Warbler is probably the most common warbler migrating through the Adirondacks in October. In fall, as the temperature nears and then drops below freezing, Cluster Flies seek protected places to spend the winter. Isolated houses in the country are especially prone to invasions of Cluster Flies, since they offer the only warm shelter for miles around. So as hoards of Cluster Flies seek out our homes in September and October, they meet the Yellow-Rumped Warblers moving through looking for an abundant source of food to fuel their migration.

This is a classic example of wildlife adapting to changes brought about by man. I suspect that Cluster Flies are more abundant today than in pre-colonial days. Why? Consider the life cycle of the Cluster Fly. They parasitize earthworms that inhabit grassy areas. With many of our earthworms, including the plump night-crawler, being exotics, the biomass of earthworms crawling around on our lawns today is more abundant than ever. We have provided the Cluster Fly with both the ideal breeding site such as large expanses of grass, and the ideal winter

shelter, our warm homes, and these two conditions, fortunately for the warbler, exist side by side.

A. C. Bent (1963) about the food of the Yellow-Rumped Warbler - "During spring and summer they destroy thousands of caterpillars... and also eat grasshoppers, bugs, house-flies and other flies including caddis-flies, crane-flies, and Ichneumon-flies..." This statement is a bit misleading since both caddis-flies and ichneumon-flies are not true flies, neither belonging to the order *Diptera*. Bent also says that "along the coast during the milder winters there are many flies rising from the seaweed in sheltered spots on mild days even in January..." that they feed on. From the long list of other insects preyed upon Bent reports it appears that this warbler is an opportunistic feeder, feeding on the most abundant and most readily available insects. It should be noted that not only is the Cluster Fly very abundant around our homes in fall, but it is a sluggish fly and therefore easily caught by the warbler with the minimum expenditure of energy. Martin et al. (1951) also lists flies as one of the food sources of the Yellow-Rumped Warbler as well as *Hymenoptera* which includes the wasps, bees, ants and sawflies.

On 15 Oct I watched the warbler gorge itself on Cluster Flies for about two and one-half hours. Almost all of its time was spent on the south and west facing parts of the house where it gets the most solar radiation, and to where the flies gravitate. As the sun fell below the tree line, removing the house from the direct rays of the sun, and as the temperatures started to drop quickly, the feeding frenzy came abruptly to an end.

On 20 Oct I discovered the same avian feeding frenzy happening at my own house about a mile down the road from my first observation. The details of this seasonally dependent phenomenon were almost a carbon copy of my initial observation on 15 Oct.

This warbler started to forage for flies on the illuminated south side of the house. As the sun dropped lower in the sky the warbler switched to the brighter west side of the house. I watched this bird for about three hours, and during this time it fed exclusively on Cluster Flies with the exception of two or three torpid paper wasps (Subfamily *Polistinae*) that it found tucked away in a crevice. The warbler pounded the wasps repeatedly against the roof with its beak, mangling them or killing them before swallowing them. The Cluster Flies, in contrast, were eaten alive. At one point I tried a little experiment. I went into the house swept up some dead Cluster Flies from the window sill, and caught and stunned a few more, and then threw them out on the roof to see how quickly or whether the warbler would eat them as well. The warbler first ate the ones that were still moving, and came back for the dead ones later.

This phenomenon I suspect was happening simultaneously hundreds of times across the Adirondacks, and perhaps thousands of times across the warbler's range on those days in September and October when overnight freezing temperatures sent Cluster Flies in droves to our warm homes looking for winter shelter. It's not only at our bird feeders that we get an opportunity to watch birds up close from the shelter of our homes. Be on the lookout next year at this time for Yellow-Rumped Warblers peeping into your windows looking for Cluster Flies.



The adaptive behavior of the Yellow-Rumped Warbler to anthropogenic change could quickly become deadly if the Cluster Flies were to concentrate chemical toxins in their tissues from lawns sprayed with herbicides. This feeding behavior would then become an ecological trap (Schlaepfer 2002), and instead of enhancing the species survival, it would hasten its demise. Fortunately, in the Adirondacks, application of herbicides to lawns is not a common phenomenon as it is in suburbia.

There must be many other insect hatches that occur throughout the year that provide birds with an abundant source of food. For example year after year I've watched Eastern Phoebes and *Aeschnid* dragonflies gorge on winged ants in August (Gretch 1997). I'd encourage more birders to document these interactions and report them to *The Kingbird*. I am sure there are many more gaps in our knowledge about the food preferences and feeding behavior of insectivorous birds.

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## AN UNUSUAL NIGHTHAWK FLIGHT IN CHAUTAUQUA COUNTY

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Late afternoon on 10 Nov 2002, my wife Marjorie and I were walking on Spring St. in Fredonia when I noticed a small flock of birds, quite high, and flying in a northwesterly direction toward Lake Erie. I remarked that they were too small for ducks or geese or the usual flocks of Ring-billed Gulls which we often see overhead. At that moment, I could not think of any bird of this appearance that would be likely to be flying over in flocks at this time of the year, but at that distance with no binoculars, I concluded I might never know what they were.

My wife then noted that were more birds coming, this time a flock of fifty or more and lower down. As we watched them approach, one dropped down as if to catch a flying insect. This time I realized this was a flock of Common Nighthawks!

The flock flew directly over us and though the day was dark and all we could see were silhouettes, the size, shape and flight behavior were all distinctively those of nighthawks. Behind this flock, another appeared, and then yet another. Counting one of these flocks as well as I could, I came up with a total of sixty birds. The flight continued for some minutes, during which time we estimated that five hundred (500) birds or so had passed. I had seen similar nighthawk flights in previous years but never at this date, which was nearly a month later than the norm and most remarkably, going in the wrong direction!

I notified Dick Miga who put this observation on the local birding hotline, and I received a call the next morning from Terence Mosher, a local veteran birder, who expressed his amazement at the sighting. We discussed the possible reasons but could come up with no answers. He then called back to tell me that his wife, Judy, had advanced the following plausible explanation.

This was the weekend that an immense storm front with high winds and tornadoes had swept north from the Gulf states, and possibly this flock had become caught up in this storm somewhere in the south and blown northwards. Their course over us would have taken them to the south shore of Lake Erie in a few minutes, and then perhaps they would reorient and resume a normal flight direction as the storm had abated by this time.

If this were the case, the question is whether they would have sufficient fat reserves to allow them to return to an area where airborne insects were still abundant. While we had a very mild autumn and a few moths were still flying, it did not seem likely that there were enough insects aloft to feed flocks of this magnitude, unless of course numbers of insects had been carried north along with the birds.

## LATE NESTING OF A WILD TURKEY IN ALLEGANY COUNTY

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On 20 Jul 2002, I discovered a female Wild Turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) incubating eight eggs in a ground nest located under a 1m White Spruce tree in a mixed conifer managed Christmas tree plantation. The plantation is on the west side of the Pingrey Road in the town of Andover in Allegany County, New York. The female was still incubating eight eggs on 25 Jul, but on 31 Jul, the nest had been depredated, probably a result of recent mowing between the trees in the plantation, making the nest more visible.

The dates given for Wild Turkey nests with eggs in western New York are "April 30 to early July (approximation)" (Beardslee and Mitchell 1965). The latest date given in the Atlas Handbook for Workers (Federation of New York State Bird Clubs et al. 2002) for turkey nests with eggs is 9 Jul. However, in research conducted by Stephen Eaton from 1969 to 1973 involving capturing turkeys in western New York, the latest egg date of captured poults was figured back to 27 Jul using methods described by Knoder (1959) (S. Eaton, pers. comm.). This date is consistent with the date of the nest I found.

Deep snow pack in late winter may delay the main nesting season and subsequently affect the timing of the late hatch. While the winter of 2001-02 was not exceptionally severe and snow depth would not have contributed to a delayed onset of nesting, the month of May was the fourth coldest and fourth wettest in 60 years (Morgante 2002). There may have been high numbers of nest failures and/or loss of poults during this period, resulting in a higher number of late nestings, and a later onset of those nestings.

Appreciation to Stephen W. Eaton for his helpful comments and to Cathy and Tom Kent for permission to conduct breeding bird studies on their land.

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## RECORD LATE TUFTED TITMOUSE NESTLINGS

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While Atlasing block 2080D in the Township of Somerset in Niagara County on 27 Jun 2001, local birder Neal Gordon showed me a Peterson nest box in his father's backyard at 8509 West Somerset Road containing young Tufted Titmice. I pointed out to Neal that since the nestlings were sparsely feathered and the late nestling date for unfledged Tufted Titmouse in *The Atlas of Breeding Birds in New York State* is 30 Jun, these nestlings would probably exceed the current late date for unfledged juveniles.

Daily observations of the adults were made as they entered the nest box to feed the nestlings. 3 Jul was last day that feeding activity was observed. We opened the nest box on 5 Jul, and confirmed that the nestlings had fledged. Based on this evidence, it is recommended that the late unfledged juvenile date of 30 Jun be extended to 3 Jul, and that downstate observers (where the Tufted Titmouse is a much more common breeder) note early and late nestlings of this species.

### EDITOR' S NOTE

While in the field, we all come across examples of interesting behavior and happenings that may not be unique but are unusual enough to note and pass on to fellow birders . This is the material sought for the section of *The Kingbird* called "Notes and Observations." A perfect example is the Benton article on the nighthawk flight on pg. 120. Early and late, nesting, egg-laying and fledging dates, also qualify for this department. I would like to make this a regular feature of the publication but need the reader's cooperation .

I note that some of this type of observation shows up pretty regularly on various internet postings. Evidently it is easier to send an e-mail to a Listserve than to sit down and pen a couple paragraphs to put in the mail. Since I have an e-mail address, *harpia1@aol.com*, why not offer the observation to *The Kingbird* for the NOTES & OBSERVATIONS section?

Manny Levine

**IN MEMORIAM**  
**Sally Hoyt Spofford, 1914 – 2003**

Charles R. Smith,  
Department of Natural Resources, Cornell University.

With the passing of Sally Hoyt Spofford on 26 October 2003 in Tucson, Arizona, a long and distinguished career drew to a close. Between 1948 and 1972, Sally worked with all the early directors of the Laboratory of Ornithology, Arthur A. Allen, Peter Paul Kellogg, and Olin Sewall Pettingill, Jr., providing dedicated professional service to the Laboratory, Cornell University, and the Ithaca community. Each of those early directors, in turn, predeceased Sally, who lived a full and eventful life of 88 years, including service as Corresponding Secretary for the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs from 1958 to 1961.

Sally was awarded her Ph.D. from Cornell University in 1948 upon completion of her thesis, *A Reference Book and Bibliography of Ornithological Techniques*. Unfortunately, her husband Southgate Hoyt, whom she had married in 1942, became ill with cancer and died in 1951, at age 39, an untimely death for a very promising ornithologist.

At the regular Monday Night Seminars at Sapsucker Woods, she met Walter R. Spofford, a neurosurgeon from Syracuse. In addition to his medical practice, "Spoff" also studied birds of prey and was a recognized expert on the Golden Eagle. Sally and Walt were married in 1964 and Walt's studies of birds of prey continued, with Sally by his side on most trips afield.

In 1972, the Spoffords retired to Portal, Arizona, at the mouth of Cave Creek Canyon on the eastern edge of the Chiricahua Mountains. Their Arizona home, Rancho Aguila, was an oasis for both birds and birders with a yard filled with bird baths and feeders, and was a popular destination listed in many bird-finding guides. After Walter Spofford died in 1995, Sally continued to welcome birds and birders to her home and remained active in local conservation activities, especially those related to conservation of the Cave Creek Canyon area and its birds. For 30 years in Portal, Arizona, she reaffirmed the natural value of Cave Creek Canyon and worked with her local community to conserve the area and its wealth of bird life.

Sally Spofford is laid to rest beside Walter Spofford in a small country cemetery, surrounded by junipers and nestled in a valley near the old mining town of Paradise, in the Chiricahua Mountains. The cemetery faces to the East, looking out upon cliffs where Golden Eagles still nest and hunt.

**IN MEMORIAM**  
**Allan S. Klonick, 1921-2003**

Gerry Rising  
295 Robinhill Drive Williamsville, NY 14221

On 22 Feb 2003, after over 65 years of active field birding and leadership not only in Rochester but state-wide as well, Allan Klonick died. He will be remembered for his many contributions to ornithology and as a friend to hundreds of Federation members.

Allan Klonick was the last of a fine group of Rochester ornithologists. A founder, in 1938, and later president of the Genesee Ornithological Society, he has now joined his companions in that organization, Gordon Meade, Joe Taylor, Howard Miller, Hi Clement, John Brown, Amb Secker, Elmer Siebert and Bill Edson, in some birding paradise.

But even in that company he stood out. When a remarkable local birding spot, Reed Road Swamp, was threatened by development, Allan, whose business was real estate, organized Bird Refuges, Inc., collected money and bought the property. He later acquired additional land including the famous Island Cottage Woods forming the west spit reaching out into Braddock Bay. Shortly before he died, Allan saw to it that those lands were donated to the Genesee Land Trust.

Allan was also instrumental in the formation of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs and he served as the first editor of *The Kingbird*.

He was president of the Burroughs Audubon Nature Club and helped to rebuild that organization's headquarters after a fire destroyed its earlier structure. For these and his many other contributions to conservation he was elected a Fellow of the Rochester Museum and Science Center.

The cause of Allan's death was a rare form of rapidly developing bladder cancer, his second bout with this dread disease. In 1965 he was diagnosed with throat cancer from which he completely recovered. Because of that earlier episode Allan often told his friends that he considered the years since then a gift. His wife, Sandy, another fine birder, died just nine months before her husband. They are survived by two sons, Thomas and John, and two grandchildren, Kate and Alex.

**FEDERATION OF NEW YORK STATE BIRD CLUBS, INC.**  
**54th ANNUAL MEETING**  
**LIVERPOOL, NY SEPTEMBER 14-16, 2001**  
**(ABRIDGED)**

At 9:19 a.m. September 15, 2001, President Mary Alice Koenke called to order the meeting of the Council of Delegates. This was the 54th Annual Meeting of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, Inc. and was hosted by the Onondaga Audubon Society.

A roll call of member clubs showed that 42 delegates represented 26 of 49 member clubs. The minutes of the 53rd Annual Meeting were approved as presented (motion by Valerie Freer; Bill Reeves, second).

**PRESIDENT'S REPORT** by Mary Alice Koenke  
Activities of the Federation this past year were:

- Three provisional member clubs have asked for membership, bringing our total to 52 clubs. Individual memberships have also increased.
- New York State Avian Records Committee (NYSARC) continues to bring the state ornithological records up to date under the fine organization of Angus Wilson, Chair, and the rest of the committee. Annual reports, including some photographs, are now on the Federation Web site. Gerard Philips was appointed to fill a vacancy on the committee, and Jeanne Skelly has replaced Jim Lowe as Secretary.
- The Federation Web site continues to expand public awareness of the Federation and its activities.
- The Federation sponsored a team at the Montezuma Muckrace and provided gift memberships to the youth participants for the third year in a row. The Federation also supported the 5th Annual Lake Ontario Bird Festival in Mexico, NY.
- The Federation was represented at conservation meetings/hearings throughout the year and continues to support the Conservation and Reinvestment Act (CARA) legislation.
- *The Kingbird* and *NY Birders* continue to publish quality articles and information for NY State's birding community. The Kingbird had its cover updated with new color artwork.
- A new project, the publication of a monograph: *Summary of the Hamlin Beach Lakewatch Fall and Winter Bird Data 1993-1999* by Brett Ewald and Dominic F. Sherony, is now complete.

**TREASURER'S REPORT:**

Bill Reeves presented the Treasurer's Report, distributing a detailed 2000 Annual Financial Report.

**AUDITING COMMITTEE REPORT:**

The committee, Manny Levine, Irving Cantor, and Peter Capainolo reported that the financial statements fairly represent the financial condition of the Federation, and the records of the Federation are in good shape.

**MEMBERSHIP REPORT:**

Valerie Freer reported that as of July 2001 there were 742 Individual Members and 71 Life Members for a total of 813. There were 52 Member Clubs, including the three provisional clubs, representing approximately 33,000 individuals.

**ELECTION OF NEW CLUBS:**

Three clubs have requested membership in the Federation: Four Harbors Audubon Society (700 Members), Pfeiffer Nature Center (119 Members), and South Shore Audubon Society (2000 Members). With a motion by Tim Baird, seconded by Barb Reuter, they were accepted into membership.

**ATLAS 2000 COMMITTEE:**

Valerie Freer reported that the project is going well.

**PUBLICATIONS:**

Manny Levine reported that Federation Checklists are available. *The Kingbird* and *New York Birders* are in good shape.

**CONSERVATION:**

Chairman Mary Alice Koeneke reported that the Federation has taken an active role in statewide conservation issues as well as those impacting local clubs.

**NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL  
CONSERVATION (NYSDEC) REPORT:**

Peter Nye reported that Bob Miller has retired. The NYSDEC is working cooperatively with other agencies and organizations to monitor and manage many bird species as part of their wildlife management program.

**NYSARC REPORT:**

Kevin McGowan reported that the 1998 report is in the March 2001 issue of *The Kingbird*. Submissions to the committee are up.

**FEDERATION WEB SITE:**

Barbara Butler reported that the Federation Checklist is updated immediately on the Web site. There is a new section on reporting marked birds. The featured site is the Shawangunk Grassland. Hits to the site peaked at 30 per day in May 2001.



**AWARDS COMMITTEE REPORT:**

The following awards will be presented:

Gordon M. Meade Award – Dorothy Crumb

President's Award – Bob Miller

John J. Elliott Award – Andrew Guthrie and Angus Wilson

Lillian Stoner Award – Sarah Mae Pascoe

Certificates of Appreciation to:

Angus Wilson –for NYSARC activity

Jeff and Sue Capolito and Mr. & Mrs. Williams -

for permitting birders access to view Wood Storks on their property.

**NOMINATING COMMITTEE REPORT:**

Chairman Valerie Freer reported nominations for officers (one year terms):

President – Timothy Baird

Vice-President – Richard Miga

Corresponding Secretary – Berna Lincoln

Recording Secretary – Brenda Best

Treasurer – William Reeves

She also reported nominations for Director (two year terms):

Bob Miller

William Ostrander

Michael Galas

Nominations were requested from the floor. Kevin McGowan motioned and John Confer seconded that the report of the Nominating Committee be approved unanimously.

**FIELD TRIP COMMITTEE REPORT:**

Bill Lee reported on field trips conducted during the past year.

**COUNTY LISTING REPORT:**

Berna Lincoln reported that approximately 90 to 100 members submit reports. These data are published in New York Birders.

**ARCHIVES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY REPORT:**

Phyllis Jones reported that a Bibliography Committee consisting of Barb Butler, Valerie Freer and Walt Sabin has been formed.

**ELECTION OF NOMINATING COMMITTEE:**

Mary Alice Koeneke, Stanley Lincoln and Kevin McGowan were nominated to serve on the Nominating Committee. Phyllis Jones motioned and Chad Covey seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

**ELECTION OF AUDITING COMMITTEE:**

Manny Levine, Irving Cantor and Peter Capainolo were nominated to serve on the Auditing Committee. Kevin McGowan motioned and Barbara Butler seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

**ELECTION OF FINANCE COMMITTEE:**

Mary Alice Koenek, William Reeves and Berna Lincoln (Chairman) were nominated to serve on the Finance Committee. Andy Mason motioned and Bill Watson seconded. Motion approved unanimously.

**FUTURE ANNUAL MEETINGS:**

The 2002 Annual Meeting is scheduled for Binghamton, NY on September 20-22, 2002.

Meeting was adjourned at 11:17 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Richard E. Miga  
Recording Secretary



## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WINTER SEASON 2002-2003

**Joseph DiCostanzo**

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It was a winter to inspire song; that is if you like songs with lyrics such as “Baby, it’s cold outside!” or “Let it snow! Let it snow! Let it snow!” No part of the state was spared the deep freeze. December was cool, generally one to two degrees below normal, except in Region 5 which was a tenth of a degree above average, but by late in the month temperatures and snow were falling. January and February were best described as brutal, with most Regions reporting average temperatures between four and ten degrees below normal. Some areas saw stretches of two to three weeks with temperatures never reaching the freezing mark. As usual it was coldest in the Adirondacks, with temperatures reaching 35 below zero in some spots and Lake Champlain freezing over completely for the first time in two years. Lakes Erie, Huron, and Superior also froze over completely, with Lakes Michigan and Ontario half frozen by the end of the season. In Region 8 the Hudson River froze over for the first time in several years. Last year, when Regions 5 and 6 had average temperatures over ten degrees above normal, Willie D’Anna wondered if any month had ever deviated more than ten degrees from normal. This year February in Region 3 was 10.9 below normal.

A Christmas Day storm dropped snow across the state, with some areas receiving two to three feet. The snow continued throughout the season in most areas, with another holiday storm on President’s Day dropping two to three feet in the lower portions of the state. Parts of the Tug Hill area in Region 6 had over 350 inches of snow. Albany in Region 8 had a total of 96 inches, approaching its all time record of 112 inches. Overall the extreme cold and heavy snow, which often made travel and outside activities difficult, made for a very long winter. Despite the weather birders managed to get out and find a fair number of lingering birds and some rarities.

### **Finches and Other Winter Irruptives**

Let’s just get these out of the way immediately. Despite a winter that might have made you think you were spending it in the far north, there were virtually no winter finches or other traditional winter irruptives to speak of. Though Northern Shrikes appeared in seven Regions, the reports were scattered with not very many individuals. Even Red-breasted Nuthatch was scarce. Single Bohemian Waxwings were reported in Regions 2 and 3 with the latter the second county record for Chemung Co. Even Region 7 had almost no finches with the exception of a record high count of 1115 American Goldfinches on the Saranac Lake CBC. The only crossbills were two reports of individual White-winged Crossbills in Region 7. Snow Buntings were scattered in generally small numbers; even the maximum count of 1000 reported in Region 3 is only about a tenth of the record inland maximum.

## Waterfowl

Most Regions reported good numbers and variety of waterfowl early before the severe cold froze them out of inland waters. Pacific Loons have been reported with increasing regularity in recent years. This winter found one in Region 10 and a possible in Region 3. The freeze-up of inland waters produced a large flight of Red-necked Grebes in the last days of the season and on into the spring season. Scattered Eared Grebe sightings in Regions 1, 2, 3, and 10 were about normal for recent winters. Greater White-fronted Goose was found in Regions 3, 9, and 10, the last Region having a total of seven on three CBCs. Barrow's Goldeneyes were widely reported, with individuals reported from all Regions except Regions 4, 8 and 9. Other highlights included high numbers of Tundra Swans in Region 1, which also hosted a drake Harlequin Duck on the Niagara River for the second winter in a row. On 30 Dec, Region 7 had its first ever Tufted Duck, surprisingly followed quickly by additional records in that Region; another Tufted was in Region 10, where the species is almost annual. Other duck and goose highlights included a "Richardson's" Canada Goose in Region 1; a Ross's Goose in Region 5; the almost annual, and almost always of questionable origin, Barnacle Geese in Region 10; King Eiders in Regions 1 and 2; and a female Common Eider in Region 6. Late December-early January saw a major Razorbill flight on the coast. Westchester's second ever Razorbill on 21 Dec was eclipsed the following day when an amazing 116 were reported on the Bronx-Westchester CBC. Over a thousand Razorbills were reported on Region 10's CBCs. Five of the six Atlantic alcids were recorded in Region 10; perhaps even more amazing, three species, Dovekie, Thick-billed Murre, and Razorbill were reported in New York City waters. The flight, however, did not last and most birds were gone by mid-winter.

## Raptors

It was hard to find any statewide effect of the severe winter on raptors with the exception of Bald Eagles. Several Regions report widespread and increasing numbers of wintering Bald Eagles, but the late season freeze-up pushed many to the open waters of the Hudson River in Region 9, where triple digit one day counts were reported; some rode the river ice floes into Region 10. An Osprey on a CBC in Region 10 is an event, but one in mid-January in Columbia Co., Region 8, when nearly most nearby waters were frozen, is truly remarkable. Red-shouldered Hawks, unusual in the interior in winter, were found in Regions 1, 2, and 3. Golden Eagles wintered in some now traditional locations in Regions 1 and 9. Two Gyrfalcons were found in Region 7 and others kept birders near Cayuga Lake in Region 3 wondering how many were present and where they would show up next. Switching to the smaller falcons, American Kestrels appear to be continuing their decline, while Merlins, traditionally a rare winter bird, continue to increase, with a record nine wintering on the SUNY Buffalo campus in Region 1 and even outnumbering kestrels on Region 10 CBCs. Among the owls the sole standout was the very cooperative Northern Hawk Owl in Montgomery Co., Region 8 that delighted hundreds of birders from mid-January through the end of the season.

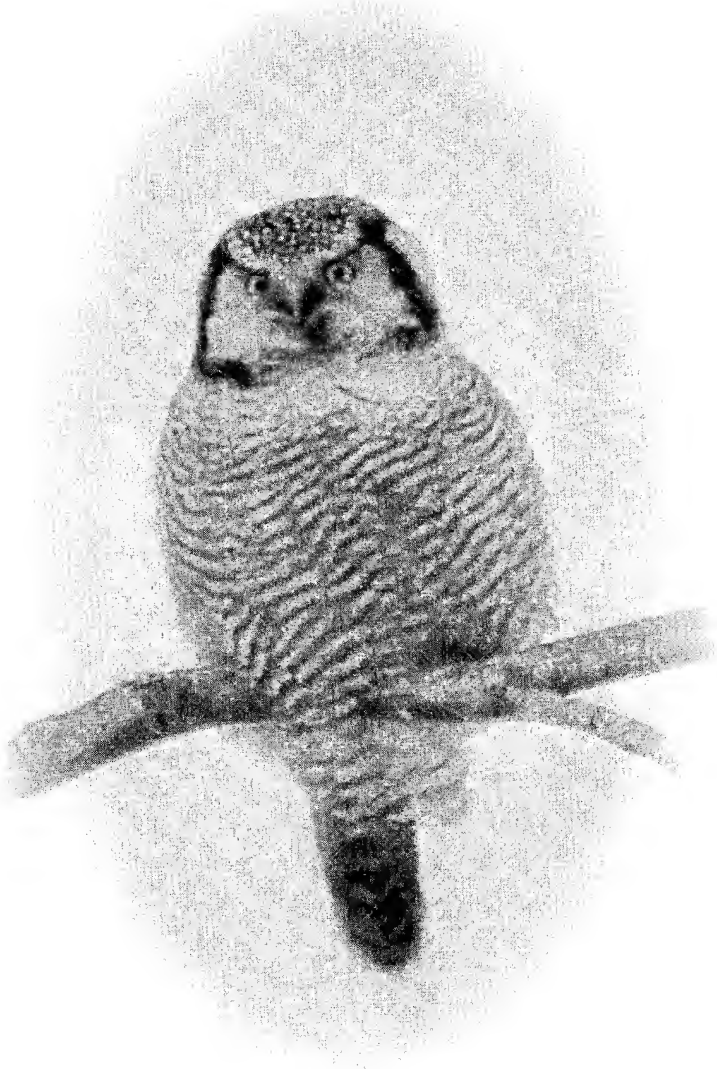
## Shorebirds and Gulls

Okay, shorebirds do not jump to mind when you think of New York winters, and especially not winters like this one, but a few shorebirds did brighten an otherwise long hard winter in some places. In Region 2, a congregation of one each Killdeer, Sanderling, Purple Sandpipers and Dunlin on the Lake Ontario shore in January was described as a "once in a lifetime event." Beside their normal locations in Regions 1 & 10, Purple Sandpiper also turned up in Regions 2, 3 and 5; in the latter Region it provided a first January record. Two Red Phalaropes at Oswego in Region 5 until 26 December is one of few winter records inland. Naturally Region 10 had the greatest variety of shorebirds, including a rare December Semipalmated Plover, Lesser Yellowlegs and Willets until early January, wintering American Oystercatchers and Long-billed Dowitchers, and an offshore Red Phalarope. A January report of Hudsonian Godwit, if NYSARC details are submitted and accepted, would be unprecedented.

Great Skua is rarely seen from land in New York, so one seen from Montauk Point in Region 10 and possibly the same individual sitting on a nearby beach the next day was a major delight for the lucky observers. As usual Region 1, with its collection of winter gulls in the Niagara area, had the greatest variety of gulls. California Gull has become almost annual there, but a "one day wonder" adult Ross's Gull was the second Regional record. Another Ross's Gull, a first winter bird, was much more cooperative in Region 2 spending five days in Irondequoit Bay. An odd gull in Sullivan Co., Region 9 was thought to be a "Nelson's Gull", a hybrid Glaucous x Herring Gull. Lesser Black-backed Gulls were found in six of the ten Regions, but were scarcer than in recent winters in Region 10.

## Half-Hardies

Considering the severity of the winter there was a surprising variety and number of half-hardies and lingering birds reported. Traditionally, Carolina Wren numbers build up during a succession of mild winters and are then hit hard by severe winters. Perhaps the species is finally adapting in our area; virtually all Regions reported good numbers throughout the winter. Other traditionally "southern" resident species that seemed to be doing well in inland Regions were Tufted Titmouse and Northern Cardinal. Regions 5, 6 and 7 all reported good to bumper crops of wild fruits with good numbers of American Robins, Eastern Bluebirds and other birds feeding on them. Widespread Eastern Phoebe in Region 10 are perhaps not surprising there, but the species was also reported from five other Regions with the bird in Region 5 being only the fourth winter record there; one perhaps wintered in Region 9. Also reported from a surprising number of Regions were Ruby-crowned Kinglets and Marsh Wrens. Six Tree Swallows in 60 F temperature on 3 Dec were thought unlikely to survive the night, but given the individual seen in Region 7 on 16 Feb following overnight temperatures of -20° F, their demise should perhaps not be assumed. A Blue-gray Gnatcatcher on the Sagaponack CBC in Region 10 was only the sixth winter record for the state.



A BOTS (Bird-of-the-Season) Northern Hawk Owl  
Region 8 – Root, Montgomery County  
18 Jan thru period (Ellen and Chuck Kieweg)  
© Carena Pooth

The “neotropics” of Region 10 reported nine warblers including a probable record number 15 Orange-crowned Warblers on nine CBCs, Nashville Warbler on four CBCs, “exceptional numbers” of Pine Warblers, two Ovenbirds, a Northern Waterthrush, seven Yellow-breasted Chats on five CBCs, and the Hermit or Hermit x Townsend’s Warbler from the fall making it into the winter period by one day. A Northern Waterthrush in Region 2 was only the second January Regional record. Though rare in winter, there are a good number of December records of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks so individuals in mid-December in Regions 2 and 10 were good finds, but nowhere near as unusual as the individual on 6 Feb in Bronx Co., Region 10. Finally, two species from Region 10 that do not normally come to mind when the term “half-hardy” is mentioned: a Greater Shearwater at Montauk 28 December is a record late date and a Least Bittern “hit and run” victim 25 Feb is one of only a handful of winter records for the state.

## Rarities

There were not a lot of rarities reported this winter and many of those that were found have already been mentioned. Some species such as Eared Grebe, Ross’s Goose, California Gull, and Ross’s Gull, which in years past would have been significant ornithological events, are now virtually annual. Many of the other species highlighted by Regional editors are noteworthy in the winter season primarily because of their out of normal season occurrence. Among the highlighted birds not already mentioned is a Clay-colored Sparrow that wintered in Region 9; another Clay-colored was in Region 10. As usual in the winter season, Region 10 has the lion’s share of rarities. Two that are out of place there, but that are regular inland were Black Vulture and Common Raven. Both species have shown great expansion in range and numbers in the southern portion of the state in recent years. Two out of range rarities were at feeders in Region 10, a Varied Thrush in mid-February in Ridge and a Painted Bunting that wintered in East Shoreham. The latter was not reported until after it left the area.

Finally, we come to the choice of the Bird of the Season or BOTS Award. In reading and rereading the ten Regional reports while preparing this highlights column, no one bird jumped off the page and said to me: “Here I am! The obvious BOTS winner!” Two birds, however, stuck in my mind as the leading candidates, not necessarily because they were the “rarest” birds reported this season, but because in addition to being rare birds they were cooperative and allowed many birders to enjoy them and add them to their life lists. First, there was Region 2’s Ross’s Gull (I know Region 1 had one also, but for only one day) and second, Region 8’s Northern Hawk Owl. Of the two, the Ross’s Gull is clearly the rarer, but I am going to give the BOTS to the Northern Hawk Owl for delighting hundreds of birders over a nearly two month stay.

## REGION 1 – NIAGARA FRONTIER

**Mike Morgante**

45 Olney Drive, Amherst NY 14226

morgm@adelphia.net

December started off very cold but turned milder over the last two weeks. The average temperature for the month was 28.4° F, which was 1.4° below normal. Monthly precipitation at Buffalo-Niagara International Airport was 4.36", 0.56" more than usual, with 35.8" of snow, 10.3" more than usual. Half of the snow total fell over the first three days. January was very cold as the average temperature was 19.0°, 5.5° below normal. There was a stretch of 21 days when the temperature did not exceed the freezing mark. The monthly precipitation was 2.30", 0.86" below normal, with 37.4" of snow, 11.3" more than normal. Lake Erie began to ice over at mid-month and was mostly covered by 20 January. The chill continued in February with an average temperature of 20.8°, 5.1° below normal. The monthly precipitation was 2.69", 0.27" above normal. Snowfall totaled 19.5", 1.7" above normal.

The winter was the coldest in 24 years. Birder activity seemed lighter than usual after the CBC season, quite possibly due to the cold winter. Those who ventured out kept good tabs on the waterfowl in Dunkirk Harbor and along the Niagara River, where concentrations increase when Lake Erie freezes.

The Tundra Swan numbers on the Niagara River reached another winter high. The swans are most often viewed in the vicinity of Strawberry Island. An adult male **Harlequin Duck** was the highlight from the mouth of the Niagara River. Many birders observed this handsome duck in the same area as last winter's "Harley," leaving some to wonder if it was a return visit. Two **Eared Grebes** and a "**Richardson's**" **Canada Goose** were the highlights from Dunkirk Harbor. A neck-collared Trumpeter Swan was also observed from that location.

Bald Eagles were well reported again this winter. Sightings were widespread, with the highest counts along the Niagara River near Grand Island. Tom LeBlanc reported that a **Golden Eagle** wintered in Allegany State Park again; there was also a report of this species from the Town of Amity in Allegany County. A mind-boggling **nine Merlins** wintered at the SUNY Buffalo campus. This is an increase over the previous maximum of five that was recorded last winter. Wintering Red-shouldered Hawks were reported in higher numbers than usual. They are more expected in the Southern Tier, so a report from along Lake Ontario was a surprise.

As usual in December, gulls on the Niagara River drew a lot of attention. Black-legged Kittiwake, **California Gull** and Black-headed Gull were all observed on multiple days and by several observers. These birds were likely the same as those seen in November. Gordon Bellerby reported that Bonaparte's Gulls departed the Niagara River in mid-January, which he has found is typical for the past 20 years. His winter maximum was 6220, which is lower than usual. A **Laughing Gull** was found at Dunkirk Harbor in January.



By far the biggest highlight of the gull season was an adult **Ross's Gull**. Ron Scovell and the South Peel (Ontario) Naturalists found the bird in the mist below Niagara Falls on 1 December. Several other fortunate birders on the river that Sunday afternoon were able to see this prized rarity. However, despite much searching in the following week the bird was never found again and fell into the "one-day wonder" category. This was the second Ross's Gull for the Region, with the first observed along the Niagara River in November 1995.

Despite the cold weather there were some interesting reports of species that do not traditionally winter in the Region. **Virginia Rails** were reported from two locations in January. Winter reports of this species are very rare. For the second year in a row, an **Eastern Phoebe** was found on a CBC. This year's bird, in Allegany, was at the "relatively early" winter date of 14 December. Pine Warblers, while still very rare, have been observed with increased regularity in recent winters. Two were seen this winter, including one in Middleport that was a regular at a feeder. There were more reports of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers and Eastern Towhees than in a typical winter.

Similar to the fall season, finches were scarce. Only a few Pine Siskins were reported plus a single observation of **Pine Grosbeak**. There were no crossbill, redpoll or Evening Grosbeak reports. Purple Finches seemed fewer than usual, other than in Allegany County.

By mid-to-late February there are typically the first signs of the coming spring in the form of returning geese, swans and blackbirds. However, these early spring arrivals were very scarce or absent this February.

Other rarities not previously mentioned included King Eider and Barrow's Goldeneye.

## CONTRIBUTORS

Robert Andrie, Paul Baglia, Tim Baird, Gordon Bellerby, Allen Benton, Jim Berry, Buffalo Rare Bird Alert (BRBA), Bill Burch, Willie D'Anna, Brett Ewald, Kurt Fox, Joanne Goetz, Carol Harding, Don Harris, Linda Holmes, Bill & Julie Horne, Dave Junkin, Brendan Klick, Jim Landau (CBCs), Tom LeBlanc, Garner Light, Steve McLaughlin (weather), Dick Miga, Miley Miller (MMi); Mike Morgante (MMo), Terry Mosher, Susan & Tom O'Donnell, Jim Pawlicki, Betsy Potter, Fran Rew, Don Roberson, Richard Rosche, Ron Scovell, David Suggs, Bob Sundell, Michael Turisk, William Watson, Peter Yoerg.

## ABBREVIATIONS

AISP – Allegany SP CATT; BeSP – Beaver I SP ERIE; BuSP – Buckhorn I SP ERIE; DH – Dunkirk Harbor CHAU; FMCSP – Four Mile Creek SP NIAG; FNSP – Fort Niagara SP NIAG; INWR – Iroquois NWR GENE/ORLE; JDSP – Joseph Davis SP NIAG; L Erie SP – L Erie SP CHAU; MI – Motor I NR ERIE; NF – Niagara Falls NIAG; NPP – Niagara Power Project on Niagara R, Lewiston

NIAG; NR – Niagara R; OOWMA – Oak Orchard WMA GENE; RTPI – Roger Tory Peterson Institute, Jamestown CHAU; SPNS – Sinking Ponds Nature Sanctuary, E Aurora ERIE; Tift NP – Tift Nature Preserve, Buffalo ERIE; TWMA – Tonawanda WMA GENE/NIAG; WoBSP – Woodlawn Beach SP ERIE; WTSP – Wilson-Tuscarora SP NIAG

### LOONS – DUCKS

**Red-throated Loon:** max 72 Wilson NIAG 6 Dec (BK!); last 3 Porter & Wilson NIAG 28 Dec.

**Com. Loon:** last Porter NIAG 28 Dec; no Jan reports.

**Pied-billed Grebe:** max 13 DH 5 Jan, good winter count, only Jan & Feb reports from DH.

**Horned Grebe:** max 22 DH 26 Dec; Olcott 2 Jan; 7 wintered DH.

**Red-necked Grebe:** Lewiston Res NIAG 9 Jan; max 26 DH 14 Feb (TM, JG).

**EARED GREBE:** 2 DH 26 Dec (BK!), one lingered thru 8 Feb.

**Double-crested Cormorant:** 6 NF 15 Dec; max 225 DH 21 Feb (DM).

**Black-crowned Night-Heron:** 3 Buffalo ERIE 13 Dec (PY); WoBSP 5 Jan (BK), non-traditional wintering location; DH 29 Jan (JG, DM).

**Turkey Vulture:** arr Ellicottville CATT 24 Feb.

**Snow Goose:** max 6 Scio CATT 14 Dec; 2 DH 1 Jan; DH 7 Feb; only reports.

**Canada Goose (*B. c. hutchinsii*):** DH 26 Dec (BK! NYSARC), rare winter report.

**Mute Swan:** max 8 Wilson NIAG 28 Dec.

**Trumpeter Swan:** 2 DH 26 Dec (BK, DM), one, neck-collared, lingered thru 27 Jan.

**Tundra Swan:** 231 Jamestown CBC 15 Dec; max 287 BeSP 17 Dec (TB, BB); 8 DH 2 Feb; arr 25 Eggertsville ERIE 21 Feb.

**Wood Duck:** Wilson NIAG 5 Dec (BE); max 9 Jamestown CBC 15 Dec; only reports.

**N. Shoveler:** SPNS 4 Dec (LH), only report.

**N. Pintail:** SPNS thru (LH); 3 DH 8 Feb, only reports.

**Green-winged Teal:** SPNS thru (LH), only report.

**Canvasback:** max 10,350 Grand 1 NR 15 Jan (BB); 100 DH 22 Feb.

**Redhead:** SPNS 17-19 Jan; Williamsville ERIE 8 Feb; inland winter reports unusual.

**Ring-necked Duck:** max 80 NR 15 Dec; 24 Lewiston Res NIAG 9 Jan; 2 BeSP 16 Jan; 5 MI 19 Feb.

**Greater Scaup:** max 8000 Buffalo ERIE 2 Feb.

**Lesser Scaup:** max 457 NR 15 Dec; 14 Porter & Wilson NIAG 28 Dec; 14 BeSP 16 Jan; 32 DH 2 Feb; 100 Buffalo NR 2 Feb.

**KING EIDER:** Wilson NIAG 6 Dec (BK); FMCSP 19 Jan (BRBA); rare.

**HARLEQUIN DUCK:** ad m Buffalo NR 21 Dec-15 Feb (PY, mob); same location as last winter.

**Surf Scoter:** NR 15 Dec; Porter NIAG 28 Dec; 2 DH 1 Jan-21 Feb; only reports.

**Black Scoter:** NR 15 Dec; 3 Porter NIAG 28 Dec (BK); 1-2 DH 25 Jan-14 Feb (DM, BK!, mob); Buffalo NR 2 Feb (MMo); annual but uncommon in winter.

**BARROW'S GOLDENEYE:** f Porter NIAG 28 Dec (BK!), observed in flight only.

**Hooded Merganser:** max 39 NR 15 Dec; 36 DH 14 Jan.

**Com. Merganser:** 1035 DH 26 Dec (BK), good count for location.

**Red-breasted Merganser:** 830 DH 26 Dec; max 3000+ Buffalo NR 2 Feb.

**Ruddy Duck:** 2 DH 3 Jan; DH 19 Jan (TM); only reports.

## HAWKS – ALCIDS

**Bald Eagle:** Wellsville ALLE 15 Dec; Angelica ALLE 22 Dec; 3 BeSP 22 Dec; Oak Orchard CBC 27 Dec; max 6,7 Grand I ERIE 13-15 Jan, 20 Feb (BB); imm Allegheny Res CATT 2 Feb; 3 Buffalo NR 2 Feb; imm Olcott NIAG 19 Feb; DH 16, 27 Feb; 2 Lewiston NIAG 17 Feb; FNSP 17 Feb; very good showing.

**N. Goshawk:** ad Wethersfield WYOM 25 Dec (DJ), only report.

**Red-shouldered Hawk:** Wilson NIAG 28 Dec, unusual winter location; 2 Jamestown CHAU 10 Feb (JB); Ripley CHAU 19 Feb; Hartland NIAG 22 Feb; Falconer CHAU 28 Feb; increased number of winter reports.

**Rough-legged Hawk:** max 12 Jamestown CBC 15 Dec; 5 Gerry CHAU 31 Jan; 4 Ellington CHAU 31 Jan; 3 Randolph CATT 12 Jan; 4 Ripley & Westfield CHAU 19 Feb; 5 S. Dayton CATT 20 Feb; singles from 7 other locations.

**GOLDEN EAGLE:** imm AISP 6 Dec (TL), wintered here in recent years; Amity ALLE 26 Dec (Burton, Maynard), unverified.

**Merlin:** max 9 SUNY Buffalo campus ERIE thru (PY!), new max at this traditional winter roost; NR 15 Dec; Olcott NIAG 17 Dec (BE); Tiffit NP 1 Jan (RA!); Buffalo ERIE 31 Jan (BK!); DH 13 Feb (DM).

**Peregrine Falcon:** NF 2 Dec (MT!); 1-2 Buffalo ERIE thru (BB! WD! PY), near nesting area.

**Virginia Rail:** TWMA 4 Jan (BK!); SPNS 12 Jan (LH); very rarely reported in winter.

**Am. Coot:** max 140 DH 14 Jan.

**Killdeer:** NF 8 Dec; Grand I ERIE 15 Dec; unusual in winter.

**Purple Sandpiper:** 3 NF 8, 22 Dec (WD), traditional location.

**LAUGHING GULL:** DH 27 Jan (TM); unusual in any season.

**Little Gull:** 4 Buffalo NR 21 Dec; 4 FNSP 22 Dec; 1-2 DH 25 Jan-16 Feb; 3 Lewiston NR 23 Feb; absent from NR mid-Jan to mid-Feb.

**BLACK-HEADED GULL:** Lewiston NR 22 Dec-19 Jan (WD! PY BK!); annual in recent winters.

**Bonaparte's Gull:** max 6220 NR 10 Dec (GB); 3600 NR 24 Dec (GB); 1355 NR 14 Jan (GB); last NR mid-Jan, Bellerby reports this as normal departure over last 20 years; returned to NR in mid-Feb.

**CALIFORNIA GULL:** 2 ad NPP 23 Dec (WD! NYSARC); single NPP 1-30 Dec.

**Thayer's Gull:** several undocumented reports along NR and L Ontario, as usual.

**Iceland Gull:** max 9 NPP 9 Jan (BRBA); typical number of reports along NR; DH 13-20 Feb.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull:** Porter NIAG 28 Dec, only report away from NR.

**Glaucous Gull:** Porter NIAG 28 Dec; max 4 NF 1 Jan; 2 DH Jan; Buffalo NR 2 Feb; 2 FMCSF 24 Feb.

**Black-legged Kittiwake:** juv NF 1-6 Dec (mob), carryover from Nov.

**ROSS'S GULL:** ad NF 1 Dec (RS, WD! NYSARC), first since 1995.

## DOVES – WOODPECKERS

**Snowy Owl:** NF Airport NIAG 14-21 Dec (WD); Buffalo NR 21 Dec (PY); Niagara 17 Jan (SO); Wales ERIE 22 Jan (*fide* RR); Carlton ORLE 22 Jan (BRBA).

**Long-eared Owl:** 4 Porter NIAG 28 Dec; 2 WTSP 21 Feb (STO).

**Short-eared Owl:** 3 Carlton ORLE 2 Dec; 7 Porter NIAG 10 Dec, max 15 Porter 19 Jan (STO, PY); 2 Dunkirk Airport CHAU 22 Dec, 1 there 30 Jan; Shelby ORLE 27 Dec; 3 Wheatfield NIAG 15 Feb, 4 there 23 Feb; 3-5 Royalton NIAG 28 Jan - 21 Feb (GL).

**N. Saw-whet Owl:** Grand I ERIE 15 Dec (BK, DH); Porter NIAG 28 Dec; Jamestown CHAU 1 Jan (PB); Mt Pleasant SF CHAU 2 Feb (BK, DH), responding to tape; WTSP 9 Feb (BP, WD).

**Red-headed Woodpecker:** FNSP 28

Dec, 9 Jan; WTSP 28 Dec (BE);  
Sturgeon Pt ERIE 5, 30 Jan (FR);  
Fredonia CHAU 27 Feb (AB); only  
reports.

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** 2 St.  
Bonaventure CBC 14 Dec; 2 Shelby  
ORLE 27 Dec; 2 NIAG 28 Dec; AISP  
29 Dec (TB); L Erie SP 29 Dec (JG);  
Boston ERIE 5 Jan (STO); high  
number of reports, unusual in winter.

#### FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

**E. PHOEBE:** Allegany CATT 14 Dec  
(TB!), very rare in winter.

**N. Shrike:** lower numbers than typical  
for CBCs; >15 other reports.

**Com. Raven:** 2 Attica Res WYOM 1  
Dec (KF), only report outside of CATT  
or ALLE.

**Horned Lark:** max 461 Oak Orchard  
CBC 27 Dec; 150 Somerset NIAG 22  
Feb.

**Carolina Wren:** well reported again  
this winter.

**Winter Wren:** 6 NIAG 28 Dec; last  
NF 21 Jan.

**E. Bluebird:** max 67 Hamburg CBC 5  
Jan; continued increase in reports and  
numbers.

**Hermit Thrush:** 3 Grand I ERIE 15  
Dec; FMCSF 28 Dec-17 Feb; Bond L  
P NIAG 18 Jan (JP); RTPI 10 Feb;  
only reports.

**Am. Robin:** 2397 INWR 12 Jan (BK,  
DH), flying north to unknown roost  
location.

**Gray Catbird:** BeSP 7, 15 Dec (STO);  
Beaver Meadow CBC 21 Dec; Shelby  
ORLE 28 Dec (KF); unusual in winter.

**N. Mockingbird:** E. Aurora ERIE 5  
Jan, unusual location.

#### WARBLERS

**Yellow-rumped Warbler:** 22 BuSP 18  
Dec (BK); 17 NIAG 28 Dec; Shelby  
ORLE 27 Dec; 10 Dunkirk CBC 1 Jan;  
Lewiston NIAG 27 Jan (B&JH); 2 L  
Erie SP 2 Feb; 2 JDSP 15 Feb; more  
locations than usual in winter.

**Pine Warbler:** FNSP 28 Dec (BRBA);  
Middleport ORLE 2 Feb (WD! BP),  
coming to feeder; very rare in winter.

#### TANAGERS – WEAVERS

**E. Towhee:** E. Aurora ERIE 12 Dec  
(BRBA); Dunkirk CBC 1 Jan; Panama  
CHAU 10 Feb (MMi); Colden ERIE  
12 Feb (BRBA); Bond L P NIAG 27  
Feb (DR); more reports than usual.

**Chipping Sparrow:** Carlton ORLE 4  
Dec (BE); Shelby ORLE 27 Dec (KF);  
unusual in winter.

**Field Sparrow:** 8 Scio CATT CBC 14  
Dec; Orchard P ERIE 5 Jan; Portland  
CHAU 1-15 Feb (CH); unusual in  
winter.

**Fox Sparrow:** RTPI 5 Dec (MMi); JAS  
6 Dec (BS); Grand I ERIE 15 Dec  
(BK); rare in winter.

**Swamp Sparrow:** 12 Scio CBC 14  
Dec; 12 Oak Orchard CBC 27 Dec; 3  
FMCSF 5 Jan; BeSP 16 Jan; Eden  
ERIE 1-28 Feb; good showing on  
CBCs.

**White-crowned Sparrow:** Belmont  
ALLE 2 Dec; Eden ERIE 4 Dec;  
Jamestown CBC 15 Dec; 2 Oak  
Orchard CBC 27 Dec; max 18 NIAG  
28 Dec; Tiff NP 16 Jan.

**Lapland Longspur:** Oak Orchard  
CBC 27 Dec; Porter NIAG 28 Dec;  
Yates ORLE 2 Feb; max 10 Somerset  
NIAG 22 Feb.

**Snow Bunting:** 50 FNPF 5 Dec; 158  
Oak Orchard CBC 27 Dec; 35 DH 5  
Jan; 45 Dunkirk Airport CHAU 31 Jan;  
max 350 Oakfield GENE 2 Feb (STO);  
250 Yates ORLE 22 Feb.

**Red-winged Blackbird:** fewer than  
usual winter reports; arr Lancaster  
ERIE 23 Feb (BRBA).

**E. Meadowlark:** Yates ORLE 8 Dec  
(BK, DH), only report.

**Rusty Blackbird:** Hamburg CBC 5  
Jan; Porter NIAG 9 Feb (WD, BP), at  
feeder.

**Com. Grackle:** 15 Buffalo CBC 15  
Dec; last 8 Oak Orchard CBC 27 Dec.

**Brown-headed Cowbird:** max 111  
Buffalo CBC 15 Dec; 20 Tonawanda  
ERIE 7 Feb; arr 20 Pomfret CHAU 22  
Feb.

**Pine Grosbeak:** 3 Lewiston NIAG 27 Dec (DS), only report.  
**Purple Finch:** max 21 Hamburg CBC 5 Jan; sparsely reported outside of ALLE.

**Pine Siskin:** 2 Tiff NP 13 Dec (RA); Beaver Meadow CBC 21 Dec; 10 Hamburg CBC 5 Jan; only reports.

## REGION 2 – GENESEE

**Kevin C. Griffith**

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It could definitely be classified as winter this year. After a couple of mild winters, we were hit with a good one. It really started in November, but December was also cold and snowy. Temperatures were a full degree below normal at 28.4°F. The 41.1" of snow was nearly double the norm. Precipitation was 3.85", which was 1.12" above normal. Conditions were not particularly good for the three area CBCs. January saw a continuation of the trend: temperatures averaged only 18.2°, 5.7° below normal, and there was 43.4" of snowfall from a precipitation total of 2.05". This precipitation total was 0.29" below normal, and the snowfall to precipitation ratio amazing. February's average temperature was 4.4° below normal at 20.9°. Precipitation was a mere 0.08" below normal, with a total of 1.96". The 21.9" of snow was just about normal.

The winter conditions didn't make winter birding any easier. There were long stretches when the temperature didn't top the freezing mark. February saw a span of 15 days, the 4th through the 18th, when the temperatures didn't reach freezing. January turned out to be the sixth snowiest in history. Open water was nearly nonexistent after mid-January. Only patches existed near the Lake Ontario shore. Russell Station turned out to be particularly good. The stream at the Caledonia State Fish hatchery remained open and was a bird magnet.

The overall bird picture was still okay. The ice conditions seriously hampered the Hamlin Lakewatch, and, after early January, lake watching anyplace. Conditions often limited the actual birding time and opportunity. There were the usual loon reports from early January, but numbers were lower than usual. The only real grebe highlights were the arrival of Red-necked Grebes in late February and the continued Eared Grebe sightings. The usual few Double-crested Cormorants wintered at the bubblers at a marina on Irondequoit Bay. With conditions the way they were, the number of Great Blue Herons was interesting. There were days when more than 20 were found at Caledonia Fish Hatchery and other days when more than 10 could be seen standing on the ice of Long Pond, with a surprising total of 31 reported around the ponds along the lakeshore in late January. Twenty-one Turkey Vultures in Wheatland in January was a good winter total, especially with this year's conditions. Waterfowl lowlights included the record **266 Mute Swans** on the Rochester CBC. This comment also fits Canada

Goose, with the 4148 reported on the Little Lakes CBC a new record. Puddle ducks were about normal. A group of six Northern Shovelers at a bubbler on Irondequoit Bay in January was high and a count of 18 Green-winged Teal on the lake in early February was unprecedented. The diving ducks were typical in species reported. There were some good counts for Greater Scaup, Bufflehead and Common Goldeneye. Barrow's Goldeneye at Conesus Lake and Sodus Bay and a January female King Eider at Russell Station were highlights.

The raptor situation was rather lackluster. Merlin and Peregrine reports were surprisingly good and a few Rough-legged hawks were reported, but accipiters were down and American Kestrels seemed quite scarce. A Red-shouldered Hawk in Parma in January was unusual. Four Virginia Rails at Mendon Ponds was an exceptional total for the winter. The Common Moorhen on the Rochester CBC was calling from the marshes of Buck Pond. It was truly a unique winter for shorebirds: the lone Killdeer, Sanderling, Purple Sandpiper and Dunlin that congregated on a few feet of gravel bar where Slater Creek empties into Lake Ontario at Russell Station in January was a "once in a lifetime" event. After spotting that group, Dave Tetlow made it a five-shorebird day by adding Wilson's Snipe at the fish hatchery. The Sanderling and Dunlin were seen off and on most of the season. Many times the Sanderling could be found walking in the snow along the edges of the parking lot or even in the parking lot itself. A jaeger reported from Irondequoit Bay outlet was a good find. The bird of the season was undoubtedly the **Ross's Gull** found by Bob Spahn on Irondequoit Bay in January. The bird was quite cooperative and many birders, both local and out of town, were treated to views. Gulls in general were okay, with the usual reports of Thayer's, Lesser Black-backed, Iceland and Glaucous in low numbers. Bonaparte's Gulls were only concentrated briefly in early January and then were nearly nonexistent. Little Gull reports were few.

Owl reports were about usual, with the typicals found on the CBCs. Long-eared and Northern Saw-whet have become standard on the Little Lakes CBC. There were some good concentrations of Short-eared Owls in the usual locales. A single Snowy Owl report was "it" for the season.

There were scattered reports of Northern Shrike, but no predictable locations. Common Raven reports from the southwestern portion of the Region have become expected. The passerine picture in general harbored no major surprises. On the plus side were Horned Lark, Carolina Wren, American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, Yellow-rumped Warbler and White-crowned Sparrow. On the down side were Common Yellowthroat, Song, Swamp and White-throated sparrows, blackbirds and winter finches. Reported half-hardies included Winter Wren, Marsh Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, Gray Catbird and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. A single Bohemian Waxwing was a highlight on the Little Lakes CBC. Lapland Longspurs were reported throughout, but didn't reach decent numbers until February when open ground patches appeared.

The passerine highlight of the season was undoubtedly a Northern Waterthrush discovered by Dave Tetlow at the Caledonia Fish Hatchery in

January. It was only the second January record for the Region. It was seen in the same area as good numbers of Yellow-rumped Warblers wintering there.

The December species total of 111 was well below the ten-year average of 122.8. The year ended with a total of 299 species. January started things off with a total of 125 species, which is right about at the ten-year average. February added only three species, bringing the 2003 total to 128.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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## ABBREVIATIONS

A – T Avon LIVI; B – T Brighton MONR; BP – Buck Pd, T Greece MONR; CFH – Caledonia Fish Hatchery LIVI; CH – Ontario Beach, Charlotte MONR; CL – Conesus L LIVI; G – T Greece MONR; H – T Hamlin MONR; HB – Hamlin Beach SP MONR; IB – Irondequoit Bay MONR; LLCBC – Little Lakes CBC; R – Retsoff LIVI; RCBC – Rochester CBC; RS – Russell Station MONR; MP – Mendon Ponds P MONR; P – T Perinton MONR; S – T Sodus WAYN; W – T Webster MONR.

### LOONS – DUCKS

**Red-throated Loon:** H 1 Jan; IB 1 Jan; max 5 HB 5 Jan.  
**Pied-billed Grebe:** CL 1 Jan.  
**Red-necked Grebe:** CH 1-20 Jan.  
**Eared Grebe:** CL 1 Jan (R&SS, mob); RS 12 Jan.  
**Double-crested Cormorant:** 1-5 IB 1-19 Jan; RS 12, 18 Jan; 1-2 IB 1-28

Feb.

**Great Blue Heron:** max 31 G 26 Jan.  
**Turkey Vulture:** max 21 Wheatland MONR 17 Jan (DT).  
**Snow "Blue" Goose:** S 20 Jan, only report.  
**Canada Goose:** 4148 LLCBC 21 Dec, record high for CBC.

**Mute Swan:** 266 RCBC 15 Dec, record high.

**Trumpeter Swan:** 2 IB 1-14 Jan, yellow tags #459, #460, same as last winter.

**Tundra Swan:** 2 IB 1 Jan, only report.

**Gadwall:** max 42 IB 14 Jan.

**N. Shoveler:** max 6 IB 12 Jan.

**Green-winged Teal:** max 18 G9 Feb, unprecedented winter high.

**Redhead:** max 4000 CL 1 Jan (DT), in flight.

**King Eider:** 2 f HB 24 Dec (WS); f RS 10 Feb (KG).

**Bufflehead:** max 450 RS 16 Feb, high total.

**Com. Goldeneye:** max 1500 S 15 Dec.

**Barrow's Goldeneye:** m CL 21 Dec (JB, JS); f S 5 Jan (DT, MD).

**Ruddy Duck:** max 9 CL 1 Jan.

#### HAWKS – ALCIDS

**Red-shouldered Hawk:** Parma 26 Jan (DT, MD), unusual in winter.

**Merlin:** CH 6 Jan; CH 22 Feb; G 23 Feb; B 28 Feb.

**Peregrine Falcon:** CH 1 Jan; IB 11 Jan; IB 13 Jan; S 19 Jan; CH 22 Feb; W 5-6 Feb.

**Virginia Rail:** BP 15 Dec; 4 MP 1-4 Jan.

**Com. Moorhen:** BP 15 Dec (KG).

**Killdeer:** RS 10-20 Jan.

**Sanderling:** CH, RS 12-31 Jan, 1-28 Feb (DT, MD, mob).

**Purple Sandpiper:** RS 17-31 Jan (DT, MD); RS 3 Feb (LG).

**Dunlin:** Ch, RS 12-31 Jan, 1-19 Feb (DT, MD, mob).

**Wilson's Snipe:** CFH 15-18 Jan (DT). jaeger species: IB 18 Jan (GC).

**Thayer's Gull:** 1st yr P 9-10 Dec (DS); P 20 Dec (C&RM, RO); 1st yr IB 11 Jan (RS, KG); 1st yr BP 3 Feb (JB).

**Iceland Gull:** max 4 P 12 Dec, 2 ad, 2 1st yr.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull:** ad BP 9

Feb (KG).

**ROSS'S GULL:** 1st winter IB 9-13 Jan (RS, mob, NYSARC).

#### DOVES – WOODPECKERS

**Snowy Owl:** Henrietta MONR 20 Jan (AH).

**Short-eared Owl:** max 16 Lima 10 Dec.

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** S 1 Jan; R 5 Jan; S 11 Jan; Webster 10-20 Jan.

#### FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

**Com. Raven:** 2 Rattlesnake Hill WMA LIVI 25 Jan (KG, CD-G); 2 T Dalton LIVI 1 Feb (KG, CD).

**Winter Wren:** Penfield 7 Jan.

**Marsh Wren:** 2 Northrup Creek G 15 Dec; CFH 18 Jan.

**Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** 3 RCBC 15 Dec; Port Bay WAYN 5 Jan.

**Hermit Thrush:** MP 30 Jan.

**Gray Catbird:** H 7 Dec.

**Bohemian Waxwing:** Taylor Marsh, Richmond 21 Dec (DB), only report.

#### WARBLERS

**Yellow-rumped Warbler:** 6 Honeoye L 21 Dec; max 60+ CFH 18 Jan (DT, MD).

**NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH:** CFH 15, 18 Jan (DT, MD).

#### TANAGERS – WEAVERS

**Chipping Sparrow:** Pittsford 1-31 Jan (JC, EW).

**Field Sparrow:** P 12-31 Jan (MT); max 23 A 20 Feb (DD).

**Fox Sparrow:** G 15-16 Feb (TB).

**White-crowned Sparrow:** max 60+ R 18 Jan.

**Lapland Longspur:** 20 A 3 Feb (LG, DH).

**Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** W 1-14 Dec (B&EM).

**Pine Siskin:** 3 Victor 21-22 Feb (RH), only report.



## REGION 3 – FINGER LAKES

**Bill Ostrander**

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It was a truly wintry winter by everyone's standard. Already in December, my neighbor and I, as we held our seemingly daily meeting to clear snow from the sidewalks, were wondering if the winter would ever end. Every month of the season was colder and snowier than normal. December was 2.2°F colder than normal, and the 27.4" of snowfall was 13.4" above normal. January was 5.6° colder than normal, and the 30" of snowfall was 12.1" above normal. February was 10.9° colder than normal, and the 17" of snow was 2.9" above normal. In Ithaca, at least trace amounts of snow fell on 48 days. The colder than normal temperatures allowed snow cover to persist. Snow that fell Christmas Day was the beginning of a stretch of continuous snow cover that lasted through the end of the season.

In spite of the cold and snow, a number of hardy individuals of various species lingered into and through the season. A small group of loons spent most of the season on Cayuga Lake off East Shore Park. The group included a couple Common Loons, a Red-throated Loon and one mystery loon that was identified as a possible Pacific Loon. Unfortunately, the group stayed just a little too far out for even the toters of the best scopes to commit to that identification with certainty. There was little December movement of Common Loons over the Cayuga Lake Loon Watch to make up for the dismal November migration.

The prolonged cold of this winter led to a rare ornithological event. Lakes Erie, Huron and Superior froze entirely and Lakes Michigan and Ontario were half frozen by the end of February when birders began to notice numbers of Red-necked Grebes showing up on smaller bodies of water throughout the Region and as far away as West Virginia. The phenomenon was consistent with the theory that large numbers of the species normally spend the winter somewhere on the Great Lakes.

As could be expected with the persistent snow cover, goose numbers were generally down. Large numbers of Canada Geese vacated the Region on 29 December. Catherine Sandell found a Greater White-fronted Goose on Cayuga Lake and Charlie Rouse found two immatures of that species on Seneca Lake. The Montezuma CBC recorded very large numbers of American Black Ducks and Mallards. Several species of diving ducks were up from last year, White-winged Scoter increasing for the second consecutive year. They were probably taking advantage of the Zebra Mussel food supply in Cayuga Lake. American Wigeon declined for the second straight year and Lesser Scaup declined for the third straight year. A Barrow's Goldeneye appeared at various points between Union Springs and Aurora Bay on Cayuga Lake between 12 January and 2 February.

Northern Harriers were sparsely distributed. Perhaps the snow cover pushed them farther south. A Red-shouldered Hawk was seen several times perched near Route 13 in Dryden and once at Sapsucker Woods, just down the road. Mike Powers also found one at Spencer Crest Nature Center in Corning. The Peregrine

Falcon that appeared in Elmira in November made just one appearance in December. Joan Scrocarelli found it feasting on a Rock Dove on 1 December. Charlie Rouse found one at Seneca Lake State Park in mid-January, and Ryan Bakelaar may have been disappointed to find one where others had had sightings of Gyrfalcons.

The first of several Gyrfalcon reports came on 11 January. Wes Hochahcka, Steve Kelling and Ann Redelfs saw an immature gray phase bird flying along Cayuga Lake's east shore at Farley's Point. Jay and Kevin McGowan photographed a Gyrfalcon as it flew over them in the Town of Ledyard on 12 January. A group of observers spotted one at Farley's Point on 16 January. Ken Rosenberg had a brief look at one north of Levanna, which lies between Farley's Point and the McGowans' location. Matt Victoria saw the Gyrfalcon fly by his place of employment in Aurora, which is between Levanna and the McGowans' location, on 24 January. Jeff Holbrook drove up from Corning on 25 January and had a wonderful view of an adult bird soaring over the same field where the McGowans had photographed a Gyrfalcon. The same day at the same location, Mike Andersen, Jesse Ellis, Pete Hosner and Matt Medler saw a falcon catch a duck and subsequently lose it into the waters of Cayuga Lake. Having seen that the bird had gray upperparts, and knowing that the previous Gyrfalcon reports had been of an immature, they were thinking that it was a Peregrine Falcon. Jeff and Whitney Gerbracht then arrived and Jeff spotted the falcon perched in a tree, where all were able to get a good look at it: an adult, gray phase Gyrfalcon. At virtually the same location, Matt Victoria photographed an immature, gray phase Gyrfalcon feeding on a duck while perched on a telephone pole on 28 January. All those who had seen the adult three days earlier verified that the bird in Matt's photographs was definitely not the same bird that they had identified as an adult. Fred Bertram provided the last sighting of a dark Gyrfalcon in Aurora on 14 February.

While driving past snow-covered fields on icy roads, Fred Bertram was surprised to find a Purple Sandpiper in a ditch in Scipio. He surmised that it had been downed in this inappropriate habitat by the previous night's whiteout. Pete Hosner had the only other sandpiper report, a Dunlin. Killdeers wisely retreated from the Region; there was not a single report of one this season. Tim Lenz had the best gull of the season, a Little Gull at Stewart Park on 16 January. Herring and Great Black-backed gulls were both present in higher numbers for the second consecutive year.

Both Snowy and Short-eared owls were scarce this winter. All of the Snowy reports came from the Savannah Mucklands in Seneca County, but even there the species was not reliably found.

The Ithaca CBC turned up Regional nine-year highs for four species of woodpeckers. Hopefully, this only means that the count had even better than usual coverage of its woodlands and/or suet feeders and not that the woodlands were richer in insect-infested trees.

In spite of the harsh winter, Carolina Wrens and Northern Mockingbirds were both reported in higher numbers than last year. It will be interesting to see how the

spring numbers compare. The CBCs turned up some interesting passerines. The Montezuma count located two Marsh Wrens and a Common Yellowthroat. The Geneva count listed two Ruby-crowned Kinglets. The Watkins Glen count found an American Pipit. The Ithaca count had three Hermit Thrushes.

Other passerines of note were Chemung County's second record of Bohemian Waxwing in Ann and Dan Kenlon's yard in West Elmira, Eastern Towhee at Marg and Bill Comstock's feeders in the Town of Jerusalem, Chipping Sparrows in Dick Clements' yard in Pine City and in David Bonter's yard in Cayuga Heights. Out in the field, Bob Guthrie found three Savannah Sparrows in Torrey and Jay and Kevin McGowan photographed their first winter encounter with one in Ledyard. It was this bird that enabled them to have their camera ready when the Gyrfalcon flew over. Chris Tessaglia-Hymes found an Eastern Phoebe at Sapsucker Woods in December, and more amazing, Bob Guthrie and Leona Lauster found one in Varick in February.

Winter finches were totally absent, with none of any species reported anywhere in the Region. It was a long hard winter, but a very interesting one for birders.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AuB – Aurora Bay CAYU; CayL – Cayuga L; CLB – Cayuga L Basin; ESP – East Shore P TOMP; GCBC – Geneva CBC; HH – Hog Hole TOMP; ICBC – Ithaca CBC; IGF – Ithaca Game Farm TOMP; MCBC – Montezuma CBC; MyPt – Myers Point TOMP; SaMu – Savannah Mucklands SENE; SaWo – Sapsucker Woods TOMP; StP – Stewart P TOMP; TMSP – Treman Marina SP; UMPd – Union Springs Mill Pond CAYU; WCBC – Watkins Glen CBC.

### LOONS – DUCKS

**Red-throated Loon:** ESP 20 Dec-28 Feb.

**Com. Loon:** max 10 Taughannock Falls SP 7 Dec; MyPt 28 Feb, -.

**Red-necked Grebe:** TMSP 6 Dec; max 35 ESP 28 Feb (S&SF), high, +.

**EARED GREBE:** CayL 12 Dec (StF!); AuB 1 Jan (KF)-3 Feb (StF).

**Double-crested Cormorant:** TMSP 6 Dec; max 4 StP 22 Dec), high; 2 HH 25 Jan.

**Turkey Vulture:** GCBC 15 Dec; max 2 GCBC 15 Dec; Ithaca 27 Feb.

**GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE:** CayL 7 Dec (CSa); max 2 Seneca L SP 19 Jan (CR).

**Snow Goose:** max 6000 Owasco L 1 Dec (FB), high; CayL 8 Feb, -.

**Canada Goose:** max 34,199 GCBC 15 Dec, -.

**Tundra Swan:** 2 Airport Gravel Pit 1 Dec; max 560 MCBC 1 Jan; 5 MyPt 28 Feb, -.

**Am. Wigeon:** TMSP 6 Dec; max 11 CLB 11 Jan; UMPd 11 Feb, -.

**Am. Black Duck:** max 7732 MCBC 1 Jan, high, +.

**Mallard:** max 18,052 MCBC 1 Jan, +.

**Green-winged Teal:** max 6 UMPd 29 Dec; 2 UMPd 16 Feb, -.

**Canvasback:** TMSP 6 Dec; max 2000 Farley's Pt CAYU 8 Feb; 5 MyPt 28 Feb.

**Redhead:** TMSP 6 Dec; max 10,001 AuB 3 Feb; MyPt 28 Feb, +.

**Greater Scaup:** TMSP 6 Dec; max 271 MCBC 1 Jan; 3 MyPt 28 Feb, +.

**Lesser Scaup:** TMSP 6 Dec; max 51 AuB 3 Feb; 5 MyPt 28 Feb, -.

**Surf Scoter:** 2 MyPt 8 Dec; max 2 MyPt 8 Dec; Keuka L 18 Jan.

**White-winged Scoter:** 2 AuB 12 Dec; max 7 StP 5 Jan; MyPt 28 Feb, +.

**Bufflehead:** 20 CayL 1 Dec; max 101 CLB 11 Jan; MyPt 28 Feb, +.

**Com. Goldeneye:** 13 StP 5 Dec; max 508 CLB 11 Jan; MyPt 28 Feb, +.

**BARROW'S GOLDENEYE:** Union Springs Marina CAYU 12 Jan (J&KM); AuB 2 Feb (BT).

**Com. Merganser:** 13 StP 5 Dec; max 225 StP 8 Feb; MyPt 28 Feb, +.

**Red-breasted Merganser:** StP 7 Dec; max 22 MCBC 1 Jan; 3 CayL 20 Feb, +.

### HAWKS – ALCIDS

**N. Harrier:** 2 Ulysses 1 Dec; max 4 MCBC 1 Jan, low; 2 CLB 15 Feb, -.

**RED-SHOULDERED HAWK:** ICBC 1 Jan (CaBC); Dryden 10 Feb (A&JW); SaWo 20 Feb (TL).

**PEREGRINE FALCON:** Elmira 1 Dec (JSc); Seneca L SP 19 Jan (CR); Ledyard 30 Jan (RB).

**GYRFALCON:** imm Farley's Pt CAYU 11 Jan (WWho, SK, AR!); ad Ledyard 25 Jan (JH); MacKenzie-Childs Pottery CAYU 14 Feb (FB); *intro.*

**Wild Turkey:** max 315 ICBC 1 Jan, high.

**Am. Coot:** max 501 MyPt 5 Jan, -.

**PURPLE SANDPIPER:** Scipio 9 Dec (FB).

**DUNLIN:** StP 7 Dec (PH).

**LITTLE GULL:** StP 16 Jan (TL).

**Bonaparte's Gull:** max 14 StP 1 Dec (GP, CT), only report.

**Ring-billed Gull:** max 1618 WCB C 28 Dec, -.

**Herring Gull:** max 6000 CayL 7 Dec (KF), high, +.  
**Iceland Gull:** CayL 7 Dec; max 4 CayL 12 Jan; IGF 25 Feb.  
**Lesser Black-backed Gull:** CayL 7 Dec; max 3 CayL 8 Dec; StP 9 Feb.  
**Glaucous Gull:** StP 12 Dec; max 2 Rt 414 Seneca Falls 11 Jan; ESP 25 Feb.  
**Great Black-backed Gull:** max 600 CayL 7 Dec (KF), high, +.

#### DOVES – WOODPECKERS

**Rock Dove:** max 1361 ICBC 1 Jan, high.  
**Mourning Dove:** max 957 GCBC 15 Dec.  
**Great Horned Owl:** max 24 ICBC 1 Jan, high.  
**Snowy Owl:** SaMu 18 Dec; SaMu 29 Dec; SaMu 5 Jan.  
**Barred Owl:** max 2 ICBC 1 Jan, only report.  
**Long-eared Owl:** Ledyard 6 Dec (FB), only report.  
**Short-eared Owl:** GCBC 15 Dec; max 7 Montezuma NWR 5 Jan; 2 Hopewell 10 Feb.  
**N. Saw-whet Owl:** Corning CBC 14 Dec; Romulus 21 Dec; Red Jacket Yacht Club SENE 1 Jan.  
**Belted Kingfisher:** HH 13 Dec; max 9 ICBC 1 Jan, high; 2 MyPt 1 Feb.  
**Red-bellied Woodpecker:** max 129 ICBC 1 Jan, high, +.  
**Downy Woodpecker:** max 384 ICBC 1 Jan, high, +.  
**Hairy Woodpecker:** max 126 ICBC 1 Jan, high.  
**Pileated Woodpecker:** max 36 ICBC 1 Jan, high.

#### FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

**E. PHOEBE:** SaWo 2 Dec (CT); Varick 9-11 Feb (BG, LL).  
**N. Shrike:** SaWo 6 Dec; max 2 ICBC 1 Jan; SaWo 27 Feb.  
**Blue Jay:** max 904 ICBC 1 Jan, high, +.  
**Am. Crow:** max 15,000 Auburn.  
**Fish Crow:** 6 IGF TOMP 13 Dec; max 12 ICBC 1 Jan, high; IGF 13 Feb.

**Horned Lark:** 101 Dryden 1 Dec; max 599 GCBC 15 Dec, +.  
**Black-capped Chickadee:** max 2333 ICBC 1 Jan, +.  
**Tufted Titmouse:** max 355 ICBC 1 Jan.  
**Red-breasted Nuthatch:** max 59 ICBC 1 Jan, -.  
**Brown Creeper:** max 38 ICBC 1 Jan, high.  
**Carolina Wren:** max 43 ICBC 1 Jan, high, +.  
**Winter Wren:** StP 4 Dec; max 3 ICBC 1 Jan, high; StP 4 Feb.  
**MARSH WREN:** max 2 MCBC 1 Jan.  
**Golden-crowned Kinglet:** max 79 ICBC 1 Jan, +.  
**RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET:** max 2 GCBC 15 Dec (EBS); Seneca Falls 24 Feb (CSa).  
**E. Bluebird:** max 136 ICBC 1 Jan, +.  
**Hermit Thrush:** Fayette 1 Jan; max 3 ICBC 1 Jan; Ledyard 18 Jan.  
**N. Mockingbird:** max 27 ICBC 1 Jan, high, +.  
**European Starling:** max 11,991 GCBC 15 Dec, -.  
**AMERICAN PIPIT:** WCBC 28 Dec, StP 5 Jan.  
**BOHEMIAN WAXWING:** Elmira 15 Feb (A&DK), only report.  
**Cedar Waxwing:** max 834 ICBC 1 Jan, high, -.

#### WARBLERS

**Yellow-rumped Warbler:** max 3 MCBC 1 Jan; 2 Ledyard 27 Feb.  
**COM. YELLOWTHROAT:** MCBC 1 Jan.

#### TANAGERS – WEAVERS

**E. TOWHEE:** Jerusalem 9 Dec (B&MC), only report.  
**Am. Tree Sparrow:** max 1302 ICBC 1 Jan, +.  
**CHIPPING SPARROW:** Pine City 1 Dec (DCI); Cayuga Heights 1 Jan thru (DB).

**Field Sparrow:** WCBC 28 Dec, only report.

**SAVANNAH SPARROW:** max 3 Torrey 12 Jan (BG); Ledyard 12 Jan (J&KM).

**Song Sparrow:** max 44 ICBC 1 Jan, +.

**Swamp Sparrow:** HH 8 Dec; max 15 ICBC 1 Jan, high; SaWo 13 Feb.

**White-throated Sparrow:** max 134 ICBC 1 Jan, +.

**White-crowned Sparrow:** GCBC 15 Dec; Ledyard 12 Jan.

**Dark-eyed Junco:** max 969 ICBC 1 Jan, high, +.

**Lapland Longspur:** max 25 Torrey 18 Jan (LD, BG), high, +.

**Snow Bunting:** max 1000 Torrey 25 Jan.

**N. Cardinal:** max 495 ICBC 1 Jan, high.

**Red-winged Blackbird:** KH 1 Dec; max 34 GCBC 15 Dec; KH 4 Jan, -.

**E. Meadowlark:** TMSP 2 Dec; max 4 Moravia 7 Dec; HH 13 Dec.

**Com. Grackle:** 2 Ulysses 1 Dec (MH), only report, -.

**Brown-Headed Cowbird:** 20 Ulysses 1 Dec; max 70 GCBC 15 Dec; 3 KH 9 Feb.

**House Finch:** max 377 ICBC 1 Jan, -.

**Am. Goldfinch:** max 588 ICBC 1 Jan, high, +.

**House Sparrow:** max 594 ICBC 1 Jan, low, -.

## REGION 4 – SUSQUEHANNA

**Tom Salo**

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Winter was brutal. It arrived early and stayed cold. Ice fishing had commenced on the completely closed Canadarago Lake in northern Otsego County by 6 December. At Binghamton, the mean for the three month season was 4.1°F below normal. All three months were below average – 2.1°, 5.9° and 4.4° respectively. Below zero temperatures were regular. Periods of extreme cold were often prolonged. According to David Nicosia of the National Weather Service, the jet stream came “primarily from the northwest, driving cold arctic air masses from central Canada down into the northeast United States.” Snow covered some areas in early December. Three significant snow storms on 25 December, 2-3 January and 16-17 February completely buried the Region. Snow depth from these storms was variable. The first two each dumped over three feet on parts of the eastern counties. Cherry Valley, Otsego County received 39” from the first storm and 38” from the second. The predominant northwest wind regularly added lake effect snow to the accumulating pack. At Binghamton, snow fell on 28 days in January. Above freezing temperatures were uncommon but warming and rain on 1 January and 22-23 February created layers of crust sandwiched within the snow pack.

The severe conditions, snow depth and the layered crust affected both birds and observers. With little open water, waterfowl became scarce as the season

progressed. Gail Kirch reported that the 12 January Federation Waterfowl Count "had improved coverage in Delaware, Otsego, Broome and Tioga counties. There were no unusual birds, however the number of Canada Geese was down 43 percent." Similar decreases in Canada Goose and Mallard numbers were seen on some of the Christmas Bird Counts. A White-winged Scoter found on the Susquehanna River at Grippen Park by Marie Petuh on 20 February was the most unusual bird of the season.

In spite of excellent coverage at the Franklin Mountain Hawk Watch, raptor numbers dropped dramatically after November. Bald Eagles concentrated along the East Branch of the Delaware River between Downsville and East Branch during late December and early January. On 29 December, 21 birds of varying age were counted in this stretch of river where birds are easily missed. These birds were scarce in late January. The Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society's field trip on 2 February located only two eagles in the same area.

A report of an albino Red-tailed Hawk came from Kay Crane in Walton. It was found on 29 January very near where a similar bird was seen the previous winter. Kay questioned whether it could be the same bird since it "is much whiter than the bird seen last year."

Away from Franklin Mountain, reports of Golden Eagle were received from only three locations. A brace spent the winter in Kortright culling Wild Turkeys from a large flock that congregated in manured fields. Department of Environmental Conservation personnel attempted to trap the birds during January and February for satellite tracking. This effort was successful shortly after the end of the reporting period. One bird was caught and fitted with a transmitter and bands.

A Snowy Owl was seen by members of the Tioga Bird Club in February. Reports of more common owls increased as Breeding Bird Atlas surveyors sought them out late in the period.

In spite of the cold, large numbers of Carolina Wren were seen across the Region. The count of 27 on the Binghamton CBC was a significant increase over recent years. They were reported from a number of unusual high elevation sites. A particularly high wren was found at 1900' on Franklin Mountain on 23 December.

There were other surprises during such a cold season. Two Ruby-crowned Kinglets and a Hermit Thrush were found on the Binghamton CBC. Dianne Benko had an Eastern Towhee at her feeder in Treadwell all season. A Chenango County record of 12 Northern Cardinals in a single flock (eight males, four females) was observed by Dale Storms on 23 February in Plymouth. An unusual, winter Rusty Blackbird was seen by Don Weber in Tioga County in January.

Few finches were reported. Purple Finch was missed after the CBCs until 28 February, when a pair was seen in Walton. Goldfinch numbers were quite low. The only northern finches reported were five Common Redpolls counted on two CBCs.

## CONTRIBUTORS

Dianne Benko, Eleanor Carson, Lucille Courtney, Kay Crane, John Davis, Renee Davis, Erica & Jim Dennis, Mark Detting, Bob Donnelly, Jean Dorman, Steve & Susan Fast, Fred Fries, Jeff Gerbracht, Bob Grosek, Steve Hall, Pete Hosner, Gail Kirch, Mike Mack, Andy Mason, Dave Messineo, J. Robert Miller, Rita Pantle, Robert Pantle, Marie Petuh, Nick Plavac, Ken Rosenberg, Jo Ann & Tom Salo, Julian Shepard, Dale Storms, Tioga Bird Club, Jan Trzeciak, Fred Von Mechow, Dan Watkins, Don Weber, Sue & Tom Whitney, Don Windsor, Matt Young.

## ABBREVIATIONS

BCBC – Binghamton CBC; CCBC – Cortland CBC; FMHW – Franklin Mt Hawk Watch; FWC – Federation Waterfowl Count; GriPk – Grippen P BROO; OnCBC – Oneonta CBC; OtsL – Otsego L; OwCBC – Owego CBC; SCBC – Sherburne CBC; SkanL – Skaneateles L; TBC – Tioga Bird Club.

### LOONS – DUCKS

**Com. Loon:** 2 SkanL CCBC 14 Dec; max 3 OtsL 5 Jan.

**Pied-billed Grebe:** 8 GriPk Jan, only report.

**Great Blue Heron:** max 8 BCBC 30 Dec; 20 reports, only 2 after 1 Jan.

**Snow Goose:** max 280 Cherry Valley 1 Dec; 15 BROO 2 Dec, only other report.

**Canada Goose:** max 1245 BCBC 30 Dec; significantly lower numbers.

**Mute Swan:** 2 BCBC 30 Dec; no reports away from BROO.

**Tundra Swan:** 2 OtsL FWC 12 Jan, only report.

**Am. Black Duck:** max 73 BCBC 30 Dec.

**Mallard:** max 552 BCBC 30 Dec; significantly lower numbers.

**Redhead:** up to 5 regular OtsL; 2 SkanL CCBC 14 Dec.

**Ringed-necked Duck:** CCBC 14 Dec, only report.

**Greater Scaup:** SkanL CCBC 14 Dec, only report.

**Lesser Scaup:** SkanL CCBC 14 Dec, only report.

**White-winged Scoter:** GriPk 20 Feb (MP).

**Bufflehead:** max 20 SkanL CCBC 14

Dec; 2 other reports.

**Com. Goldeneye:** max 50 SkanL CCBC 14 Dec; 3 OtsL 30 Dec.

**Hooded Merganser:** 8 OtsL FWC 12 Jan; low numbers.

**Com. Merganser:** max 124 BCBC 30 Dec, high count.

**Red-breasted Merganser:** 6 OwCBC 30 Dec, only report; never common.

### HAWKS – ALCIDS

**Bald Eagle:** max 21 E. Branch Delaware Ri 29 Dec (J&TS); 13 FMHW Dec; regular reports but fewer after mid-season; *intro*.

**N. Harrier:** only 2 reports of singles, CHEN 14 Dec, BROO 30 Jan.

**Sharp-shinned Hawk:** max 3 BCBC 30 Dec; regular.

**Cooper's Hawk:** max 10 BCBC 30 Dec; many more than Sharp-shinned Hawk.

**N. Goshawk:** 2 FMHW Dec; 4 other reports.

**Red-tailed Hawk:** max 43 FMHW Dec; albino Walton 29 Jan (KC); *intro*.

**Rough-legged Hawk:** max 7 OwCBC 30 Dec; regular.

**Golden Eagle:** 30 FMHW Dec; West Burlington OTSE 11 Dec; Pepacton



Res DELA 2 Feb; 2 Kortright DELA after late Dec; *intro*.  
**Am. Kestrel:** max 5 OwCBC 30 Dec; FMHW 29 Dec, very late for site.  
**Peregrine Falcon:** multiple reports from Binghamton, sometimes near nest site, sometimes 2 birds.  
**Ruffed Grouse:** max 4 BCBC 30 Dec.  
**Wild Turkey:** max 421 OwCBC 30 Dec.  
**Am. Coot:** 40 all season OtsL; 2 SkanL CCBC 14 Dec.  
**Ring-billed Gull:** max 47 OnCBC 14 Dec.  
**Herring Gull:** max 25 BCBC 30 Dec.  
**Great Black-backed Gull:** FMHW 11 Dec.

#### DOVES – WOODPECKERS

**Rock Dove:** max 1427 BCBC 30 Dec.  
**Mourning Dove:** max 601 OwCBC 30 Dec.  
**E. Screech Owl:** numerous reports increased late season.  
**Great Horned Owl:** 2 BCBC 30 Dec; 2 Milford 19 Jan; other reports of singles.  
**Barred Owl:** 2 OnCBC 14 Dec; several late season reports.  
**Snowy Owl:** TIOG TBC Feb, no details.  
**Belted Kingfisher:** max 10 BCBC 30 Dec; only one report after Dec.  
**Red-bellied Woodpecker:** max 17 OwCBC 30 Dec.  
**Downy Woodpecker:** max 109 BCBC 30 Dec.  
**Hairy Woodpecker:** max 29 BCBC 30 Dec.  
**N. Flicker:** max 6 on 2 counts, BCBC 30 Dec and OwCBC 30 Dec.  
**Pileated Woodpecker:** max 5 OwCBC 30 Dec.

#### FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

**N. Shrike:** 7 reports.  
**Blue Jay:** max 291 OnCBC 14 Dec.  
**Am. Crow:** max 1022 BCBC 30 Dec.  
**Fish Crow:** GriPk 20 Feb, only report.  
**Com. Raven:** regular reports from some areas, widespread across Reg.

**Horned Lark:** max 1000 Cornell Lane, Harford CORT 21 Jan.  
**Black-capped Chickadee:** max 682 BCBC 30 Dec.  
**Tufted Titmouse:** max 113 BCBC 30 Dec.  
**Red-breasted Nuthatch:** max 16 OnCBC 14 Dec; generally scarce.  
**White-breasted Nuthatch:** max 90 BCBC 30 Dec.  
**Brown Creeper:** max 10 BCBC 30 Dec.  
**Carolina Wren:** max 27 BCBC 30 Dec; many reports; *intro*.  
**Golden-crowned Kinglet:** max 11 BCBC 30 Dec; 2 BROO 1 Jan (MP); few reports.  
**Ruby-Crowned Kinglet:** 2 BCBC 30 Dec, unusual.  
**E. Bluebird:** max 25 OwCBC 30 Dec.  
**Hermit Thrush:** BCBC 30 Dec, unusual.  
**Am. Robin:** missed 30 Dec–25 Feb.  
**N. Mockingbird:** max 5 OwCBC 30 Dec.  
**European Starling:** max 2288 OnCBC 14 Dec.  
**Cedar Waxwing:** max 103 OwCBC 30 Dec.

#### WARBLERS

None

#### TANAGERS – WEAVERS

**E. Towhee:** Treadwell DELA all season, unusual.  
**Am. Tree Sparrow:** max 476 OwCBC 30 Dec; TBC comment “most in several years.”  
**Chipping Sparrow:** 3 OwCBC 30 Dec; TIOG Dec; unusual.  
**Song Sparrow:** max 20 BCBC 30 Dec.  
**White-throated Sparrow:** max 9 BCBC 30 Dec; few reports.  
**Dark-eyed Junco:** max 567 OwCBC 30 Dec.  
**Snow Bunting:** max 40 BROO 2 Dec; few reports, low numbers.  
**N. Cardinal:** max 164 BCBC 30 Dec; 12 Plymouth 23 Feb (DS), CHEN record for number in a single flock.

**Red-winged Blackbird:** missed after 15 Dec.

**Rusty Blackbird:** TIOG Jan (DWe), rare in winter.

**Com. Grackle:** only 3 reports.

**Purple Finch:** max 6 on each of 3 CBCs; missed after 31 Dec.

**House Finch:** max 297 BCBC 30 Dec.

**Com. Redpoll:** 2 BCBC 30 Dec; max 3 SCBC 21 Dec; only reports.

**Am. Goldfinch:** max 136 BCBC 30 Dec; low numbers after Dec.

**House Sparrow:** max 426 BCBC 30 Dec.

## REGION 5 – ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

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The December temperature was 28.7°F, just 0.1° above the average, and the 2.84" of precipitation was 0.28" below normal. It was a cold January, with an average temperature of 18.8°, 3.9° below normal, with a stretch of 22 consecutive days when the thermometer failed to reach 32°. There was only 1.42" of precipitation, 1.18" below average. In February the average temperature was 21.6°, 2.8° below normal, and there was 2.58" of precipitation, 0.46" above normal. In the Adirondacks, Gary Lee reported zero degree or below temperatures on 33 days, above freezing weather on only seven days, and snow, sleet or rain on 40 days during the period.

The official snowfall total of 121", as recorded at the Syracuse Airport, was low compared to most areas in the Region. The higher elevations to the south received heavy snow from several coastal storms and the snowbelt north of Oneida Lake was pummeled by lake effect snow. The first 11 days of December were very cold, with 25" of snow. In our southern highlands, lakes were frozen by 10 December. The weather moderated for the rest of the month although it rained on 14-15 December, the first two days of CBCs, and 10" of snow on Christmas day were unpleasant. Oneida Lake was just about iced over by 2 January and the only waters not frozen by the middle of January were small portions of the Oswego and Mohawk rivers and Onondaga Lake. A cold winter pattern developed on 12 January, resulting in strong winds and lake effect snow through 20 January. A flood gate on the Seneca River in Baldwinsville collapsed on 18 January, allowing a swifter flow through the Seneca and Oswego rivers, which may have contributed to the large number of gulls feeding at dams on the river. Oswego Harbor was frozen from 25 January through 20 February, and as the season ended many areas still had 2-3 feet of snow on the ground. There was little evidence of spring migration.

No loons were reported after mid January and there was only one Red-necked Grebe until the upper Great Lakes froze in late February. The only comparable winter numbers were from 1994 under similar circumstances. The usual handful of Turkey Vultures wintered in the Dewitt area, although observers reported that they were not easy to locate this year.

Fair Haven hosted a **Ross's Goose**, several Trumpeter Swans and two Barrow's Goldeneyes at times. Another Barrow's Goldeneye was on Lake Ontario. Waterfowl numbers dropped rapidly by mid January as much of the Lake Ontario shoreline froze, although that may have contributed to an increase in White-winged Scoter sightings on the Oswego River.

As a result of the deep snow, there were few wintering Northern Harriers and Short-eared Owls were not reported after December. Rough-legged Hawk numbers were quite good, especially in the Mexico-Richland area, despite the snow. There was one Golden Eagle and several Merlins and Peregrine Falcons. Snowy Owl was found at two inland locations.

There were two shorebird species for the season, both unexpected. Two **Purple Sandpipers** at Fair Haven were a first for January, while two Red Phalaropes spent much of December near an outflow at Oswego Harbor. Bonaparte's Gulls lingered into January, while Iceland, Lesser Black-backed and Glaucous gulls could be found along the Oswego River in January and February.

American Robins, European Starlings and Cedar Waxwings all fed on a bumper crop of European buckthorn fruit. A record number of Gray Catbirds were found and Eastern Bluebirds persisted through the season. Other unusual species included **Eastern Phoebe**, Winter Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Chipping, Field and Fox sparrows and Rusty Blackbird. Horned Larks and Snow Buntings remained through the season but Lapland Longspurs were scarce. Given the good fruit crop, it was surprising that Yellow-rumped Warbler was missed.

Throughout most of the Region, it was a very poor winter for finches. Purple Finch and American Goldfinch were common in the Adirondacks but quite scarce elsewhere. A few Evening Grosbeaks showed up in February, first in Old Forge and, at the end of the season, in southern Madison County. House Finch, in small numbers, was the only other finch reported.

Finally, there was the possible **Northern Hawk Owl** reported near Canastota in Madison County. There were three secondhand reports and one first person report on a birding listserv as well as another secondhand report communicated to me. The only written report I received would be unlikely to pass review by the NYSARC, but the person who at least took the trouble to submit it knew that the details were sketchy, given that the bird was seen at last light. Many other observers who would have submitted reports spent many hours searching the area but did not find the owl. Since Northern Hawk Owl is a NYSARC review species and no reports have been submitted, it is not in the species account. However, in this era of the Internet I do feel something should be said in *The Kingbird*, since there is already some public record concerning the owl.

For the season, a total of 118 species was found, lower than recent years and

more in line with totals from other severe winters. The highlights were **Ross's Goose**, Trumpeter Swan, Barrow's Goldeneye, **Purple Sandpiper**, Red Phalarope, **Eastern Phoebe**, Gray Catbird and Fox Sparrow.

## CONTRIBUTORS

Faith Baker; Brenda Best, Sue Boettger, Joseph Brin, Tim Capone, Bernie Carr, Natalia Garcia, Bill Gruenbaum, Barbara Herrgesell, Gene Huggins, Gary Lee, John Moore, David Nash, Kevin McGann, Matt Perry, Gerard Phillips, Bill Purcell, Marge Rusk, Tom Salo, Mickey Scilingo, Tony Shrimpton, Maureen Staloff, Andrew Van Norstrand, Matt Victoria, David Wheeler, Matt Young, Ken Zoller.

## ABBREVIATIONS

Bvllc – Baldwinsville; CM – Clay Marsh; FH – Fair Haven, Little Sodus Bay and vicinity; HIWMA – Howland I WMA; LOL – L Ontario Littoral; OneiL – Oneida L; OnonL – Onondaga L; SFWS – Spring Farm Wildlife Sanctuary, Paris; SSSP – Selkirk Shores SP; SVB – Sylvan and Verona Beach; Syr – Syracuse.

### LOONS – DUCKS

**Red-throated Loon:** max 7 FH 12 Dec; Oswego to 12 Jan.

**Com. Loon:** 2 FH 12 Dec; 1-2 Oswego to 12 Jan; Skaneateles L 12 Jan; low numbers.

**Pied-billed Grebe:** on small mill pond W. Eaton 8 Jan; 2 Bvllc & 2 Fulton thru.

**Horned Grebe:** max 10 Dempster Beach 5 Jan; OnonL 25 Jan, partial breeding plumage.

**Red-necked Grebe:** Oswego 12 Jan; 9 Phoenix 28 Feb, result of upper Great Lakes freezing.

**Double-crested Cormorant:** max 32 Oswego R 12 Jan; OnonL Jan-Feb, front lower mandible broken off but seemed to be able to feed itself.

**Great Blue Heron:** several Oswego R thru; Sangerfield 31 Dec; Oneida 14 Jan; T Western 3 Feb.

**Turkey Vulture:** 1-3 Fayetteville-Dewitt area thru, seen irregularly, as in recent years; Cazenovia 27 Feb.

**Snow Goose:** 2 FH 11 Dec, 1 white & 1 blue morph.

**ROSS'S GOOSE:** FH 8-12 Jan (TC, KM ph, mob).

**Canada Goose:** Limekiln L outlet 8

Jan; max 3500 FH 12 Jan.

**Mute Swan:** singles FH & Bvllc; 2 Bridgeport 14 Jan.

**Tundra Swan:** max 36 FH 13 Dec; 14 OnonL 12 Jan, 2 Bridgeport 14 Jan, 7 Phoenix 19 Jan, all late.

**Trumpeter Swan:** 2 FH most of Dec (mob).

**Wood Duck:** Fulton 23 Dec; max 4 New Hartford 15 Jan; CM 19 Jan.

**Gadwall:** max 33 Oswego 12 Jan.

**Am. Wigeon:** max 6 FH to 1 Jan; none after 5 Jan.

**Am. Black Duck:** max 120 OnonL 12 Jan; 100 Sherrill 14 Jan, good inland count.

**Mallard:** 500 Vernon 14 Jan.

**N. Pintail:** FH to 5 Jan, only report.

**Green-winged Teal:** 3 Syr to 12 Jan; last Phoenix 17 Jan.

**Canvasback:** Skaneateles L 12 Jan; 3 Oswego 19 Jan; only reports.

**Redhead:** max 52 Skaneateles L 12 Jan.

**Ring-necked Duck:** max 364 Skaneateles L 12 Jan; 2 Oswego & 2 FH 19 Jan, unusual LOL after early Jan.

**Greater Scaup:** max 310 Oswego 19 Jan.  
**Lesser Scaup:** max 22 Oswego 19 Jan.  
**Surf Scoter:** Oswego 28 Dec, only report.  
**White-winged Scoter:** max 49 LOL 12 Jan; 10-12/day Oswego R Jan-Feb, due to L Ontario near-shore ice.  
**Black Scoter:** FH 20 Dec; 2 off SSSP 5-12 Jan.  
**Long-tailed Duck:** max 1200 LOL 5 Jan.  
**Bufflehead:** max 120 Oswego 19 Jan.  
**Com. Goldeneye:** max 330 FH 19 Jan.  
**Barrow's Goldeneye:** 2 males FH 13 Dec (GP); male LOL off SSSP 5 Jan (KM).  
**Hooded Merganser:** max 52 Bville 8 Dec & Fulton 15 Dec; to 25/day Oswego R thru Jan falling to 10/day in Feb.  
**Com. Merganser:** max 2100 OnonL 25 Jan.  
**Red-breasted Merganser:** max 600 SVB 7 Dec.  
**Ruddy Duck:** FH 10 Dec; FH 10 Jan; Oswego 26 Feb.

#### HAWKS – ALCIDS

**Bald Eagle:** max 7 Phoenix 16 Feb, usually 3-5/day Oswego R after mid Jan freeze-up; 2 Big Moose thru; Cross L 10 Jan; Poland 21 Jan; Mohawk R to mid Jan.  
**N. Harrier:** 2 OnonL 14 Dec; Cross L 10 Jan; OnonL 25 Jan; Canastota 22 Jan; N. Chittenango 6 Feb; typical low numbers with heavy snowfall.  
**N. Goshawk:** max 3 New Woodstock CBC 15 Dec; singles at 4 other locations.  
**Red-tailed Hawk:** max 21 Richland 16 Feb.  
**Rough-legged Hawk:** max 21 Richland-Mexico 1 Feb & 20 along same route 16 Feb; small concentrations SW MADI, Griffiss AFB, Sangerfield, Verona.  
**Golden Eagle:** SW MADI 15-18 Dec (MY).

**Merlin:** Liverpool 14 Dec; Van Buren sporadic Jan-Feb; none Onondaga P Syr where 1-2 had wintered since 1991.

**Peregrine Falcon:** Syr after 16 Dec; ad & imm Oswego various times after 30 Dec, Georgetown 5 Jan (DW, ph), unusual site.

**Wild Turkey:** max 140 Orwell 1 Feb; large flocks on manure spreads as deep snow brought them out of woods.

**Am. Coot:** max 4 Bville 12 Jan; 2 Oswego 12 Jan.

**PURPLE SANDPIPER:** 2 FH 15 Jan (DN), first Jan record and remarkable given that there was little open water.

**Red Phalarope:** 2 Oswego 10-26 Dec, first Dec report since 1977.

**Bonaparte's Gull:** max 6 Oswego 21 Dec; last LOL 11 Jan.

**Herring Gull:** max 1900 Oswego R 2 Feb.

**Iceland Gull:** 3-4/day Oswego R after Dec, all 1st winter plumage.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull:** 2 ad & 1 imm Oswego R Jan-Feb.

**Glaucous Gull:** ad Oswego 12 Jan; up to 3 1st winter Oswego R Feb; fewer reports than Iceland.

**Great Black-backed Gull:** max 750 Oswego 2 Feb.

#### DOVES – WOODPECKERS

**Mourning Dove:** max 122 CM 14 Dec; 120 Fulton 2 Feb.

**E. Screech-Owl:** on eggs SFWS 9 Feb (MP), early, later predated upon.

**Snowy Owl:** 1-2 Fenner after 5 Jan; Sauquoit after 12 Feb.

**Short-eared Owl:** 3 Sterling thru Dec; Caughdenoy 5 Dec; DeRuyter 29 Dec; none Jan, driven out by deep snow.

**N. Saw-whet Owl:** found dead Old Forge 20 Feb.

**Belted Kingfisher:** 6 reports in Jan & 5 in Feb, possibly concentrated by lack of open water.

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** Green Lakes SP 14 Dec; HIWMA 1 Jan.

**N. Flicker:** up to 8/day to 14 Jan; 1/day after.

## **FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS**

**EASTERN PHOEBE:** Elbridge 1 Jan (Lois Needham), 4th winter record.

**N. Shrike:** reports from about 14 sites, 3-4 persistent thru.

**Blue Jay:** large numbers Tug Hill, but seemingly normal elsewhere.

**Am. Crow:** numbers down on CBCs, West Nile Virus suspected, but weather and count methodology may be factors as well.

**Fish Crow:** 2 Syr Jan-Feb.

**Com. Raven:** DeRuyter 9 Jan; Williamstown 15 Jan; Nine Mile Pt 30 Jan; Fenner 9 Feb; regular Old Forge.

**Horned Lark:** max 310 Skaneateles 25 Jan.

**Tufted Titmouse:** numbers down on CBCs from previous year's record but still good.

**Red-breasted Nuthatch:** few on CBCs outside breeding areas.

**Carolina Wren:** remains strong in lower elevations; Hannibal 15 Dec, unexpected site; wintering at Georgetown feeder at 1700', out of range.

**Winter Wren:** Oneida 19 Dec, only report.

**Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** SFWS 1 Dec; Syr 14 Dec.

**E. Bluebird:** many reports of 2-8 thru season, sustained by good fruit crop, but even in less productive years this species seems to be wintering farther north.

**Hermit Thrush:** FH 10 Jan (KM, GP).

**Am. Robin:** max 700 Skaneateles 4 Jan; 15-30/day not uncommon in Feb; despite deep snow able to winter on European buckthorn fruits; Williamstown 13 Jan, out of expected range.

**Gray Catbird:** CM 4 Dec; SFWS to 10 Dec; 3 Syr 14 Dec; Oswego 15 Dec; Camillus 4 Jan; Manlius Center 1 Feb and 2 there 16 Feb; record winter count.

**European Starling:** max 14,500 Marcellus 4 Jan.

**Cedar Waxwing:** max 422 CM 28 Feb; widespread, eating buckthorn fruit.

## **WARBLERS**

None.

## **TANAGERS – WEAVERS**

**Am. Tree Sparrow:** max 100 Camillus 4 Jan; to 70/day SFWS Jan-Feb.

**Chipping Sparrow:** DeRuyter 15 Dec; SFWS to 20 Jan.

**Field Sparrow:** New Harford 14 Dec; N. Syr 1 Jan.

**Fox Sparrow:** Van Buren 12 Dec; New Harford 14 Dec; SFWS 14 Dec; last winter record was 1989.

**Song Sparrow:** max 3 Camillus 4 Jan; numbers rapidly declined in Jan.

**Swamp Sparrow:** Syr 14 Dec; SVB 21 Dec; 2 CM 19 Jan.

**White-throated Sparrow:** max 33 CM 9 Dec.

**Dark-eyed Junco:** daily max 10-15.

**Lapland Longspur:** 5 at 4 sites to 10 Jan.

**Snow Bunting:** max 300 Lincoln-Fenner 3 Feb.

**N. Cardinal:** 14 Fulton 15 Dec, large flock for OSWE.

**Red-winged Blackbird:** scattered 1-5 to 5 Jan; 1 Durhamville 21 Feb may have been a survivor as no migrant flocks noted.

**Rusty Blackbird:** Clinton after 9 Feb; Camillus 14 Feb.

**Com. Grackle:** to 4/day Dec; last N. Syr 5 Jan.

**Brown-headed Cowbird:** max 7 Skaneateles 4 Jan; 1-2 various sites thru.

**Purple Finch:** common Adirondacks; outside Adks max 12 Fulton 28 Jan; about 6 other reports of singles.

**Am. Goldfinch:** flocks in Adirondacks; low numbers elsewhere; max 22 Durhamville 26 Jan.

**Evening Grosbeak:** arr Old Forge in Feb; 7 Georgetown 27 Feb.

## REGION 6 – ST. LAWRENCE

Gerry Smith

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It was a real winter for the first time in the new century. Cold and snow began in late October, intensified in mid November, and remained with us through the period. At my base in Barnes Corners on Tug Hill, snowfall exceeded 350", with higher amounts in interior sections. Even the snow-limited banana belt of northwestern Jefferson County experienced significant snowfall this winter. As I write this report in early April, my front lawn remains snow covered and early migrants are stressed to find sustenance. December continued the fall cold trend, with average temperatures 1-2°F below normal and widespread frequent lake effect snows. A cold front on 9-10 December dropped temperatures well below zero and produced more than two feet of snow in the Central Tug Hill. Highmarket officially recorded 54" of snow for the month, but this Lewis County resident thinks that number is low. Needless to say, with such weather most half-hardies were already scarce by Christmas count time. The only truly moderate period of the winter occurred in the first week of January when temperatures reached the low thirties and reports surfaced of human residents of Tug Hill being seen in shorts. Soon after, a major cold wave established over eastern North America and persisted mostly unbroken through late February. The intense cold froze all waters in the Region except for the current-maintained open water pools of the St. Lawrence River. Frequent heavy snows buried most areas to a depth of several feet. Remaining ground-feeding half-hardies vanished, and even hardy winter raptors seemed pressed. This weather also notably reduced birder activity. In February, another arctic blast occurred in mid month. Overall January/February temperatures were 7-10° below average and, as the upper Great Lakes became ice covered, flow ice on Lake Ontario extended at least 15-20 miles out from our shores.

Positives for the season included: (1) a good variety of waterfowl and waterbirds, although in low numbers; (2) good numbers of Tundra Swans in the northwest until their rapid exit in mid January; (3) widespread occurrence of Bald Eagles in fair numbers; (4) widespread Common Ravens; (5) large numbers of overwintering Eastern Bluebirds and American Robins due to an immense wild fruit crop; (6) fair numbers of open country passerines in northwestern Jefferson County.

Negatives included: (1) no evidence of the Red-necked Grebe invasion observed elsewhere, due to limited open water; (2) low numbers of most waterfowl; (3) few half-hardies; (4) poor to fair numbers of most mouse-eating hawks; (5) virtual absence of any northern owls, including the lowest Snowy Owl numbers in recent memory; (6) virtual absence of Gray Partridge in northwestern Jefferson County despite ideal conditions for concentrating them; (7) ridiculously low numbers of American Tree Sparrows; (8) no winter finches.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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## ABBREVIATIONS

CV – T Cape Vincent JEFF; FL – Fishers Landing, T Orleans JEFF; MCBC – Massena CBC; NBCBC – New Boston CBC; PilPt – Pillar Pt, T Brownville JEFF; PtPen – Pt Peninsula, T Lyme JEFF; RMPD – Robert Moses Power Dam; SLR – St. Lawrence R; WCBC – Watertown CBC; WFC – Federation Waterfowl Count.

### LOONS – DUCKS

**Red-throated Loon:** 2 WFC (NL).

**Com. Loon:** RMPD to 24 Feb, only report.

**Horned Grebe:** 2 PilPt 13 Dec; 2 WFC.

**Red-necked Grebe:** none despite large late winter invasion elsewhere.

**Great Blue Heron:** very scarce; none on CBCs for first time in years; 1 imm T Worth JEFF 13 Dec, at small freezing pond, probably expired soon after.

**Canada Goose:** max 5812 MCBC, high, but numbers diminished rapidly; only 463 WFC; 10-70 in scattered small flocks mid-Jan thru.

**Mute Swan:** 4 WCBC; 2 WFC.

**Tundra Swan:** max 42 WCBC; 36 PtPen 19 Dec; last 26 Stony Pt heading south in heavy snow squalls 14 Jan (GS).

**Gadwall:** max 25 MCBC; 10 WCBC; 14 WFC.

**Am. Black Duck:** 10-25/day thru where open water existed; 282 WFC.

**Mallard:** 2394 WFC; 1283 MCBC; 16 NBCBC; most 30-100/day Dec, fewer after; 602 SLR 5 Jan, high for location.

**N. Pintail:** 2 WCBC; WFC; none thereafter.

**Green-winged Teal:** f FL 23 Dec, late.

**Redhead:** 2 Pt Vivian SLR 5 Jan, only report.

**Ring-necked Duck:** 335 WCBC, record high; 5 FL thru 25 Jan, rare mid-winter.

**Greater Scaup:** max 380 WCBC; 241 WFC; continues a great decline in our area.

**Lesser Scaup:** 6 WCBC.

**COMMON EIDER:** f Pt Vivian SLR 5 Jan (NL, NYSARC), extremely rare.

**Long-tailed Duck:** 146 WFC; otherwise quite scarce.

**Bufflehead:** 408 WFC; 15-35/day to mid-Jan; scarce after.

**Com. Goldeneye:** 2617 WFC; most 150-300/day to mid-Jan; thereafter only in SLR pools.

**Barrow's Goldeneye:** f FL 5-8 Jan; 2 WFC.

**Com. Goldeneye x Barrow's Goldeneye hybrid:** FL 23 Dec (NL).

**Com. Goldeneye x Hooded Merganser hybrid:** FL 5 Jan (NL).

**Hooded Merganser:** max 29 WFC, good count; thru 25 Jan.

**Com. Merganser:** 520 PtPen 19 Dec; 1261 MCBC; 681 WFC.

**Red-breasted Merganser:** 3 MCBC; 152 WFC, high.

### HAWKS – ALCIDS

**Bald Eagle:** widespread at 1-4/day thru near any open water; occasionally elsewhere.

**N. Harrier:** three singles thru 19 Dec; absent thereafter until return of migrants in Mar.

**Sharp-shinned Hawk:** total 12 mostly in Dec/Jan.

**Cooper's Hawk:** total 10 mostly Dec.

**N. Goshawk:** total 9 (6 ad, 3 imm), more than usual.



**Red-tailed Hawk:** mostly less than 10/day in prime habitat NW JEFF; max 18 PtPen 11 Feb.

**Rough-legged Hawk:** most counts 8-12/day in prime NW JEFF habitat; max 20+ NW JEFF, low; high percentage (35-50%) dark morphs this year interesting.

**Merlin:** imm f Gosier Rd CV Nov thru, wintered successfully at a large dairy farm.

**Am. Kestrel:** 1-4/day Dec; very scarce thereafter, only 3 scattered singles.

**Gray Partridge:** virtually none seen despite ideal conditions to concentrate them, suggests reduced populations; T Massena STLA 1 Dec, unusual.

**Ring-necked Pheasant:** 1-2/day scattered.

**Ruffed Grouse:** max 9 MCBC; 5 NBCBC; scarce.

**Wild Turkey:** max 239 NBCBC; widely distributed at 20-60/day.

**Killdeer:** T Massena STLA 1 Dec.

**Ring-billed Gull:** max 24 MCBC; gone after late Dec.

**Herring Gull:** max 804 MCBC; scarce after mid-Jan.

**Iceland Gull:** 3 MCBC.

**Glaucous Gull:** 2 MCBC.

**Great Black-backed Gull:** max 676 MCBC; only regular gull after mid-Jan at 5-15/day.

#### DOVES – WOODPECKERS

**Rock Dove:** 222-365 on all CBCs.

**Mourning Dove:** max 206 MCBC; 5-25/day, reduced after mid-Jan; feeder/farm dependent.

**E. Screech-Owl:** 3-4/day Louisville-Massena STLA (MB); not reported elsewhere.

**Great Horned Owl:** 1-5/day all areas.

**Snowy Owl:** 1-2/day Philadelphia area JEFF Jan, only reports.

**Barred Owl:** 5 reports of singles.

**Red-bellied Woodpecker:** 3 singles JEFF.

**Downy Woodpecker:** max 33 MCBC.

**Hairy Woodpecker:** max 28 MCBC.

**N. Flicker:** 1-3/day scattered areas; successful wintering PtPen.

**Pileated Woodpecker:** 1-3/day all areas; max 6 T Louisville-Massena STLA 24 Feb, high.

#### FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

**N. Shrike:** 8 total, a very poor year.

**GRAY JAY:** at feeder T Louisville STLA 12 Jan (MB), convincing description, very rare away from Adirondack haunts.

**Blue Jay:** 516 NBCBC; truly the only common bird on Tug Hill this winter.

**Am. Crow:** max 1957 MCBC.

**Com. Raven:** 1-2/day many areas including lowland sites along L Ontario and SLR; increasing; max 7 NBCBC.

**Horned Lark:** max 434 CV 13 Dec; 200-300/day CV thru Jan; 150 MCBC; good.

**Tree Swallow:** 6 CV 3 Dec (GS, T.Carrolan), insane, highly fluffed individuals in 6°F temperatures were probably sorted out of the gene pool that evening.

**Black-capped Chickadee:** max 460 MCBC; 380 NBCBC.

**Tufted Titmouse:** now regular along L Ontario shore JEFF; 1-3/day Louisville STLA thru.

**Red-breasted Nuthatch:** 1-4/day at scattered locations; scarce.

**White-breasted Nuthatch:** max 75 MCBC.

**Brown Creeper:** 10 MCBC, high count; a few scattered singles elsewhere to early Jan.

**Golden-crowned Kinglet:** 27 MCBC, very high count; scattered 1-4/day elsewhere.

**E. Bluebird:** many reports of 3-6/day lowland areas to early Feb, reflect super-abundant wild fruit crop.

**Am. Robin:** 100-300/day wintered in the alvar areas of NW JEFF dining on super-abundant fruit crops; 10-50/day many other areas N STLA; extraordinary numbers for such a severe winter.

**Brown Thrasher:** at feeder Black River JEFF thru at least 9 Feb.

**European Starling:** max 2137  
WCBC.  
**Cedar Waxwing:** scattered flocks of  
15-60/day.

#### **WARBLERS**

**Yellow-rumped Warbler:** 1 MCBC.

#### **TANAGERS – WEAVERS**

**Am. Tree Sparrow:** max 85 MCBC;  
40 PtPen 11 Feb; 5-10/day average;  
incredibly scarce.  
**Song Sparrow:** MCBC, only report.

**White-throated Sparrow:** 8-10/day at  
scattered feeders; virtually none afield.  
**Dark-eyed Junco:** max 46 MCBC;  
very few after early Jan.

**Lapland Longspur:** 5-15/day NW  
JEFF.

**Snow Bunting:** 10-100/day  
widespread; max 300 CV 25 Jan.

**N. Cardinal:** max 55 MCBC,  
indicative of how well established  
along SLR.

**Com. Grackle:** 1 WCBC.

**Brown-headed Cowbird:** f PtPen 11  
Feb, extraordinary.

## **REGION 7 – ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN**

**John M.C. Peterson**

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The season began with a high of 40°F at Plattsburgh, but by 2 December a snowstorm had brought 16" to Inlet, where temperatures dropped to -16° by the 4th. Temperatures dropped from 34° at Plattsburgh on 8 December to -22° at Inlet the following day, separated by the coldest night in 22 months. Mid-month was generally warmer, reaching a high of 40° on the 19th. A 3.1 Richter scale aftershock of the April earthquake radiated from the Ausable Forks epicenter on Christmas Day. Monthly snowfall in the Champlain Valley was 8.3", with snow cover on the Christmas Bird Counts varying from bare ground on the Ferrisburg CBC to a foot on the Saranac Lake CBC. New Year's Day was a balmy 39°, but an Alberta Clipper dropped 1-2 feet of snow on the 4th. Alberta Clipper #2 on 7-8 January only added another 3", but light snows continued through mid-month. And it was cold: -21° at Saranac Lake on the 14th, -23° at Inlet on the 22nd. By 28 January, with Saranac Lake thermometers reading -35°, even the Champlain Valley had seen sub-zero temperatures for 11 of the past 15 days. February saw a return to the +30°s, but turned frigid mid-month: -24° at Inlet on the 11th and Saranac Lake dropped to -28° on the 13th and -35° on 16 February. That same day Lake Champlain froze completely for the first time in two years (and only the second time in the last seven). Inlet was below zero for 33 days, below -20° on a dozen of those, and above freezing only seven days. Even in the Champlain Valley, Plattsburgh had 24 sub-zero nights and days. A warm front pushed Plattsburgh to a high of 42° on the 20th and, after 4" of snow at Malone 23 February, the season closed on a sunny, 31° day.

Prior to freezing over, Champlain had good numbers and excellent variety of

waterfowl, with a record 21 species located on the 11-12 January Federation Waterfowl Count. A drake **Tufted Duck** at Port Kent was a highlight of the count, and yet this appeared to be but one of several, beginning with a first Regional sighting at the Crown Point narrows in late December. There were also multiple encounters with Barrow's Goldeneyes, including three during the Waterfowl Count.

Bald Eagles are easier to find along Champlain with each passing winter. As the lake closed in February, one was standing on the ice beside – and jumping over – a swimming flock of ~20 Canada Geese, who suffered the interruption with aplomb. There were also reports from the central Adirondacks, where eagles fed on road-killed deer on the ice of Tupper Lake and nearby Long Lake. A gray-phase **Gyr Falcon** was at Monty Bay on the afternoon of 12 January, and there were later sightings from 30 January at the favored locale at the mouth of the Saranac River in Plattsburgh, where large numbers of ducks congregate to be fed.

In spite of stretches of extreme cold, good numbers of half-hardies were reported, including Northern Flickers, a **Tree Swallow** at Ausable Point WMA on **16 February**, record numbers of Tufted Titmice, four widely-distributed Carolina Wrens (Essex, Hogansburg, Rouses Point, Ticonderoga), a Winter Wren at Essex, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet at a Westport feeder, Northern Mockingbirds and three Chipping Sparrows. Rusty Blackbirds at Ausable Point and West Chazy feeders were good finds. Eastern Bluebirds lingered in the lowlands, while American Robins were more widely reported and present in larger numbers: 180 on the Elizabethtown CBC, for example. In the interior Adirondacks, robins were reported from as high as Ampersand Mt., Hanging Spear Falls and Marcy Dam, with 30 wintering at Limekiln Lake. Mountain ash was often mentioned as a favored food of these stalwarts. In the Champlain Valley, a fairly good crop of buckthorn, red cedar and staghorn sumac helped support some of these half-hardy species.

At higher elevations within the Adirondacks, only a fair conifer mast crop developed, mostly Eastern hemlock and some spruce/balsam fir. Purple Finch was present in modest numbers, but over a widely scattered area. There were no reports of Red Crossbill and only two of their White-winged congener. Both redpolls were absent, following last winter's invasion. Pine Siskin was present, but even more scarce than Purple Finch. The most abundant winter finch by far was American Goldfinch, with a record 1115 tallied on the Saranac Lake CBC, and present in numbers at feeders, especially those offering niger seed (or "nyjer," as politically-correct feed stores now spell it). Evening Grosbeak was extremely scarce, with the largest flocks 18 at Long Lake on 15 February and 25 feeding on mountain ash at Saranac Inn on 20 February.

A total of 95 species was reported, well short of the record 109 found during the previous winter of 2001-02. Atlas observers are again asked to keep in contact with their regional coordinator throughout the breeding season. A periodic short note or e-mail providing the number of species per Block, plus details of any unusual finds, would be greatly appreciated.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AP – Ausable Pt WMA; BB – Bloomingdale Bog; CH – Cumberland Head; CP – Crown Pt; CR – Chazy Rivers; ECBC – Elizabethtown CBC 21 Dec; FB – Ferd's Bog; FCBC – Ferrisburg CBC 14 Dec; IL – Indian L; LL – Long L; PCBC – Plattsburgh CBC 15 Dec; SB – Sabattis Bog; SLCBC – Saranac L CBC; TL – Tupper L; WB – Whallon's Bay; WC – Federation Waterfowl Count 11-12 Jan; WM – Wickham Marsh WMA.

### LOONS – DUCKS

**Com. Loon:** max 20 PCBC, high.

**Red-necked Grebe:** grounded North Hudson Feb (AF), rehab released Schroon Ri WARR; grounded TL sewer plant Feb (NS), rehab released Saranac Ri ESSE..

**Great Blue Heron:** 2 PCBC; ECBC, late.

**Snow Goose:** 4 PCBC; WC, late.

**Canada Goose:** 30 flying s Limekiln L 8 Jan (GL); lg flock over TL 14 Jan (PL), late.

**Mute Swan:** pr WM 4 Dec (JP) -14 Feb (DR), with 2 Bald Eagles; 2 pr there 10 Feb (JP); pr Westport 10 Dec (SS) -11 Jan (JP, RW).

**Gadwall:** 2 Pt Kent 10 Feb (DR), rare in winter.

**Mallard:** max 2957 WC, record number.

**N. Pintail:** 2 WC; Boquet Ri Willsboro Feb (RL); CH 22-26 Feb (NO, UW); good showing.

**Redhead:** WC, only report.

**Ring-necked Duck:** max 47 WC; Pt Kent to 10 Feb (DR); a strong showing.

**TUFTED DUCK:** drake CP 30 Dec; probable hen CP 3 Jan (DH), where there were multiple sightings in VT waters; drake in raft of 1000 Greater Scaup Pt Kent 11 Jan (JP, DR, RW) to 13 Jan (DR); possible hen Pt Kent 13 Jan (DR); 1st ESSE & Reg records.

**Greater Scaup:** max 1001 WC, record number; 400 Pt Kent 10 Feb (JP, DR); zebra mussels?

**Surf Scoter:** Valcour I 2 Dec (J&RH), only report.

**Black Scoter:** drake Valcour I 2 Dec (J&RH); Essex 1 Jan (J&RH); WB 12 Jan (DP, DR); good showing.

**Barrow's Goldeneye:** hen Essex 8 Dec (DR); 2 hens WB 10-11 Jan (JP, DS, RW); drake Essex 11 Jan (TM, SO); drake WB 12 Jan (DP, DR); drake Pt Kent 5 Feb (DR); drake Essex 23 Feb (J&PT); outstanding.

**Hooded Merganser:** max 99 WC, record number.

### HAWKS – ALCIDS

**Bald Eagle:** 13 Bald Eagle Survey 11-12 Jan (7 ad, 2 imm, 4 age?); numerous other sightings.

**GYRFALCON:** gray-phase Monty Bay 3:30 pm 12 Jan (GW); Plattsburgh 11 am 30 Jan (DM); always exciting.

**Am. Coot:** Westport where now almost annual in winter 11 Jan.

#### DOVES – WOODPECKERS

**E. Screech-Owl:** Chateaugay feeder 12 Feb (MH); Whiteface Inn Rd Feb (NS), emaciated, rehab released.

**Snowy Owl:** Goodnow-Hudson R confluence 16 Feb (AF), in unusual location; only report.

**Barred Owl:** TL feeder 25 Jan (CD), diving on Dark-eyed Juncos; 8 others reported.

**Short-eared Owl:** Essex 2 Dec (DR); PCBC, encouraging finds.

**Belted Kingfisher:** FCBC; ECBC; Westport 10 Jan (JP, DS), late.

**Black-backed Woodpecker:** max 4 SLCBC; other reports BB, Chubb Ri, Marcy Dam, Paul Smiths.

**N. Flicker:** ECBC; AP Feb (JL); Essex 28 Feb (MG); scarce in winter here.

#### FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

**N. Shrike:** 9 reported, somewhat low.

**Gray Jay:** max 17 SLCBC, record number NYS & Reg; Jackrabbit Trail, Keene 27 Dec (J&PT), new location within High Peaks region; other more expected reports BB, FB, SB.

**Horned Lark:** 12 Essex 8 Dec (DR); 5 FCBC; 6 PCBC; max 20 CR 29 Jan (DR); 2 Essex 21 Feb (MG); somewhat low.

**TREE SWALLOW:** 1 AP 16 Feb (DR) “following -20°F night and no open water!” Official high at Plattsburgh that day was -2°. Unprecedented.

**Black-capped Chickadee:** max 1011 SLCBC, record high.

**Boreal Chickadee:** max 8 SLCBC; many Hanging Spear Falls 1 Feb (JC); reports from Avalanche L, BB, ECBC, LL, N-P Trail, SB.

**Tufted Titmouse:** max 14 FCBC,

2 PCBC, 7 ECBC, Pt Kent; strong numbers.

**Carolina Wren:** Essex, Hogansburg, Rouses Pt, Ticonderoga feeders; a good showing.

**Winter Wren:** Essex feeder late Jan (SC), rare here in winter despite name.

**Golden-crowned Kinglet:** max 54 SLCBC, record high.

**Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** Westport feeder 14 Dec (JT), scarce in winter.

**E. Bluebird:** 12 FCBC; 15 PCBC; max 18 ECBC; confined to lowlands.

**Am. Robin:** max 180 ECBC and widespread at lower elevations; 12 inside culvert AP 16 Feb (DR), “only open water inside for miles”; interior sightings at Ampersand Mt, Hanging Spear Falls, IL, Limekiln L, Marcy Dam, Marcy Field, SLCBC, many feeding on mountain ash.

**N. Mockingbird:** 2 PCBC; Plattsburgh 3 Feb (NO); good finds.

**Cedar Waxwing:** max 111 FCBC; only waxwing reported.

#### TANAGERS – WEAVERS

**Am. Tree Sparrow:** 2 Little TL 3 Dec (JC); wintered Inlet feeder (GL); both noteworthy.

**Chipping Sparrow:** 2 PCBC; TL 24 Dec thru (CD); great winter finds.

**Song Sparrow:** SLCBC; wintered IL, unusual in Adirondacks during winter.

**White-throated Sparrow:** SLCBC, unusual in Adirondacks in winter.

**Dark-eyed Junco:** max 106 SLCBC; widespread elsewhere.

**Lapland Longspur:** Stetson Rd CLIN 24 Jan (J&RH), only report and always a good find.

**Snow Bunting:** 3 PCBC; max 200 CR 27 Jan (DR); Altona 19 Feb (JH, NO, MS); 35 Keene 24 Feb (J&PT); relatively scarce.

**Red-winged Blackbird:** flock Limekiln L 16 Dec (GL); SLCBC, late.

**E. Meadowlark:** Whallonsburg early Jan (SS); Essex 12 Jan (DP, DR); 1st Jan records ESSE.

**Rusty Blackbird:** West Chazy feeder

24 Jan (J&RH) -22 Feb (NO); AP feeder 28 Feb (WE, SUNY Plattsburgh).

**Brown-headed Cowbird:** max 26 SLCBC; wintered IL, unusual in highlands.

**Purple Finch:** max 49 SLCBC.

**House Finch:** max 63 PCBC.

**White-winged Crossbill:** 1 heard ECBC; 1 heard Bigelow Rd FRAN 3 Feb (DR); only reports.

**Pine Siskin:** max 8 separate small flocks Newcomb 4 Dec (CD); 12 SLCBC.

**Am. Goldfinch:** max 1115 SLCBC, record high; by far the most abundant winter finch.

**Evening Grosbeak:** Inlet, LL, L Placid, SB, SLCBC; max 25 Saranac Inn 20 Feb (BS), feeding on mountain ash; only reports.

## REGION 8 – HUDSON-MOHAWK

**Will Yandik**

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The winter remained cold with persistent snow. As reported from Albany International Airport, December's mean temperature was 27°F, 1° below normal. There were 3.97" of precipitation, 1.21" above normal, with 33.2" of snow. January averaged 15.5°, 6.7° below normal, with only three days with temperatures above freezing. Precipitation was 3.45", 0.74" above normal, with 32.2" of snow. February was also cold, averaging 21.1°, 3.9° below normal, with precipitation measured at 2.15", 0.12" below normal; 16.7" of snow fell that month. A Christmas Day storm brought nearly three feet of snow to the Region, approaching a rate of 4" per hour. By early March, 96" of snow had fallen, approaching the Albany record of 112".

It is unclear what impact this weather had on the Region's birds. Persistent below-zero temperatures produced some winterkills, but many species previously thought to be vulnerable to cold appeared to be adapting. High numbers of Carolina Wrens were reported and continued beyond Christmas counts through January and February. Other 'southern species,' such as Tufted Titmouse, Northern Mockingbird and Red-bellied Woodpecker, maintained stable populations as well, perhaps bolstered by well-stocked feeders. Eastern Bluebirds were an exception; their numbers dropped slightly from the unusually large flocks of the two previous mild winters.

All but the fastest moving water remained frozen through mid March, forcing many waterfowl south. The Hudson River froze for the first time in several years, with navigation channels quickly refreezing through January, at times trapping barges for several days before they could be rescued by the U.S. Coast Guard's icebreaker fleet. The frozen upper Great Lakes forced a southward invasion of

Red-necked Grebes throughout the Northeast, a few appearing in our Region. No significant thaw occurred until late February when temperatures nosed above 40° for a few days. Clearly, the cold weather limited bird reports indirectly as many Regional birders preferred to stay inside and make their observations safely near the glow of their woodstoves (the editor included).

One good excuse to venture out into the cold was to see a well-publicized **Northern Hawk Owl** that wintered in Root, Montgomery County, from mid January into the spring season. Favoring a conspicuous hunting perch surrounded by open farmland and red maple swamp, the bird was observed and photographed by hundreds, including curious non-birders and local evening news camera troupes. Reports from such sources as the New York State listserv attracted out-of-state birders, with as many as 40 observers present on busy weekends. In addition to inflating several life lists, the owl sparked a debate about the ethics of feeding mice to wild avian predators. Several observers offered the owl live mice, including prey obtained from pet stores that are thought to supplement food with antibiotics and to harbor diseases potentially harmful to the owl. Controversy also arose when one photographer baited the owl with caged mice, deliberately stressing the bird for the purpose of obtaining dramatic photographs. Despite this disturbing publicity, the bird remained in Root through the season, apparently healthy, surviving largely on wild voles caught and cached in a Norway maple.

Fewer than 60 sightings of Northern Hawk Owl have been recorded in New York State. Previous irruptions occurred as recently as 1991-92, 1981-82 and 1961-62. Even during irruptive years, this species remains largely an upstate phenomenon; only two New York records exist south of the mid-Hudson Valley, both specimens collected on Long Island. Very few records exist in adjacent states: Massachusetts, 5; Connecticut, 5; Pennsylvania, 4; New Jersey, 2. This hawk owl is the fifth confirmed record for Region 8, following sightings in 1888 (Saratoga County), 1955 (Saratoga County), 1991 (Warren County) and 1992 (Washington County).

As experienced birders journeyed to Montgomery County to observe the hawk owl, they discovered several other uncommon species in the surrounding manured fields. Some of the season's best birds were reported in the hawk owl's vicinity, an area that traditionally receives little attention. Notable finds included many Rough-legged Hawks, Red-shouldered Hawk, Merlin, Northern Shrike, Snow Bunting and Lapland Longspur.

For the fifth winter in recent years, observers reported **Osprey** in our Region. Despite the absence of nesting records on the mid-Hudson, this species has been reported with increasing frequency on past Christmas counts. This year's mid January report from Ghent, Columbia County, represents an unusually late sighting, seemingly miraculous due to ever-present ice on ponds and lakes. Only a handful of Great Blue Herons, Belted Kingfishers and other fish-eaters managed to feed near fast-moving streams or heat sources adjacent to municipal sewage outfalls and industrial plants.

Other unusual lingerers included an Eastern Phoebe, reportedly surviving on

bittersweet and ornamental berries in a suburban yard. Marsh Wren, Field Sparrow and Savannah Sparrow showed up on Christmas counts; all are uncommon winter residents in the area. This season was another poor one for winter finches; only one report of Common Redpoll, a few Pine Siskins and scattered Purple Finches surfaced. There were no reports of either species of crossbill. A small feeder flock of Evening Grosbeaks in Fulton County was a scant glimpse of a species that has not been abundant in the Region for several years.

Observers discovered 113 species this season, nine fewer than the previous winter.

## CONTRIBUTORS

Ken Able, Sue Adair, Alan Devoe Bird Club monthly sighting reports (ADBC), Paul Connor, Bill Cook, Kate Dunham, Jane Graves, Richard Guthrie, Hudson Mohawk Bird Club's Birdline of Eastern New York (BEN), Chuck & Ellen Kieweg, William Lee, Andrew Mason, Gail & Rich Nord, Tom Palmer, Barb Putnam, Alison Van Keuren, Carol & Owen Whitby, Will Yandik, Matt Young, Robert Yunick.

## ABBREVIATIONS

CAT – T Catskill GREE; CF – Coxsackie Flats GREE; CL – Cheviot Landing COLU; COH – City of Cohoes ALBA; FR – Five Rivers Environmental Education Center, Delmar ALBA; FtE – Fort Edward area WASH; GBL – Germantown Boat Launch COLU; GI – Green I ALBA; HR – Hudson Ri; JEF – T Jefferson SCHO; L7 – Vischer Ferry Power Station/Lock 7 SCHE; LIV – T Livingston COLU; MR – Mohawk Ri; NB – New Baltimore GREE; NL – Nassau L RENS; PCr – Papscanee Creek RENS; ROO – T Root MONT; SS – Stockport Station COLU; STO – T Stockport COLU.

### LOONS – DUCKS

**Com. Loon:** JEF 2 Dec; CL 7 Dec; only reports.

**Pied-billed Grebe:** MR SCHE 27 Dec, only report.

**Horned Grebe:** max 6 MR 25 Feb.

**Red-necked Grebe:** max 5 MR 25 Feb; in small numbers during late Feb invasion.

**Great Blue Heron:** 2 NB 21 Dec; max 3 MR 12 Jan; 11 reports of singles.

**Turkey Vulture:** Guilderland ALBA 6 Feb, only report.

**Snow Goose:** max 200 Bells Pd LIV 2 Dec; scarce after Dec.

**Canada Goose:** max 2500 Bells Pd LIV 2 Dec, decreasing numbers as

season advanced.

**Mute Swan:** max 125 CL 7 Dec; 2 NL 2 Dec, only report away from HR.

**Wood Duck:** SS 21 Dec, only report.

**Gadwall:** max 6 GBL 7 Dec.

**Am. Wigeon:** SS 7 Dec, only report.

**Am. Black Duck:** max 280 SS 21 Dec.

**Mallard:** max 905 MR 12 Jan.

**N. Pintail:** SS 21 Dec; Roe Jan Kill COLU 12 Jan; only reports.

**Green-winged Teal:** SS 7 Dec; SARA 12 Jan.

**Canvasback:** max 300 CAT 12 Jan.

**Redhead:** GBL 7 Dec; 2 SS 17 Jan; only reports.



**Ring-necked Duck:** MR 12 Jan; scattered CBC reports.  
**Lesser Scaup:** max 5 GBL 21 Dec.  
**White-winged Scoter:** HR at GI 12 Jan, only report.  
**Black Scoter:** Albany CBC 18 Dec, only report.  
**Long-tailed Duck:** Albany CBC 18 Dec, only report.  
**Bufflehead:** GBL 7 Dec; f L7 17 Dec; scarce.  
**Com. Goldeneye:** max 100 GBL 7 Dec, concentrated at open water in rafts of 5-10.  
**Hooded Merganser:** 6 CL 7 Dec; 7 HR at Northumberland 30 Dec; 2 FtE 5 Jan.  
**Com. Merganser:** max 134 MR 12 Jan; concentrated at open water in rafts of 30-50.  
**Red-breasted Merganser:** 3 Troy 25 Jan; Ghent COLU 20-22 Feb; only reports.  
**Ruddy Duck:** max 33 Albany CBC 18 Dec.

#### HAWKS – ALCIDS

**Osprey:** S RENS 21 Dec; Ghent COLU 25 Jan, very late.  
**Bald Eagle:** 23 ad, 5 imm, mostly near HR.  
**N. Harrier:** max 5 FtE 21 Dec; 41 reports of f/imm, 6 reports of m.  
**Sharp-shinned Hawk:** 3 ROO 11 Dec; 48 other reports.  
**Cooper's Hawk:** 2 MONT 12 Dec; 39 reports of singles.  
**N. Goshawk:** ad MONT 2 Dec; ad SCHE 11 Dec; ad Argyle WASH 20 Dec; imm Troy 5 Jan; ad Berne ALBA 19 Feb.  
**Red-shouldered Hawk:** Catskill CBC 17 Dec; ROO 25 Jan; only reports.  
**Rough-legged Hawk:** max 7 ROO 31 Jan; above average numbers overall; most numerous in ROO, FtE, CF.  
**Merlin:** PCr 30 Dec; FtE 2 Feb; LIV 3 Feb; ROO 12 Feb.  
**Ring-necked Pheasant:** 4 reports of singles, all on late Dec CBCs.

**Ruffed Grouse:** 2 SCHE 21 Dec; FR 5 Jan; Schodack I 15 Jan.  
**Wild Turkey:** max 60 MONT 7 Feb; reported in lower numbers in flocks of 6-12.  
**Am. Coot:** HR 7 Dec, only report.  
**Ring-billed Gull:** max 300+ COH 2 Dec; typical winter numbers.  
**Herring Gull:** max 120+ CAT 17 Dec; typical winter numbers.  
**Iceland Gull:** max 4 Cossackie GREE 17 Dec; COH 1 Jan; SARA 17 Jan; increasingly frequent winter visitor.  
**Lesser Black-backed Gull:** STO 2 Jan; COH 12 Jan.  
**Glaucous Gull:** 2 juv COH 5 Jan.  
**Great Black-backed Gull:** max 26 SCHE 21 Dec.

#### DOVES – WOODPECKERS

**E. Screech-Owl:** 3 SS 21 Dec; 32 reports of singles; typical winter numbers on most CBCs.  
**Great Horned Owl:** max 6 Schneider Rd LIV 10 Jan; 19 other reports in addition to CBCs.  
**Barred Owl:** Saratoga CBC 14 Dec; S RENS CBC 21 Dec; Chatham CBC 21 Dec.  
**Short-eared Owl:** CF 17 Dec; FtE 27 Dec; S RENS CBC 28 Dec; scarce at FtE this year due to low vole population.  
**N. Saw-whet Owl:** dead specimen collected NB 29 Dec (RG); SARA 6 Jan.  
**N. HAWK OWL:** ROO 18 Jan-thru (C&EK).  
**Belted Kingfisher:** Saratoga Springs 13-14 Dec; 3 STO 21 Dec; 3 MR 12 Jan; scarce after HR and MR froze in Jan.  
**Red-bellied Woodpecker:** max 9 SS 21 Dec; typical numbers on CBCs; remaining steady thru.  
**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** Kinderhook COLU 28 Dec; East Glenville SCHE 18 Jan.  
**Pileated Woodpecker:** 26 reports; typical numbers on CBCs.

## FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

**E. Phoebe:** Austerlitz COLU 7-15 Dec, feeding on bittersweet and other berries.

**N. Shrike:** JEF 7 Dec; Saratoga Springs 13-14 Dec; SCHE 27 Dec; Gansevoort SARA 4 Jan; 2 ROO 25-31 Jan; Berne ALBA 2 Feb; Greenfield SARA 22 Feb; LIV 26 Feb.

**Fish Crow:** PCr 30 Dec; 3 GI 12 Jan; only reports.

**Com. Raven:** 12 reports of singles.

**Horned Lark:** max 220 LIV 1 Dec; 160 FtE 5 Jan; numerous and widespread in suitable habitat, larger flocks reported than in previous winters.

**Tufted Titmouse:** max 15 FtE 5 Jan; typical numbers on CBCs.

**Red-breasted Nuthatch:** 11 reports; continues scarce.

**Brown Creeper:** max 3 GI, consistent with seasonal averages.

**Carolina Wren:** max 5 CAT 17 Dec; 62 reported on all CBCs, 12 more than previous year; many populations stable through Jan and Feb.

**Winter Wren:** STO 21 Dec, only report.

**Marsh Wren:** Schenectady CBC 22 Dec, only report.

**Golden-crowned Kinglet:** max 8 CAT 17 Dec.

**Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** Schodack 27-28 Dec.

**E. Bluebird:** max 21 MONT 19 Dec; reported widely in modest flocks of 4-6.

**Hermit Thrush:** LIV 1 Dec; CAT 17 Dec; Northumberland SARA 30 Dec; Troy 5 Jan; Chatham COLU 3 Feb; consistent with previous winter averages.

**N. Mockingbird:** max 4 Niskayuna SCHE; 19 other reports.

## WARBLERS

**Yellow-rumped Warbler:** 4 CAT 17 Dec; no change from previous winter.

## TANAGERS – WEAVERS

**Am. Tree Sparrow:** max 80 PCr 5 Jan.

**Field Sparrow:** RENS 6 Jan, only report.

**Savannah Sparrow:** PCr 30 Dec; Grangerville SARA 30 Dec.

**Fox Sparrow:** NB 20 Jan, only report.

**Song Sparrow:** max 13 FtE 21 Dec.

**Swamp Sparrow:** MR 21 Dec; STO 21 Dec; FR 5 Jan; consistent with previous winter averages.

**White-throated Sparrow:** commonly reported in flocks of 6-8.

**White-crowned Sparrow:**

Schenectady 27 Dec, only report.

**Dark-eyed Junco:** commonly reported in flocks of 10-15.

**Lapland Longspur:** Northumberland SARA 14 Dec; ROO 3 Feb.

**Snow Bunting:** max 12 Albany CBC 18 Dec; 6 MONT 19 Feb; slightly below average.

**N. Cardinal:** max 14 WASH 30 Dec.

**Red-winged Blackbird:** max 70 Schodack I 11 Jan; in smaller numbers on CBCs.

**E. Meadowlark:** 2 Canajoharie MONT 14 Dec, only report.

**Com. Grackle:** scattered CBC reports; 2 RENS 15 Jan; 5 Albany 27 Feb.

**Brown-headed Cowbird:** max 50 Guilderland ALBA 1 Jan.

**Purple Finch:** 6 JEF 2 Dec; Chatham COLU 17 Dec; Taghkanic COLU 28 Jan; scarce.

**House Finch:** max 76 Niskayuna SCHE 21 Dec.

**Com. Redpoll:** 11 Hudson Falls CBC 5 Jan, only report.

**Pine Siskin:** 10 Hudson Falls CBC 5 Jan; ROO 31 Jan; SARA 22 Feb; scarce.

**Am. Goldfinch:** max 33 SS 21 Dec; most in small flocks of 4-6.

**Evening Grosbeak:** 6 Northville FULT, only report; scarce.

## REGION 9 – HUDSON-DELAWARE

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The winter season was much colder than normal with significant snowfall throughout the period. The first part of December was snowy with numerous low accumulation events. This was followed by a brief thaw before Christmas, then by a nor'easter on Christmas Day. All areas saw 9" or more of snow, with Liberty inundated with 31" that day. Overall, December was near average in temperature, with above average precipitation. January was brutally cold, with the average temperature 5°F below normal. Liberty had eight straight days with lows below zero, starting with lows of -9° on 18 and 19 January. Precipitation was near normal but nearly all of it fell as snow. February was one of the snowiest on record, mainly due to the Presidents Day storm that saw two feet of snowfall in some locations.

A remarkable 74 Red-throated Loons were found in Long Island Sound during the Bronx-Westchester CBC, nearly doubling the previous record count set in 2001.

The deep freeze in January made Bald Eagle numbers rise on the Hudson. Tom Fiore had 120 between Croton Point and Cold Spring on 20 January. John Askildsen had a count of over 90 between Croton Point and the Bear Mountain Bridge on 25 January, with another 50 at the Croton Reservoir, one mile from the Hudson.

John Haas found an odd looking gull 25 January at the Sullivan County Land Fill. After videotaping the gull and posting still shots on the Internet, the consensus was that the bird was a second winter "Nelson's Gull", a hybrid Glaucous x Herring Gull. It was relocated on 27 January. Two Glaucous Gulls visited the landfill in late December and at least six different Iceland Gulls visited there in December and January.

Tom Burke found a single **Razorbill** off Edith G. Read Sanctuary in Rye on 21 December. The next day was the Bronx-Westchester CBC. To everyone's surprise, an incredible westward movement of Razorbills was seen off the sound shore. A total of 116 was counted. Why that many were that far west in the sound is anybody's guess. Good vantage points included Edith Read Sanctuary, Milton Point and Larchmont. Another 23 were seen the following day off Edith Read. This is only the second record for Westchester County. The first sighting was way back in 1927, when Kassoy and Kuerzi reported one from near the same location on 11 December.

An Eastern Phoebe was present at the Bashakill Melrose Farm on 14 and 16 December. Possibly the same individual was at the same location on 16 February, indicating it was surviving the harsh winter. There were two other phoebe

sightings in early January: on the Pawling CBC and at Kakiat Park, Rockland County. Only two Northern Shrikes were reported, both in Sullivan County, one on 24 December and the other 29 January.

American Crow numbers were way down on the Bronx-Westchester CBC, with 820, the lowest since 1983 when 715 were counted. But to keep it in perspective, American Crow numbers in the late 1990s had reached all time highs.

Carolina Wrens were reported in good numbers even from the northern part of the Region. Both the Eastern and Southern Orange County CBCs reported 36 birds, and there were numerous reports from Sullivan County feeders.

Kristin Smith found a **Clay-colored Sparrow** in her Rhinebeck, Dutchess County, yard in early December and called members of the Ralph T. Waterman Bird Club. Allan and Barbara Michelin, Barbara Butler and Carena Pooth were able to confirm Kristin's identification. The bird remained through the season.

A male Pine Grosbeak was at a Liberty feeder on 3 February. It was the only report.

The Sullivan County "Big Year" ended with a total 219 species seen, with two new county records and five second records. The "Big Year" was used as a preparation for updating the Sullivan County checklist of birds.

Other notable sightings included: Red-necked Grebe, Northern Gannet, Greater White-fronted Goose, Pine Warbler, Ovenbird, Yellow-breasted Chat and Baltimore Oriole.

## CONTRIBUTORS

John Askildsen, John Balint, Beth Barker, Andrew Block, Michael Bochnik, Frank Bonanno, Arlene Borko, Tom Burke, Barbara Butler, Bill Case, Mary Collier, Renee Davis, Larry Federman, Tom Fiore, Richard Fitzgerald, Valerie Freer, John Haas, Lois Head, Kevin Holcomb, Rodney Johnson, Phyllis Jones, Steven Kahl, Jeff Lucas, Barbara Mansell, Liz Martens, Ed McAndrews, Allan & Barbara Michelin, Alan & Jan Peterson, Carena Pooth, Beverly Simone, Selden Spencer, Herb Thompson, Joe Weise, John Yrizarry.

## ABBREVIATIONS

BWCBC – Bronx-Westchester CBC; CPP – Croton Pt P; DCCBC – Dutchess County CBC; EGR – Edith G. Read Wildlife Sanctuary; EOCBC – Eastern Orange County CBC; LNP – Lenoir Nature Preserve; MLARCBC – Mohonk L/Ashokan Res CBC; PCBC – Peekskill CBC; RNC – Rye Nature Center; RTWBC – Ralph T. Waterman Bird Club; SCLF – Sullivan County Land Fill; SGNWR – Shawangunk Grasslands NWR; SOCBC – Southern Orange County CBC; WRNWR – Wallkill Ri NWR.

## LOONS – DUCKS

**Red-throated Loon:** 74 Long Island Sound 22 Dec (BWCBC), record count.

**Com. Loon:** max 14 Long Island Sound 22 Dec.

**Horned Grebe:** DCCBC 21 Dec.

**Red-necked Grebe:** Neversink Res 22 Dec (JH); EGR 22 Dec (BWCBC).

**N. Gannet:** EGR 22 Dec (BWCBC).

**Double-crested Cormorant:** EOCBC 14 Dec; DCCBC 21 Dec.

**Great Cormorant:** max 87 Long Island Sound 22 Dec.

**Great Blue Heron:** max 24 EGR 13 Dec.

**Black Vulture:** 119 SOCBC 21 Dec; Congers 27 Dec; Pawling 28 Jan; 5 Poughquag 9 Jan; 3 Verbank 11 Jan.

**Turkey Vulture:** 28 New Paltz 21 Dec; 29 SOCBC 21 Dec.

**Greater White-fronted Goose:** Upper Kay's Pd 21, 24 Dec (BM, LM, A&JP, JL).

**Snow Goose:** 400 Milbrook 4 Dec; 5000 migrating Fraleigh Hill; 400 Norrie Pt 9 Jan.

**Canada Goose:** 3867 EOCBC 14 Dec; 8043 SOCBC 21 Dec; 3602 DCCBC 21 Dec; 3724 S. WEST 22 Dec.

**Brant:** 7 EGR 22 Dec; 5 Larchmont 22 Dec.

**Canvasback:** low numbers all winter

**Redhead:** EGR 13 Jan.

**Ring-necked Duck:** 70 Beekman 13 Dec; 76 DCCBC 21 Dec.

**Greater Scaup:** 260 EGR 13 Dec, low; 4 Greenwood L 21 Dec; 4000 EGR 4 Jan; 5000 EGR 13 Jan.

**Lesser Scaup:** 4 EGR 8 Dec, low; 200 EGR 13 Jan.

**Surf Scoter:** EGR 22 Dec.

**White-winged Scoter:** 3 EGR 22 Dec.

**Long-tailed Duck:** max 20 EGR 13 Dec.

**Bufflehead:** max 40 EGR 7 Dec.

**Hooded Merganser:** max 68 EGR 8 Dec.

**Red-breasted Merganser:** high numbers on Long Island Sound; 260 EGR 7, 13 Dec; 200 EGR 2 Jan.

## HAWKS – ALCIDS

**Bald Eagle:** 9 L Tappan 10 Jan; 120 Hudson Ri 20 Jan (TF); 90 Hudson Ri 25 Jan (JA); 50 Croton Res 25 Jan (JA).

**N. Harrier:** 12 WRNWR 19 Dec; 19 SOCBC 21 Dec; 11 WRNWR 6 Jan.

**Rough-legged Hawk:** Claryville 7 Dec; Sylvan L 8 Dec; Rondout Res 9 Dec; 2-4 WRNWR 21 Dec thru; Rhinebeck 6 Jan; Red Hook 22 Jan; 1-3 CPP Jan thru; 1-2 SGNWR 15 Jan thru.

**Golden Eagle:** 3 Thompson Pd 29 Dec; 2 Mashomack DUTC 14 Jan; Cold Spring 20 Jan; 2 Stissing Mt 25 Jan; Roscoe 16 Feb.

**Merlin:** WRNWR 10 Dec (SK); S. WEST 22 Dec (BWCBC); Pine Plains 1 Jan (BM).

**Peregrine Falcon:** Mid-Hudson Bridge thru; EGR 22 Dec.

**Wild Turkey:** 47 MLARCBC 21 Dec, single flock.

**Clapper Rail:** MC 22 Dec.

**Virginia Rail:** 2 MC 22 Dec.

**Am. Coot:** 70 Sylvan L 8 Dec; 28 Greenwood L SOCBC 21 Dec; 35 DCCBC 21 Dec.

**Greater Yellowlegs:** 4 EGR 4 Dec; 2 EGR 2 Jan.

**Ruddy Turnstone:** Rye 1, 11 Jan.

**Purple Sandpiper:** 79 EGR 22 Dec; 13 Larchmont 22 Dec.

**Dunlin:** 18 Rye 22 Dec; 4 Larchmont 22 Dec.

**Bonaparte's Gull:** 97 Rye 22 Dec.

**Iceland Gull:** SCLF 14, 25 Dec, 11 Jan (JH); 3 SCLF 18 Jan (JH); Peekskill 20 Jan (TF).

**Lesser Black-backed Gull:** imm EGR 7 Dec (TB); EGR 22 Dec (BWCBC); SCLF 20, 25 Dec (JH); 2 ad SCLF 28 Dec (JH); imm SCLF 15 Jan (JH).

**Glaucous Gull:** Al Turi Land Fill 21 Dec (SOCBC); 1-2 SCLF 20, 24 Dec (JH, RD); Kiamesha L 16 Feb (VF, MC, BBa).  
**"Nelson's" Gull:** SCLF 25, 27 Dec (JH), *intro*.  
**RAZORBILL:** 1 EGR 21 Dec; 116 Long Island Sound 22 Dec (TB, mob); 26 EGR 23 Dec, *intro*.

#### DOVES – WOODPECKERS

**Barn Owl:** West Nyack 28 Jan.  
**Long-eared Owl:** Norrie Pt 8 Jan.  
**Short-eared Owl:** 2-6 SGNWR 1 Dec-2 Feb; 2-8 WRNWR 1 Dec-1 Feb.  
**Red-headed Woodpecker:** 4 EOCBC 14 Dec; Blue Chip Farm 5 Jan; Vanderbilt Mansion 5 Jan; Norrie Pt 8 Jan; 3 Esopus late Feb.  
**Red-bellied Woodpecker:** more numerous than Downy Woodpecker in S. WEST.

#### FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

**E. Phoebe:** near Bashakill 14, 16 Dec, 16 Feb; Pawling CBC 1 Jan; Kakiat P 5 Jan.  
**N. Shrike:** SULL 24 Dec; Bethel 29 Jan.  
**Horned Lark:** 50 Millbrook 4 Dec; 12 WRNWR 19 Dec; 119 Black Dirt Region SOCBC 21 Dec; 42 Millbrook 12 Jan; 40 Poughquag 1 Jan; 25 Verbank 12 Jan; 100 Red Hook 22 Jan.  
**Red-breasted Nuthatch:** very low numbers.  
**Marsh Wren:** Bashakill 8 Dec; 4 MC 22 Dec.

**E. Bluebird:** 106 SOCBC 21 Dec; 141 DCCBC 21 Dec.

**Hermit Thrush:** found on many CBCs.

**Am. Pipit:** 15 CPP 20, 25 Jan.

**Brown Thrasher:** 2 S. WEST 22 Dec.

#### WARBLERS

**Pine Warbler:** at feeder Congers 24, 26 Dec (FB).

**Ovenbird:** Mount Kisco PCBC 14 Dec.

**Yellow-breasted Chat:** Larchmont 22 Dec (BWCBC).

#### TANAGERS – WEAVERS

**CLAY-COLORED SPARROW:** Rhinebeck 12 Dec thru (KS, mob).

**Savannah Sparrow:** SGNWR 19 Dec.

**White-crowned Sparrow:** 31 Black Dirt Region SOCBC 21 Dec; many other reports.

**Snow Bunting:** EGR 7 Dec; EOCBC 14 Dec; Neversink Res 11 Jan; few CPP 20 Jan; 6 Red Hook 22 Jan.

**E. Meadowlark:** Youngsville 11 Dec.

**Rusty Blackbird:** 12 EOCBC 14 Dec; 7 Hastings-on-Hudson 22 Dec; 2 New Rochelle 22 Dec.

**Baltimore Oriole:** Greenburgh Nature Center 22 Dec (BWCBC).

**Pine Grosbeak:** m Liberty feeder 3 Feb (EM).

**Pine Siskin:** S. WEST 11 Dec.



## REGION 10 – MARINE

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After a series of unusually warm winters and a warm early December, we went back to the reality of subnormal cold and above normal snow. For the three months, temperatures were, respectively, 1.3°F, 4.6° and 4.5° below normal, with a season low 8° on 16 February. This season's average temperature was 10° below last year. Precipitation was very slightly above normal for December, half of normal for January, fifty percent above normal in February, with half of it in the form of snow. On 7 February, 5" fell. And an additional 19" fell on the 16-17th, for the fourth snowiest month on record. The warm early weather induced an unusual number of birds to stay far into the season and kept some for the entire winter. On the other hand, there were absolutely no northern finches, except for a very few isolated Pine Siskins.

On 14 December, a **Pacific Loon** in basic plumage was found by Tom Burke, Gail Benson and Bob Shriber at Camp Hero on the Montauk CBC. It was subsequently seen there and at the point by others on 24, 27 and 28 December. On 28 December, Guy Tudor saw a **Greater Shearwater** sail in toward Montauk Point before returning out to sea. This is a very late record.

A **Least Bittern**, apparently hit by a car "somewhere in East Hampton" on 25 February, was turned over to a local rehabilitator. There have been less than half a dozen prior winter records. On 27 February, Andy Baldelli saw a **Black Vulture** in Riverhead.

The "Eurasian" form of Green-winged Teal was reported this winter at Short's Pond in Watermill from early December to mid February, on the Brooklyn CBC at Spring Creek 21 December, on the West Pond at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge into early January, on the Southern Nassau CBC 29 December and on Kellis Pond in Bridgehampton where there were two on 2 February and one on 9 February.

A Semipalmated Plover, very rare in winter, was reported on the Captree CBC 15 December. Several Willets were in the Jones Inlet area, seen both from the Coast Guard Station and from the Point Lookout side: two on 10 December, one on 29 December and two on 5 January. Although uncommon to rare in winter, Red Knots were virtually absent from the Region this season. A single bird was found on the Montauk CBC 14 December and another at Great Kills Park, Staten Island, on 19 January. However, on 21 December there were 18+ at the inlet jetty Jones Beach West End. Long-billed Dowitchers wintered at the Massapequa Preserve,

with other reports from the Marine Nature Study Area in Oceanside in January and five in Mastic at the Forge River on 15 February.

On 13 December, the day before the Montauk CBC, Hugh McGuinness, Bryan Pfeiffer, Peter Polshek, Brian Kane and Patrick Santinello watched a **Great Skua** cruise by the Montauk Point lighthouse. The next day a Great Skua (the same?) was found sitting on the beach at Hither Hills State Park by Betsy McCully and Joe Giunta. It stayed for an hour, allowing several counters to see it before it flew west and disappeared. On the Southern Nassau CBC, 29 December, 2 Forster's Terns were seen, but not thereafter.

Reports of alcids included a **Thick-billed Murre** seen in Gerritsen Creek off Marine Park by Eric Salzman and Valerie Helton on the Brooklyn CBC 21 December and another, reported by Robert Kurtz, was seen at Montauk Point 3 February and sporadically for the next two weeks. A **Black Guillemot** was seen at Lake Montauk inlet on the Montauk CBC 14 December. On a pelagic trip to Hudson Canyon on 7 December, John Haas, *et al* saw an **Atlantic Puffin** in NY waters.

While walking the dog in Peconic on 4 December, Lester Feldman found a **Common Raven** sitting on a utility pole crossbar. A **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** was found on the Sagaponack CBC 15 December. This species was last seen in winter on the Central Suffolk CBC 27 December 1986. A **Wood Thrush** continued in Central Park and was last seen by Tom Fiore on the Lower Hudson CBC 15 December. On 10 February, a **Varied Thrush** appeared in Ridge at a feeder. It remained until 20 February.

Nashville Warblers found on four CBCs to 21 December is a state high for the winter. The **Hermit (or Hermit x Townsend's hybrid) Warbler** found at the end of last season continued to 1 December. An **Ovenbird**, very rare in winter, remained in Central Park to 5 December and on 26 January one was found at Montauk Point along the dirt road north of the concession stand. A **Northern Waterthrush**, also very rare in winter, continued in Central Park through the Lower Hudson CBC 15 December.

On 15 December on the Queens CBC, Seth Ausubel found a *Spizella* sparrow in the dunes near the Atlantic Beach inlet jetties. Not completely sure of the identification because of poor viewing conditions (rain and fog), he returned the next day and verified that it was a **Clay-colored Sparrow**. A NYSARC report has been submitted. There are two prior winter records, from Suffolk County. **Grasshopper Sparrows**, extremely rare in winter, were found on the Montauk CBC at Turtle Cove just west of the lighthouse on 14 December and on the Sagaponack CBC 15 December. The Montauk bird was also seen 18 January and another was seen 15 February in a roadside flock of sparrows near the entrance to Gilgo Beach.

Stu Lipkin found a **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** at a feeder in Harbor Hills Sanctuary in Lake Success 14 December on the Queens CBC. While there are records in November and December, there appear to be none in recent years in



Region 10. Then another was reported later in the season at Woodlawn Cemetery in The Bronx on 6 February by Starr Saphir and Dorothy Poole. Neither bird exhibited characteristics that might indicate the rarer Black-headed Grosbeak. A male **Painted Bunting** appeared at a feeder in East Shoreham in mid December and remained to late February. It was not reported at the time, but photos were taken and the identification was confirmed.

There are 14 Christmas counts, including portions of two which overlap NY and NJ, that cover our Region. Virtually our entire Region and all its habitats are accounted for. The total number of species reported this year was 182, plus two count period birds. Several counts exceeded 130 species. Not all of these species were seen again once the New Year started.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

APP – Alley Pd P; CLP – Clove L P, SI; CP – Central P; FBF – Floyd Bennett Field; FI – Fire I; FP – Forest P; FTT – Fort Tilden QUEE; GKP – Great Kills P, SI; HLSP – Hempstead L SP; HP – Hook Pd, Southampton; JBCH – Jones Beach; JBWE – Jones Beach West End; JBWR – Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge; LI – Long Island; MAP – Massapequa Preserve; MEB – Mecox Bay; MNSA – Marine Nature Study Area, Oceanside; MOR – Moriches; MP – Montauk Pt; NYRBA – New York Rare Bird Alert; PEL – Pelagic trip to Hudson Canyon; PL – Pt Lookout side Jones Inlet; PP – Prospect P; RMSP – Robert Moses SP; SHIN – Shinnecock Inlet; SI – Staten I; VCP – Van Cortlandt Park BRON.

## CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT DESIGNATIONS

(These four letter identifiers are the official assigned codes as used in the *American Birds* Christmas Count Issue). NJLH – Lower Hudson 15 Dec; NYBR – Brooklyn 21 Dec; NYBW – Bronx-Westchester 22 Dec; NYCA – Captree 15

Dec; NYCS – Central Suffolk Co 21 Dec; NYMK – Montauk 14 Dec; NYNN – Northern Nassau Co 21 Dec; NYOR – Orient 28 Dec; NYQU – Queens 14 Dec; NYQW – Quogue-Watermill 14 Dec; NYSG – Sagaponack 15 Dec; NYSI – Staten Island 14 Dec; NYSM – Smithtown 27 Dec; NYSN – Southern Nassau Co 29 Dec.

### LOONS – DUCKS

**Red-throated Loon:** 2935 NYMK 14 Dec, Reg high.

**PACIFIC LOON:** Camp Hero NYMK 14 Dec (TB *et al.*), then there or at MP 24, 27, 28 Dec.

**Red-necked Grebe:** 5 on 4 CBCs; number increased at end of season.

**Eared Grebe:** s of Montauk Village 18-19 Jan; w end T Montauk 25 Jan; PL 15 Feb thru.

**N. Fulmar:** PEL 7 Dec.

**Greater Shearwater:** PEL 7 Dec (JH, BF); MP 28 Dec (GT), a very late record.

**Great Cormorant:** expanding in Reg, approaching Double-crested numbers; 300-400 on CBCs; scattered throughout.

**LEAST BITTERN:** picked up on road East Hampton (still alive) 25 Feb; less than 6 prior winter records.

**Great Blue Heron:** total 600+ on all CBCs; max 127 NYCA; 115 NYSN; half the CBCs exceeded previous highs.

**Great Egret:** 16 on 8 CBCs, high for winter.

**Snowy Egret:** NYSN 29 Dec, only report.

**Tricolored Heron:** 2 NYSN 29 Dec, only report.

**BLACK VULTURE:** Riverhead 27 Feb (AB).

**Turkey Vulture:** CP 6 Dec; NYCS 21 Dec; NYBR 21 Dec; Old Field 10 Jan; Middle Island 12 Jan; Hampton Bay 17 Jan; CP 17 Jan; SI 19 Jan; Hither Hills 20 Jan; Babylon 27 Jan; PP 14 Feb; 1 or more seem to have wintered on eastern LI.

**Greater White-fronted Goose:** 7 on 3 CBCs; most of these birds wintered.

**Canada “Richardson’s” Goose:** HLSP 15 Dec; NYSG 15 Dec; 3 MEB

9 Feb.

**Brant:** “black” intermediate-type race FBF 25 Jan.

**BARNACLE GOOSE:** HLSP 15 Dec; Baiting Hollow 19 Jan-20 Feb; the usual question of origin.

**Tundra Swan:** 2-5 wintered eastern LI.

**Wood Duck:** est. 75 on 9 CBCs; quantity and distribution represent a significant increase in winter birds.

**Eurasian Wigeon:** 4 on 4 CBCs.

**Green-winged “Eurasian” Teal:** Short’s Pond Watermill, early Dec-mid Feb; NYBR at Spring Creek 21 Dec; West Pd JBWR into early Jan; NYSN in Oceanside 29 Dec; 2 Kellis Pd Bridgehampton 2 Feb, 1 on 9 Feb.

**Tufted Duck:** Cooper’s Neck Pd, Southampton 11 Jan (JA, WT).

**Harlequin Duck:** 5 PL; 1-2 MP; several others.

**Barrow’s Goldeneye:** Bayville 19 Dec thru; MEB 11 Jan.

### HAWKS – ALCIDS

**Osprey:** count week NYQU mid Dec.

**Bald Eagle:** sub-ad Riverside P 15 Dec; 8 on ice flows in Hudson River from upper Manhattan 29 Jan. The balance of sightings from the east end of LI may be just the same two wintering birds; imm South Haven County P 4 Dec; Poxabogue 13 Dec; ad, imm Gardiners I 14 Dec; NYSG 15 Dec; along Carmens Ri 15 Dec; imm Napeague 6 Jan; imm Watermill 27 Jan; Southaven County P 25 Jan; Major’s Harbor Mashomack 12 Feb; ad, imm on the ice from South Ferry Shelter I 13 Feb; 3rd yr imm feeding on ice Swan Pd 26 Feb.

**N. Harrier:** 168 on 11 CBCs; widespread and reasonably abundant for a species with breeding problems.  
**Red-tailed Hawk:** est. 350 on all 14 CBCs; this large raptor is doing well.  
**Rough-legged Hawk:** 11 on 4 CBCs, all from east end LI.  
**Am. Kestrel:** approx. 30 on CBCs; about the same as 5 years ago.  
**Merlin:** approx 35 on CBCs; slightly more abundant this winter than the past, totals now exceeding Am. Kestrel.  
**N. Bobwhite:** 39 on 4 CBCs; missed on NYCS first time ever; the accelerated decline of this species started about 10 years ago; it is a species in trouble on LI.  
**Virginia Rail:** 10 on 8 CBCs; more common than Clapper Rails in winter.  
**Semipalmated Plover:** NYCA 15 Dec, very rare in winter.  
**Am. Oystercatcher:** 64 JBWE 8 Dec; 12 NYSN 29 Dec; 5 remaining in Jones Inlet 5 Jan, single 23 Feb.  
**Lesser Yellowlegs:** MAP to 5 Jan, rare in winter.  
**Willet:** 2 Jones Inlet 10 Dec, 5 Jan; 1 Jones Inlet 29 Dec; rare in winter.  
**HUDSONIAN GODWIT:** east end Hook Pd 5 Jan (*fide* HMG), NYSARC report requested; unprecedented date.  
**Red Knot:** NYMK 14 Dec; north end Great Kills P SI 19 Jan; 18+ JBWE 21 Dec; normally rare in winter, rarer yet this winter.  
**Purple Sandpiper:** while seen on rocks and jetties in usual places throughout, only single digit numbers except for 24 at Atlantic Beach.  
**Long-billed Dowitcher:** wintered MAP; MNSA in Jan; 5 Forge Ri Mastic 15 Feb; rare in winter.  
**Red Phalarope:** PEL7 Dec (JH, BF).  
**GREAT SKUA:** MP 13 Dec (HMG *et al*); then NYMK 14 Dec.  
**Laughing Gull:** NYSG 15 Dec; CP 22 Jan thru.  
**Little Gull:** JBWE inlet 8 Dec, then sporadically on PL side; L Montauk NYMK 14 Dec; MP 26 Dec; increase

to 2 PL 5 Jan; Captree SP 17 Jan thru; SHIN mid Feb thru; 2 Breezy Pt 23 Feb with other gulls attracted by major clam kill.

**Black-headed Gull:** 3 on 3 CBCs; most reliably found on falling tide at PL.

**Iceland Gull:** 4 on 4 CBCs.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull:** on 1 CBC; after a surge in abundance, has become quite scarce in early winter; became more abundant later in season.

**Glaucous Gull:** 4 on 3 CBCs.

**Black-legged Kittiwake:** PEL7 Dec; 57 NYMK 14 Dec; 303 NYSG 15 Dec.

**Forster's Tern:** NYSN 29 Dec.

**Dovekie:** PEL7 Dec (JH, BF); sporadically along the South Shore from Breezy Pt to MP.

#### **THICK-BILLED MURRE:**

Gerritsen Creek off Marine Park NYBR 21 Dec (ES, VH); MP 3 Feb and sporadically for next two weeks.

**Razorbill:** PEL7 Dec; 1024 on 8 CBCs, mostly at Montauk; large numbers widely distributed, most gone by mid-winter; 1 in LI Sound off Sands Pt NYNN 21 Dec.

**BLACK GUILLEMOT:** L Montauk Inlet NYMK 14 Dec.

**ATLANTIC PUFFIN:** PEL 7 Dec (JH, BF, mob).

#### **DOVES – WOODPECKERS**

**Barn Owl:** 4 on 3 CBCs; is found mostly in inaccessible areas and may possibly be less uncommon than it appears.

**E. Screech-Owl:** 72 on 8 CBCs.

**Great Horned Owl:** 36 on 10 CBCs.

**Snowy Owl:** JBWE 9 Dec; RMSP 10 Dec; JBSP 21 Dec, 13 Jan, 16-23 Feb; Cow Neck in North Sea 23 Jan; Calverton 21-22 Feb.

**Barred Owl:** CP 24-26 Dec (TF), very rare anywhere in Reg.

**Long-eared Owl:** 6 on 3 CBCs.

**Short-eared Owl:** 7 on 5 CBCs.

**N. Saw-whet Owl:** 3 on 2 CBCs; now less common in winter.

**Red-bellied Woodpecker:** est. 500 on all 14 CBCs; successful expansion.

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** est. 40 on 12 CBCs; probably a winter high for the Reg.

#### FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

**E. Phoebe:** widespread; CP 1 Dec; NYNN Dec 21; NYCS count week; VCP 21 Dec- 9 Jan; Bronx P/Zoo 24 Dec; APP 26 Dec; HLSP on NYSN 29 Dec; GKP 19 Jan; **8** widely scattered Riverdale BRON 3 Feb.

**Western Kingbird:** Mount Loretto P SI thru 7 Dec.

**COMMON RAVEN:** Peconic 4 Dec (LF).

**Tree Swallow:** PL JBWE area to mid Jan; a few others to mid Jan.

**Red-breasted Nuthatch:** 24 scattered over 9 CBCs; unusually scarce this winter.

**BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER:** NYSG 15 Dec, last seen in winter NYCS 27 Dec 1986.

**WOOD THRUSH:** CP thru 15 Dec.

**VARIED THRUSH:** Ridge feeder 10-20 Feb.

#### WARBLERS

**Orange-crowned Warbler:** 15 on 9 CBCs; rare but regular in winter; number undoubtedly a record winter high for state.

**Nashville Warbler:** CP to 15 Dec; Amagansett 8 Dec; NYQU 14 Dec; NYSG 15 Dec; Eastport/East Moriches area of NYCS 21 Dec; a high number for winter.

**HERMIT (or Hermit x Townsend's hybrid) WARBLER:** thru 1 Dec.

**Pine Warbler:** 6 Calverton 4 Dec; 6 on 4 CBCs; Manorville feeder 12 Dec on; APP 23 Jan; Sunken Meadow SP 2nd-3rd week Jan; APP 23 Jan; exceptional numbers this winter.

**Palm Warbler:** 21 on 6 CBCs.

**Ovenbird:** CP to 5 Dec; MP 26 Jan, few have survived this late.

**N. Waterthrush:** CP to 15 Dec (TF), rare in winter.

**Com. Yellowthroat:** CP to 15 Dec; VCP 22 Dec-9 Jan.

**Yellow-breasted Chat:** 7 on 5 CBCs.

#### TANAGERS – WEAVERS

**Chipping Sparrow:** 25 on 10 CBCs; number and distribution high for this uncommon wintering species; **26** Grumman facility in Calverton 12 Jan (AG, TWB).

**CLAY-COLORED SPARROW:** Atlantic Beach inlet jetties 15-16 Dec (SA), 3rd winter record, 2 previous were from SUFF.

**GRASSHOPPER SPARROW:** NYMK 14 Dec; NYSG 15 Dec; Gilgo 15 Feb; extremely rare in winter.

**Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow:** NYSG 15 Dec; MNSA, wintered.

**Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow:** Accabonac Harbor 8 Dec; NYBR 21 Dec; 2 NYSM 27 Dec.

**Seaside Sparrow:** NYQW 14 Dec; up to 6 seen Shinnecock during Jan.

**Lapland Longspur:** small numbers JBWE, RMSP, Riverhead sod fields, others.

**Snow Bunting:** less common and smaller flocks this year.

**Rose-breasted Grosbeak:** Harbor Hills Sanctuary in Lake Success NYQU 14 Dec (SL); Woodlawn Cemetery BRON 6 Feb (StS, DP).

**PAINTED BUNTING:** at feeder East Shoreham mid Dec to late Feb, *intro*.

**Dickcissel:** s of Sag Harbor 17 Jan-8 Feb.

**Rusty Blackbird:** 207 on 9 CBCs.

**Baltimore Oriole:** CP 10, 12 Dec; NYSG 15 Dec; CP 25 Dec; Park Pl & Sixth Ave KING 8 Jan.

**Pine Siskin:** several CP feeders to mid Jan; Riverdale 22 Dec; a few others.

## STANDARD ABBREVIATIONS

Regional rarities appear in BOLD; county names are shortened to their first four letters and appear in UPPER CASE letters; months are shortened to their first three letters. In species accounts: number of individuals omitted implies that one individual was reported; ! - details seen by Regional Editor; ad - adult; Alt - Alternate plumage; Am. - American; arr - arrival or first of season; BBS - Breeding Bird Survey; BOTS - bird of the season; CBC - Christmas Bird Count; CO - confirmed nesting; Com. - Common; E. - Eastern; FL - fledgling; FY -adult feeding young; I - Island; imm - immature; intro - see introduction to report; juv - juvenile; L - Lake; max - maximum; mob - multiple observers; N. - Northern; NYSDEC - New York State Department of Environmental Conservation; NWR - National Wildlife Refuge; NYSARC - report to New York State Avian Records Committee; P -park; Pd- Pond; ph - photographed; Pt -Point; Res - Reservoir;Ri - River; SP - State Park; spm - specimen; subad -subadult; T - Town of; thru - throughout period; Twn - township; W. - Western; WMA - Wildlife Management Area; y - young.

## REPORTING REGIONS

Regional boundaries coincide with county lines, except at:

**Region 1-Region 2** in Orleans, Genesee and Wyoming Counties:

the boundary is NY Route 98 from Pt. Breeze to Batavia;  
NY Route 63 from Batavia to Pavilion, and NY Route 19  
from Pavilion to the Allegany County line.

**Region 2-Region 3** in Ontario County:

the boundary is Mud Creek to NY Route 64, NY Route 64  
from Bristol Center to S. Bristol Springs, and Route 21  
from S. Bristol Springs to the Yates County line.

**Region 3-Region 5** in Cayuga County:

the boundary is NY Route 31.

## REPORTING DEADLINES

**Winter Season:** December, January, February

Deadline is 7 March

**Spring Season:** March, April, May

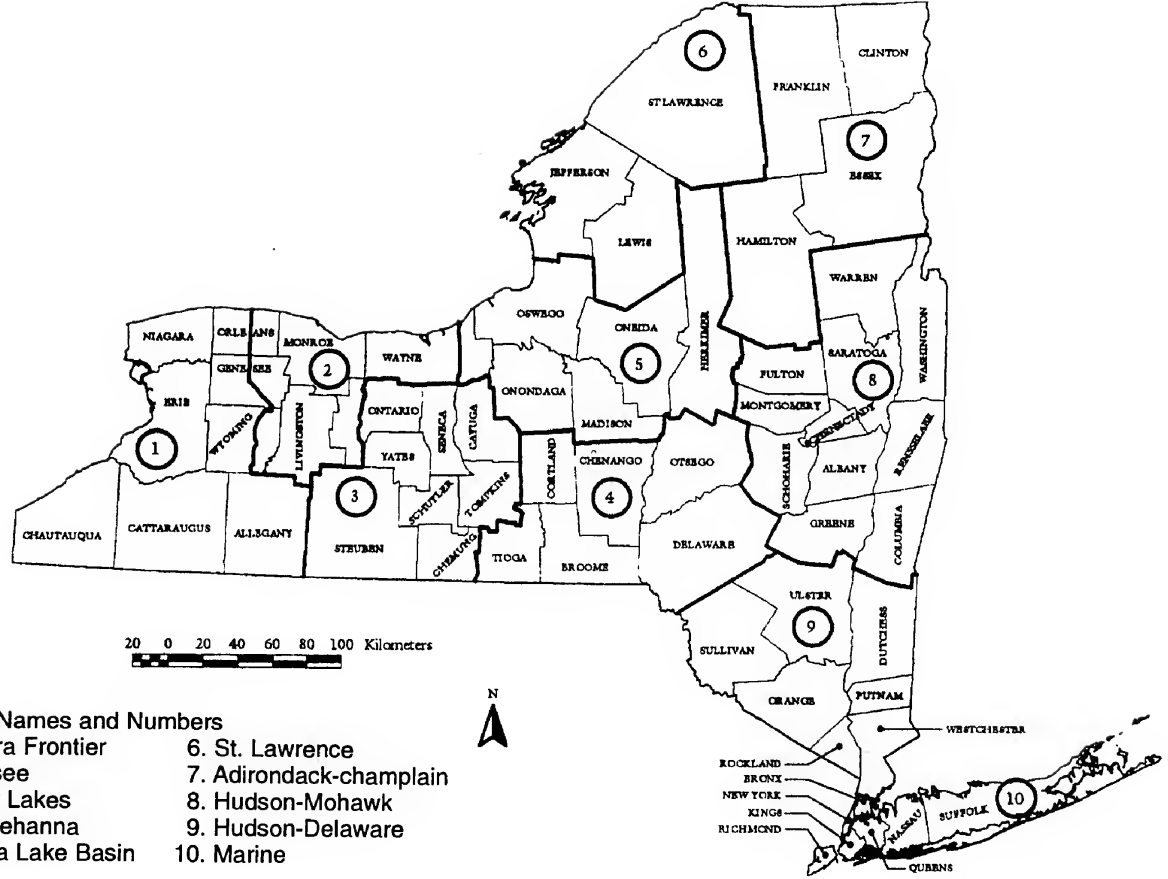
Deadline is 7 June

**Summer Season:** June, July, August

Deadline is 7 September

**Fall Season:** September, October, November

Deadline is 7 December



- Region Names and Numbers**
- |                      |                         |
|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Niagara Frontier  | 6. St. Lawrence         |
| 2. Genesee           | 7. Adirondack-champlain |
| 3. Finger Lakes      | 8. Hudson-Mohawk        |
| 4. Susquehanna       | 9. Hudson-Delaware      |
| 5. Oneida Lake Basin | 10. Marine              |

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