

The

KINGBIRD

Federation of
New York State
Bird Clubs, Inc.

Vol. 54 No. 2

June 2004



THE KINGBIRD (ISSN 0023-1606), published quarterly (March, June, September, December), is a publication of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, Inc., which has been organized to further the study of bird life and to disseminate knowledge thereof, to educate the public in the need for conserving natural resources, and to document the ornithology of the State and maintain the official Checklist of the Birds of New York State.

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Figure 1 – Hildreth Feeder ©Jody Hildreth

REDPOLLS IN CENTRAL NEW YORK WINTER 2003 - 2004

Jody Hildreth

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The Common Redpoll (*Carduelis flammea*) can be found most winters in New York State. Some years, this species is abundant, with individual flocks numbering in the hundreds, sometimes into the thousands!! The winter of 2003-04 was such a year. In contrast, the Hoary Redpoll (*C. hornemanni*) is a very rare winter visitant with numbers usually in single digits (Levine 1998).

The Hoary Redpoll is on the review list of birds to be reported to NYSARC if seen anywhere in the state, and is divided into two subspecies: *hornemanni* and *exilipes*. All accepted records of Hoary Redpoll in NYS accrue to the subspecies *exilipes*.

According to NYSARC records there have been five winters since 1981 when Hoary Redpolls have been reported. Keep in mind these are only reports that were submitted to NYSARC, which means there were undoubtedly more sightings than what this data reflects:

1981/82	12 accepted records
1993/94	7 accepted records
1995/96	5 accepted records
1997/98	10 accepted records
1999/2000	10 accepted records

At least 8 documented Hoary Redpolls were seen at my feeders in Waterville, NY between January and March of 2004. Hoary Redpolls were also reported widely throughout New York State with at least 32 individuals being reported on several birding listservs. It will be interesting to see how many of these get reported to NYSARC.

Attracting Redpolls

The first Common Redpoll made a solo appearance on 18 Dec 2003. Each week more redpolls were added, peaking in early February when we had over 1000 finches at our feeders with seventy-five percent of them being redpolls and the rest mostly American Goldfinches. Numbers were estimated by printing a large digital picture of the flock and then crossing individual birds off with a magic marker. We have been feeding birds for ten years now and we have never come close to having a flock this size before.

So why did they come to our feeders? One answer might be our location. We are on the edge of a small town with a large state forest about a mile away from us. There are many open farm fields all around us as well. In November I built a crude bird feeder out of some lumber left over from a home renovation project. It consisted of a 2 ft. by 3ft. platform tray, a roof over the tray, two

hanging tube feeders above this roof, and two suet feeders hanging off each side of the tube feeders. Although not as aesthetically pleasing as are most store bought feeders, this homemade model served its purpose well. Except for the suet, the feeders were filled exclusively with black-oil sunflower seeds.

Obviously, one thousand birds could not feed effectively from a feeder this size. I had two strategies for attracting large numbers of birds to our yard; scattering seed and keeping the ground clear. Each morning after filling the feeder I would scatter seeds in a ten foot circle (Fig. 1). Anytime we received a significant snowfall I would snowblow a path to the feeders as well as clear the area where I scattered seed. This created a hard ground surface for the seed. Otherwise, seed falling on freshly fallen snow disappears and becomes difficult for birds to find and eat easily. The snowblowing also served another purpose. It helped throw the scattered seed in a larger area, including a small woodlot near the feeder. This created even more surface area where the redpolls could feed. During February I was putting out an average of five gallons of seed each day. By the end of the winter the birds had gone through 500 pounds of sunflower seed.

Redpoll Behavior at the Feeders

Anyone who has observed a flock of redpolls knows that they are quite energetic and at the feeders they are constantly in motion. They would start gathering in the tops of tall trees in a small woodlot adjacent to our house. Gradually they would move lower into the lilac branches that were just a few feet from the feeders. Finally, following the lead of one seemingly brave bird, they would descend onto the feeders and ground looking like large drops of water dripping from the branches. Once on the ground the redpolls made small but frequent movements as they sorted through the seeds. The flock would feed in this incessant manner until something startled them: a car driving by the house, our furnace kicking on, or a Mourning Dove landing at the feeders. The startled flock would find quick cover in a small woodlot only to return to the feeders within a few minutes. This pattern of feeding would continue throughout the day only to be broken by a hunting accipiter. The numbers would peak in the morning then gradually decrease as the day went on. The last few redpolls would make their final appearance with about two hours of sunlight left.

Other sources mention that Hoary Redpolls display aggressive behavior towards Common Redpolls (Czaplak 1995). I did not observe this at our feeders. In fact, I observed the Common Redpolls being more aggressive. On one occasion, a male Common Redpoll landed near a feeding male House Finch. The House Finch had an entire sunflower seed in its bill which caught the eye of the Common Redpoll. A mini tug of war ensued which lasted for about 15 seconds with the Common Redpoll winning.

Redpolls are also vocal while feeding. However this cannot be realized while watching in warmth from behind windows. One day I sat in a chair on the edge of the scattered seed. Redpolls came within a foot of me as the flock gave soft *tip* notes in complete surround sound. When the flock was startled and flew to the safety of the tall trees they would often give a wiry ascending *tweweee*.

Separating Hoary from Common Redpoll

On 7 Jan 2004 I noticed one bird that looked 'different' than the others. I have always been skeptical of Hoary Redpoll sightings because most sightings were backed up with few details except to note an overall frosted appearance. The bird I was looking at certainly did look much whiter than any I had ever seen before, but I had my doubts.

Fortunately I had been practicing digiscoping and immediately got my camera set up (Nikon Coolpix 995 and a Pentax PF80). Through our windows I managed to get some poor quality pictures which I posted to the Oneidabirds listserv and asked for people's opinions.. Everyone who responded was in agreement that the bird was indeed a Hoary Redpoll. Over the next several weeks, in the company of other birders, I had the opportunity to study Hoary Redpolls many times.

What are the best ways to identify the Hoary Redpoll in a flock of constantly moving redpolls? The first key is to find a bird that is much paler/whiter than any other redpoll. This alone does not indicate that you have a Hoary Redpoll. It merely indicates that you may be on the right path. Next you need to note a few key field marks, and hope the bird cooperates during this process. After personal observations and discussions with other New York birders, I believe the two crucial field marks are the bill structure and the lack of streaking on the undertail coverts. The bill structure, for many birders, is considered the most important field mark since a species' skeletal structure has less variation than its plumage. In comparison with Common Redpoll, Hoary Redpoll's bill is shorter and has a pushed in look. The undertail coverts of a Hoary Redpoll should be unstreaked, but some sources say there can be overlap with a single streak. (Sibley 2000, Czaplak 1995)

Other field marks that should help support the identification:

Flank streaking – greatly reduced in length and number in Hoary

Rump – should be unstreaked in Hoary

Breast – In Hoary ,a pale frosted pink in males, white in females

Cream color in face – more pronounced than in Common

Identifying a Hoary Redpoll positively can be excruciatingly difficult. If you believe you have discovered a Hoary Redpoll, get pictures of it regardless of the quality. Then ask other birders for their impression of the bird. As I have discovered, other birders may notice field marks that at first went unnoticed.

Variation in a Flock

At one time our flock of redpolls swelled to over 700 birds. With a flock this large it did not take long to realize there is a myriad of variation between individual redpolls. Before discussing variations between Common Redpolls, it is important to understand the molting cycle of the redpoll. Redpolls molt once a year, at the end of the breeding season. As the winter months pass, the edges of the feathers wear away causing birds to appear darker and males to reveal more

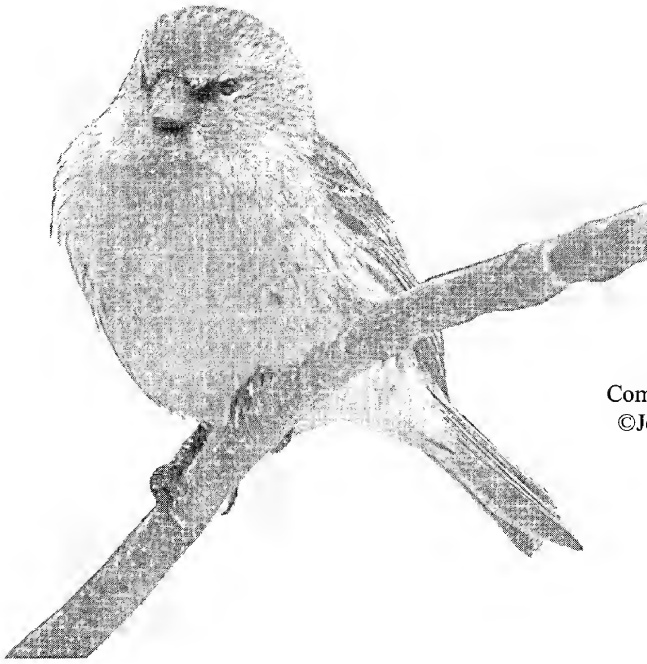


Figure 2
Common Redpoll
©Jody Hildreth

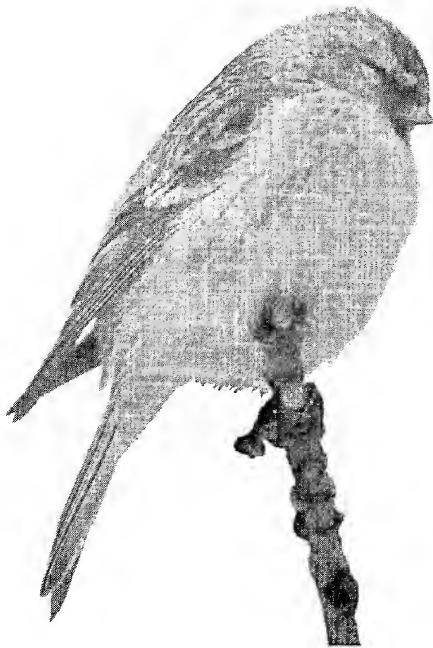


Figure 3
Hoary Redpoll
©Jody Hildreth

pink in the breast.(Czaplak 1995) Compounding the problem of feather wear is the fact that a typical flock of Common Redpolls contains four types of birds: adult male, adult female, juvenile male, and juvenile female.

A large flock of Common Redpolls in New York has the potential of containing Hoary Redpolls. A problem with identification is that juvenile Hoaries can look similar to Commons. In my observations, I saw several dark birds that had a strongly pushed in bill. However, it was nearly impossible to study these birds further as they were active and impossible to relocate since they showed no other obvious field marks that would distinguish them from the other birds in the flock. I do believe there were juvenile Hoary Redpolls in the flock of birds that visited our yard, but it is impossible to verify without good photographic documentation.

Many birders who visited our feeders were amazed at the variation in the redpolls. Several birds were studied closely since they showed some characteristics of Hoary Redpoll, but did not exhibit enough field marks to make a positive identification. For example, (Fig.2) is of a Common Redpoll. While the bird exhibits greatly reduced flank streaking and clean undertail coverts, the bill is too large and the red in the breast too pronounced.

Number of Hoary Redpolls in Waterville

After close study and many photographs, I have identified eight different Hoary Redpolls at our feeder this winter. The first two were females with greatly reduced flank streaking (Fig.3). These two looked so identical that had I not seen both of them at the same moment I would have believed there was only one. Accompanying these were two males, each of which showed extremely pale pink in the breast, but different amounts of streak flanking making it possible to distinguish between the two. I photographed another bird that at first I thought was a female which later turned out to be a male that was just beginning to acquire a pale pink wash on its breast These five birds disappeared when the snow melted in late February, but a new group appeared in mid-March. The first was a female easily identified by an unusual cap: only a quarter of it was red while the rest was a dark brown. Finally, on 25 Mar two extremely white individuals made a one-day appearance.

Fig. 4 shows a comparison of the two species highlighting obvious specific differences in optimum individuals.

What's More Fun: Watching the Birds or the Birders?

It was a joy to have the constant motion of redpolls outside our family room window this winter, but even more so was the joy of hosting so many birders from around the state and as far away as Maryland. It gave me a chance to put a face to so many names I only read in e-mails, listen to so many birding tales, and the opportunity to compare field marks in a live setting. Birding is always more enjoyable when you share it with someone else.

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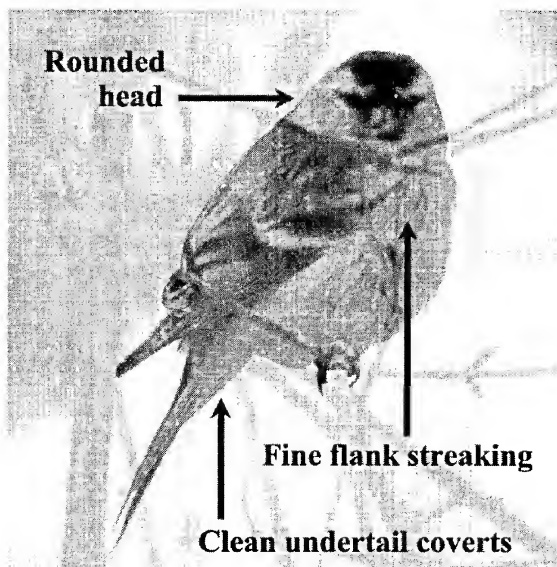


Figure 4
Hoary Redpoll
©Jody Hildreth

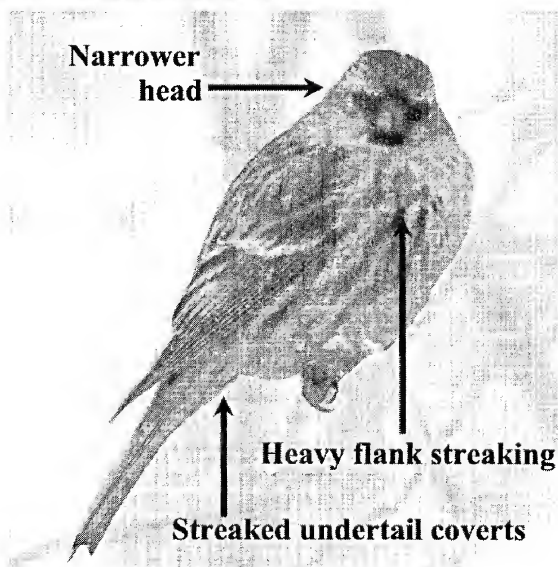


Figure 4
Common Redpoll
©Jody Hildreth

POTENTIAL IMPACTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE ON THE SUMMER DISTRIBUTIONS OF NEW YORK'S PASSERINE BIRDS

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Introduction

Water vapor, carbon dioxide (CO₂), methane, and other trace gases in the Earth's atmosphere act much like the glass in a greenhouse, helping to retain heat by trapping and absorbing infrared radiation. This "greenhouse effect" acts to keep the Earth's surface temperature significantly warmer than it would otherwise be, allowing life, as we know it, to exist. However, since pre-industrial times, there have been significant increases in the amount of these greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. The current levels of the two primary greenhouse gases are now greater than at any time during at least the past 420,000 years and are well outside of the bounds of natural variability (IPCC 2001).

Accompanying the increases in greenhouse gases has been an increase in temperature. The annual global mean temperature is now 1.1°F (0.6°C) above that recorded at the beginning of the century. Limited data from other sources indicates that the global mean temperature for the 20th century is at least as warm as any other period since approximately 1400 AD (IPCC 1996, 2001). And, ***"There is new and stronger evidence that most of the warming observed over the last 50 years is attributable to human activities"*** (IPCC 2001). These activities include the burning of fossil fuels, increases in agriculture and other land use changes (such as deforestation).

Increases in greenhouse gases (past and projected), coupled with the length of time these gases remain in the atmosphere are expected to cause a continued increase in global temperatures. Models based on various scenarios for population growth, economic well being, improvements in technology, and fossil fuel use project annual average temperature increases in New York of 7-13°F (3.9-7.2°C) in winter and 7-14°F (3.9-7.8°C) in summer by 2100 (Kling et al. 2003).

"Recent regional changes in climate, particularly increases in temperature, have already affected hydrological systems and terrestrial and marine ecosystems in many parts of the world" (IPCC 2001). For example, there have been changes in growing season, earlier spring green-up and earlier arrival and breeding in some birds (Root et al. 2003). The global average sea level has risen by 4-8 inches due to a combination of thermal expansion of the oceans and melting of land ice (IPCC 2001). If these changes have been observed with only a small rise (1°F) in the global average temperature, what might happen if temperatures continue to rise? In addition to rising temperatures, many climate

models also project an overall increase in evaporation - leading to increases in precipitation (mostly in storms) but also to overall declines in soil moisture. Shifts in the timing of precipitation and snowmelt are also possible. Even after emissions are reduced, CO₂ concentrations, temperature and sea level will all continue to rise for a period ranging from decades/centuries (CO₂ stabilization, temperature rise) to millennia (sea-level rise). Thus, climate change will likely have a continuing impact on New York's birds and their habitats.

Projected habitat changes

As the climate changes so will plant and animal distributions. In general, the geographic range of North American plants and animals will tend to shift poleward and/or upwards in elevation in response to temperature changes. It is very unlikely that plant and animal species will respond in the same manner to climate change. The best available evidence from paleoclimatic studies, models and observations suggests that each plant and animal species will move independently. Thus, communities as we now know them will look different in the future. Indeed, there is evidence indicating that many ecosystems have already begun to change in response to observed climatic changes (Root et al. 2003).

Thus, there could potentially be major changes in the suitable climates of many vegetative communities in New York occurring over the next 75-100 years. Models estimate that climate suitable for maple-beech-birch forests will potentially become more suitable for oak-hickory forests (NAST 2000). Models also project the potential complete loss of species like balsam fir, red pine, northern white cedar and bigtooth aspen; potential major declines in the extent of eastern white pine, sugar maple, paper birch, and quaking aspen; and potential eventual gain or spread of species like Virginia and shortleaf pine, flowering dogwood and yellow poplar (Iverson et al. 1999).

As many tree species are long-lived and migrate slowly it could potentially take decades to centuries for species in some vegetative communities to be replaced by others (Davis and Zabinski 1992). However, as increased temperatures and drought stress plants they become more susceptible to fires and insect outbreaks. These disturbances could play a large role in the conversion of habitats from one type to another. There could very well be instances where existing plant communities are lost to disturbance but climatic conditions and migration rates limit the speed at which they are replaced. Thus, invasive species, grasslands and shrublands may transitionally replace some of these areas.

Projected changes in bird distributions

Summer bird ranges are often assumed to be tightly linked to particular habitats. This generalization is only partially true. While certain species are usually only found in specific habitats (e.g., Kirtland's Warbler breeding in jack pines), others are more flexible in their habitat use. Species found in a particular habitat type throughout their summer range may not be found in apparently equivalent habitat north or south of their current distribution. Birds are also limited in their distributions by their physiology and food availability. The link

between physiology and the winter distributions of many species is well-established (Kendeigh 1934, Root 1988a, 1988b). Research shows that physiology plays a role in limiting summer distributions as well (Dawson 1992, T. Martin, *pers. comm.*). Often, the choice of a specific habitat may actually be to provide a microclimate suitable for a species' physiology. While habitat selection, food availability, and competition may all play a role in influencing *local* distributions of a given bird species, looking at a species' overall distribution often yields different results. This study examined the association between summer bird distributions and climate and how these distributions may change with a changing climate.

Methods

To determine how the summer ranges of birds may actually change, logistic regression models were developed associating bird distributions (from Breeding Bird Survey data) with climate (both temperature and precipitation). The climate variables acting as surrogates for the many factors possibly limiting a species distribution (e.g., physiology, habitat, food availability). One way of determining how 'accurate' these models are is to compare how well the predicted species distribution map based on climate (Fig. 1B) matches a map of the actual distribution (Fig. 1A) based on similar bird data (Price *et al.* 1995). This comparison (and various statistical tests) indicated that at least a portion of the summer distributions of many North American birds could be modeled accurately based on climate alone. These models were then coupled to output from the Canadian Climate Center (CCC) based on a doubling of atmospheric CO₂. This model projects what the average climatic conditions may look like sometime in the next 75 to 100 years. These combined models were then used to create maps (cf. Fig. 1C) of the projected summer distributions of many North American passerine birds. A more complete explanation of methods used to develop the models and maps has been published elsewhere (Price 1995, Price *in press*).

What the maps developed in this study show are areas projected to have the proper climate for the species, or climatic range, under conditions derived from the CCC model. While the results of the models cannot be used to look at the fine points of how a given species' distribution might change, they can provide an impression of the possible direction and potential magnitude of the change in the suitable climate for the species. These maps of projected summer climatic ranges of birds were then compared with the maps and information found in *Atlas of Breeding Birds of New York State* (Andrle and Carroll 1988) to determine how New York's avifauna might change under this climate change scenario.

Results

Species whose future climatic summer ranges might exclude New York (i.e., possibly extirpated as summer residents) – Olive-sided Flycatcher, Yellow-bellied Flycatcher, Alder Flycatcher, Willow Flycatcher, Least Flycatcher, Blue-

headed Vireo, Philadelphia Vireo, Bank Swallow, Cliff Swallow, Boreal Chickadee, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Winter Wren, Golden-winged Warbler, Tennessee Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Cape May Warbler, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Black-throated Green Warbler, Blackburnian Warbler, Bay-breasted Warbler, Northern Waterthrush, Mourning Warbler, Hooded Warbler, Wilson's Warbler, Canada Warbler, Clay-colored Sparrow, Lincoln's Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, Dark-eyed Junco, Rusty Blackbird, Purple Finch, Pine Siskin and Evening Grosbeak.

Species whose future climatic summer ranges in New York might contract – Warbling Vireo, Tree Swallow, Black-capped Chickadee, House Wren, Gray Catbird, Blue-winged Warbler, Northern Parula, Yellow Warbler, Chestnut-sided Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, American Redstart, Ovenbird, Scarlet Tanager, Vesper Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Song Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Bobolink.

Species whose future climatic summer ranges in New York might expand – Acadian Flycatcher, Loggerhead Shrike, White-eyed Vireo, Purple Martin, Northern Rough-winged Swallow, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Northern Mockingbird, Yellow-throated Warbler, Pine Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Cerulean Warbler, Prothonotary Warbler, Louisiana Waterthrush, Kentucky Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, Grasshopper Sparrow, Northern Cardinal, Blue Grosbeak

Species whose future climatic summer ranges might eventually include New York – Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Bell's Vireo, Carolina Chickadee, Brown-headed Nuthatch, Summer Tanager, Dickcissel and Great-tailed Grackle.

Discussion

These lists are not all-inclusive, since results obtained from models of some species were not adequate to assess how their climatic ranges might change. Nor do the lists include those species whose climatic ranges in New York may undergo little change. Finally, these lists are based on output from a single commonly used climate model - different climate models may yield different results. In addition, the geographic scale of these models, like those of the underlying climate change model, is relatively coarse. As such, the models are unable to take into account localized topographic changes and the possible existence of suitable microclimates (e.g., along rivers or on north-facing mountain slopes). Even so, both the climate and bird models are able to differentiate the Adirondacks from the surrounding area. Therefore, some of the species whose *climatic* ranges are projected as shifting out of New York may be able to persist in small areas that may retain suitable microclimates such as deep canyons on the north slope of the Adirondacks.

How quickly distributional changes might occur is unknown - the rate of change will largely depend on whether limits to a given species' distribution are more closely linked with physiology (via climate), vegetation, or some other factor. The rate of change will also likely be tied to the rate of change of the climate itself. If the climate changes relatively slowly, then species may be

able to adapt to the new climate. However, many changes could occur (and are occurring) relatively quickly. One pilot study found that the average latitude of occurrence of some species of Neotropical migrants has already shifted significantly farther north in the last 20 years, by an average distance of almost 60 miles (100 km) (Price and Root 2001; Price, unpublished data). Other studies have found that many other species are arriving and breeding earlier, not only in the US but also in Europe and elsewhere (Root *et al.* 2003).

Conclusion

Projected future rapid climate change is of major concern, especially when viewed in concert with other population stresses (e.g., habitat conversion, pollution, invasive species). Research and conservation attention needs to be focused not only on each stressor by itself, but also on the synergies of multiple stressors acting together. These synergistic stresses are likely to prove to be the greatest challenge to wildlife conservation in the 21st Century. Because anticipation of changes improves the capacity to manage, it is important to understand as much as possible about the responses of animals to a changing climate.

In summary, a high probability exists that even a small amount of climate change could lead to changes in bird distributions within the state. Some of these changes could occur (and may be occurring) relatively quickly. While these changes may have some ecological and, possibly, economic effects, the magnitude of these effects is unknown. Ultimately, the greatest impact on wildlife and vegetation may not come from climate change itself, but rather from the rate of change. Given enough time, many species would likely be able to adapt to climatic shifts, as they have done in the past. However, the current projected rate of warming is thought to be greater than has occurred at any time in the last 10,000 years (IPCC 1996). This rate of change could ultimately lead to many changes in New York's avifauna.

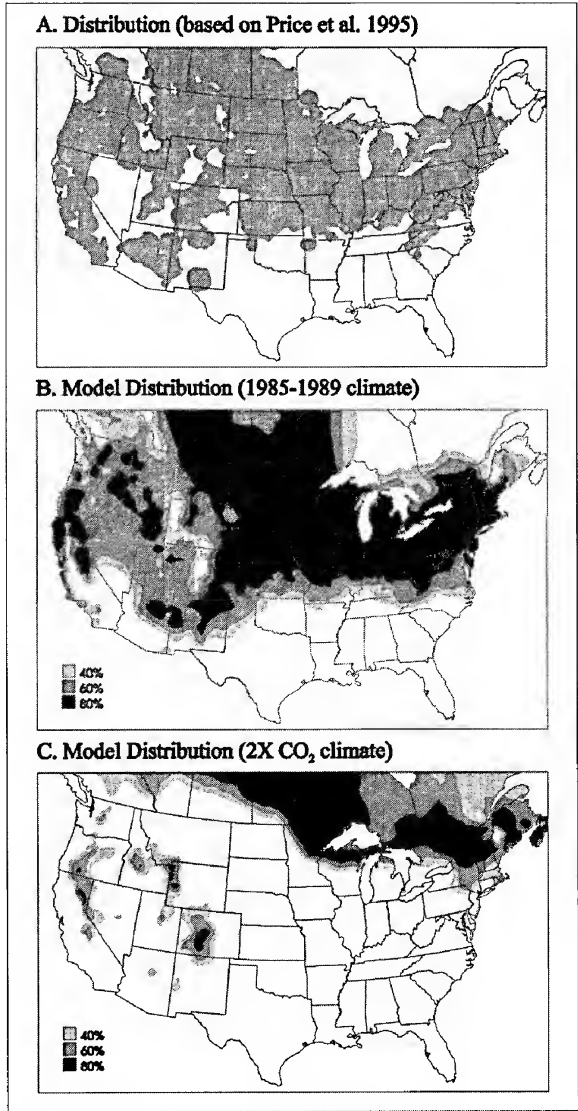
Birders can help the scientist look for and document changes in bird ranges and populations. Besides participating in regular events like the Breeding Bird Survey or Christmas Bird Count, information is also needed on nesting, arrival and departure. If you, or your club, has 10 or more years of data please contact me at the address listed above.

Acknowledgments

This study was funded by cooperative agreements between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Geological Survey and American Bird Conservancy. The views expressed herein are solely those of the author and do not represent the official opinion of the Environmental Protection Agency nor the U.S. Geological Survey.

Figure 1. A. Map depicting the distribution of House Wren as detected by the Breeding Bird Survey. This map is based on one found in Price et al. (1995). B. Map depicting a model of the distribution of House Wren based solely upon the climate of 1985-1989. The scale represents the probability of the species' occurrence with shaded areas depicting the distribution of the species (i.e., areas with suitable climate). C. Map depicting the possible distribution of House Wren under the doubled CO₂ climate conditions projected by the CCC. The scale represents the probability of the species' occurrence - shaded areas depicting the distribution of the species (areas with suitable climate for the species).

House Wren



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THE MONTEZUMA NATIONAL WILDLIFE REFUGE

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When my wife and I relocated to New York State after years in western states, we began the tedious process of house hunting. We found an old home for sale in Seneca Falls and while she spoke to the real estate agent about the pros and cons of the local school district, I mentally calculated the probable flight paths of birds from Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge (MNWR) directly over the abandoned farm fields that were part of the property. And as the sun set to the west and we watched wave after wave of geese appear out of that reddening sky to seek shelter for the night at the Refuge, I knew we had found our new home.

At 8,196 acres, Montezuma is a magnet for birds and birders alike. 315 of the 460 species of birds (or 68%) on the official "Checklist of the Birds of New York State" have been recorded at MNWR. Nearly every shorebird and waterfowl species that has been recorded in the state has been found at the Refuge at one time or another. Recent rarities include White-faced Ibis, Purple Gallinule and Curlew Sandpiper. In addition to the wide variety of birds, the sheer numbers of them, especially the migrants, are staggering. A quick check of Bull's Birds of New York State shows that MNWR holds the record for numerous maxima, either inland or statewide, with peak numbers occurring in the spring (April) and the fall (September and October). Certainly part of the credit for these outstanding statistics is due to the wealth of dedicated birders that diligently seek to identify each and every bird encountered. The rest of the credit goes to the high quality habitat and the staff that manages it year-round.

In 1938, MNWR was first dedicated to the public and like all Refuges, was established for the benefit of wildlife, specifically migratory birds. For nearly six decades its size remained unchanged at about 6,400 acres. With recent acquisitions fueled by federal funds and Nature Conservancy dollars that number is now over 8,000 acres with no immediate end to growth. With the new lands come new management responsibilities with the vast majority of lands within MNWR treated as wetlands.

Many folks refer to the area as the "Montezuma Swamps" but few true swamps actually exist. Most of the wetlands are dominated by emergent vegetation and therefore classified as marshes. Refuge staffers often have to recreate marshes through the placement of dikes, complete with water control devices providing the ability to raise and lower water levels. The amount of vegetative cover is a factor influencing both nesting birds and those using the Refuge as a migratory stopover. Ideally, there should be about a 70/30 split of cover and open water respectively. To accomplish this,

some of the pools are on a regular drawdown schedule to mimic natural drought conditions. These dry years when the water levels are purposely lowered allow the soils to reoxygenate and stimulate the growth of plants such as cattails. Regular visitors to the Refuge may have noticed the dramatic change in the Main Pool in the last few years after such a drawdown was implemented in 1999. Additional benefits of these dry periods include the control of invasive species of plants such as purple loosestrife and phragmites.

Two areas of the Refuge are specifically managed for shorebirds. Benning Marsh along the Wildlife Drive is the smaller of the two, but is much more labor intensive. Water levels are kept low throughout the summer to keep the loosestrife germination at bay. Before water levels are raised in the late summer, the area is plowed under to provide bare soil that quickly becomes a mudflat. The area sprouts with plants such as smartweed and a host of macroinvertebrates to feed the shorebirds, waterfowl and gulls that flock to this location. To the delight of birders, a new viewing area was added just a year ago to Benning Marsh. The larger May's Point is managed in a slightly different way. The lay of this area allows for a deeper flooding during the summer, which prevents plant growth from becoming established before the end of summer drawdowns. Early morning birders have a short window of prime viewing before the sun rises over the Thruway and turns birds into silhouettes. Evening birders are treated to exceptional lighting conditions and the added treat of waterfowl and passerines such as swallows and blackbirds coming to roost by the thousands.

Traditionally, the spring migration of shorebirds is not as spectacular as the fall flight. Although the first birds appear in July, the peak of shorebird migration is the last part of August through September. Birds linger well into November, with Pectoral Sandpipers and Dunlins reliable at that time, but with most species and numbers of individuals greatly reduced.

Two ways to measure the success of waterfowl management at MNWR are through the waterfowl banding records kept each year and the duck harvest records from the limited hunting that is allowed on the Refuge. Duck banding has been a regular Refuge activity since 1985. Banding usually takes place from the first week of August until the first week of October. Over 17,000 ducks have been banded in that 18 year period, Mallards accounting for 75% of the total with Wood Ducks and American Black Ducks making up about 23% more. Although the 18-year average for number of birds caught is only 949, the average over the last four years is 1,300.

Waterfowl hunting is allowed in Tschache Pool on a limited basis. Hunting is allowed only three days a week and only 40 parties (one or two to a party) are allowed per day. Further restrictions include a 15-shell maximum and a hunt that ends at noon. Since these restrictions have not been consistent over the years, the best way to compare years is by measuring the average number of birds shot per hunter per visit. From 1966 to 1986, hunters averaged less than one bird per visit. From 1995 to 2002, hunters averaged over 2.5 birds per visit. Total ducks harvested each year average

about 1,000.

A relatively new management practice within the Refuge is the creation of warm-season grasslands. Over 1,100 acres of land are now classified as grass or brush, with more to come. A recent purchase of 140 acres along Route 89 has been prepared for seeding in the spring of 2004. A mixture of grass species is planted including big and little blue stem, Indian grass, Eastern grama, switchgrass and others. A forb or wildflower mix is added to provide diversity and perhaps increase insect availability as well. An aggressive and well-orchestrated fire management plan is in place to stimulate the grassland growth and keep the areas in this early successional stage. Prescribed burns usually take place in April and require careful planning and specialized training.

In many practical ways, it is no longer proper to just refer to the Refuge alone, but rather to the Montezuma Wetlands Complex as a whole. The NYSDEC now owns about 8,000 acres of land to the north of the Refuge. Management efforts and acquisitions are coordinated between the two agencies. State lands compliment the federal lands well as they are generally completely open to hiking, biking and canoeing. In addition, money and expertise from Ducks Unlimited, The Nature Conservancy and The Friends of the Montezuma Wetlands Complex combine to create a unified effort in restoring and preserving this impressive area.

For further reading you are referred to three previous articles in *The Kingbird* as follows:

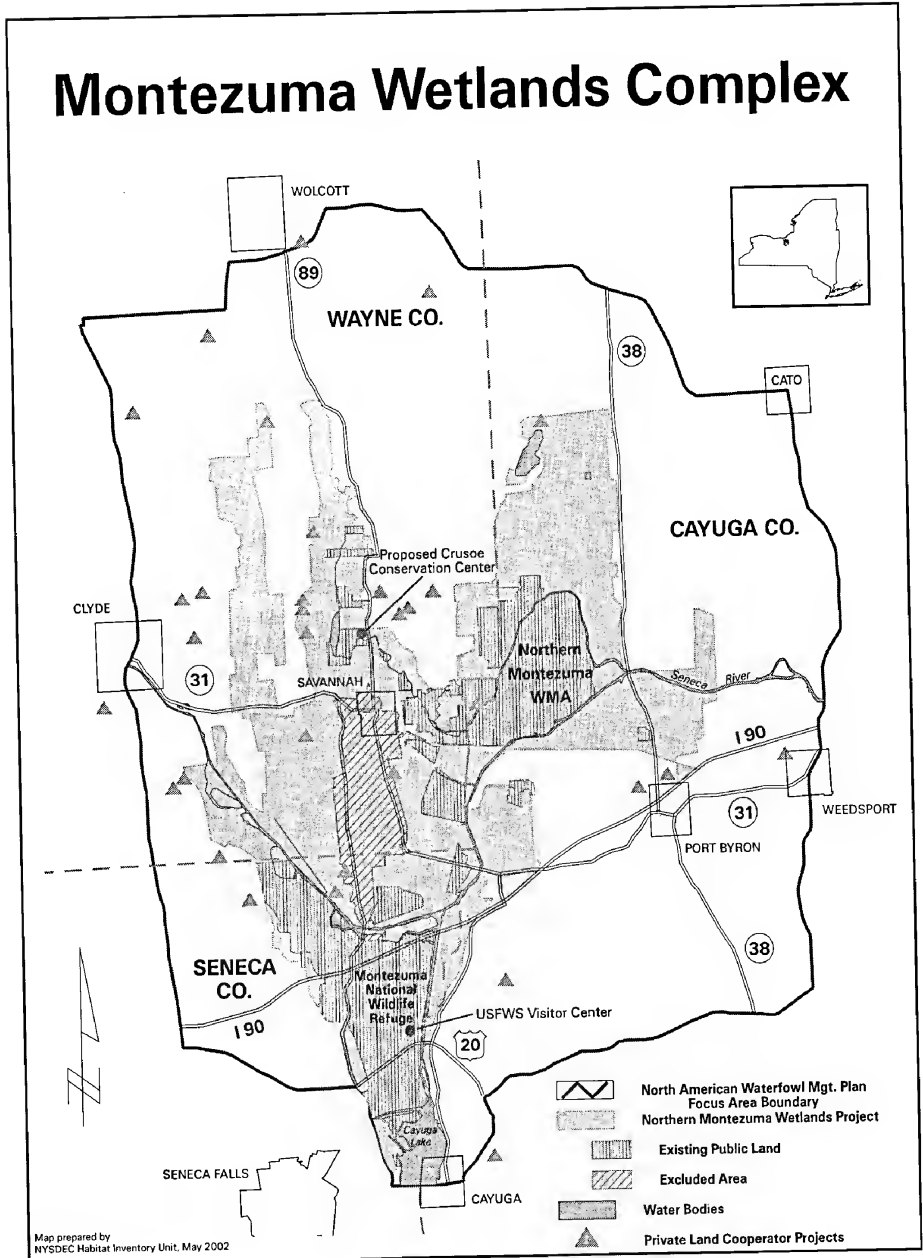
Kingbird 4 (2): 34-37

Kingbird 25 (4): 197-201

Kingbird 33 (2): 82-88



Montezuma Wetlands Complex



A HAWKING RAVEN (*CORVUS CORAX*)

Sean C. Phelan

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1- hawk, v.t. And v.i.; 2-hawked, pt., pp., hawking, ppr.

- 1.- Hawk -To catch or attempt to catch (birds) by means of hawks trained for the purpose ; to practice falconry
- 2.- Hawked- To fly at; to attack on the wing, as the hawk does.

29 May, 03: Place- Atlas Block 2469A (Allen Lake) heading East on the Vincent Hill Road:

Pulling my truck over to the south shoulder of the road, I stopped and got out. I had spotted the incoming bird about two hundred and fifty yards out. It was headed west, nearly parallel to the road. If the big bird maintained its course, it would pass directly in front of me about 100 yards north of my position. I estimated its altitude to be about forty feet over the tree tops, in the neighborhood of one hundred feet off the ground. If nothing changed, I was in the ideal position to view the bird as it passed in front of me.

Locking my 8x32 SE binoculars on the bird confirmed that it was a Common Raven (*Corvus corax*). The wing beats were steady and deliberate; its course a straight line, and it was silent. My impression was that this was a bird focused on a task. The raven steadily reduced the distance between us, and I was content to merely observe and admire both the individual and the species.

As I watched, a Tree Swallow appeared in my field of view, approaching from the north at a slightly lower altitude. The little bird was moving fast in a shallow arc which would momentarily put both birds, at different altitudes, but nearly directly in front of me at almost the same instant. My interest was in the raven, and I gave almost no thought to the swallow.

Without warning, the raven lowered its head and partially folded its wings. The big bird dropped ten feet head first, in a fraction of a second. Pulling up past level from the dive, the raven banked slightly to the right; lowered and flared its tail while spreading its wings to their full extent, all in a single fluid motion. The action reminded me of a spring loaded umbrella popping open.

With body, flared wings, and fully fanned tail now nearly vertical to the ground, the raven came to a full stall in mid-air, hanging like a solid black wall directly in the path of the approaching swallow.

Instinctively the smaller bird tried to pull up and bank west to avoid running head first into the chest of the raven; and in the process also came to a full mid-air stall inches in front of the raven. That stall proved to be fatal.

With open beak, the raven extended its neck, slipped its beak behind the head of the swallow and clamped down. I suspect the swallow died almost instantly from a broken neck.

The raven dropped several feet before its wings could displace enough air for the bird to level out and continue its westward journey. From the right side of the big bird's beak hung the limp body of the Tree Swallow.

The raven was no longer silent. As is often the case with this species, the bird softly 'awked' and croaked as it flew off.

I have reviewed this incident in my mind a number of times. It is my belief that when I first spotted the Common Raven it was intent on getting to its west bound destination only. The Tree Swallow unwittingly created an unplanned opportunity for the raven to hawk and it instinctively capitalized on the moment.

While the sudden unexpected mid-air hawking maneuver caught me by surprise, the split second timing and control demonstrated by the bird did not. Ravens are well-documented aerial acrobats; and I have personally witnessed mid-air back flips and barrel rolls by pairs of ravens dropping like stones in seemingly suicidal free fall courtship displays. What always impresses me about these aerial displays (including this just described "hawking" incident) is the control and split second timing needed to execute such maneuvers without injury or possibly even death for the raven itself. This species is second to none when it comes to aerodynamic agility.

One final thought. I don't know why many individuals of this species appear to be having mid-air 'muttered' conversations with themselves, but then like many humans that talk to themselves, perhaps it is some form of self therapy.



BIRDING WITH FATHER

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It is 24 Jan 2004, and my father has driven from his home in Southern Connecticut to join me for a winter birding expedition. He picks me up in upper Manhattan at about 10:30 AM, and we head for Point Lookout, Nassau County, on the western shore of Jones Inlet, a prime seasonal birding location. For my Dad, winter birding has generally meant feederwatching, while I have long since fallen off the deep end into the serious, occasionally masochistic, pursuit of coastal winter specialties, and so I hope to offer several new birds to my father on this day.

Arriving around noon, we work our way down the rock jetty in search of Harlequin Ducks, a species for which it has been a particularly good year. In a generally bitter cold winter, this is a relatively mild day, with the temperature around 15-20 degrees, but the wind has picked up a bit in this coastal location. I am accustomed to the cold, and I merrily trot along in a fleece jacket and a small hat. I look back at my father, bundled up in a heavy, hooded parka, and he has clearly been happier. His discomfort is exacerbated by the absence of Harlequins, but it also occurs to me at this moment that my father is 70 years old. I tend to overlook this fact, as he is generally quite fit and in good health, and I believe I have eternally assigned my parents the age they possessed in my childhood. I find myself silently reflecting on the passage of time, and shared experiences that have led us to this place...

I grew up in Flushing, Queens, in a neighborhood of attached townhouses, and one containing little wildlife of note. But I was the child of teachers; my father taught English at a NYC public school, a thankless job at best, but, on the bright side, one that gave him long summers off. We spent parts of these summers in the southern Adirondacks, for varying lengths of time according to available budget, first renting an A-frame near Garnet Lake, and later buying a small house on Crane Mt., one with good property and surrounding unoccupied lands. My Dad was an avid bird photographer. He never kept a life list or traveled far to chase down rare species, but he possessed a remarkable tenacity in his efforts to get the right shot. Much to our delight (and amusement), he would also create all manner of Rube Goldberg contraptions to aid in his photographic efforts; various blinds were employed, and a tripod was as likely to be propped up by a kitchen sink as by terra firma. Dad improvised a remote-control shutter device for his camera, and would sit for hours with the camera pointed at a stand of milkweed, waiting for a Ruby-throated Hummingbird to land on his chosen flower (more often than not, chosen well). I will never forget the time we found a Red-breasted Nuthatch nest in a cavity about 25' up a dead tree. My father propped an extension ladder against a neighboring tree, climbed to the top, and somehow balanced his camera to get remarkable eye-level images of the young being fed.

He created a bounty system for my brother and me; a reward of one dollar was offered for the discovery of a nest, his favorite photographic opportunity. Thus, my brother and I developed birding skills of our own, and occasionally collected some pocket change. Dad paid the reward even when the nest turned out to be inactive.

As will happen with young men, during my teenage years the pursuit of birds became less interesting to me than that of other, more worldly distractions, although I never entirely lost sight of my love of the natural world. During my twenties, I took my first solo vacation for the primary purpose of birding, and began to pursue the passion in earnest. Whereas my father was content to enjoy those birds which came to him, I began to keep a life list, and endeavored to locate and identify as many species as possible.

Inevitably, at some point my knowledge, and my interest, surpassed that of my father, and our field trips together involved my introducing him to new species. Our differing styles and agendas resulted in amusing exchanges: "Yes, Dad, it's nice that we're stopping to photograph that American Redstart, but I hear a Prairie Warbler in the next tree over, so can we move on?" Becoming a factor as well was the slowing down of reflexes and loss of visual acuity that affects all but the most gracefully-aging human beings: "Dad, there's obviously a Wilson's Warbler 3 trees back, about 50' up, at 11:00- why can't you see that?" But we generally found a happy medium, and we both seem to enjoy the fact that the student has now become the teacher. More often than not, I can get him on the bird, and his unofficial life list has expanded greatly in my company.

Back at Point Lookout, the Harlequins are nowhere to be found, nor are there other birders present to help us out, and my father is starting to get an "Are we there yet?" look on his face. I decide to take us down a side street, and we park near the jetties at the south end of the Point. Within a few feet of the car there is a male Red-breasted Merganser proudly posing on a rock, and my Dad stops to photograph it, happily distracted while I wander down the beach in search of bigger game. As I approach the first jetty, a few shorebirds fly in- Purple Sandpipers- one of my target species! My father is several hundred feet away, fixated on his merganser, so, short of a futile effort to yell into the wind, I have little choice but to hustle back to retrieve him. He picks up his camera and follows at what seems an excruciatingly slow pace. We are halfway to the jetty when some ducks alight a bit offshore- Harlequin Ducks, the "must-not-miss" species for the day! They are too far offshore and too backlit to photograph. I know enough about Harlequins to expect this situation to change, but my Dad, new to the species, curses the sun. I urge him onward, and, as we approach the jetty, 3 Purple Sandpipers fly in, and obligingly land on a rock not 25 feet from us. We set up our respective cameras- mine a Canon digital video camera, and, befitting the generation gap, my Dad's a 35mm Minolta with a telephoto lens- and we both shoot away. Then something wondrous happens; the sandpipers take off, swiftly joining a larger flock in undulating flight. The birds bank sharply several times before alighting en masse on the rocks directly in front of us. There are at least 30 Purple Sandpipers (I have never before seen more than two at a time), and the rocks seem to be covered with energetically peeping, foraging birds. Soon the Harlequins, nine of them, float into the fray, and entertain my father with their

synchronized diving act. They are close to shore, the light is now excellent, and, oddly enough, we have both forgotten to be cold.

It is 15 minutes before the birds move on, and we are happy to call it a day, and head for the car. But Point Lookout has one more treasure to yield; a female King Eider, which has been present for much of the season, swims back and forth for some time quite close to shore. It is another life bird for Dad, and an excellent opportunity for me to point out the plumage details that define this winter specialty.

On our last stop, the Jones Beach Coast Guard Station, across the inlet, it seems a foregone conclusion that a flock of Snow Buntings lands only a hundred feet away, and allows close approach as they forage. It is that kind of day, and it is the fourth new species today for my father. It is an exhilarating experience we have shared, and I have proudly delivered to my father all the birds he dreamed of on this day.

Over the years, our shared passion for birding has been so much more than a simple hobby for my father and me. The dissatisfaction of an unrewarding job, and a deeply flawed marriage between two good people, one that ultimately resulted in divorce, created an atmosphere of tension and occasional anger as I grew up. We also faced the typical political differences between generations, taking years to learn that people can disagree while maintaining a civil respect. Through the most troubled of times, my father and I could always fall back on birding as a time when we were perfectly in sync, and all differences were put aside. My brother never really took to birding, and he has had to work that much harder to maintain a positive relationship with my father.

Is there something about birding that particularly connects fathers and sons? I can readily cite examples of noteworthy father and son birding teams, even one mother and son combo. In Panama last summer, I met a mixed bag of three generations, but I draw a blank on a mother-daughter birding pair. Perhaps it is true that men tend to bond over shared interests, and women on a more directly emotional level.

My father takes pride in my modest birding achievements, and I eagerly share my most joyous moments with him. We have built a deep bond that is centered on a shared passion, one that has carried us through hard times and into better ones. I love my father for many reasons, but never more than when I glory in the beauty of a new or long-admired bird, grateful for the world he opened up for me, a world that has offered me many of the finest memories of my young life.

FEDERATION OF NEW YORK STATE BIRD CLUBS, INC.
56TH ANNUAL MEETING
Athenaeum Hotel, Chautauqua Institution
November 1, 2003

The 56th Annual Meeting of the Federation, hosted by Lake Erie Bird Club, Jamestown Audubon Society, and Roger Tory Peterson Ornithological Club, was called to order at 9:25 a.m. Roll call of member clubs revealed there were 68 delegates and proxies from 32 clubs, and a quorum was present. Dorothy Crumb made a motion to approve the minutes from the 2002 Annual Meeting and Ellie Long seconded. Motion passed unanimously.

President's Report by Tim Baird:

There are 51 member clubs and 740 individual members of the Federation. Our superb web site now has its own domain name. The Breeding Bird Atlas has completed its fourth field season. Our publications are strong, and New York Birders has a new editor. A new edition of the official checklist now stands at 460 species. Dominic Sherony has been appointed to the New York State Avian Records Committee (NYSARC), and Angus Wilson has been re-appointed. Bryan Swift with the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation (NYSDEC) has been an active participant at Board of Directors meetings. Andy Mason and John Fritz are working on various conservation issues. Several Federation members are involved with Audubon New York's Important Bird Area program. The Board of Directors has proposed a formal name change for the organization. Tim thanked the hosts of this year's Annual Meeting, the people of Nuthatch Hollow Nature Preserve where the Board has met for the past year, the current officers and directors of the Federation, and "everyone who, currently or in the past, has contributed to making this organization a great one."

Reports and Elections:

John Confer made a motion to accept the membership application of ESF Birding Club from Syracuse, and Bob Mauceli seconded. Motion was approved unanimously.

John Ozard gave the NYSDEC report and passed out a summary of their bird conservation activities written by Bryan Swift.

The Treasurer's Report dated December 31, 2002, was issued. The major expense (60% of total expenses) is publication of *The Kingbird*. The major source of income (\$18,240 annually) is dues from individual members. The Auditing Committee Report indicates that the Federation's finances are in good order.

Valerie Freer reports that about 4,400 Breeding Bird Atlas blocks have been visited, but about 1,000 have had no work done in them. More blockbusters will be hired for next year. Cornell University Press will be the publisher. The Atlas is

funded largely by Return-A-Gift-To-Wildlife, with additional support from NYSDEC's State Wildlife Grant and New York Audubon. Its budget reveals the Atlas will cost more than \$1 million.

Tim Baird is the new editor for New York Birders and club editors should send their newsletters to him. The Kingbird is in fine shape with much material available. The new Checklist of the Birds of New York State with a yellow cover is now available.

The Conservation Committee received an excellent response from the Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation (OPRHP) in regards to our concerns about feral cat colonies and feeding stations in state parks. They have issued a draft of "Guidelines for Feral Cat Control in State Parks," and OPRHP is requesting feedback. The Committee is working on a resolution regarding wind power in New York State, attended meetings regarding cormorants on Oneida Lake, and contacted NYSDEC regarding the effect of West Nile Virus and hunting on the American Crow population.

NYSARC has completed their work on 2001 reports and their findings will be published in the December 2003 issue of The Kingbird. They are currently working on reports from 2002.

Stanley Lincoln presented the report from the Nominating Committee. Nominated for 2003/04 are President – Kevin J. McGowan; Vice President – Andrew Mason; Corresponding Secretary – Timothy H. Baird; Recording Secretary – Brenda Best; and Treasurer – William B. Reeves. Nominated Directors are Robert G. Spahn, to fill a vacancy in the 2004 Class, and for the 2005 Class – Berna B. Lincoln, Robert Miller, and William Ostrander. Dorothy Crumb made a motion to accept the Nominating Committee Report as read, and Barb Butler seconded. Motion was approved unanimously.

Weather and the blackout affected field trips in 2003. A tentative 2004 field trip schedule has been developed, and Bill Lee is open to suggestions.

Phyllis Jones asks that papers from all past presidents be submitted to the Archivist.

Future annual meetings are scheduled for September 17-19, 2004, Ithaca, hosted by Cayuga Bird Club, and for September 23-25, 2005, Albany, hosted by Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club.

Andy Mason made a motion to accept the resolution regarding Bird Population Management as published in New York Birders and mailed to member clubs, and Gail Kirch seconded. With one nay vote, the motion was approved to accept the resolution with one change. In the first Resolved, the word "will" is to be changed to "should."

Berna Lincoln made a motion to honor the 60th wedding anniversaries of Mr. and Mrs. Emanuel Levine and Mr. and Mrs. Richard Sloss. Seconded by Bill Lee and approved unanimously.

With a motion by Ellie Long seconded by Bill Lee, a Nominating Committee consisting of Sue Adair, Tim Baird, and Gail Seamans was elected unanimously. With a motion by Valerie Freer seconded by Gail Seamans, the Auditing Committee consisting of Irving Cantor, Peter Capainolo, and Emanuel Levine was re-elected unanimously.

Old Business:

Bill Reeves made a motion to change the name of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, Inc. to New York State Ornithological Association, Inc. Seconded by Phyllis Jones. After some discussion pro and con, a roll call vote was taken. Motion was passed, 47 ayes to 21 nays. Valerie Freer made a motion, seconded by Berna Lincoln, to amend the By-laws Article I to change the name to New York State Ornithological Association, Inc. Bill Lee then made a motion to cast a unanimous vote to amend the By-laws Article I to change the name, which was seconded by Bob McKinney. Motion was approved unanimously.

New Business:

Bob Mauceli asked about the role of individual members in governance, and Tim Baird indicated the Board would discuss this in the future.

Motion to adjourn was made, seconded, and approved unanimously. Meeting adjourned at 11:58 a.m.

Awards presented during the Saturday evening banquet:

- Certificate of Appreciation was presented to Carena Pooth for her work on the Federation web site.
- Lillian C. Stoner Award, which provides financial help to one or more high school seniors or college students so they may attend the Annual Meeting, was awarded to Yelena Samsonenko, who was nominated by Cayuga Bird Club.
- John J. Elliott Award, given for the best article contributed to *The Kingbird* each year, was awarded to Michael D. Stubblefield and James D. Rising for their article entitled, "Review of Eastern and Spotted Towhee Taxa Based on Possible Spotted Towhee in Central Park, NYC – 26 April 2001" which appeared in *The Kingbird* Vol. 52 No. 3.
- Gordon M. Meade Distinguished Service Award, given to individuals for outstanding service to the Federation, was awarded to Donald A. Windsor.

Respectfully submitted,
Brenda Best
Recording Secretary

ON "SUBSPECIES" OF THE CANADA GOOSE

Gerry Rising

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I am concerned about the interest being expressed by New York State observers in the smaller Canada Geese occurring here. These are, according to them, *Branta canadensis hutchinsii*, a subspecies termed the Hutchins Goose in Bent's Life Histories of North American Waterfowl. (Elsewhere it is named Hutchins', Hutchins's or even Richardson's Goose.) I certainly do not argue with this identification, but I wince each time I see these birds reported. In this article I explain why.

But first an aside: I have no problem with our differentiating the Horned Lark and Palm Warbler subspecies or the various hybrid forms of the Golden-winged and Blue-winged warblers. There are, I believe, good arguments for these identifications. However, with game birds and in particular Canada Geese, I urge caution in raising this issue of races.

Now to my point: Surely most of us would agree that we have today a few too many Canada Geese soiling our ball fields and corporate lawns, ruining our golf course greens and driving other species out of our marshes. What we should understand is that interest in the various forms of Canada Geese contributes to this overpopulation.

How many birders realize that goose-hunting seasons have been severely curtailed because of concern for another so-called race of Canada Goose, *B. c. maxima*, a subspecies that is not even recognized by taxonomists of the American Ornithologists' Union?

These larger geese were popularized by Harold C. Hansen's *The Giant Canada Goose* (Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1965, rev. 1997). In this book, which has been termed by one wildlife manager "one of the finest waterfowl monographs ever written," Hansen makes the case for protecting these big geese — hunters' favorites for obvious reasons — through season restrictions: "Adjustment of the opening and closing dates of the hunting season," he says, "is one of the principal means of regulating the size and selectivity of waterfowl kills. It should, therefore be pointed out that because the fall migration movements of the giant Canadas are fully a month behind the migration of the race interior, late hunting seasons will tend to jeopardize stocks of *maxima*..."

And so, at least partly influenced by Hansen, goose seasons have been reduced. As my Ohio colleague, Bill Whan, says: "It is an article of belief among wildlife officials that their precious *maximae* 'migrate' a month later than other forms. Thus here in Ohio we have an 'early goose season' in September (coinciding with the teal season pretty much), which is ballyhooed as a way to control nuisance flocks of resident geese without imperiling any of the truly wild and migratory Canadas, which allegedly come through beginning in mid-October." But even this goes wrong. Bill continues: "This year the truly migrant race *interior* - with orange collars - (universally recognized as genuinely in trouble) came through a bit 'earlier' than usual...to be greeted by a hail of shot."

Hansen fought hard to have the American Ornithologists' Union recognize his beloved giants, but Alexander Wetmore and his taxonomic colleagues would have no part of his arguments. The only mention of the *maxima* subspecies in any of the seven A.O.U. Checklists is in the 5th (1957). There it is listed as probably extinct. More important, especially as regards our local Canadas is the 6th (1983) Checklist. In it no subspecies is listed! And this note appears: "The northern populations of small Canada Geese have been variously treated taxonomically as three separate species, *B. hutchinsii* (Richardson, 1832) [Hutchins' or Richardson's Goose, 172.3], *B. minima* Ridgway, 1885 [Cackling Goose, 172.2], and *B. leucopareia* (Brandt, 1836) [Tundra Goose, 172.1]; as a single species under the name *B. hutchinsii* [Cackling Goose]; or as one or more subspecies of *B. canadensis*. Consideration of the entire complex as a single species seems best for the present." (The underscoring of these important points is mine.) To bring this up to date: The 7th Checklist (1998) follows the 6th in listing no subspecies. Clearly all of these size differences are currently considered a cline.

Why, despite this, Kevin Griffith mentions *B. c. maxima* in the 1998 Bull's Birds of New York State escapes me. Consider, however, what he says: "Resident breeding geese probably include some of both [the *canadensis* and *interior* subspecies] and a large proportion of *maxima*, or 'Giant' Canada Goose." What a turn-around: from Hansen's endangered race needing protection to the lawn pests of Griffith and, as it happens, of current waterfowl managers! (pers. comm., Paul Hess) Has no one thought of the possibility that these 'giant' geese are bigger and fatter simply because they are lazy, pampered and overfed?

My point here is that attention to game bird subspecies gives wildlife managers an excuse to tamper with what I consider an already far too short goose season. While they concern themselves with niggling subpopulations, we're being inundated by the species as a whole. And we certainly don't want to provide an excuse for a season further curtailed to address the smaller numbers of *hutchinsii*. An indication of just how far this race issue may be taken is found in the revised (1997) edition of Hansen's book. In it he insists on page xvii that "As a result of over 30 years of research on the taxonomy and biogeography of the white-cheeked geese, at least 186 geographic races (subspecies) of these geese will be recognized in a yet-to-be published work." He comments on this work in progress in a footnote: "The White-cheeked Geese (*Branta canadensis*, *B. maxima*, *B. hutchinsii*, *B. leucopareia*, and *B. minima*): Taxonomy, Ecophysiological Relationships, Biogeography, and Evolutionary Considerations. (Yet to be published.) Late in the preparation of this work on the white-cheeked geese, it was realized that the giant Canada Goose (*Branta canadensis maxima*) was in reality a separate species — *Branta maxima* — and that it should be given a more appropriate common name — the giant prairie goose. Seven geographic races or subspecies will be described."

He adds to this in Appendix 1 on pages 207-208: "The 83 races at least of Canada Geese (*Branta canadensis*) that will be recognized by the author (Hansen, yet to be published) represent a series of staircase clines in respect to size, proportions, color, and color patterns — that is, each racial population exhibits a discrete combination of these characters that are related to the latitude,

climate, and ecology of their isolated breeding grounds. Stated another way, the mosaic of characters associated with the racial populations of white-cheeked geese are not accompanied by 'intergrades' or individuals that represent a blending of the characters of the nearest racial populations."

It is easy to be confused by all that nonsense. What he appears to be saying is that he is separating out from the *Branta* genus (because Brant, *Branta bernicla*, is no longer included in its own genus) these so-called white-cheeked geese for which he identifies "at least 186" races, 83 of which are races grouped under the species *Branta canadensis*. This leaves us with over 100 races that would have to be identified with new species, one of which he identifies as *Branta maxima*, no longer the Giant Canada Goose, but now the Giant Prairie Goose. And his "new species" has only seven of those 100 races, thus suggesting still more full species. Hansen certainly deserves some kind of prize (offered by listers?) as the champion among all splitters.

Of course this all flies in the face of John W. Aldrich's 1946 article "Speciation in the White-cheeked Geese" (Wilson Bulletin 58(2): 94-103) which identifies, among 254 museum specimens examined, only seven races, none of them *maxima*; and the most subspecies ever considered by an A.O.U. Checklist: ten in the 5th (1957).

I join Bill Whan in wondering if "all those goose-droppings in the water have had some neurotoxic effects" on a few game managers. Whether or not that is the case, I counsel extreme caution in calling attention to nonexistent subspecies to avoid even the possibility of contributing further to our increasingly serious Canada Goose overpopulation problem.

A final note: Despite all I have said here, it is, I believe, quite reasonable to differentiate between our tame, non-migratory geese and the wild geese that migrate through this country and Canada. What we really need is a national campaign to rid ourselves of the pests that we have created in the same way that waterfowl managers are finally seeking to control cormorants and Mute Swans — by activities like egg-oiling and removal (a.k.a. killing). Then goose seasons could be scheduled in response to wild populations. Sadly, however, even the consideration of such actions divides our community

(This is a revised version of an article that appeared
in *The Prothonotary* 68 (12):131-132.)



HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SEASON – WINTER 2003/2004

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The Weather

There was no doubt that the weather during the 2003-04 winter season had an impact on birds and birders. Many areas across the state experienced heavy snow in December, followed by severe cold in January, when average temperatures were in the range of 5-10 degrees below normal. In many areas, deep, lingering snow led to a scarcity of field birds, especially raptors, and most likely lowered passerine numbers. The severe cold in January resulted in little open water in most of the state, and, subsequently, lower than normal waterfowl totals. February provided some moderation as temperatures and precipitation trended closer to historical averages.

Christmas Bird Counts

The annual National Audubon Society Christmas Bird Counts are a focal point of early winter birding for many. Since the count dates are fixed beforehand and are relatively inflexible, the weather can make or break a count. This year proved somewhat of a mixed bag – most counts were not directly hampered by the weather on count day, but in some areas heavy snow before the count period had an impact on both the birds and the ability of birders to get full coverage. No trend applied statewide – Region 1 enjoyed good weather and more open water than usual, while nearby Region 2 suffered due to heavy snow and lack of open water. Region 4 reported good numbers of “half-hardies”, while early December snowfall in Region 9 suppressed passerine totals. As always, the intense coverage of the counts led to many good finds; see the Regional reports for details.

Waterfowl/Waterbirds

Perhaps the most apparent impact of the January freeze was on waterfowl. The deep cold froze most standing water statewide, resulting in much lower than normal numbers of waterfowl. As examples, totals on the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation waterfowl counts (FWC) were down 40-50% in Regions 4 and 6, and the counts in Region 8 were described as “nearly a bust due to high winds and frozen water”. Despite the harsh conditions, “good” birds did turn up in some areas. The first winter record of Ross’s Goose for Region 1 was before the cold temperatures hit; single Ross’s Geese were also found in Region 3 and Region 10. Greater White-fronted Goose was scarce on Long Island, the normal winter stronghold, but elsewhere in Region 10 two somewhat out-of-place birds of this species frequented a golf course and nearby ball field on Staten Island. Other Greater White-fronted Geese were found in Regions 1, 3 and 9. A Barnacle Goose on Long Island raised, as usual,

unanswerable questions of origin. Of more easily placed provenance were the Trumpeter Swans found in Regions 2 and 5, their wing tags showing them as "introduced." The fall season's Tundra Swan at Croton Point continued well into the winter season, and was briefly joined by up to nine others in late January. A Tufted Duck present in Region 2 for a month beginning in mid-January may have been the same bird found further east on Lake Ontario in Region 5 both before and after those dates. Other unusual ducks this winter were an immature male King Eider in Region 2, Barrow's Goldeneyes in Regions 3 and 10, multiple Eurasian Wigeons in Regions 9 and 10 and the Eurasian form of Green-winged Teal in Region 10. Another bird in Region 10 was originally also thought to be the Eurasian form, which is known on some current lists as Common Teal, but careful scrutiny showed that the bird shared features of the Eurasian nominate species and the North American subspecies, indicating it was a hybrid between the two. The tell-tale field marks, including hints of the local subspecies' vertical white breast line and details of the face pattern and tertials, were subtle; observers should be on guard for evidence of interbreeding when identifying Common Teal.

Winter Finches

A big story this winter was the occurrence of winter finches, particularly redpolls. Common Redpoll was reported in all ten Regions, occasionally in good numbers – including a maximum count of 1019 on the Saranac Lake CBC in Region 7 – although the overall impression was that numbers were lower than in a major invasion year. Somewhat surprising, therefore, was the widespread appearance of Hoary Redpolls, reported in eight of ten Regions. A number of photographs were circulated on the internet, and hopefully reports of this review list species will be sent to NYSARC. There were fair numbers of Purple Finches and Pine Siskins overall. Evening Grosbeak made the best showing in Region 7 in many years, with flocks of up to 150, and were also found in each of the other nine Regions, in varying numbers. Appearing in smaller numbers, and less widespread, were White-winged Crossbill, Red Crossbill, and Pine Grosbeak. In Region 4, the invasion led to breeding evidence for Red Crossbill and Pine Siskin.

Other Winter Irruptives

Besides finches, a few other irruptive passerines made notable incursions into the state this winter. Foremost among these was the widespread appearance of Bohemian Waxwing, which, remarkably, was recorded in each of the ten Regions, albeit generally in low numbers away from traditional northerly strongholds. The highest concentrations were in Regions 5, 6, 7, and 8, with flocks ranging from 70 to 200 birds; the remainder of the reports being in single digits. The southward incursion in NY was part of a more widespread event that saw Bohemians recorded as far south as Cape May, NJ and Maryland. Northern Shrikes are more regular in their visits to New York; this year represented somewhat of an uptick in numbers over recent years, especially in Regions 6, 7 and 8. The absence of a major invasion made the state-record single day count of

22 Northern Shrikes on 17 Feb in Region 1 all the more unexpected. Even more remarkably, the same observer tallied the same number a week later to the east in Region 2. On a less dramatic scale, Red-breasted Nuthatches turned up in higher numbers downstate after last winter's virtual absence.

Gulls

Winter gulls, especially the "white-winged" gulls, Iceland and Glaucous, are a welcome corollary to cold weather and short days. These two species made a decent showing around the state, joined by reports of the enigmatic Thayer's Gull in Regions 1 and 2. Surprises along the Niagara River in Region 1, where the "gull season" in recent years seems to have extended later than in the past, included a continuing Black-headed Gull and 1-2 California Gulls and the Region's fourth record of Mew Gull, an adult bird initially found on the Canadian side of the river on 6 Dec, and relocated on the NY side a week later. Other unexpected finds upstate were an adult Laughing Gull in a Region 1 mall parking lot in January, perhaps the same individual seen in December on the river, and an immature Black-legged Kittiwake in Region 2. The severe weather may have impacted the movement of Bonaparte's Gulls, which arrived on the Niagara River about two weeks late and stayed less time than normal; downstate, Bonaparte's Gulls were virtually absent from usual coastal haunts in Region 10. Low counts and the short stay of the bulk of the Bonaparte's led to few reports of Little Gull, which are usually found in flocks of Bonaparte's, with only a handful in Region 1, and none at all in Region 2 or Region 10. Black-headed Gulls were also scarce in Region 10. Anecdotally, Lesser Black-backed Gull numbers around New York City and Long Island seem lower since the closing of the Great Kills landfill on Staten Island, although it is difficult to know with certainty since they are apparently still thought of as common enough not to warrant reporting on the same level as, for example, Iceland Gull; these two species were reported on the NYC Rare Bird Alert in the same numbers this season. Many of the Lesser Black-backed Gulls in the area seem to be wintering individuals, such as the adult which has returned to the Shinnecock Inlet fishing boat docks for several years, or the confiding first-year bird at Jones Beach which allowed for a nice study of plumage changes from its discovery on the Southern Nassau CBC in early January through the end of the period. Another notable returnee was the extremely white-wing-tipped adult Iceland Gull at Shinnecock Inlet, which has frequented the same location in winter for many years.

Raptors, etc.

Birders hoping that the severe weather would result in an incursion of northern raptors and owls were for the most part disappointed. Snowy Owls were scarce statewide, and the rarer northern owls – Northern Hawk Owl, Great Gray Owl, and Boreal Owl – were unreported. Short-eared Owl numbers varied statewide; the highest numbers being reported from Regions 1, 2 and 9, but were down in Regions 3, 4 and 5. Day-flying Long-eared Owls in Region 5 were likely forced by deep snow to extend their hunting time; good numbers were also

reported in Regions 9 and 10. Rough-legged Hawks were reported as above normal only in Region 3 and in agricultural areas of Region 6; in locations with low totals, such as Regions 2 and 5, they may have been forced out by high snows or low rodent numbers. Bald Eagles continue to occur in good numbers; especially notable were the wintering concentrations along the lower Hudson River, where over 100 birds were counted on occasion. Golden Eagles wintered in small numbers in several locations; the tail end of the fall migration also passed by Franklin Mt. in Region 4 in early December. A number of Regional editors also commented on higher than expected numbers of Red-shouldered Hawks. Up to seven Merlins wintered at the communal roost on the SUNY Buffalo campus in Region 1, while the birds which frequented the Onondaga Park roost in Region 5 seemed to have moved from that location. Gyrfalcons made two appearances in the state this winter: a briefly seen but well-photographed bird at Point Peninsula on 1 Dec was less accommodating but also less controversial than an individual at Sodus Bay. This latter bird, seen by many during its 10-day stay, was found to have been banded by the USFWS, under still mysterious circumstances. Superficially similar but not technically raptors, both species of vulture continued an increasing trend in the state this winter. Black Vulture was only recorded in three Regions, but birds in outlying Region 8 and on eastern Long Island in Region 10 may be evidence of range expansion, while Region 9 high counts of 63 on the Putman CBC and 101 on the South Orange CBC represent the species' stronghold in the state. Turkey Vulture was recorded in eight of ten Regions, the exceptions being only northerly Regions 6 and 7.

Lingers

Each year a number of lingering summer visitors or fall migrants squeak into the winter season, generally disappearing as the colder temperatures set in, whether by late migration (hopefully) or expiration. Some of these are classic "half-hardies" a term governed somewhat by the local climate – Yellow-rumped Warblers and icterids, common winterers downstate, fit the bill in more northerly Regions, while less hardy stock such as Eastern Phoebe and Baltimore Oriole often last long enough to be counted on Long Island Christmas Counts. Others are unexpected surprises, presumably birds not fit enough to migrate south on schedule, or true rarities hanging on from their initial appearance in late fall. Examples this season include Common Yellowthroat in Regions 1 and 2; Virginia Rail in Regions 2 and 9; last season's *Tyrannus* flycatcher hybrid and Indigo Bunting in Region 2; Brown Thrasher, Eastern Towhee and Chipping Sparrow in Region 3; Gray Catbirds in Regions 3 and 5; Osprey in Regions 4 and 9; Winter Wren, Hermit Thrush, Red-winged Blackbird, Rusty Blackbird and Common Grackle in Region 5; Great Blue Heron in Region 7; American Bittern, Wilson's Snipe, and a surprisingly high number of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers in Region 8; Green Heron, Eastern Phoebe, House Wren, Pine Warbler, and Baltimore Orioles in Region 9; and Black Rail, Common Tern and Forster's Tern in Region 10. Lingering shorebirds included a rare-at-any-season Willet in Region 1, at the same location one was present in September; Purple Sandpiper, Dunlin and Red Phalarope in Region 5; and in Region 10, Spotted Sandpiper and two Willets at an

odd, slightly inland location, both recorded on the Southern Nassau CBC. The snowy weather helped concentrate late sparrows on the Jones Beach strip in Region 10, where single Clay-colored, Grasshopper and Lincoln's sparrows were found in early December, while good numbers of late warblers in the Region, including Pine Warbler and Palm Warblers, Common Yellowthroat, Yellow-breasted Chat and the state's second post-December record of Cape May Warbler, were more surprising considering the harsh conditions.

Rarities

Although the season seemed to lack any "stand-out" rarities, a number of "good" birds did appear around the state. The second Region 1 record of Townsend's Solitaire spent two days on Grand Island in early December. Two Northern Gannets, rarer in winter than in fall, included an especially unusual sighting on the Niagara River. A well-described "Slate-colored" Fox Sparrow in Region 2 was unfortunately elusive and only seen by the original finders on consecutive days. Late Dickcissels made appearances at feeders in Regions 3, 4 and 10. Region 3 also hosted a trio of unusual waterbirds on Cayuga Lake, including Pacific Loon, Eared Grebe, and Northern Gannet, the first two also including follow-up. Yellow-throated Warblers turned up in odd locations in Region 3 – roosting on an old Cliff Swallow nest, and in Region 4 – frequenting a diner where the staff put out scraps of bread for it. Region 7 hosted a couple of short-staying waterbirds, Western Grebe and Black Guillemot, and a Brewer's Blackbird there was found at a Wild Turkey feeding area. In Region 8, a Varied Thrush that spent five days at a feeder in mid-January was a second Albany County record. Region 10 highlights included the continuing presence of two *Selasphorus* hummingbirds first found in the fall, both now believed to be immature female Rufous Hummingbirds. Following the hybrid flycatcher debate discussed in the previous issue (KB 54:1-17), a *Tyrannus* flycatcher on Staten Island in early January was cautiously identified as a Western Kingbird. Good CBC records from Region 10 were an immature Brown Pelican found at Shinnecock Inlet on 19 Dec that not only continued at that location long enough to be counted on the Quogue CBC the following day, but was gracious enough to fly east through the Sagaponack CBC circle on 21 Dec, and a Harris's Sparrow on limited-access Gardiner's Island, on the Montauk CBC.

Miscellaneous

A couple of Regional editors commented on the numbers of corvids in light of their susceptibility to the West Nile Virus. In Region 3, American Crow and Common Raven numbers were both up, although Blue Jay numbers were down. In Region 5, point counts of American Crows at roost locations and the Syracuse CBC showed numbers down from the previous year, perhaps indicating the continuing impact of the virus. Region 8 editor Will Yandik commented on the populations of a couple of "half-hardy" wintering species, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and Carolina Wren. Carolina Wren, at the limits of its range in New York, is known for having periodic population crashes as a result of harsh winter

weather, and the cumulative effects of the last two winters resulted in lower numbers this year. It will be interesting to see how the species fares in the near future. Yandik theorizes that Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, on the other hand, may be undercounted by traditional methods such as Christmas Counts, since, at least in Region 8, they seem to favor specific microhabitats in winter. Better directed searching may prove the species to be a more common wintering bird than previously thought. Finally, Region 1 editor Mike Morgante describes an incident along the Niagara River, where birders at a traditional stop along the river (a public park, no less) were interrogated at gunpoint by the Buffalo Police and other authorities, apparently due to a phoned-in tip describing suspicious activities in which the birders' telescopes were mistaken for cameras directed at the nearby Peace Bridge to Canada. This unfortunate incident serves as a reminder that, especially in this age of heightened security concerns, birders should be aware that routine activities of our hobby may be met with suspicion and questioning. Each of us is potentially an unofficial ambassador to the non-birding public and to the authorities – the admirably measured response of the Buffalo birders most likely smoothed the way for future birders in the area.

Bird of the Season

Without a standout rarity – a first state record, or a crowd-pleasing vagrant – the Bird of the Season is a difficult choice. Many of the rarities listed above would make a decent choice, but none of them, in my mind, occurred under the particularly compelling circumstances that would warrant the BOTS. My choice, therefore, is to award the BOTS, as a group, to the Bohemian Waxwings that scattered south in an almost certainly unprecedented foray into all ten Kingbird Regions.



REGION 1 – NIAGARA FRONTIER

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December was moderate, with an average temperature of 33.2° F, 3.4° above normal. Monthly precipitation at Buffalo-Niagara International Airport was 3.64", 0.16" less than usual, and snowfall 21.6", 3.9" less than usual. Most of the snow fell over three days, 14, 17 and 25 December. January was persistently cold and had frequent lake effect snow. The average temperature was 17.4°, 7.1° below normal, making this the coldest January since 1994. The month's precipitation was 2.95", 0.21" below normal, with 45.2" of snow, 19.1" more than normal. Lake Erie began to ice over at mid-month and was mostly covered by the last week. February was typical at an average temperature of 25.5°, 0.4° below normal. However, the month was unusually dry, with total precipitation 1.15", 1.27" below normal, and only 5.9" of snowfall, 11.9" below normal.

To the delight of the birders, and probably birds too, the weather was especially good during the CBC season. There was more open water on inland ponds than usual and waterfowl lingered. I had the good fortune of finding an adult **Ross's Goose** at Iroquois NWR during the Oak Orchard CBC on 27 December. Many birders searched for the rare goose in subsequent days and came up with some more interesting finds, including **Greater White-fronted Goose** and Common Yellowthroat. There were more reports of lingering Northern Shovelers than usual, likely attributed to the open water.

The weather quickly deteriorated after early January, and birder activity decreased. Red-necked Grebes turned up in Dunkirk Harbor and along the Niagara River in late January and early February but in much smaller numbers than last winter's invasion. Their appearance likely coincided with the freezing of Lake Erie. One bird was recovered from the parking lot at Ralph Wilson Stadium in Orchard Park, rehabilitated, and released a few days later.

Wintering raptor highlights were similar to last year. A **Golden Eagle** was once again observed in Allegany State Park. Bald Eagles were widespread and well reported throughout the season. The maximum count was 11 at Allegheny Reservoir. Up to seven Merlins wintered at the SUNY Buffalo campus and several other birds were seen in the Region. This species was formerly very rare in winter. Five winter Red-shouldered Hawk reports were a high number.

Unprecedented in winter was a **Willet** that remained at the Bird Island Pier along the Niagara River into early January. It may have been the same bird observed at this location in September, however, it did not appear to be injured. While observing this bird on 3 January, two local birders were interrogated at gunpoint by the Buffalo Police and subsequently questioned by the Border Patrol, other federal agencies and local TV crews, who suspected they were terrorists. It's no coincidence that few birders ventured to this area after this incident of overreaction and harsh treatment.

An adult **Mew Gull** was the highlight for the Niagara River this winter. Only the fourth report for the Region, it was found on the Canadian side at Niagara Falls on 6 December. Willie D'Anna re-found the bird on 13 December on the American side at the Niagara Power Project. Consistent with recent winters, **Black-headed Gull** and **California Gull** were observed on multiple occasions. Gordon Bellerby commented that the large number of Bonaparte's Gulls arrived on the Niagara two weeks late and spent less time in the Region than usual. His high count for Bonaparte's was 12,100 on 7 December. A rare Laughing Gull was observed in a mall parking lot in January, possibly the same bird that was seen along the Niagara in December.

Snowy Owls were reported from only two locations and Long-eared Owls from only one. There were a few more reports of Short-eared Owls and Northern Saw-whet Owls than usual, the latter because birders seem to be making more effort to find them.

In mid-February, Dave Tetlow noticed that there were good numbers of Northern Shrikes along the Lake Ontario plain and he suspected they were staging prior to migration. On 17 February, he performed a methodical, all-day search through three towns and counted **22 Northern Shrikes**, a new state daily maximum.

Common Redpolls were widely reported and in good numbers and a **Hoary Redpoll** was documented in Youngstown. Pine Siskins were reported in low numbers and there were single reports of both crossbill species and Pine Grosbeaks, plus a handful of Evening Grosbeak reports.

Susan O'Donnell found the Region's second Townsend's Solitaire on 6 December along the West River Parkway in Grand Island. The bird was re-found the next day but not again. Other rarities not previously mentioned included Northern Gannet and Bohemian Waxwing.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AISP – Allegany SP CATT; BeSP – Beaver I SP ERIE; BuSP – Buckhorn I SP ERIE; BWWTP – Batavia Wastewater Treatment Plant GENE; DH – Dunkirk Harbor CHAU; FMCSPP – Four Mile Creek SP NIAG; FNPS – Fort Niagara SP NIAG; GHSP – Golden Hill SP NIAG; INWR – Iroquois NWR GENE/ORLE; JDSP – Joseph Davis SP NIAG; L Erie SP – L Erie SP CHAU; NF – Niagara Falls

NIAG; NPP – Niagara Power Project on NR, Lewiston NIAG; NR – Niagara R; 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; WhSP – Whirlpool SP NIAG; WTSP – Wilson-Tuscarora SP NIAG.

**WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES
GREATER WHITE-FRONTED**

GOOSE: 3 Cheektowaga ERIE 1 Dec, continued from fall season (MM!, WW!); INWR 1, 2 Jan (BBR).

Snow Goose: 2 Cassadaga L CHAU 3 Dec; 7 Beaver Meadow CBC 20 Dec; INWR 1 Jan; 2 BeSP 13-14 Feb (JL); only reports.

ROSS'S GOOSE: INWR 27 Dec-2 Jan (MM! NYSARC), 1st winter record.

Mute Swan: WTSP 13 Dec; max 5 Porter NIAG 28 Dec; DH 17 Jan-8 Feb; 2 Newfane NIAG 22 Feb; 2 Pt Breeze ORLE 22 Feb.

Tundra Swan: 28 Bear L CHAU 20 Dec; 11-14 INWR 23 Dec-2 Jan; max 294 NR 10-18 Jan; 6 DH 17 Jan; 30 BuSP 15 Feb; 135 BeSP 27 Feb.

Wood Duck: NF 5 Dec; max 5 Amherst ERIE 11 Jan; only reports.

Am. Black Duck: 36 Oakfield GENE 23 Dec; max 127 BWWTP 1 Jan, good count for date.

N. Shoveler: SPNS 1-25 Dec & 8 Jan (LH); 57 BWWTP 7 Dec; 1 BWWTP 23 Dec; Wilson NIAG 27 Dec; 2 INWR 30 Dec (BK!); LaSalle P Buffalo 1 Jan; more reports than usual after mid-Dec.

N. Pintail: reported from 8 locations; more than usual for winter.

Green-winged Teal: NF 6 Dec; 7 BWWTP 7 Dec; INWR 3 Jan (S&TO); Amherst ERIE 15 Jan (JP); only reports.

Canvasback: 2 BWWTP 1 Jan; max 4090 NR 10-18 Jan, lower max than usual; 25 DH 31 Jan; 3000 Grand I NR 3 Feb (JL).

Ring-necked Duck: 5 INWR 3 Jan; max 7 Strawberry I NR 5 Feb.

Greater Scaup: max 8066 NR 10-18 Jan.

Lesser Scaup: max 5 Buffalo NR 19 Jan.

Surf Scoter: 3 Wilson NIAG 27 Dec; 3 FMCSP 28 Dec; Sheridan CHAU 1 Jan; FNPS 18 Jan; only reports.

Black Scoter: FNPS 11 Jan (S&TO), only report.

Hooded Merganser: max 35 N Tonawanda NIAG 22 Dec; 11 DH 25 Jan.

Red-breasted Merganser: max 7000 Somerset NIAG 6 Feb (DT), flying east on L Ontario during 10 minute period.

Ruddy Duck: 3 BWWTP 7 Dec; 1 BWWTP 1 Jan; 1-2 DH 17 Jan-8 Feb; N Tonawanda NIAG 7 Feb (JP); rare in Feb.

Red-throated Loon: max 15 FMCSP 28 Dec; DH 1 Feb (FR); FNPS 15 Feb (PY).

Com. Loon: DH 1 Jan; last BuSP 4 Jan.

Pied-billed Grebe: max 4 DH 1 Jan; N Tonawanda NIAG 5 Jan.

Horned Grebe: 1-2 DH 1 Jan-8 Feb; max 16 Shadigee ORLE.

Red-necked Grebe: 2 FMCSP 28 Dec; Wilson NIAG 1 Jan; recovered in Wilson Stadium parking lot Orchard Park ERIE late Jan (GC); max 11 Buffalo NR 5 Feb (PY); max 11 DH 8 Feb (WW).

N. GANNET: imm NF 6-16 Dec (WD!, WW!, GB, NYSARC); imm WhSP NR 6 Dec, different individual than one at NF observed on same day; very rare on NR.

Double-crested Cormorant: max 70 DH 1 Jan.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: DH 17 Jan (FR), only report.

Turkey Vulture: Lancaster ERIE 30 Jan (MM!), rare in mid-winter; Buffalo ERIE 8 Feb (WD!); arr Hamburg ERIE 28 Feb.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: Alexander GENE 19 Dec; 3 INWR 27 Dec; Porter NIAG 28 Dec; max 11 Allegheny Res CATT 1 Jan (MD, TL); Ripley CHAU 25 Jan; DH 25 Jan; Westfield CHAU 2 Feb; 8 Strawberry I NR Feb; 4 Grand I ERIE 18 Feb; 2 Lewiston NIAG 22 Feb; increasingly common.

N. Harrier: max 23 Porter NIAG 28 Dec (MM), together in one field at dawn.

N. Goshawk: Beaver Meadow CBC 20 Dec; St Bonaventure CBC 21 Dec; only reports.

Red-shouldered Hawk: Gerry CHAU 4 Dec; Westfield CHAU 9 Dec; Ellicott CHAU 9, 17 Dec & 25 Jan (LD); Beaver Meadow CBC 20 Dec; 2 Jamestown CHAU 31 Jan (JB); unusual in winter.

Rough-legged Hawk: max 6 Ellington CHAU 15 Feb (LD); well reported thru.

GOLDEN EAGLE: AISP 8 Feb (TB), wintered this location in recent years.

Merlin: max 7 SUNY Buffalo campus ERIE thru season (PY!), traditional winter roost; Somerset NIAG 16 Dec, 1 Feb (BE, WD!); Alabama GENE 1 Jan, 28 Feb (DS! JL!); Alexander GENE 18 Jan (KF).

Peregrine Falcon: BuSP 10 Dec (WW!); Porter NIAG 13 Dec (WD!); 1-2 Buffalo ERIE thru (BBu! RA!), near nesting area.

Am. Coot: 10 BuSP 10 Dec; INWR 27 Dec; 7 Buffalo Harbor 1 Jan; max 49 DH 28 Jan.

Killdeer: last Beaver Meadow CBC 20 Dec; arr Hamburg ERIE, Belmont ALLE 29 Feb.

WILLET: Bird I Pier NR 9 Dec-3 Jan (PY! WD!); first winter record.

Purple Sandpiper: 3 Bird I Pier NR 15 Dec; 3 NF 26 Dec (WD); only reports.

LAUGHING GULL: N Tonawanda NIAG 21 Dec (NS!); in a mall parking lot Amherst ERIE 11 Jan (DS!); possibly same bird; unusual in any season.

Little Gull: max 3 NR Dec; fewer reports than usual.

BLACK-HEADED GULL: Lewiston NR

13 Dec, 8 Jan (WD! GB!); annual in recent winters.

Bonaparte's Gull: max 12,100 NR 7 Dec (GB); Bellerby commented that the large number of gulls arrived on NR about two weeks late and spent less time in Reg than usual.

MEW GULL: NPP 13, 16 Dec (WD! MH, NYSARC), first found at NF Ontario on 6 Dec; 4th Reg record; very rare.

CALIFORNIA GULL: 1-2 ad NPP 6 Dec-12 Jan (WD! GB, NYSARC), continued from fall.

Thayer's Gull: several undocumented reports along NR as usual.

Iceland Gull: typical number of reports along NR thru; Porter NIAG 28 Dec; FNSP 17 Jan; LBSP 22 Feb.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Grand I NR 6 Dec; BeSP 22 Feb; only reports away from NF and NPP.

Glaucous Gull: DH 17-25 Jan; Porter NIAG 17 Jan; FNSP 15 Feb; only reports away from NF and NPP.

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Snowy Owl: Buffalo Harbor 14 Dec (CR); NF Airport NIAG 3, 17 Jan, 1 Feb (WD, PY, S&TO); only reports.

Long-eared Owl: 5 INWR 28 Dec, 2 INWR 11 Jan (CR); only reports.

Short-eared Owl: 3 Carlton ORLE 2, 16 Dec; 8 Shelby ORLE 12, 27 Dec; 2 Clarence ERIE 18 Dec; 3 Beaver Meadow CBC 20 Dec; max 15 Porter NIAG 28 Dec (AG), up to 9 routinely observed this location thru; NF Airport NIAG 17 Jan; 2 Somerset NIAG 12 Feb.

N. Saw-whet Owl: Grand I ERIE 21 Dec; 2 Oak Orchard CBC 27 Dec; WTSP 27 Dec (CR); max 3 INWR 18 Feb (CR); Cambria NIAG 23 Feb; Lewiston NIAG 23 Feb; Porter NIAG 29 Feb; Bennington WYOM 29 Feb (KF).

Red-headed Woodpecker: Hamburg CBC 4 Jan, only report.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: Bennington WYOM 4 Jan (GS), unusual in winter.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: well reported thru; max 22 Carlton ORLE to Somerset NIAG 17 Feb all day methodical search of roads in 3 towns on L Ontario Plain (DT!; state maximum count.

Com. Raven: Sardinia ERIE 26 Feb (JL!), only report outside of CATT or ALLE.

Horned Lark: max 175 Yates ORLE 19 Jan.

Carolina Wren: moderate number of reports.

Winter Wren: Tiftt NP 9 Dec, only report.

E. Bluebird: typical number of reports.

TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE: Grand I ERIE 6-7 Dec (S&TO!); 2nd Reg report.

Hermit Thrush: 7 Porter NIAG 28 Dec, good count.

Gray Catbird: 2 Tiftt NP 10 Dec; 1 Tiftt NP 2 Jan (RA, WW); unusual in winter.

BOHEMIAN WAXWING: 2 GHSP 10-11 Jan (WD!, WW!); max 11 Somerset NIAG 17 Feb (DT), latest winter report ever.

WARBLERS

Yellow-rumped Warbler: 2 Porter NIAG 28 Dec; 3 Lewiston NIAG 29 Feb; only reports.

Com. Yellowthroat: INWR 30 Dec (BK!); very rare in winter.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

E. Towhee: Dunkirk CHAU 1 Feb (FR); Somerset NIAG 18 Feb; unusual in winter.

Chipping Sparrow: Pomfret CHAU 2 Dec (TM); Alexander GENE 19 Dec (KF); Scio CBC 20 Dec; unusual in winter.

Field Sparrow: 2 Scio CBC 20 Dec; 2 Oak Orchard CBC 27 Dec; unusual in winter.

Savannah Sparrow: Carlton ORLE 4 Dec (DT); rare in winter.

Swamp Sparrow: 2 Tiftt NP 9 Dec; Beaver Meadow CBC 20 Dec; 22 Oak

Orchard CBC 27 Dec.

White-crowned Sparrow: max 23 Porter NIAG 28 Dec (WD); 2 Dunkirk CBC 1 Jan; JDSP 18 Jan.

Lapland Longspur: 2, 10 Porter NIAG 28 Dec, 18 Jan; 16 Yates ORLE 17 Jan; max 25 Yates ORLE 1 Feb (WD); 2 Newstead ERIE 9 Feb; 8 Shelby ORLE 9 Feb.

Snow Bunting: 37 Times Beach NP 14 Dec; 288 Porter NIAG 28 Dec (MM); 17 Farmersville CATT 18 Jan; 65 Yates ORLE 19 Jan; 250 Pomfret CHAU 8 Feb; max 700 Somerset NIAG 12 Feb (DT); 40 Lyndon CATT 15 Feb.

Red-winged Blackbird: 40 Porter NIAG 28 Dec (MM); 122 Hamburg CBC 4 Jan, good winter count; Bethany GENE 26 Jan; arr Clarence ERIE 16 Feb.

Com. Grackle: 18 Scio CBC 20 Dec; Dunkirk CBC 1 Jan; SPNS 4 Jan; arr Somerset NIAG 23 Feb.

Brown-headed Cowbird: 20 Tonawanda ERIE 22 Dec; arr Clarence ERIE 16 Feb.

Pine Grosbeak: 5 Colden ERIE 4 Jan (MB), only report.

Purple Finch: low numbers on CBCs and elsewhere.

Red Crossbill: Porter NIAG 28 Dec (KF), only report.

White-winged Crossbill: FMCSF 13 Dec (S&TO), only report.

Com. Redpoll: max 115 Porter NIAG 28 Dec; 30 Bennington WYOM 1-29 Feb; widely reported.

HOARY REDPOLL: Youngstown NIAG 31 Jan (LL!), very rare.

Pine Siskin: 2 AISP 11 Jan; max 10 Colden ERIE 22 Feb; 4 Bennington WYOM 22-24 Feb; Conewango CATT 23 Feb; Orchard Park ERIE 28 Feb; 2 Napoli CATT 29 Feb.

Evening Grosbeak: 5 Scio CBC 20 Dec; Hamburg CBC 4 Jan; 5-7 Alma ALLE 1 Jan -29 Feb; Angelica ALLE 30-31 Jan; only reports.

REGION 2 – GENESEE

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It was a winter of contrasts. Early December brought a hint of winter with cold temperatures and snow. Unfortunately, the heaviest snowfall occurred on the 14th, the day of the Silver Lake CBC. Deep snow cover persisted through the Rochester CBC the next weekend, followed by warming temperatures and the disappearance of the bulk of the snow. The average temperature for the month was 2.9° above normal at 32.3°F. Precipitation was slightly below normal, - 0.31", at a total of 2.42". Snowfall totaled 27.2", which was 5.3" above normal. January was a monster. After a warm start, with a record 61° on the 3rd, things changed drastically. The temperature didn't top the freezing mark until the end of the month. The average was 17.2°, for the coldest in 10 years and the ninth coldest in the last 100 years. A record 61.3" of snow fell, with some lake areas recording over 80" due to persistent lake effect. Precipitation totaled 2.81", only 0.47" above normal, but the snowfall was 35.5" above normal. February was best described as tranquil and brought a bit of respite to the harsh winter. The average temperature was 0.3° below normal at 33.5°, but it was very dry with 0.72" of precipitation. That was 1.32" below normal. Snowfall was less than half the norm at 10.3".

The varied conditions often dictated the where and how to bird for local birders. The Christmas Bird Counts certainly were impacted by the changing weather. The Silver Lake and Rochester counts were hampered by deep snows, even when it wasn't snowing. The Little Lakes Count, on the other hand, experienced pleasant conditions. Open water was relatively scarce away from the lakeshore. Lakeshore birding was often hampered by the persistent lake effect snow. February brought considerably better conditions and renewed birding opportunities. Regardless of the total impact, it was still a season with interesting and exciting reports. The lack of a Big January effort, the closing of part of the Hamlin Beach State Park roadway and, of course, the inclement weather were all factors that contributed to low numbers of reports. Yet diligent birding by some produced some excellent results.

Canada Geese remained rather common as did, unfortunately, Mute Swans. Trumpeter Swans were once again reported, with two wing-tagged birds that were spotted the last two years again frequenting the south end of Irondequoit Bay. On the low side were Green-winged Teal, Canvasback and scaup. Common Goldeneye and Red-breasted Merganser were about average. Some observers also commented on the abundance of White-winged Scoters; pockets could be located frequently along the shore of Lake Ontario with totals higher than usual. When the ice pack piled against the shoreline, they were found in any open water along the shore. Immature male King Eiders were reported at the mouth of the Genesee in January and February for a seasonal highlight. It certainly seems like Tufted Duck is being more consistently reported in the state, and the same holds true for

Region 2. A very cooperative male was discovered by Mike Tetlow at Sodus Bay on 11 January and was observed through the middle of February at that location. A very healthy total of 107 Wild Turkeys was reported from the Town of Huron in January. Red-throated Loon and Red-necked Grebe numbers were a bit above average while Horned Grebe reports were near average. The usual couple of late Double-crested Cormorants disappeared quickly in January. Great Blue Herons were limited to a few individuals. An adult Black-crowned Night-Heron was discovered in January at Powder Mill Park. Typical winter records here are of adults. Turkey Vultures were reported from the usual Letchworth State Park location, with scattered reports of singles elsewhere around the Region.

The usual Bald Eagle sightings were reported as the wintering numbers continue to be steady. Eight Northern Harriers in the Nations Road area in January was a good count. It was a banner winter for Cooper's Hawk, with 42 sightings in January alone by David Tetlow. Northern Goshawks were reported from three separate locations in January. Of special interest were the two Red-shouldered Hawks seen in Rattlesnake Hill WMA in January. This is a species seldom reported in winter. Rough-legged Hawks were good early but dropped off during January. Merlins continued the recent trend of winter sightings. A most interesting find was the adult female **GYRFALCON** discovered at Sodus Bay in February by Mike Tetlow. Research into its origin, determined by a USFWS band on its leg, indicated that it was a recovered and released bird. Many observers managed to enjoy its presence in that area to the end of the season. At least one of the Rochester Peregrine Falcons was observed from time to time throughout the season. Two observers had the fortunate experience of seeing American Kestrel, Merlin and Peregrine Falcon all in the same day, an unusual winter occurrence here. Virginia Rail was reported from the traditional Mendon Ponds location, but Sora went unreported this winter. This season's shorebird total was zero, a far cry from last winter's five species in one day. Gulls for the most part were very good, with Thayer's Gull a highlight. Herring Gull numbers were good and Lesser Black-backed Gull continued the trend of multiple sightings. Iceland and Glaucous gulls were reported regularly, but were not entirely predictable as to location. Little Gulls were unreported and Bonaparte's Gulls left the area quite early. A Black-legged Kittiwake found by Bill Symonds in January was an unexpected surprise.

A **Barn Owl** in the Livonia area was a very good find. Snowy Owls were found in a few locations, but moved out rather quickly. An immature bird seen in the Braddock Bay area for six consecutive days was the only "long-term" sighting. Long-eared and Northern Saw-whet owls were both reported. The Short-eared Owl maximum was a respectable 17 birds in the Nations Road area on 18 January. A single individual represented Yellow-bellied Sapsucker this winter.

Jim Kimball saw the **Tyrannus flycatcher hybrid** that was first discovered in Livingston County in November on 2 December for the last sighting of this most interesting bird. Northern Shrike numbers fluctuated throughout the season, but Dave Tetlow counted an unprecedented 22 individuals along the West Lakeshore in Region 2 on 26 February, matching the total he had turned up a few days prior

in Region 1 just to the west. Common Raven was reported from the hilly southern portion of Livingston County in February. This area continues to produce consistent sightings. Carolina and Winter wren numbers were good. Both species were very consistent in suitable habitat. Hermit Thrush was found in four locations. Gray Catbird was found in all three months of the season. There was one Brown Thrasher report in January and one in February. The only American Pipit report came from the Town of Leicester in early December. It was a very poor winter for Cedar Waxwings, yet there was a single **Bohemian Waxwing** found with Cedars in Durand Eastman Park on 8 February. This single report was surprising, based on the reports of an influx in the Northeast. Yellow-rumped Warblers were found in lower numbers than recent peak counts in the Caledonia area. There were two Common Yellowthroat reports.

A female Eastern Towhee lingered in Durand Eastman Park into January. American Tree Sparrow numbers were good. A lone Savannah Sparrow report continued the trend of recent winters. A "Slate-colored" Fox Sparrow was carefully studied by Bob and Sue Spahn in Hamlin Beach State Park. White-throated Sparrow numbers were generally low. White-crowned Sparrow started the season in very high numbers but dropped off as the season progressed. The male Indigo Bunting found near Leicester in November continued visiting a feeder for three days into December. Up to seven Rusty Blackbirds were seen in the Town of Leicester for most of January. The only Common Grackle report was of a single bird in Greece on 15 January.

The winter finches were sparse for the most part. December saw a Pine Grosbeak report, four separate **Hoary Redpoll** sightings and three Evening Grosbeaks. Common Redpoll numbers fluctuated, with decent counts earlier in the season and a drop in numbers as the season progressed. The Hoary Redpolls reported in December were found with flocks of Commons.

December's total of 117 species was higher than last year but below the ten-year average. The year 2003 ended with a species total of 279, which was again below the ten-year average. January's total was just slightly below the ten-year average at 119 species. February's 101 species, with five new for the year, brought the 2004 total to 124 species.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

B – T Brighton MONR; BB – Braddock Bay MONR; CH – Charlotte MONR; DE – Durand-Eastman P MONR; G – T Greece MONR; HB – Hamlin Beach SP MONR; HO – Honeoye L area LIVI; HP- Hogan Pt, T Greece MONR; IB – Irondequoit Bay MONR; L – T Leicester LIVI; LLCBC – Little Lakes CBC; NR – Nations Rd, Avon LIVI; P – T Perinton MONR; PI – T Pittsford MONR; RCBC – Rochester CBC; RH – Rattlesnake Hill WMA LIVI; SA – T Savannah WAYN; SB – Sodus Bay WAYN; W – Webster MONR; WL – West Lakeshore MONR/ORLE.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Snow Goose: max 2300 SA 3 Jan.
Canada Goose: max 30,000 SA Jan.
Canada x Greater White-fronted Goose: 1 SA 3 Jan (DT, MD).
Mute Swan: 266 RCBC 21 Dec, record high for count.
Tundra Swan: max 300 SA 3 Jan.
Trumpeter Swan: 2 IB 10-11 Jan, wing tags 459 & 460 back for 3rd year.
Wood Duck: Bear Creek WAYN 11-31 Jan; Caledonia 17 Jan.
Gadwall: max 72 IB 9 Dec.
Am. Wigeon: max 30 Ellison P North MONR, 21 Dec.
N. Shoveler: arr 1 G 28 Feb.
N. Pintail: max 30 Conesus L LIVI 27 Dec.
Ring-necked Duck: 72 LLCBC 27 Dec.
TUFTED DUCK: m SB 11-31 Jan (MT, mob); 4th Reg record.
King Eider: f G 21 Dec (WS); imm m HB 31 Dec (WS); 2 imm m CH 25 Jan (BE); imm m CH 26 Jan-16 Feb (mob), one of the 31 Dec birds.
Black Scoter: max 4 SB 1 Jan.
Com. Goldeneye: max 100 SB 18 Jan.
Wild Turkey: max 107 T Huron WAYN 11 Jan.
Red-throated Loon: max 21 G (RCBC)

21 Dec, record high for count.
Red-necked Grebe: max 17 HB 9 Dec.
Double-crested Cormorant: G 1-2 Jan; IB 11 Jan.
Black-crowned Night-Heron: ad Powder Mill P MONR 1-29 Feb (mob).
Turkey Vulture: NR 1 Jan; max 17 Letchworth SP 25 Jan.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

N. Harrier: max 8 NR 4 Jan.
Cooper's Hawk: 42 total many locations Jan (DT); big total for a single observer for a month, reflecting high numbers present.
N. Goshawk: imm m W 10 Dec (JC); RCBC 21 Dec; Manitou MONR 13 Jan; imm f HP 16 Jan; Avon 21 Jan.
Red-shouldered Hawk: 2 RH 21 Jan (DT).
Merlin: G 21 Dec; Seneca P Rochester 21 Dec; IB 26 Dec; Bergen GENE 18 Jan.
GYRFALCON: ad f SB 20-29 Feb (MT, mob); captive that was previously retrieved, checked out, banded and released.
Peregrine Falcon: RCBC 21 Dec; ad f B 18 Jan; downtown Rochester all Jan.
Virginia Rail: Mendon Ponds P 1-31 Jan.
Killdeer: arr Hamlin 29 Feb.

THAYER'S GULL: P 9 Jan (MT); 1st winter IB 30 Jan (RS); 1st winter P 10 Feb (RS).

Herring Gull: max 11,000 P 29 Dec, 8 Jan (MT).

Iceland Gull: max 6 P 8 & 26 Jan (MT).

Lesser Black-backed Gull: 2nd yr P sev Jan (MT); ad P sev Jan (MT); ad G 11 Jan (KG); ad SB 18 Jan (R&SS).

Glaucous Gull: max 3 P 26 Jan.

Black-legged Kittiwake: imm HB 4 Jan (WS, RS, DT).

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Barn Owl: Livonia LIVI 27-31 Dec (J&PD, PK).

Snowy Owl: BB 17-22 Dec; CH 21-22 Dec (LG, JO); B 30 Jan (BC).

Long-eared Owl: NR 7 Dec (C&RMc), only report.

Short-eared Owl: max 17 NR 18 Jan.

N. Saw-whet Owl: WAYN 7 Dec (DD); HO 27 Dec (RS).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: RH 21 Jan, only report.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

Tyrannus flycatcher hybrid: L thru 2 Dec (JK).

N. Shrike: 22 WL 26 Feb (DT).

Com. Raven: 2 Dalton LIVI 21 Feb (KG, CD-G), only report.

Horned Lark: max 900 Byron GENE; good total.

Carolina Wren: max 3 Pittsford all Jan (R&SM).

Brown Thrasher: HB 1 Dec.

Gray Catbird: Penfield 9 Dec; Caledonia 17 Jan; 1 dead W 18 Jan; Manitou 29 Jan; Hamlin 2 Feb.

Am. Pipit: last L 2 Dec.

Bohemian Waxwing: DE 8 Feb (RS).

WARBLERS

Com. Yellowthroat: Conesus L 1 Jan; 1 DE 1-2 Jan.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

E. Towhee: f DE 1 Dec-2 Jan.

Savannah Sparrow: Groveland 1 Jan (DT, JeB).

“SLATE-COLORED” FOX SPARROW: HB 7-8 (R&SS, NYSARC); 2nd state report for this form.

Song Sparrow: max 25 Hilton 21 Dec.

White-throated Sparrow: max 50 P 12-31 Jan.

White-crowned Sparrow: max 100+ Avon area LIVI 12 & 21 Jan.

Indigo Bunting: m L 1-3 Dec, very late.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 71 P 29 Dec.

Hoary Redpoll: DE 13 Dec (R&SS, NYSARC); HB 17 Dec (RS, NYSARC); Manitou MONR 27 Dec (RO); HO 27 Dec (RS, NYSARC).

Evening Grosbeak: 3 Canadice LIVI 27 Dec, only report.



REGION 3 – FINGER LAKES REGION

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Overall, the winter was colder and snowier than normal. December was 1.8°F warmer than normal, but January was 6.8°colder and February was 2°colder than normal. December, with 28.3” of snowfall in Ithaca, was twice as snowy as normal. January snowfall was 4.6” more than normal. February had 3.8” less snowfall than normal. Snow covered the ground on all but 14 days.

The season featured several rarities and lingering migrants. Rare for the season waterfowl were Ross’s Goose, Brant and Barrow’s Goldeneye, all in the Cayuga Lake Basin. Several species showed significant changes in numbers since the previous winter, but only Common Goldeneye and Common Merganser increased for the second consecutive year.

Other rare waterbirds included **Pacific Loon**, Eared Grebe and Northern Gannet. Pete Hosner provided good details of the one good look that the Pacific Loon afforded before it quickly moved to the center of Cayuga Lake. His poor digiscoped photograph was perhaps not conclusive, but was not at all inconsistent with the identification. The Eared Grebe returned once again to the waters of Cayuga Lake’s Aurora Bay, where it remained through the end of the season. Tim Lenz was the only one fortunate enough to see the Northern Gannet pass by Stewart Park in Ithaca in early December.

A Peregrine Falcon roosting at Cornell University through the winter was the biggest raptor news. Large numbers of Red-tailed Hawks again gathered at the Ithaca Game Farm; one photograph showed the amazing phenomenon of 20 sitting together on the same fence. Regionwide, the numbers of both Red-tailed and Rough-legged hawks were up from last year.

There was nothing particularly remarkable among this winter’s gull species. The presence of four Glaucous Gulls in Geneva, however, was the most at a single site in at least ten years. The only shorebird this winter season was a migrating Killdeer that would have missed this report if this were not a leap year.

In spite of West Nile Virus, American Crow and Common Raven numbers were both up this year. Blue Jay numbers, which tend to vary a great deal from winter to winter anyway, were down. Among the small woodland birds, only Black-capped Chickadee increased. This was the second consecutive increase for the species’ winter numbers.

Dave, Matt and Mark Russell had a great father-sons day helping with the Watkins Glen Christmas Bird Count. They found a Bald Eagle, two Marsh Wrens, a Gray Catbird and a Brown Thrasher, even though they had a late start. They had had to return to Horseheads to get Mark’s forgotten coat. On return to Horseheads for the coat, they discovered and photographed a Peregrine Falcon.

Just single Bohemian Waxwings, one in December and one in February, were reported. Cedar Waxwing numbers were down for the second straight year. A **Yellow-throated Warbler** seemed very out of place sitting in a Cliff Swallow’s

old nest near the top of one of the tallest buildings in downtown Elmira in early December.

The Dickcissel that appeared at a home in Enfield in mid-November lingered there until 7 December. Eastern Towhees appeared in the neighboring towns of Ulysses, Tompkins County, and Covert, Seneca County. As one might guess, considering the persistent snow cover, it was a good winter for finding Snow Buntings. Their numbers were up for the second consecutive year.

Steve Kelling found the only Pine Grosbeak of the season, and Evening Grosbeaks appeared at a few feeders in the Region. Redpolls were the big news, however. Good-sized flocks of Common Redpolls appeared at many feeders in the counties bordering the Finger Lakes, though they were scarce in the Southern Tier counties. Feeder watchers recorded Hoary Redpolls at a remarkable seven locations. For the second consecutive winter, American Goldfinch numbers were up.

Overall, 96 species showed no significant change since the previous winter. Twenty-three species increased significantly. Eighteen species declined significantly.

The following species listing includes comparisons of observed bird populations in the Region between winter 2002-03 and winter 2003-04. A "+" at the end of the species account indicates an increase; a "-" indicates a decrease. Accounts with neither symbol indicate that the species did not demonstrate a significant change in reported numbers. Unless otherwise noted, the cited comparisons showed statistically significant changes ($\chi^2 > 3.84$; $P = 0.05$). A discussion of my methodology and its limitations can be found in the Region 3 report that appeared in the December 1999 issue of *The Kingbird*.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

AurB – Aurora Bay CAYU; CLB – Cayuga L Basin; ECBC – Elmira CBC; GCBC – Geneva CBC; GCC – Geneva Chamber of Commerce; ICBC – Ithaca CBC; KeuL – Keuka L; MCBC – Montezuma CBC; MyPt – Myers Pt TOMP; StP – Stewart P TOMP; WCBC – Watkins Glen CBC.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Snow Goose: Ithaca 6 Dec; max 6000 Montezuma NWR 3 Jan (J&K&PMc), high; 2 Genoa 28 Feb, +.
ROSS'S GOOSE: AurB 14 Dec (J&KMc).
Canada Goose: 37,093 MCBC 1 Jan, +.
BRANT: last 2 StP 2 Dec (GK).
Tundra Swan: 15 StP 2 Dec; 724 MCBC 1 Jan; MyPt 18 Feb, +.
Trumpeter Swan: MyPt 11 Jan-15 Feb; max 3 Mill Pd CAYU 26 Jan.
Am. Black Duck: max 1045 CLB 17 Jan, -.
Mallard: max 2343 CLB 17 Jan, -.
Canvasback: max 800 AurB 8 Feb, -.
Redhead: max 19,000 AurB 8 Feb (MDr, PHo, TL, MiS), high, -.
Ring-necked Duck: max 205 KeuL 17 Jan (EBS), high, +.
Lesser Scaup: max 351 CLB 17 Jan (CaBC), high, +.
Black Scoter: KeuL 17 Jan; Sampson SP 15 Feb.

Surf Scoter: GCC 7 Feb (GC), only report.

White-winged Scoter: AurB 19 Dec; max 6 Sampson SP 15 Feb, -.

Long-tailed Duck: max 11 Lodi Pt Marine SP 15 Feb.

Com. Goldeneye: max 969 CLB 17 Jan, +.

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE: MyPt 25 Jan thru (MDe); max 2 Taughannock Falls SP 28 Jan (JA).

Com. Merganser: max 255 CLB 17 Jan, +.

Ruddy Duck: max 5 Hog Hole TOMP 8 Dec; Canandaigua City Pier ONTA 30 Dec.

Wild Turkey: 126 ICBC 1 Jan, -.

Red-throated Loon: MyPt 8-22 Feb.

PACIFIC LOON: MyPt 8 Feb (MDr, PHo, ph!, AMJ, TL, MiS).

Red-necked Grebe: KeuL 17 Jan; max 22 Seneca L 13 Feb; 4 Long Pt SP 28 Feb.

EARED GREBE: AurB 1 Jan thru (BTR!).

N. GANNET: StP 4 Dec (TL!).
Turkey Vulture: max 4 Varna 21 Feb, +.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: max 9 MCBC 1 Jan.
Sharp-shinned Hawk: max 4 ICBC 1 Jan, low.
Red-tailed Hawk: max 172 ICBC 1 Jan (CaBC), high, +.
Rough-legged Hawk: max 17 ECBC 1 Jan, +.
Am. Kestrel: max 8 WCBC 27 Dec.
Merlin: max 2 ECBC 1 Jan (CVAS), high.
Peregrine Falcon: Cornell U thru; MyPt 21 Feb.
Am. Coot: max 398 CLB 17 Jan.
Killdeer: arr & max Dryden 29 Feb (COC, SH), only report.
Bonaparte's Gull: StP 5 Jan (JE), only report, -.
Ring-billed Gull: max 2591 GCBC 1 Jan, +.
Herring Gull: max 717 MCBC 1 Jan, -.
Iceland Gull: max 6 GCC 12 Feb.
Lesser Black-backed Gull: max 3 T Seneca 28 Dec.
Glaucous Gull: max 4 GCC 7 Feb (GC), high.
Great Black-backed Gull: max 220 Seneca L SP 24 Jan, -.

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Mourning Dove: max 343 WCBC 27 Dec, low, -.
Snowy Owl: Phelps 27 Dec (B&DP!), only report.
Barred Owl: max 2 ICBC 1 Jan (CaBC), only report.
Short-eared Owl: max 3 Milo 23 Feb, low.
N. Saw-whet Owl: Danby 1 Dec-12 Jan.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: max 2 ICBC 1 Jan.
Blue Jay: max 350 ICBC 1 Jan, -.
Am. Crow: max 30,000 Auburn 10 Jan, +.

Fish Crow: max 13 Riverfront P CHEM 20 Jan (BO), high.

Com. Raven: max 39 ECBC 1 Jan (CVAS), high, +.

Horned Lark: max 600 Genoa 15 Dec (TL, MM), high.

Black-capped Chickadee: max 2350 ICBC 1 Jan, +.

Tufted Titmouse: max 241 ICBC 1 Jan.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: max 71 ICBC 1 Jan, +.

Winter Wren: Sapsucker Woods TOMP 31 Dec (KR); max 2 ICBC 1 Jan.

MARSH WREN: max 2 WCBC 27 Dec (SCBC).

Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 66 ICBC 1 Jan.

E. Bluebird: max 37 ICBC 1 Jan, -.

Hermit Thrush: Sapsucker Woods TOMP 14 Jan-19 Feb.

Am. Robin: max 177 MCBC 1 Jan, -.

GRAY CATBIRD: Corning CBC 20 Dec; WCBC 27 Dec.

BROWN THRASHER: WCBC 27 Dec.

European Starling: max 4507 GCBC 1 Jan, -.

Am. Pipit: MyPt 28 Feb (eB); arr & max 9 Dryden 29 Feb (MAn, COC, BW).

BOHEMIAN WAXWING: SSF 20 Dec (KR, JW); Lansing 22 Feb (MH).

Cedar Waxwing: max 354 ICBC 1 Jan, -.

WARBLERS

Yellow-rumped Warbler: max 2 AurB N Bluffs 18 Jan.

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER: Riverfront P CHEM 3-6 Dec (BO, MPo, ph).

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

E. TOWHEE: Ulysses 13 Dec (BTh); Covert 26 Feb (BMcA).

Am. Tree Sparrow: max 453 ICBC 1 Jan, -.

CHIPPING SPARROW: ICBC 1 Jan (CaBC); Ithaca 31 Jan (ML).

Field Sparrow: ECBC 1 Jan, only report.
White-crowned Sparrow: 2 Romulus 7-21 Jan; max 7 GCBC 1 Jan, +.
Lapland Longspur: max 4 Ovid 12 Jan.
Snow Bunting: max 700 Ledyard 21 Dec, +.
N. Cardinal: max 293 ICBC 1 Jan, -.
DICKCISSEL: Enfield 3-7 Dec (CM, LW).
Red-winged Blackbird: max 25 Ithaca Game Farm TOMP 29 Feb.
Rusty Blackbird: max 2 Clock property 11 Jan; Fast property 11 Feb.
Com. Grackle: Mill Pd CAYU 31 Dec (J&KMc), only report.
Brown-headed Cowbird: max 2000 Hector 5 Dec (EG), high, +.

PINE GROSBEAK: Caroline 1 Feb (SK, ph).
House Finch: max 252 ICBC 1 Jan, low.
Red Crossbill: Summerhill 20 Dec (fide MY), only report.
White-winged Crossbill: SSF 1 Jan; max 3 Dryden 15 Jan.
Com. Redpoll: max 103 ICBC 1 Jan, +.
HOARY REDPOLL: Caroline 14 Dec (AM&TJ, ph!); Dryden 21 Feb (NM).
Pine Siskin: max 20 Summerhill 9 Dec, +.
Am. Goldfinch: max 547 ICBC 1 Jan, +.
Evening Grosbeak: 13 Caroline 2 Dec; max 62 Summerhill 6 Jan; 2 SSF 28 Feb, +.
House Sparrow: max 691 ICBC 1 Jan, +.

REGION 4 – SUSQUEHANNA

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Heavy snow in December, combined with more snow and extreme cold in January, made the winter colder and snowier than normal. December's temperature at Binghamton was 1.2°F higher than average. The 32.9" of snow was almost double the normal amount. January's average temperature of 13.4° at Binghamton was the second coldest ever. The record at Walton was tied. Across the Region, many local records for cold were broken on 10 January. The extreme cold was often accompanied by strong winds. The month's 36.3" of snow at Binghamton was 80% more than average. February was very cold at times, but snowfall of 15.9" and the monthly average temperature of 23.7° were normal.

Five major snow events brought at least 10" to some part of the Region on 5-6 December, 14-15 December, 11-13 January, 27-28 January and 3 February. Lake effect snow was a regular occurrence in some areas. Deep powder conditions prevailed until late February when crust formed. Only fast moving water remained open after early January.

The frequent snow and the depth of the powder may have been difficult for some birds. Little manure was visible until late February. Few reports were received of Horned Larks, Snow Buntings and Wild Turkeys, all of which exploit manured fields. Rough-legged Hawks were mostly absent from the northern counties. The snow didn't adversely affect an influx of irruptive finches, which found a good cone crop in spruces, larches and hemlocks.

Good numbers of half-hardies were found on Christmas Bird Counts. Binghamton CBC compiler Gail Kirch noted low numbers overall but "good

numbers of Southern species.” Red-bellied Woodpecker, Carolina Wren and Northern Mockingbird were again found away from their regular winter haunts.

After the CBC period, most half-hardy birds were found in the low elevations of Broome and Tioga counties. During the depth of winter, some other species were quite scarce elsewhere. This pattern was noticeable with Sharp-shinned and Cooper’s hawks. Did these birds withdraw or could the finches in high elevation conifers have drawn some accipiters away from bird feeders and observers?

Waterfowl numbers were low – Federation Waterfowl Count gross numbers were slightly above half of the 10 year average – but variety was good. The Cortland CBC’s coverage of Skaneateles Lake contributed some interesting ducks.

In December, a pair of Bald Eagles started rebuilding a nest that had blown out of a large sycamore in Delaware County in the summer of 2003. Fortunately, the storm came shortly after the season’s eaglets had left the nest.

While Andy Mason was counting raptors at the Franklin Mountain Hawk Watch on 1 December, he tallied a very good count of more than 50 loons flying south. On 7 December at Franklin, counter Fred Fries observed a Golden Eagle “kiting.” A query of the Franklin Mountain counters did not find any who had seen the behavior by this species. (Results from the full Franklin Mountain season that ended 1 January 2004 were included in the fall 2003 report.)

Peregrine Falcons are now found regularly near their Binghamton nest site in winter. This may be something we can expect from Merlins as they move into areas with a reliable winter food supply. During this first winter since they were confirmed nesting in Binghamton, 14 reports of single Merlins, both male and female, were received from Broome County. Twelve reports came from near the Merlin nest site. The small falcon is a rarity, even more so in winter. The presence of these birds suggests strong nest site fidelity. It is interesting that the only confirmed breeding of both Peregrine Falcon and Merlin in Region 4 occurs in the same Atlas survey block.

The **Yellow-throated Warbler** spotted by Jan Petersen and Dave Sterling at Niko’s Diner in Binghamton on 2 January drew a lot of attention. The warbler was feeding on bread put out by the diner’s staff. Petersen and Sterling returned with binoculars several days later to positively identify the bird. During the two weeks it lingered at the site, many people visited Niko’s to enjoy the cuisine and the bird. One of Victor Lamoureux’s fine photographs was submitted along with a very complete report by Marie Petuh. The warbler was last seen on 15 January, a day on which a Sharp-shinned Hawk was also observed.

A **Dickcissel** in Don Weber’s yard in Candor was videotaped during the five days it was seen. Bob Pantle identified it as an immature female.

Finches made the season interesting. Purple Finch, Red Crossbill, Common Redpoll, Hoary Redpoll, Pine Siskin and Evening Grosbeak were all present. Good numbers of Common Redpoll and Pine Siskin were widespread after mid-December. Five credible reports of Hoary Redpoll were received. All were carefully observed. Four reports came from skilled birders with considerable experience. Two reports were submitted to NYSARC.

In late February, Matt Young found Red Crossbills and Pine Siskins singing and behaving territorially in mixed conifers near Bowman Lake State Park. These

birds persisted into spring and were found with fledglings in early April. The behavior of these species during and after the reporting period, along with White-winged Crossbills, which were first found singing at several locations after the reporting period ended, lead Matt Young to speculate about the possibility of a significant crossbill and siskin breeding event.

Other seasonal rarities included Ruddy Duck, Osprey, a very late Turkey Vulture, Winter Wren, Brown Thrasher, Gray Catbird, Bohemian Waxwing and White-crowned Sparrow.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BCBC – Binghamton CBC; CCBC – Cortland CBC; FMHW – Franklin Mountain Hawk Watch; FWC – Federation Waterfowl Count; OnCBC – Oneonta CBC; OwCBC – Owego CBC; SCBC – Sherburne CBC; SkanL – Skaneateles L; TBC – Tioga Bird Club.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Snow Goose: regular thru Dec; last 25 TIOG 15 Jan.

Canada Goose: max 1350 OwCBC 2 Jan; numbers dropped with temperature.

Mute Swan: max 3 BCBC 28 Dec; several other reports.

Wood Duck: 2 OwCBC 2 Jan, only report.

Gadwall: TIOG Feb, no details.

Am. Wigeon: DELA 1 Feb (TBC); Boland Pd BROO Feb.

Am. Black Duck: max 51 FWC 11

Jan. **Mallard:** max 532 FWC 11 Jan.

Green-winged Teal: Chenango SP Jan (PK).

Redhead: max 5 FWC 11 Jan; 2 other reports.

Ringed-neck Duck: 129 SkanL CCBC 20 Dec, only report.

Lesser Scaup: SkanL CCBC 20 December; only report.

Bufflehead: max 18 SkanL CCBC 20 Dec; several reports of small groups and singles.

Com. Goldeneye: max 82 SkanL CCBC 20 Dec; 3 other reports.

Hooded Merganser: max 16 SkanL
CCBC 20 Dec; 8 of 10 reports from
BROO.
Com. Merganser: max 295 FWC 11 Jan;
common.
Red-breasted Merganser: 18 Jan Owego
(SK); Endwell 21 Feb (DWa); never
common.
Ruddy Duck: 3 Dec Hillcrest Pits BROO
(JWe); uncommon.
Ring-necked Pheasant: 8 OwCBC 2 Jan,
high count; found on 4 CBCs.
Ruffed Grouse: max 9 Berkshire 21 Feb.
Wild Turkey: max 178 BCBC 28 Dec;
most flocks small; low numbers.
Com. Loon: 50+ FMHW 1 Dec (AM),
good flight.
Great Blue Heron: max 10 BCBC 28
Dec; most reports BROO.
Turkey Vulture: SCBC 20 Dec, very late;
2 arr DELA 27 Feb.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Osprey: Vestal 29 Jan (CW), exceptional
date.
Bald Eagle: 26 FMHW Dec; reported
from all counties, very widespread; nest
building DELA 21 Dec; 10 DELA TBC
trip 1 Feb; *intro*.
N. Harrier: 8 OwCBC 2 Jan; few
reported.
Sharp-shinned Hawk: max 6 BCBC 28
Dec; regular BROO; few elsewhere.
Cooper's Hawk: max 6 BCBC 28 Dec; 2
Harford 17 Jan; regular BROO.
N. Goshawk: 5 FMHW Dec; 6 other
reports.
Red-shouldered Hawk: 3 reports away
from FMHW; uncommon but regular in
winter.
Red-tailed Hawk: 126 FMHW 1 Dec-1
Jan; 73 OwCBC 2 Jan; breeding activity
TIOG 29 Feb.
Rough-legged Hawk: 11 FMHW Dec;
max 13 OwCBC 2 Jan; missed in many
areas mid-season.
Golden Eagle: 35 FMHW Dec, 10 on 7
Dec; observed "kiting" FMHW 7 Dec FF;

2 West Burlington Dec; imm chased by
Red-tailed Hawks Springfield 27 Feb
(LG); missed 27 Dec-27 Feb.
Am. Kestrel: max 6 OwCBC 2 Jan; TIOG
thru; generally scarce.
Merlin: BROO thru; Nanticoke 24 Feb
(JW); Port Crane 11 Jan (JW); 12 other
reports from Binghamton; *intro*.
Peregrine Falcon: 2 Binghamton thru,
now expected.
Am. Coot: 30 FWC 11 Jan; regular at
Otsego L.
Ring-billed Gull: max 47 OnCBC 20
Dec.
Herring Gull: max 10 BCBC 28 Dec.
Great Black-backed Gull: max 12
Tioughnioga Ri 8 Feb.

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Rock Pigeon: max 1586 BCBC 28 Dec.
Mourning Dove: max 354 BCBC 28 Dec.
E. Screech-Owl: max 6 OnCBC 20 Dec.
Great Horned Owl: max 3 OnCBC 20
Dec.
Barred Owl: 2 OnCBC 20 Dec; only one
other report; scarce.
Short-eared Owl: Springfield 15 Feb,
only report.
N. Saw-whet Owl: West Burlington OTSE
28 Feb.
Belted Kingfisher: missed after 2 Jan
except Port Crane BROO.
Red-bellied Woodpecker: max 19
OwCBC 2 Jan; West Exeter 13 Feb,
unusual location.
Downy Woodpecker: max 103 BCBC 28
Dec.
Hairy Woodpecker: max 33 BCBC 28
Dec.
N. Flicker: max 3 OwCBC 2 Jan.
Pileated Woodpecker: max 5 BCBC 28
Dec & OwCBC 2 Jan; regular,
widespread.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: 2 BCBC 28 Dec; reports from
12 locations; average.

Blue Jay: max 190 OnCBC 20 Dec.
Am. Crow: max 1900 West Hill, Norwich 9 Feb, going to the roost (DWi).
Fish Crow: Owego 29 Dec (D&JW), only report.
Com. Raven: max 6 OwCBC 2 Jan, fewer than recent years.
Horned Lark: max 300 CORT 17 Jan; few, and small, flocks.
Black-capped Chickadee: max 759 BCBC 28 Dec.
Tufted Titmouse: max 166 BCBC 28 Dec.
Red-breasted Nuthatch: max 22 OnCBC 20 Dec; 20+ Truxton thru (MY); regular some locations.
White-breasted Nuthatch: max 97 BCBC 28 Dec.
Brown Creeper: max 15 BCBC 28 Dec.
Carolina Wren: OnCBC 20 Dec; max 17 BCBC 28 Dec; Springfield to late Jan; Margaretville 12 Jan; Norwich 26 Jan & 4 Feb; unexpected locations.
Winter Wren: Chenango Valley SP 10 Jan (BK); T Maine 30 Jan (JH); very unusual.
Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 11 BCBC 28 Dec.
E. Bluebird: max 38 BCBC 28 Dec; missed outside BROO, TIOG after Dec.
Am. Robin: max 80 Cherry Valley 8 Feb BD; widespread thru.
Gray Catbird: T Otsego 25-30 Dec (BD), very late.
N. Mockingbird: max 5 OwCBC 2 Jan.
Brown Thrasher: Vestal 24 Jan-27 Feb (GK), very unusual.
European Starling: max 2017 OwCBC 2 Jan.
Bohemian Waxwing: 5 Middlefield 22 Jan (JD).
Cedar Waxwing: max 108 OwCBC 2 Jan; widespread, unpredictable.

WARBLERS

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER:
 Court St Binghamton 1-15 Jan (mob!);
intro.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

Am. Tree Sparrow: max 130 OwCBC 2 Jan.
Song Sparrow: max 12 BCBC 28 Dec.
White-throated Sparrow: max 32 BCBC 28 Dec; Margaretville 1 Jan; Norwich Feb; BROO, TIOG thru; well represented.
White-crowned Sparrow: OwCBC 2 Jan, unusual.
Dark-eyed Junco: max 313 BCBC 28 Dec.
Lapland Longspur: CCBC 20 Dec; CORT 17 Jan (JM & KM).
Snow Bunting: max 300 CCBC 20 Dec; mostly small flocks, generally scarce.
N. Cardinal: max 118 BCBC 28 Dec.
DICKCISSEL: imm f Candor 15-19 Dec (DWe, BP), unusual.
Red-winged Blackbird: max 75 BCBC 28 Dec, unexpected in such numbers; on 2 other CBCs; missed after Dec.
Brown-headed Cowbird: max 30 BCBC 28 Dec; 10 Harford 17 Jan; more than expected.
Purple Finch: max 10 BCBC 28 Dec; 8 Morris 29 Jan; small numbers but more widespread than expected.
House Finch: max 321 BCBC 28 Dec; few reports from higher counties; "scarce" Norwich (DWi).
Red Crossbill: pair, territorial males T McDonough 26 Feb into March (MY); *intro.*
Com. Redpoll: widespread, high numbers after 12 Dec; max 200 T Otsego 22 Feb.
HOARY REDPOLL: Chenango Forks 7 Jan (mob); West Burlington 12-30 Jan (J&TS, NYSARC); Milford 6 Feb (GC); Morris Feb (A&JR, NYSARC); South Otselic 26 Feb (MY, JSi).
Pine Siskin: widespread but patchy after 12 Dec; 75 T Otsego 22 Feb; territorial T McDonough 26 Feb (MY); *intro.*
Am. Goldfinch: max 237 BCBC 28 Dec.
Evening Grosbeak: 4 reports of small groups.
House Sparrow: max 562 OwCBC 2 Jan.

REGION 5 – ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

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The December average temperature was 30.0°F, 1.4° above normal, with 3.01" of precipitation, 0.1" below normal. There was 48.5" of snow, with a maximum depth of 19" on the ground, possibly enough to drive out half-hardies, although milder weather at the end of the month left little snow on the ground. Many area lakes and ponds were frozen by 15 December and Oneida Lake was mostly frozen by 23 December except the area near Bridgeport, which didn't freeze until 8 January. The average temperature for January was 14.7°, 8.0° below average, which made it the second coldest January on record. There was 1.86" of precipitation, 0.74" below normal, and it all fell as snow, which totaled 78.1", the most ever for the month. Oswego County received 115-160" of snow for the month, with four feet from 29-31 January over most of the county and a maximum of seven feet in some areas. In February the snow let up with 19.4" and the temperature averaged 23.5°, 1.0° below normal, with 1.12" of precipitation, 1.0" below normal.

Waterfowl numbers were generally low for the season as the rapid freeze-up forced many birds to leave. Moderating conditions toward the end of February opened Little Sodus Bay slightly and some early migrants appeared there. An immature male Tufted Duck with some traces of gray on the flanks and a tuft that extended about halfway down the nape was found in Oswego Harbor in December. What was thought to be the same duck, in bright adult plumage but with a similar length tuft, was seen at Fair Haven when Little Sodus Bay began to open up in late February. [RREd.: Region 2 birders thought the Fairhaven bird was likely an adult male seen at Sodus Point from 11 January to 17 February.] Possibly spurred by a mild spell, Snow Geese were seen flying north to Lake Ontario in early January just before the harsh weather set in. A family of Trumpeter Swans were at Fair Haven in December, and what may be our first wing-tagged Trumpeter was at Baldwinsville. Green-winged Teal, Common Loon and Horned Grebe numbers quickly declined after 1 January.

Turkey Vulture numbers seemed to increase in eastern Onondaga County despite the hard winter, and one over Stillwater Reservoir in January was a surprise. Early in the season the low numbers of species such as Northern Harrier, Rough-legged Hawk and Short-eared Owl were probably due to a crash in rodent population, while later the raptors most affected by the deep snow were Red-tailed Hawk and American Kestrel. The deep snow may have been responsible for Long-eared Owls seen in daylight in February as they looked for prey. Northern Goshawk and Red-shouldered Hawk reports were up. There was a single Golden Eagle. Merlins at several sites suggested increased wintering, although the Syracuse birds seem to have changed their roost site away from Onondaga Park. Several Peregrine Falcons seen in urban areas may be birds prospecting for new nesting sites. No Snowy or Short-eared owls were reported this season.

Early December is usually the end of shorebird season in this part of the state, so this was the first time that Purple Sandpiper, Dunlin and Red Phalarope were reported in the same winter season. Gull numbers were very low in January, usually a good month for them along the Oswego River, but they returned to more normal levels in February. Bonaparte's Gull was an exception, with a record winter count on 7 January as Great Lakes lingerers moved south with the onset of harsh weather. Iceland and Glaucous gull numbers were very low this year. A gull with gray in the wing tips but otherwise suggesting a first winter Glaucous may have been the result of a first generation "Nelson's" (Herring x Glaucous hybrid) mating with a Glaucous.

Gene Huggins did point counts of American Crows flying to roost at several locations in Syracuse and the numbers were down from the previous year as was the Syracuse CBC total. Half-hardies such as Winter Wren, Hermit Thrush, Gray Catbird, Rusty Blackbird, Red-winged Blackbird and Common Grackle were reported through December and the first few days of January. Red-breasted Nuthatch was seen at many feeders away from breeding areas, but at the same time they were also easy enough to find at higher elevation breeding sites. There were only scattered sightings of Bohemian Waxwing for most of the season; it wasn't until mid-February that large numbers were found in southern Madison and Oneida counties. The sparrow variety was good, with most of the typical half-hardy species represented, but only one Swamp Sparrow was reported later than 17 January. There were good numbers of Common Redpolls, but not as large as most big invasion years, and there were several well-described Hoary Redpolls. American Goldfinches wintered in large numbers in many areas, while Pine Siskin was seen in small numbers and Purple Finch was very scattered. No Pine Grosbeaks and neither crossbill species were found this year.

For the season, a total of 125 species was reported, very good for a severe winter. Highlights included Tufted Duck, Golden Eagle, Purple Sandpiper, Red Phalarope, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Bohemian Waxwing, Field Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow and Hoary Redpoll.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

Bvllle – Baldwinsville; CM – Clay Marsh; DeR – DeRuyter; DH – Derby Hill; FH – Fair Haven, Little Sodus Bay and vicinity; Geo – Georgetown; OnonL – Onondaga L; SFNS – Spring Farm Nature Sanctuary, Kirkland; SSSP – Selkirk Shores SP; Syr – Syracuse; TRWMA – Three Rivers WMA.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Snow Goose: max 700 Sterling 4 Jan, flying north.
Canada Goose: max 5000 FH 10 Jan.
Brant: FH 25 Dec (GD), only report.
Mute Swan: 2 FH to mid Jan freeze-up; Bville thru; 2 SVB 27 Dec.
Trumpeter Swan: max 7 FH 7 Dec; Bville after 1 Feb, wingtagged.
Tundra Swan: max 41 Bridgeport 3 Jan; last 12 Oswego 9 Jan.
Wood Duck: last 2 Manlius 14 Jan.
Gadwall: max 3 FH 11 Jan; few reports.
Am. Wigeon: last FH 4 Jan.
Am. Black Duck: max 118 Sherrill 10 Jan.
N. Shoveler: 3 FH 4 Dec, only report
N. Pintail: max 3 Oneida L 7 Dec; arr 2 Seneca R 21 Feb.
Green-winged Teal: last 3 Meadowbrook Syr 3 Jan.
Canvasback: 4 singles thru; max 33 FH 29 Feb.
Redhead: max 82 FH 16 Feb.
Ring-necked Duck: max 15 Hatch L 5 Dec.
TUFTED DUCK: imm m Oswego 14-29 Dec (GP, mob); m FH after 22 Feb (KM, mob), thought by some to be the same bird. [Thought by Reg 2 birders to be an ad m at Sodus Pt 11 Jan -17 Feb], *intro*.
Greater Scaup: max 463 SSSP 10 Dec.
Lesser Scaup: max 8 Oswego 8 Feb.
King Eider: 3 DH 1 Dec, on cold front.
White-winged Scoter: max 20 DH 1 Dec; 17 Oswego 16 Feb, fewest wintering since 2000.
Black Scoter: max 5 DH 1 Dec; none Jan-Feb.
Long-tailed Duck: max 335 DH 1 Dec; 80-100 Oswego thru.
Bufflehead: max 64 Oswego 16 Feb.
Com. Goldeneye: max 1350 FH 29 Feb.
Hooded Merganser: max 15 Delta L 4 Dec.
Com. Merganser: max 1452 OnonL 8 Jan.

Red-breasted Merganser: max 75 DH 1 Dec.
Ruddy Duck: last FH 8 Dec.
Red-throated Loon: singles Oswego & FH 4 Dec, only reports.
Com. Loon: max 11 DH 1 Dec; 1-2 Oswego to 5 Jan; only 2 reports of singles after that.
Pied-billed Grebe: max 2 Bville & 2 Fulton 11 Jan.
Horned Grebe: Cazenovia L 5 Dec; max 3 OnonL 20 Dec; last L Ontario 1 Jan, early departure.
Red-necked Grebe: FH 4 Dec; Seneca R 29 Feb.
Double-crested Cormorant: 5 Oswego 11 Jan, low mid winter max.
Great Blue Heron: 2 Bville late Feb, survived hard winter; 3 other singles after early Jan.
Turkey Vulture: max 9 Fayetteville 13 Dec, where some wintered; Stillwater Res 17 Jan (TS!), not expected Adks.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: 11 NYS Waterfowl Count 10-11 Jan, new high; max one site 5 SVB 27 Dec, with 1-4 per day large lakes and rivers thru; singles Western 5 Feb & Poland 11 Feb, on deer carcasses.
N. Harrier: last Richland 4 Jan.
N. Goshawk: 6-7 singles, with 1 Geo persistent thru Jan.
Red-shouldered Hawk: Clinton 1 Dec; New Hartford 20 Dec; Durhamville 20 Feb thru; not found most winters.
Red-tailed Hawk: 92 Clinton CBC 20 Dec, new high for count; 9 Sangerfield 27 Dec, reduced to zero 24 Jan.
Rough-legged Hawk: scattered in open areas of southern highlands; not persistent elsewhere, presumed lack of prey and deep snow.
Golden Eagle: Geo 14 Dec (MY).
Am. Kestrel: most departed by mid Jan.
Merlin: Utica 20 Dec; Syr 20 Dec; Cicero 6 Jan; Durhamville 25 Jan-7 Feb; Clinton

22 Feb; continues increase in winter.

Peregrine Falcon: DH 1 Dec; Oswego 4 Dec & 1 Jan; Utica 20 Dec; 2 Syr after 20 Dec; Phoenix 7 Jan.

Am. Coot: max 2 per day Bvllle and Syr; 4 other singles thru.

Killdeer: last 2 Cicero 4 Dec; arr Constantia 18 Feb (BMc), very early for severe winter; next 1 Camillus 29 Feb.

Purple Sandpiper: 1-2 FH 5-7 Dec.

Dunlin: FH 4-5 Dec.

Red Phalarope: FH 4 Dec.

Bonaparte's Gull: max 210 FH (KM); 18 Phoenix 7 Jan (BC); winter record as birds moved on a cold front.

Ring-billed Gull: max 4000 Oswego 28 Feb.

Herring Gull: 285 Oswego R Jan, very low; more normal Feb with 600+ per day Oswego Harbor.

Iceland Gull: max 2 Bvllle 16 Feb; few Jan reports.

Glaucous Gull: max 1 per day, hard to find.

"Nelson's" Gull (Herring x Glaucous): DH 1 Dec, thought to be a result of Glaucous and first generation "Nelson's" mating.

Great Black-backed Gull: 47 Oswego R & Bvllle 18 Jan, very low.

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Long-eared Owl: Feb daytime reports Holland Patent, Bvllle & Camillus, possibly stressed by deep snow.

N. Saw-whet Owl: Oneida CBC 27 Dec (BB).

Belted Kingfisher: max 2 Carpenter's Brook 3 Jan; 1 report after 11 Jan.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: 31 Clinton CBC 20 Dec, very high as range expansion continues eastward.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: Pompey feeder Jan-Feb; W Winfield 27 Feb.

Black-backed Woodpecker: Stillwater Res 17 Jan (TS).

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: 9 Dec reports 10 Jan reports; 3

Feb reports; forced out by snow?

Am. Crow: Huggins noted 20% decline of birds flying to roost in Syr.

Fish Crow: 2-4 Syr & 2 Liverpool thru, usual locations.

Com. Raven: 1-2 per day southern highlands; 2 southbound over SSSP 4 Jan; 1 Verona Beach 8 Feb; 2 calling Scriba 29 Feb.

Horned Lark: max 100 Tully 25 Jan.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: thru in breeding areas.

Carolina Wren: reported throughout usual sites Syr, Utica areas, 2 Fulton; possibly building some winter hardiness?

Winter Wren: SFNS & Dewitt 20 Dec.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 6 Bvllle 29 Dec; 4 Nine Mile Creek 3 Jan; only 2 reports after 3 Jan.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: Fulton 2 Jan (AVN).

E. Bluebird: generally scarce, 2-3 per day but 8 Durhamville & 12 Tully wintered at feeders on fruit and suet.

Hermit Thrush: last SSSP 10 Dec (DN).

Am. Robin: max 200 New Hartford 5 Feb.

Gray Catbird: last Syr 20 Dec.

Bohemian Waxwing: Bvllle 5 Dec; Hastings 1 Feb; 2 New Hartford 5 Feb; 1-2 TRWMA 6 Feb thru; max 70 Tioughnioga WMA 14 Feb (MY) in the crabapple "orchard"; 40 SFNS 27 Feb (MP).

Cedar Waxwing: max 200 New Hartford 5 Feb.

WARBLERS

None.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

E. Towhee: singles Clinton CBC & Syr CBC 20 Dec.

Am. Tree Sparrow: to 80 per day SFNS thru.

Chipping Sparrow: SFNS 2 Dec; 2 Oneida CBC 27 Dec.

Field Sparrow: Kirkville 17-18 Jan (JC).

Savannah Sparrow: Kirkville 17-18 Jan (JC).

Swamp Sparrow: SFNS thru; 2

Skaneateles 3 Jan.

White-throated Sparrow: max 11

Camillus 3 Jan.

White-crowned Sparrow: Pompey 29

Dec-7 Jan.

Lapland Longspur: Oswego 7 Dec; 2 Stockbridge 25 Jan; Fabius 26 Jan; DeR 27 Feb.

Snow Bunting: max 800 Stockbridge 25 Jan.

Red-winged Blackbird: max 8 Solvay 20 Dec; singles SFNS 5 Jan & 6 Feb.

Rusty Blackbird: last Durhamville 1 Dec (BB).

Com. Grackle: Williamstown thru; max 4 Fayetteville 8 Feb.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 25 Delphi Falls 8 Jan; 4 Norway 14 Feb, unusual; 20 Fayetteville 22 Feb, possible early arr.

Purple Finch: 2 DeR 15 Dec; 26 Clinton

CBC 20 Dec; 3 Bville 8 Jan; mostly scattered 1-2 per day.

Com. Redpoll: 50-100 many feeders Jan & Feb.

Hoary Redpoll: 3 Clinton CBC 20 Dec; 1-2 Geo, DeR in Jan (MY!); Sauquoit 7 Jan (JH, ph); 2 SFNS 23 Jan to 25 Feb (MP).

Pine Siskin: 3-6 Geo thru; 15 DeR 14 Dec; 6 Western 24 Dec; max 25 Camillus 3 Jan; small numbers higher elevations.

Am. Goldfinch: large numbers, 80+ at feeders not uncommon.

Evening Grosbeak: 14 Geo 2 Dec; 20+ Old Forge early Dec; 26 Geo 1 Jan; 5-10 per day southern highlands Jan & Feb.

ADDENDUM

Vol.54, No. 1, p. 74 add **Red Knot:** 3 SPd 8 Sep (DW), only report.

REGION 6 – ST. LAWRENCE

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It was a winter of contrast in the North Country, with generally mild December temperatures giving way to brutal cold in January. The average December temperature at the Watertown airport of 28.6° F was 3.3° warmer than normal, and similar weather persisted through the first week of January. Temperatures plummeted on 7 and 8 January, with nighttime lows well below zero on 15 of the next 18 nights and averaging 10.2° below normal. Precipitation was generally low away from the traditional snowbelt in the southern portion of the Region, but a series of mostly light snowfalls in late January and February accumulated to a depth of two feet or more over most of the area.

Many observers noted the virtual lack of waterfowl after the mid-January freeze. This freeze up came at the worst possible time, at least from the perspective of participants in the NYSDEC waterfowl count, who counted only 6765 individuals in Region 6, compared with totals of 10,000-12,000 in recent years. Several observers complained that areas that had hosted large flocks of ducks and geese a few days earlier were completely frozen over and bird-free on the day of the count. Other birds that seemed to disappear after the cold snap included half-hardies such as American Robin and several sparrow species, which were generally scarce throughout the winter despite the early mild weather.

Red-tailed and Rough-legged hawks and Short-eared Owls were reported in high numbers in northern Jefferson County and were common throughout the

agricultural portions of Lewis and St. Lawrence counties as well. Numbers declined in January, but both *buteos* remained common throughout the period. Perhaps the highlight of the season was a Gyrfalcon at Point Peninsula on 1 December, but this bird was only observed for a few hours. Fortunately, Gerry Smith and Tom Carrolan took excellent pictures. Snowy Owl and accipiters were exceptions to the good raptor year: there was only one report for Snowy Owl and few for Cooper's or Sharp-shinned hawks.

Another highlight of the season was the irruption of redpolls, including at least three Hoary Redpolls among the flocks of Commons. Common Redpolls were widespread, with most feeder-watchers reporting flocks of 20-40, but numbers were lower than in many irruption years. Small numbers of Pine Siskins and one White-winged Crossbill were reported, but the finch irruption was generally restricted to redpolls. Other northern birds that were present in average to above-average numbers included Northern Shrike, Bohemian Waxwing, Snow Bunting, Horned Lark and Lapland Longspur.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

BRB – Black River Bay JEFF; Can – T Canton STLA; CI – Collins Landing SLR at Thousand Islands Bridge T Orleans JEFF; CV – T Cape Vincent JEFF; FL – Fishers Landing, T Orleans JEFF; GPSP – Grass Pt SP, T Orleans JEFF; KC – Kelsey Creek, T Watertown JEFF; KPSP – Kring Pt SP, T Alexandria JEFF; Lou – T Louisville STLA; MCBC – Massena CBC; Mor – T Morristown STLA; NBCBC – New Boston CBC; Phil – T Philadelphia JEFF; PilPt – Pillar Pt; PRGC – Partridge Run golf course, T Canton STLA; PtSa – Pt Salubrious JEFF; PtPen – Pt Peninsula, T Lyme JEFF; RMPD – Robert Moses Power Dam; SH – Sacketts Harbor, T Hounsfield JEFF; SLR – St. Lawrence Ri; WATN – T Watertown JEFF; WBSP – Westcott Beach SP, T Henderson JEFF; WCBC – Watertown CBC; WFC – NYSDEC waterfowl count; WI – Wellesley I, T Orleans JEFF.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Canada Goose: 5000 Mor 27 Dec; 3224 WFC; numbers declined rapidly after mid-Jan freeze.

Tundra Swan: 32 SH 24 Dec; 50-100/day PtPen to early Jan freeze, none afterward.

Am. Black Duck: 50-120/ day N JEFF and SLR until mid-Jan freeze, scarce afterwards; 131 WFC, most (78) below RMPD.

Mallard: 100-250/day until mid-Jan

freeze N JEFF and SLR, fewer than 100/day thereafter; 557 WFC was about 25% of 2003 total.

N. Pintail: m PtPen thru early Jan.

Ring-necked Duck: 1 WFC.

Greater Scaup: 2500-3000 BRB until freeze-up in mid-Jan; 10 WFC.

Long-tailed Duck: 86 WFC.

Bufflehead: 150-200/day PtPen until mid-Jan; 36 WFC, less than 10% of 2003 total.

Com. Goldeneye: 400-700/day PtPen;

150-350/day in open water S of WI to mid-Jan; 1265 WFC.

Barrow's Goldeneye: 1 each m & f FL, where this species has been found annually since at least 2000.

Common x Barrow's Goldeneye: 1 m at FL, same place as hybrid observed previous two winters (NL).

Hooded Merganser: 4 WFC; 6 FL Feb.

Com. Merganser: 50-200/day S of WI thru; 1448 WFC.

Red-breasted Merganser: 3 WFC.

Gray Partridge: max 6 Hardscrabble Rd PtPen 12 Dec; none CV despite substantial survey effort.

Ring-necked Pheasant: 2 f PtPen thru; 3 T Limerick Jan; f Sandy Creek Valley Rd 26 Feb; 4 MCBC.

Ruffed Grouse: max 12 NBCBC.

Wild Turkey: widespread reports of 20-40 early, numbers significantly reduced by Feb; max 100+ in evening roost Phil thru; 102 MCBC.

Com. Loon: 2 singles Dec.

Horned Grebe: 3 PtPen 12 Dec.

Red-necked Grebe: TICBC.

Double-crested Cormorant: CI 3 Jan, only report.

Great Blue Heron: PtPen 1 Dec; WBSF 28 Dec.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: widespread at 1-4/day along L Ontario and SLR; scattered inland reports; max 10-11 (5-6 each ad and imm) T Clare STLA.

N. Harrier: 10-25/day PtPen and CV thru mid-Dec.; 1-4 /day mid-Dec to mid-Jan; scarce afterward until 1 on 21 Feb.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: 3 total N JEFF; 2 MCBC.

Cooper's Hawk: near feeder Can, 10-11 Jan; 2 T Evans Mills JEFF 26 Feb; 2 total for season PtPen and CV (low); 1 occasionally taking birds at WATN feeder thru.

N. Goshawk: 3 total for season N JEFF; 2 MCBC; Can 24 Jan.

Red-tailed Hawk: 20-25/day PtPen and CV Dec; declined to 10-12/day by late Feb.

Rough-legged Hawk: good numbers throughout Reg; 25-45/day PtPen and CV Dec; increased to 45-65/day through late Feb.

Golden Eagle: ad T Hammond STLA 20 Jan (NL).

Am. Kestrel: 4-7 m/day PtPen and CV until early Jan; declined to 1-2/day by late Jan; f 26 Feb, possibly a migrant.

Merlin: ad WATN 24 Dec, feeding on a starling.

Gyr Falcon: gray morph ad Hardscrabble Rd PtPen 1 Dec(GS, TC, ph).

Peregrine Falcon: MCBC.

Herring Gull: 2 MCBC.

Glaucous Gull: MCBC.

Great Black-backed Gull: 2 MCBC.

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Rock Pigeon: max 958 WCBC; 235 MCBC.

Mourning Dove: av 39/day at KC feeder; 287 WCBC.

E. Screech-Owl: MCBC.

Great Horned Owl: max 4 T Limerick JEFF.

Snowy Owl: T Depauville 20 Dec, only report; first time with no reports from CV, PtPen 2 consecutive years since at least 1970s.

Barred Owl: 2 MCBC; Can 27-28 Feb.

Short-eared Owl: 20-25 at roost Mason Rd CV Dec, declined to a few that wintered thru; roost of 10 PtSa thru; PRGC 24 Feb.

N. Saw-whet Owl: wintered T Lyme JEFF.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: 2 at CV feeder thru; Snowshoe Pt JEFF 29 Feb.

Downy Woodpecker: max 41 MCBC; 35 WCBC.

Hairy Woodpecker: max 35 MCBC; 9 WCBC.

N. Flicker: PIPt 28 Dec, only report.

Pileated Woodpecker: 1-3/day throughout Reg; max 6 MCBC.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: 1-3/day throughout Reg; numbers considerably higher than previous winter.

Blue Jay: max 134 MCBC; 75 WCBC.

Am. Crow: max 5000+ at roost Watertown thru.

Com. Raven: range expansion continues, 1-4/day along L Ontario thru; 4 MCBC.

Horned Lark: 100-200/day CV thru mid-Feb; small number of breeders (prairie race) back by 20 Feb, with decline in northern numbers; numerous flocks 25-100 elsewhere JEFF, STLA; 2 singing males Can 28 Feb.

Black-capped Chickadee: max 318 MCBC.

Tufted Titmouse: 2 at CV feeder thru; 2 WI 27 Dec; MCBC.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: 1-3/day scattered locations; max 9 WCBC.

White-breasted Nuthatch: max 73 MCBC; 15 WCBC.

Brown Creeper: max 2 MCBC.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: 2 GPSP 18 Feb.

Am. Robin: 1-5/day PtPen; 16 CV 2 Feb; fewer than normal wintered, with increase throughout area 3rd week Feb.

European Starling: max 1545 WCBC; migrants returned by 15 Feb.

Bohemian Waxwing: 156 WCBC; ~200 PRGC 28 Feb, probably same flock reported as Cedar Waxwings by inexperienced birders 20 Feb.

Cedar Waxwing: scarce thru; 14 WCBC, outnumbered by Bohemians 10-1.

WARBLERS

None.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

Am. Tree Sparrow: max 144 WCBC; widespread reports of 10-20 at feeders throughout Reg.

Savannah Sparrow: 7 WCBC (high); 2 Hounsfield JEFF 10 Jan.

Song Sparrow: 2 WCBC.

White-throated Sparrow: 12 MCBC; few reported elsewhere.

Dark-eyed Junco: max 55 MCBC; 29 WCBC; few after early Jan.

Lapland Longspur: 6-20/day CV thru; max 31 WCBC.

Snow Bunting: 250-800/day N JEFF thru; max 1500 CV probably included migrants.

N. Cardinal: max 57 MCBC.

Red-winged Blackbird: KC 3 Dec.

Brown-headed Cowbird: 17 NBCBC, high; max 35 PtPen 19 Jan.

Purple Finch: max 35 MCBC.

House Finch: max 99 WCBC.

White-winged Crossbill: f at feeder for 5 minutes and not seen again Can 1 Feb (JB).

Com. Redpoll: av 30-80/day with a few flocks of 200+ PtPen and CV; widespread reports of 20-40 at feeders throughout Reg.

HOARY REDPOLL: ad m feeder T Can 3 Jan (JB), not seen again; KC feeder (DB); ad m GPSP 7 Jan (NL).

Pine Siskin: 2-7 feeder Can late-Jan-mid-Feb; 2 feeder KC 20 Feb; 25-30 feeder Lou 23 Jan.

Am. Goldfinch: max 86 MCBC.

Evening Grosbeak: 12 NBCBC; 24 MCBC; 30 feeder T Brasher Falls STLA 10 Jan thru.



REGION 7 – ADIRONACK-CHAMPLAIN

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The season began with a 6-7 December Nor'easter that left 23" of snow at Ellenburg Depot, 41" on Whiteface Mt. and wound up ninth on the all-time list of Champlain Valley storms. This was followed by a new claimant to the eighth greatest snowstorm on 15 December, with totals of 30" at Ellenburg Depot, 24" at Plattsburgh and 18" at Inlet. A thaw began on the 22nd, lasting until month's end, with daytime temperatures in the 40's, reaching 47°F on 30 December. By the end of the month Lake Champlain stood at 99.40', just below the 100 foot flood stage. January was brutally cold. Inlet experienced a low of -28° on the 9th, Wawbeek was -37° the following day, Inlet was -38° on 14 January and Titus Mt. ski center closed the following day with a low of -27°. Saranac Lake dropped to -37° on the 16th, so a high of 10° at Plattsburgh the next day felt like a heat wave. Champlain had dropped to 98.30' by the 22nd and was freezing in the widest parts. To close out the month, Inlet was -26° on the 24th and 26th and Saranac Lake was -21° on 26 January. February was a modest improvement, with Plattsburgh reaching 33° on the 3rd. Tupper Lake dropped to -20° on 16 February but Plattsburgh was back to a balmy 39° by the 18th.

There were numerous sightings of Bald Eagles, with highs of nine on the Bald Eagle Survey, eight at Lake Simond on a deer carcass, five on a deer carcass at Port Douglas and five adults at Crown Point. Two of the Lake Simond adults wore blue and silver bands, while another adult had a yellow wing tag. A Bald Eagle was an unexpected visitor at an Inlet feeder on 27 February. There were also many reports of Wild Turkeys, with a total of 135 on the four Christmas Bird Counts. There were 14 sightings of Northern Shrikes, with a record eight of those on the Elizabethtown CBC. American Robins were widespread, with 80 near Essex on 23 February the largest flock.

Bohemian Waxwings staged a welcome invasion, with reports from Ausable Point, Chateaugay, Elizabethtown, Essex, Jay, Lake Placid, Ticonderoga, Upper Jay and Westport, with the largest flocks of 80 each feeding near Westport on 15 February and Lake Placid 21 February, as well as a Jay flock that reached 75 birds by season's end. Smaller numbers of Cedar Waxwings were found, with a maximum of 15 on the Elizabethtown CBC.

Among the winter finches, there were a half-dozen reports of Pine Grosbeak. Purple Finches were found on three CBCs but were otherwise absent. As expected, the Plattsburgh CBC tallied the greatest number of House Finches with a total of 56. Red Crossbills were limited to an adult male at Indian Lake 1 January, a few at the Olympic cross-country ski area 21 January and a pair at Chilson 11 February. The only White-winged Crossbills were at Bigelow Road and Bloomingdale Bog on 7 December. Finch-of-the-winter honors went to Common Redpoll, with large flocks at most feeders and a high of 1019 tallied on the Saranac Lake CBC. Again, snow-burrowing and tunneling by redpolls was observed and videotaped at Long Lake. As now expected during an invasion year,

there were also reports of Hoary Redpoll from Chilson, Essex, Inlet, Jay, Lake Placid and Long Lake. Pine Siskins also appeared at a few feeders, but the largest number was 15 on the Plattsburgh CBC. The same count boasted 386 American Goldfinches, which were erratic, but more abundant than siskins. Evening Grosbeaks enjoyed their best winter in many years, with a flock of 50-150 at Long Lake and 120 on the Saranac Lake CBC.

Rarities included a **Western Grebe** off Gravelly Point, Cumberland Head, on 7 January, drifting south at 9:15 a.m., five hours ahead of a cold front. A Great Blue Heron at Fish Creek, Franklin County, 2 February was certainly noteworthy. Also unexpected was a **Black Guillemot** in winter plumage at Noblewood Park 28 December, the second Essex County and Region 7 record. Yet another surprise was the **Brewer's Blackbird** that visited a Wild Turkey feeding area at Tupper Lake on 31 December.

Christmas counters are most grateful to Matthew Medler for stepping forward to serve as compiler of the Elizabethtown CBC following my retirement after 30 years of service from 1973-2002. Matt did a superb job.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

AP – Ausable Pt WMA; BB – Bloomingdale Bog; CH – Cumberland Head; ECBC – Elizabethtown CBC 27 Dec; FB – Ferd's Bog; FCBC – Ferrisburgh CBC 20 Dec; LL – Long L; NP – Noblewood P; PCBC – Plattsburgh CBC 14 Dec; SLCBC – Saranac L CBC 4 Jan; TL – Tupper L; WB – Whallons Bay; WC – NYS Waterfowl Count 10-12 Jan.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Snow Goose: max 55 FCBC; 12 Keeseville flying s 4 p.m. 13 Feb (JL).
Canada Goose: max 1418 PCBC; 75 Raquette R 2 Dec (CD), late for interior.
Mute Swan: pr AP 14 Dec (DCR).
White-winged Scoter: hen CH 1 Feb (TM).
scoter sp.: WC.

Long-tailed Duck: PCBC; WC; drake CH 23 Feb (L&PO).

Barrow's Goldeneye: drake WB 10-11 Jan (GL, JP, DCR); pr Essex 12 Jan (DCR); CH to 29 Feb (EV).

Ruddy Duck: hen Essex 23 Feb (DCR), rarely reported.

Ring-necked Pheasant: 1 wintered Essex (CS); 5 wintered TL village feeders (CD).

Wild Turkey: max 61 SLCBC; total 135 on 4 CBCs.

Red-throated Loon: CH to 8 Dec (MD).

WESTERN GREBE: Gravelly Pt CH 7 Jan (MD), drifting s. 9:15 a.m., 5 hrs. ahead of cold front.

Great Blue Heron: PCBC; Fish Cr FRAN 2 Feb (CD), late.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: 9 WC; 8 L Simond - 2 ads blue color-banded, 1 yellow wing-tagged; 5 Crown Pt 3 Jan (JF); 5 Pt Douglas 27 Jan (JP); Inlet feeder 27 Feb (GL); numerous other reports.

N. Harrier: Plattsburgh 18 Dec (HK), late.

Am. Kestrel: PCBC, late.

Glaucous Gull: 1st winter on ice Willsboro Bay 10 Jan (GL, JP).

BLACK GUILLEMOT: in winter plumage NP 28 Dec (MM), 2nd ESSE & Reg record.

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

E. Screech-Owl: 2 FCBC, hard to find here.

Snowy Owl: imm f CH 23-29 Feb (L&PO, EV), only report.

Short-eared Owl: pr CH 27 Feb (NO), one pale, other orange-tinged.

Belted Kingfisher: count week PCBC; 2 ECBC, late.

Black-backed Woodpecker: m Olympic x-c ski center 14 Dec (J&PT); SLCBC; BB 5 Jan (BM); m LL 1 & 16 Feb; 2 drumming LL 29 Feb (JC).

N. Flicker: 4 FCBC; 2 PCBC; 1 ECBC; good numbers.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: 8 ECBC; FCBC; SLCBC; 4 other reports.

Gray Jay: usual reports from BB, Bigelow Rd, FB, Oregon Plains Rd; max 9 SLCBC.

Com. Raven: max 31 SLCBC; 18 FCBC in lakeshore corridor; 16 ECBC; PCBC.

Horned Lark: 54 FCBC; 40 Essex 19 Jan

(DCR); 6 Oseetah L 27 Fed (LL).

Boreal Chickadee: BB; Bigelow Rd; Blue Mt L; FB; 16 SLCBC.

Tufted Titmouse: 17 ECBC; 15 FCBC; 7 Port Kent feeder 18 Dec (DCR); 4 Westport 13 Dec (J&PT); 2 PCBC; Wickham Marsh 1 Feb (SS); exceptional numbers.

Carolina Wren: FCBC; count week PCBC; CH Dec-Feb (MD); a strong showing.

E. Bluebird: max 16 PCBC; 4 Essex 23 Feb (DCR); rather scarce.

Am. Robin: max 80 Essex 23 Feb (DCR); 13 Akwesasne late Feb; about 10 other reports.

N. Mockingbird: max 3 PCBC; CH 12 Jan (NO), always a good find.

Bohemian Waxwing: arr Jay 24 Jan (L&PO); max 80 Westport 15 Feb (J&PT) & L Placid 21 Feb (*vide* PO); other flocks AP, Chateaugay, Elizabethtown, Essex, Ticonderoga, Upper Jay, with 75 in Jay 28-29 Feb (JN, EV), a superb showing.

Cedar Waxwing: max 15 ECBC; smaller numbers Chateaugay, Elizabethtown, Essex, Ticonderoga, Westport.

WARBLERS

None.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

Song Sparrow: PCBC; FCBC; SLCBC; good finds.

White-throated Sparrow: 2 PCBC; FCBC; SLCBC; good finds.

Dark-eyed Junco: max 193 PCBC; 5 wintered TL feeder (CD) where less expected.

Snow Bunting: 30 CH 8 Dec (NO); 50 Essex 13 Dec (J&PT); 100 FCBC; 60 ECBC; 19 SLCBC; 4 PCBC; 10 TL turkey feeder 19 Dec (CD); 60 Essex 19 Jan (DCR); 50 Keene 8 Feb (J&PT); a good showing.

N. Cardinal: max 89 PCBC; record 26 FCBC; 7 SLCBC; 4 ECBC; good here.

Red-winged Blackbird: 2 FCBC; 2

overwintered L Pleasant (GL); good finds.
BREWER'S BLACKBIRD: TL 31 Dec (CD), at Wild Turkey feeding area.

Com. Grackle: PCBC; Essex 17 Dec (CS); ECBC; 3 SLCBC; a strong showing.

Brown-Headed Cowbird: 40 PCBC; 17 CH 23 Feb (L&PO); only reports but good numbers.

Pine Grosbeak: Heart L Rd; LL; L Placid; Raquette L; Saranac L; a modest showing.

Purple Finch: 18 PCBC; 7 FCBC; 6 SLCBC; largely absent this winter.

House Finch: 56 PCBC; 6 FCBC, 2 CH 11 Dec (NO), one with white head returned for 2nd winter.

Red Crossbill: ad m Indian L 1 Jan (DS); few Olympic x-c senter 21 Jan (J&PT); pr Chilson 11 Feb (DMR); only reports.

White-winged Crossbill: BB & Bigelow Rd 7 Dec (BM); only reports.

Com. Redpoll: max 1019 SLCBC;

widespread and most numerous winter finch; snow-burrowing & tunneling LL feeders.

Hoary Redpoll: reports from Chilson, Essex, Inlet, Jay, L Placid, LL.

Pine Siskin: max 15 PCBC; 6 FCBC; others at Chilson, Jay, Newcomb, Paul Smiths, Port Kent, Saranac L, TL, but in small numbers.

Am. Goldfinch: 386 PCBC; 66 ECBC; 48 FCBC; 22 SLCBC; 140 Essex 19 Jan (DCR); excellent numbers.

Evening Grosbeak: 50-150 LL Dec-Feb (DB); 120 SLCBC; also reported Elizabethtown, Plattsburgh, Paul Smiths, St. Regis Falls, TL; an encouraging showing.

ADDENDUM

Hooded Merganser: max 50 (25 drakes, 25 hens) Lincoln Pd 24 Nov '03 (MG), ESSE record.

REGION 8 – HUDSON-MOHAWK

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Winter began stormy and later settled into a prolonged deep freeze. December exhibited average temperatures, with alternating bouts of heavy rain and snow during its first three weeks. Beginning in early January, the Region experienced a steady pattern of unusually cold arctic air masses. January's average temperature at Albany International Airport was only 14.6°F, 7.6° below average. Twenty-four days in January did not make it above freezing, whereas 11 days dropped below zero. The arctic highs created a fairly stable, albeit windy, local atmosphere with few storms. February's weather eventually moderated, closing with average temperatures and precipitation.

A break in the storms in late December allowed most local Christmas Bird Count participants to get out into the field to collect data, however the Region's January waterfowl counts were nearly a bust due to high winds and frozen water. Observers struggled to tally even Mallard and American Black Duck, with no reports of scoters, Redhead or Canvasback through the entire winter. The Hudson

River froze completely in early January and remained frozen until March. The handful of winter waterfowl records were observed, of course, near fast-flowing water or in urban areas where industrial activities warmed small pockets of water. The snow that accumulated in December remained on the ground until spring, melting and refreezing, forming a semi-permanent shell of crusty ice. Many raptors, especially Northern Harrier and Rough-legged Hawk, moved south after December. Perhaps related to the atypical cold in Canada, large numbers of winter irruptive species entered our area this year, including Northern Shrike, Bohemian Waxwing and both species of redpoll.

In addition to the usual lingering icterids and fall sparrows, a few surprises surfaced on area Christmas Bird Counts, including Merlin, Wilson's Snipe and a very late record of **American Bittern**, observed along the ice-ringed water of the Roe Jan Kill near the Hudson River in Columbia County. **Black Vulture**, although increasing in our Region, is rare in winter. Several appeared this season, all in Columbia County, including one on the Chatham CBC, one along Route 82 in Ancram and two that appeared regularly at Copake Lake in January.

Visiting the Region only briefly this winter, two Monk Parakeets lingered along the Claverack-Livingston border in Columbia County. A county record, the birds roosted near the feeders of Pam and George Starr from Christmas to New Year's Day. A small population of these parakeets has been observed in Albany County, apparently constructing a few nests in suburban areas. It's unclear, however, whether or not these birds have successfully bred. These recent birds likely wandered down the Hudson River from the Albany County population. Despite the fact that CBS News recently aired a segment describing the New York City population of Monk Parakeets, largely suggesting that the birds were a bane to humans and native species, many birders remain fascinated by the expansion of this unlikely New York breeder.

A surprisingly large number of Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers wintered in the southern part of the Region, despite the cold. Rising, in *Bull's Birds of New York State* (1998), cited CBC data through the 1980s to suggest that fewer than 20 winter upstate each year, the largest numbers occurring in mild winters; however, informal local surveys I conducted at Clermont State Park and Mount Merino in Columbia County during the past five years suggest that mild winters are not the only requisite for large wintering populations. Particularly in sunny ravines adjacent to the Hudson, where there are patches of basswood, local populations of 8-10 can be counted each year in a very small area. A study of upstate CBC data from 1990 to the present shows an increase of sapsuckers from numbers close to 20 in the early 1990s to today's averages in the 50s. Of course, the appearance of a bird on a CBC does not automatically prove that it is wintering, but my late January observations do loosely suggest that sapsuckers are increasingly choosing to remain upstate. Hopefully, more winter sightings will be carefully noted and shared with this publication.

Following the ups and downs of winter Carolina Wren populations has become a kind of annual rite for many of my fellow editors over the years, and it appears that this season does present a change in numbers. After successfully weathering last year's tough winter, this season's population finally crashed. Volunteers uncovered only 20 birds on Regional CBCs, a decline of nearly two-thirds from last year. Five reports of single birds outside the CBCs represents a very low tally of a common Hudson Valley species. You can be sure, observers will closely watch for a rebound in the next few years.

As previously mentioned, this winter forced a strong push of select irruptive species. Observers recorded twice as many Northern Shrikes this year as last and **Bohemian Waxwing** numbers peaked in late February, the seasonal maximum of 175 occurring on Orebed Road, Rensselaer County, on a stretch of private land loaded with wild cherries, grapes, and crab apples. Several dozen feeder-watchers reported Common Redpolls, with flock sizes ranging from a few birds to the seasonal maximum of 100+ routinely observed in Saratoga County. In addition to these birds, I received five reports of **Hoary Redpolls**. Only two of those reports, however, had solid details, including one with excellent photographs of a bird observed at Copake Lake, Columbia County.

With the influx of waxwings and redpolls, many observers kept a close eye on their feeders, which led to Jocelyn Cole-Calkins's discovery of a **Varied Thrush** in Berne, Albany County. Lingering for five days in mid-January, the bird arrived each morning at the feeder with a flock of Blue Jays. Varied Thrush was first noticed in our region in 1966, with a dozen or so sightings recorded since then. This bird represented a second county record for Albany.

One hundred fourteen species were observed this season, one more than the previous winter.

CONTRIBUTORS

Alan Devoe Bird Club monthly sighting reports, Larry Alden, Jocelyn Cole-Calkins, Bill Cook, Kate Dunham, Larry Federman, Jane Graves, Richard Guthrie, Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club's Birdline of Eastern New York, Bill Lee, Berna Lincoln, Andrew Mason, Gail & Rich Nord, Jeff Novick, Tom Palmer, Barb Putnam, Mike Rutkowski, George & Pam Starr, Alison Van Keuren, Carol & Owen Whitby, Will Yandik, Robert Yunick.

ABBREVIATIONS

ANC – T Ancram COLU; CAT – T Catskill GREE; CF – Coxsackie Flats GREE; COH – City of Cohoes ALBA; COX – T Coxsackie GREE; FtE – T Fort Edwards WASH; GHE – T Ghent COLU; HR – Hudson Ri; LIV – T Livingston COLU; MR – Mohawk Ri; NBA – T New Baltimore GREE; STI – T Stillwater SARA.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Snow Goose: 2 LIV 5 Dec; 11 FtE 20 Dec; Stuyvesant COLU 11 Jan; STI 22 Jan.
Canada Goose: 1000+ NBA 27 Dec; max 2500 HR WASH 3 Jan; 950 ANC 28 Feb.
Brant: 3 Clermont COLU 5 Feb.
Wood Duck: MR SCHE 1 Feb; 2 STI 28 Feb.
Am. Black Duck: max 130 CAT 16 Dec.
Mallard: max 90 COX 12 Jan.
N. Pintail: 2 Hudson Falls CBC 20 Dec; COH 16 Feb; 3 ANC 18-28 Feb.
Green-winged Teal: ANC 18 Feb, only report.
Ring-necked Duck: 2 Chatham CBC 20 Dec; 6 STI 22 Jan.
Greater Scaup: 11 COH 18 Jan; STI 22 Jan.
Lesser Scaup: STI 22 Jan; 12 COH 16 Feb.
Bufflehead: 2 Queensbury WARR 13 Dec; Lock7 SCHE 12 Feb; STI 17 Feb; 3 LIV 20 Feb.
Com. Goldeneye: max 100 STI 16 Feb.
Barrow's Goldeneye: FtE 29 Feb (mob).
Hooded Merganser: 5 L George WARR 18 Jan; 36 STI 22 Jan.
Red-breasted Merganser: 3 Salem CBC 27 Dec; 2 HR SCHE 1 Feb; COH 16 Feb.
Ring-necked Pheasant: 3 CF 20-25 Feb, only report.
Com. Loon: Bolton Landing CBC 14 Dec, only report.
Double-crested Cormorant: CAT-COX CBC 16 Dec; 2 HR ALBA 29 Feb.
Great Cormorant: COX 21 Dec, only report.
AM. BITTERN: CAT-COX CBC Roe Jan Kill 16 Dec (LA & LF), very late.
Great Blue Heron: max 3 CF 12 Dec; scarce after Dec.
BLACK VULTURE: Chatham CBC 20 Dec; 2 Copake L COLU 8-22 Jan; Rt 82 ANC 27-29 Feb.
Turkey Vulture: arr Guilderland ALBA 11 Feb; ANC 20 Feb; Slingerlands ALBA 25 Feb.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: max 11 NBA 22 Dec, consistent numbers; 6-8 HR thru.
N. Harrier: max 12 CF 11 Jan; no Feb reports.
Sharp-shinned Hawk: max 4 CF 16 Dec; sightings nearly every day thru mid-Jan.
Cooper's Hawk: 48 reports of singles.
N. Goshawk: Berne ALBA 10 Jan; Austerlitz COLU 11 Jan; SCHE 15 Jan; Jefferson SCHO 24 Feb; only reports.
Red-shouldered Hawk: S RENS CBC 27 Dec; Ballston Spa SARA 6 Feb.
Rough-legged Hawk: max 18 FtE 11 Feb; infrequently reported in groups of 3-5 in suitable habitat.
Am. Kestrel: 2 NBA 21 Dec; LIV 21 Dec; Claverack COLU 4 Jan; Germantown COLU 18-20 Feb; scarce.
Merlin: Troy CBC 3 Jan, only report.
Am. Coot: 7 Saratoga Springs CBC 14 Dec, only report.
Wilson's Snipe: Chatham CBC 20 Dec, first count record.
Iceland Gull: 3 COX 20-29 Dec; COH 11 Jan; 2 Colonie ALBA 14 Feb; now a regular winter visitor.
Lesser Black-backed Gull: Colonie Landfill ALBA 8 Jan, only report.
Glaucous Gull: imm Colonie Landfill ALBA 14 Feb, only report.

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Monk Parakeet: 2 Claverack-LIV border COLU 25 Dec-1 Jan (G&PS), county first.
E. Screech-Owl: 9 reports of singles outside CBCs.
Great Horned Owl: 11 reports of singles outside CBCs.
Barred Owl: Saratoga Springs 11 Feb; E Hoosick RENS 28 Feb; 4 other reports.
Long-eared Owl: Florida MONT 22 Jan-14 Feb (TP).
Short-eared Owl: 5 CF 16 Dec-8 Feb.
N. Saw-whet Owl: Troy CBC 3 Jan; Brunswick RENS 27 Feb; only reports.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: E Glenville

SCHE 10 Jan; 2 Claverack COLU 12 Jan; 2 Copake COLU 26 Jan; 8 Clermont COLU 16-21 Feb; 15 other reports.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: max 3 Amsterdam MONT 31 Dec; 4 reports Dec; 2 reports Jan; 8 reports Feb; modest irruption year.

Am. Crow: roost 3500+ Amsterdam MONT thru; roost 4750+ SUNY ALBA thru mid-Feb.

Fish Crow: COH 14 Feb; Waterford SARA 19 Feb.

Com. Raven: 16 reports of singles; numbers consistent with previous winter.

Horned Lark: max 40 Princetown MONT 17 Jan; average flock size 8-12.

Tufted Titmouse: max 8 GHE 20 Dec.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: max 5 Kaaterskill Falls GREE 26 Jan.

Carolina Wren: 5 reports of singles; 20 reported on all CBCs, a decline of nearly 66% from last year, clearly experienced some population crash.

Winter Wren: 2 CAT-COX CBC 16 Dec, only report.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: NBA 14 Dec; Chatham CBC 20 Dec.

Hermit Thrush: CF 8 Feb, late.

VARIED THRUSH: Berne ALBA 10-15 Jan (JC, mob).

BOHEMIAN WAXWING: max 175 Orebed Rd E Hoosick RENS 21 Feb; 10 Gansevoort SARA 28-29 Feb; GHE 29 Feb.

WARBLERS

Yellow-rumped Warbler: absent on most CBCs; LIV 26 Jan; Feller Rd Taghkanic COLU 15 Feb; CF 20 Feb; scarce.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

Chipping Sparrow: Chatham COLU 9 Dec; CAT-COX CBC 16 Dec.

Savannah Sparrow: LIV 15 Dec; max 4 CF 16 Dec; GHE 20 Dec; no reports

thereafter.

Fox Sparrow: max 3 GHE 20 Dec; Taghkanic COLU 27-31 Jan.

Swamp Sparrow: 5 reports Dec; none thereafter.

White-crowned Sparrow: Glens Falls WARR 7-14 Dec; Guilderland ALBA 15 Dec; GHE 1-18 Jan; Valatie COLU 22 Feb; 3 Hoosick RENS 29 Feb; somewhat numerous.

Lapland Longspur: Chatham CBC 20 Dec, single bird in flock of Snow Buntings.

Snow Bunting: max 254 Stuyvesant COLU 21 Dec; common in Dec, rapidly dwindling thereafter.

N. Cardinal: max 14 E Greenbush RENS 16 Jan.

Red-winged Blackbird: a few scattered reports thru Feb; first true migratory flock 250+ LIV 20 Feb.

E. Meadowlark: max 4 NBA 21 Dec.

Com. Grackle: 6 E Greenbush RENS 27 Feb.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 6 Valatie COLU 22 Feb.

Purple Finch: max 6 Stanton Rd ALBA 16 Dec; wintered locally in HR and MR valleys.

House Finch: 'yellow' variant Guilderland ALBA 31 Jan.

Red Crossbill: Johnstown-Gloversville CBC 28 Dec, only report.

Com. Redpoll: max 100+ Ballston Spa SARA 24 Jan; average flock sizes 20 in Dec, 25 in Jan, 37 in Feb; irruptive year.

HOARY REDPOLL: Copake L COLU 8 Jan (ph); Gansevoort SARA 27 Dec-9 Jan (mob); 3 other reports without documentation.

Pine Siskin: 6 Saratoga SARA thru; 4 Jefferson SCHO 14 Jan; 7 other reports of singles.

Evening Grosbeak: max 40 Jefferson SCHO 30 Jan thru; 8 Bolton Landing CBC 14 Dec.

REGION 9 – HUDSON-DELAWARE

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Winter came in early this season. December started unusually cold and snowy, with temperatures dropping well below freezing between 2 and 9 December. Most still water froze, even in the southern sections of Region 9. Katonah had 18" of snow on 6 December, and the Region was hit with another snowstorm on 14 December. The deep snow made many passerines move farther south, resulting in lower than average numbers for the Christmas Bird Counts. Fortunately, most of the count period was blessed with warmer weather, resulting in normal or slightly above average temperatures for the month. January and most of February were very cold and very dry. Sullivan County reached -12°F on 10 January, with White Plains dipping to -2° that day. Liberty had 12 days below zero in January, with five of them -9° or lower. The month ended with average temperatures 5° to 7° below normal. Liberty was slightly below normal for precipitation for the month, but Poughkeepsie had only 1.9" of rain, 1.3" below normal. White Plains was even dryer, with 1.5" of rain, 2.8" less than normal. Dry weather continued into February, with most locations 1" to 1.5" of precipitation below normal. Most of February was colder than normal, but a warm spell at the end moderated the month's temperatures to just below normal.

It was a great season for winter finches and others visitors from the north, with numerous reports of Common Redpoll, Pine Siskin, Purple Finch, Long-eared Owl, Short-eared Owl and Rough-legged Hawk. There were two reports of Bohemian Waxwing from Ulster County and a few reports of Northern Shrike, Pine Grosbeak, White-winged Crossbill and Evening Grosbeak.

As usual, many highlights of the season resulted from the area Christmas Bird Counts. The Peekskill CBC recorded 93 species on 20 December, a new all-time record. Highlights included: 64 Brant, Tundra Swan, Redhead and two Northern Pintails in Shrub Oak, Red-breasted Merganser at Annsville Creek in Peekskill, 210 Ruddy Ducks, 31 Turkey Vultures and 29 Black Vultures at a roost in Cortlandt, a count record 32 Bald Eagles (15 ad, 17 imm), light morph Rough-legged Hawk, Merlin at Georges Island Park, Long-eared Owl, Common Raven in Yorktown Heights, 13 American Pipits and Pine Warbler at Croton Point Park. Possibly the same Pine Warbler was relocated at Croton Point on 17 and 24 January. The Tundra Swan stayed into January only to be joined by many others. Charlie Roberto found an incredible 10 Tundra Swans on 24 January, making it a bit easier for those seeking that elusive previous single bird.

The Mohonk Lake/Ashokan Reservoir CBC, held 20 December, had a very late **Osprey** at Mohonk Preserve, New Paltz, reported by Paul Huth. The count also had three Pine Grosbeaks in High Falls. The Eastern Orange CBC recorded 75 species on 20 December. Highlights were Eastern Phoebe and Northern Shrike. Other Northern Shrikes for the season included one in Ellenville in December and February and others in Ulster Heights and White Sulphur Spring.

Dutchess County CBC reported 79 species also on 20 December, with a Greater White-fronted Goose in Pleasant Valley; two were then located near and on Hunns Lake in January.

The Sullivan County CBC recorded 60 species on 28 December. Highlights included: 37 Bald Eagles, Northern Goshawk, dark phase Rough-legged Hawk, several Red-shouldered Hawks, Pine Siskins, Common Redpolls and three Iceland Gulls a day before count. The Sullivan County Landfill and nearby Kiamesha Lake continue to be the place to look for white-winged gulls. Various Iceland and Glaucous gulls were present until sub-zero temperatures in January pushed most of the gulls out of the county.

The Southern Orange CBC on 27 December recorded 83 species. Highlights were a late Green Heron in the Black Dirt region and a Merlin. The count also recorded 101 Black Vultures and 52 Turkey Vultures. The Putnam CBC on 3 January also had high numbers of vultures, with 63 Black and 41 Turkey vultures. The count also recorded a count week Baltimore Oriole. Andrew Block had male and female first fall Baltimore Orioles at his feeders in Bronxville 5 January. The female disappeared by 8 January, with the male remaining until the 13th. Results in the Region 9 area of the Bronx-Westchester CBC on 28 December included: a House Wren in White Plains and Eurasian Wigeons in New Rochelle and Mamaroneck. An additional Eurasian Wigeon was found in the Croton River in February.

Ruth Greenwood had an unusual junco that appeared 18-20 January in Billings, Dutchess County. Barbara Butler described it as overall pale brown with nearly white tail, primaries and secondaries. It appeared to be an extreme color variation or perhaps had some form of pigment deficiency. John Winkler, Jr. was able to photograph the bird and post photos on the web.

Other highlights included Lesser Black-backed Gull and Red-headed Woodpecker

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

BWCBC – Bronx-Westchester CBC (Westchester Only); CPP – Croton Pt P; EGR – Edith G. Read Wildlife Sanctuary; MC – Marshlands Conservancy; PCPC –

Peekskill CBC; PP – Piermont Pier; RCBC – Rockland CBC; SCCBC – Sullivan County CBC; SCL – Sullivan County Landfill; SGNWR – Shawangunk Grasslands NWR; WRNWR – Wallkill Ri NWR.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Greater White-fronted Goose: Pleasant Valley 20 Dec; 2 Hunns L DUTC 7, 17, 18, 21 Jan (DF, AJ).
Snow Goose: 234 Stump Pd SULL 5 Dec; Lomontville 20 Dec; blue phase Middletown 27 Feb.
Brant: 64 CPP 20 Dec; 23 EGR 23 Jan, 3 Feb.
Tundra Swan: CPP 20 Dec-23 Feb (MB, KJ); 10 CPP 24 Jan (CR); 7 CPP 25 Jan-1 Feb.
Wood Duck: 5 Van Cortlandt Manor 11 Feb.
Eurasian Wigeon: Mamaroneck 28 Dec-6 Jan (BWCBC, AB); Premium Mill Pd 28 Dec; Croton Ri 8 Feb (E&JO).
N. Pintail: 2 Shrub Oak 20 Dec; 2 Croton 9 Feb; Croton 11 Feb.
Canvasback: 24 PP 3 Dec.
Redhead: Shrub Oak 20 Dec; 2 CPP 17 Jan-26 Feb; Port Ewen 28 Feb.
Greater Scaup: max 200 EGR 7 Jan.
Lesser Scaup: max 24 EGR 29 Dec.
White-winged Scoter: 1-6 EGR 19 Dec-7 Jan.
Black Scoter: Rye 28 Dec.
Long-tailed Duck: max 100 EGR 28 Dec.
Hooded Merganser: max 89 EGR 5 Dec.
Red-breasted Merganser: max 185 EGR 5 Dec; Peekskill 20 Dec.
Ruddy Duck: 210 CPP 20 Dec.
Red-throated Loon: EGR 28 Dec, 1 Jan, 20-21 Feb.
Com. Loon: max 4 EGR 28 Dec.
Horned Grebe: Ashokan Res 20 Dec.
Red-necked Grebe: EGR 28, 31 Dec.
N. Gannet: EGR 3, 27 Dec; 2 EGR 1 Jan.
Double-crested Cormorant: max 30 EGR 3 Dec.
Great Cormorant: max 12 EGR 31 Dec.
Great Blue Heron: max 20 EGR 8 Dec.
Green Heron: Black Dirt region 27 Dec

(JT, MA, WC).

Black Vulture: 29 Cortlandt 20 Dec; 101 S ORAN 27 Dec.

Turkey Vulture: 31 Cortlandt 20 Dec; 52 ROCK 20 Dec; 52 S ORAN 27 Dec.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Osprey: Mohonk Preserve, New Paltz 20 Dec (PH), very late.
Bald Eagle: 32 PCBC 20 Dec; 37 SCCBC 28 Dec; 25 Georges I P 18 Jan; 100+ Hudson Ri after 15 Jan; many scattered reports away from the Hudson.
N. Harrier: 5 SGNWR 2 Jan; 10 SGNWR 12-19 Jan; 9-10 WRNWR 12-25 Jan; 5 SGNWR 16-23 Feb; 6 WRNWR 16-23 Feb; 6 Thompson Pd 29 Feb.
N. Goshawk: SCCBC 28 Dec; EGR 6 Jan; Claryville 17 Jan.
Red-shouldered Hawk: Yulan 4 Dec; Devine Corners 20 Dec; High Falls 20 Dec; Monticello 26 Dec; sev SCCBC 28 Dec; Woodstock 1 Jan; 2 Gardiner 28 Jan thru; Stormville 11 Feb; imm Goldens Bridge 18 Feb; Verbank 8, 18 Feb.
Rough-legged Hawk: common this winter; Woodbourne 6 Dec; CPP 20 Dec, 6 -28 Feb; SCCBC 28 Dec; Claryville 2 Jan; SGNWR 12-19 Jan; 2 WRNWR 12-19 Jan; 1-2 Rhinebeck 28, 31 Jan; 2 SGNWR 1-7 Feb; 5 SGNWR 16-23 Feb; 3 WRNWR 16-23 Feb.
Golden Eagle: Thompson Pd 7 Jan; 1-2 Stissing Mt 18 Jan, 3, 14, 23 Feb; Croton Res 7 Feb.
Merlin: Georges I P 20 Dec; Wickham L 27 Dec; CPP 24 Jan; DUTC 3 Feb.
Peregrine Falcon: EGR 10, 15, 27 Dec; CPP 24 Jan; Mid Hudson Bridge 5, 22 Feb; Rhinebeck 28 Feb.
Clapper Rail: CPP 9 Feb.
Virginia Rail: 3 MC 28 Dec.
Greater Yellowlegs: EGR 5 Dec.

Ruddy Turnstone: 2 EGR 25 Dec.
Purple Sandpiper: 96 EGR 25 Dec.
Dunlin: 24 EGR 25 Dec.
Wilson's Snipe: Pawling 1 Jan.
Am. Woodcock: arr MC 24 Feb.
Bonaparte's Gull: 12 EGR 22 Dec; 62 EGR 1 Jan.
Herring Gull: 1100 Kiamesha L 1 Dec.
Iceland Gull: 1st winter SCL 1-4 Dec; 2nd winter SCL 3-6, 8, 16 Dec, 2 Jan; 3 Kiamesha L 27 Dec; 1st winter EGR 31 Dec; 2 Blue Chip Farm 2 Jan; ad & 2nd winter SCL 10 Jan; CPP 24 Jan; SGNWR 8 Feb.
Lesser Black-backed Gull: PP 3 Dec (JCI); Glen I 18 Jan (TB).
Glaucous Gull: 1st winter SCL 1-6 Dec; ad SCL 10 Jan.

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Monk Parakeet: 2 New Rochelle 1 Jan.
Long-eared Owl: CPP 20 Dec; 3 CPP 14 Feb; 6 SGNWR 24 Feb (MD); 5-6 Domin Farm 27 Feb (CV).
Short-eared Owl: 8-12 SGNWR 28 Dec-16 Feb; 9 WRNWR 12-19 Jan; 2-6 CPP 1-28 Feb with max 6 on 14 Feb; 10 SGNWR 16-28 Feb; 2 WRNWR 16-23 Feb.
N. Saw-whet Owl: Black Rock Forest thru Dec; Livingston Manor 8 Dec; Greenfield P 5 Jan; Thompsons Pd 14 Feb thru; Pawling Nature Preserve 29 Feb.
Red-headed Woodpecker: 1-2 Blue Chip Farm 19 Jan, 14 Feb (RG); 2 Loughran Rd Marsh, Esopus 21 Jan (SC).

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

E. Phoebe: E Orange CBC 20 Dec; MC 1 Jan (TB).
N. Shrike: E Orange CBC 20 Dec; Ellenville 24 Dec; Ulster Heights 31 Dec; White Sulphur Spring 19 Jan; Ellenville 8-9 Feb.
Am. Crow: numbers continue to decline; 33 year low on BWCBC, with similar results on others.
Fish Crow: DUTC 2 Feb.
Com. Raven: numerous reports thruout Reg; max 9 Stissing Mt 19 Jan.

Horned Lark: 261 Black Dirt region 27 Dec; 120 ORAN Airport 14 Jan; 50 Blue Chip Farm 23 Jan; 50 Pine Plains 2 Feb; 17 Rhinebeck 14 Feb.
Red-breasted Nuthatch: widespread and common.
HouseWren: White Plains 28 Dec.
Marsh Wren: MC 28 Dec.
Hermit Thrush: 2 Woodstock 15 Jan.
Am. Pipit: 6-18 EGR 8-15 Dec; 13 CPP 20 Dec.
Bohemian Waxwing: Rt 55/44 west of Minnewaska SP 25 Jan (AG, TB, GB); Grahamsville 14-16 Feb (VF, JHaa, ABo).

WARBLERS

Pine Warbler: CPP 20 Dec (B&SL); CPP 17 Jan (DB); CPP 24 Jan (BW).

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

E. Towhee: EGR 29 Jan.
Fox Sparrow: good numbers; max 8 MC 3 Feb.
White-crowned Sparrow: numerous scattered Dec reports.
Lapland Longspur: EGR 10 Dec; Rhinebeck 14 Feb.
Snow Bunting: 20 Ellenville 2 Dec; 8 EGR 9 Dec; 16 Lomontville 20 Dec; 62 Monticello 2 Jan; 2 Stonykill 10 Feb.
Red-winged Blackbird: 3000 Dubois Rd, New Paltz at dusk 29 Feb.
E. Meadowlark: CPP 1 Jan.
Rusty Blackbird: 15-20 Rhinebeck Jan thru; 6 Indian L 24 Jan; 27 Georges I P 1 Feb; 1-3 Rhinebeck 7-18 Feb.
Baltimore Oriole: PUTN early Jan (PCBC); 2 Bronxville 5-7 Jan (ABI); Bronxville 8-13 Jan (ABI).
Pine Grosbeak: 3 High Falls 20 Dec (B&ER).
Purple Finch: more numerous than in last few years; 22 Livingston Manor 5 Dec; 50 Clinton Corners 6 Feb; 50 Upton L 13 Feb.
White-winged Crossbill: 4 Parksville 21 Jan (JHaa, ABo).
Com. Redpoll: 3 Claryville 20 Dec; 50 Claryville 5 Jan; 16 Woodbourne 5 Jan; 18 Ellenville 5 Jan; 30 Thompson Pd 7 Jan; 6

Bedford 24 Jan; 20 Bedford 4 Feb; 150
Katonah mid Feb; 10-30 Brewster Jan-mid
Feb; 50 Lexington 14 Feb; many other
scattered reports.
Pine Siskin: 10 Monticello 3 Dec; MC 24
Dec; 30 Forestburg 31 Dec, 10 Jan; 1-3

Bronxville 7, 29 Jan; common SULL,
DUTC, N. WEST Jan & Feb.
Evening Grosbeak: Rock Hill 5 Dec; 5-6
Parksville 5 Dec, 25 Jan (JHaa, ABo); 5
Scarsdale 28 Dec (BWCBC).

REGION 10 – MARINE

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The season started with large amounts of very early snow tapering off as the season progressed. While December was only a bit colder than normal, it was considerably wetter. Most of the precipitation came as snow, 19.8" in all, with 11" falling on 7 December. January was very cold, averaging 7.4°F below normal. The precipitation for the month was half of normal, but almost all came as snow, 9.2", with 6" falling on 27 January. February was about average in temperature and had 21 days of temperatures below freezing. Despite the cold and somewhat below normal precipitation, most fell as rain, with less than 1" falling as snow.

The combination of early snow and sustained cold differed markedly from our recent winters. The cold desolation of the ocean beaches was highlighted by the stark silhouettes of dying and leafless Japanese pines against the snow. What impact this ongoing destruction will have on the birds migrating on the barrier beaches remains to be seen.

Fall and early winter brought large numbers of American Goldfinches and scattered small groups of Common Redpolls to the ocean pines, but both species became increasingly scarce as the winter proceeded. Other changes from previous years included widely scattered Red-breasted Nuthatches, compared with last year's virtual absence, and very few Red-necked Grebes this season in contrast with last year's large and widespread invasion. Bonaparte's Gulls were virtually absent or scarce everywhere, as were Little and Black-headed gulls.

A **Ross's Goose** was found in the Snow Goose flocks at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge on 20 December. It, or another, was seen from Breezy Point that day on the Brooklyn CBC. The Jamaica Bay bird was seen again on the 21st but not relocated thereafter. On 21 February, a Green-winged Teal thought to be of the "Eurasian or Common" race was seen at Hempstead Lake State Park. Subsequent observations concluded that this bird exhibited features of both *A.c. crecca* and *A.c. carolinensis*. Sightings of any "Eurasian" forms should be reviewed carefully

for any indications of mixed parentage. The drake Barrow's Goldeneye returned to Bayville. It was usually seen off Ransom Beach, a mile west of Bayville from 23 December on. Another, or possibly the same, was reported at Caumsett State Park on 24 December.

On 19 December, Jim Clinton found a **Brown Pelican** at the fishing docks on the west side of Shinnecock Inlet. This bird was subsequently seen on the Quogue Watermill CBC on 20 December and the Sagaponack CBC on 21 December.

On 17 February, Robert Adamo spotted a **Black Vulture** over Mill Road in Riverhead. The last Osprey of the season was seen on the Sagaponack CBC 21 December and the first spring arrival was at Shelter Island 26 February. This winter saw an extremely large concentration of Bald Eagles in the Hudson River to the north of New York City. Tom Fiore saw 132 on 29 January while birding from The Bronx to north of Peekskill in Region 9. In addition, there were numerous sightings throughout the season in Suffolk County. This indicated that there were one or more wintering birds at Connetquot River State Park and/or Gardiners or Shelter Islands.

On 11 January, Tom Burke and Andy Guthrie found a **Black Rail** resting on a block of ice in a canal between Dolphin Lane and Docker's Restaurant along Dune Road in Quogue. Also seen in the immediate vicinity were two Virginia Rails, a Marsh Wren and a Seaside Sparrow.

Late shorebirds included two Willets seen on the Southern Nassau CBC at the Massapequa Preserve on 3 January and on the Smithtown CBC on 27 December. A **Spotted Sandpiper** was also seen on the Southern Nassau CBC on 3 January.

Late terns included a Common Tern at the marina west of the ferry terminal at Orient Point on 5 December and a Forster's Tern on the Central Suffolk CBC at Forge River on 27 December.

Two *Selasphorus* hummingbirds remained from last season and survived the 7 December snows. Both birds appeared to be immature females. The one in Orient was reported to 22 December and the other, in East Hampton, was reported to 9 January. Both have tentatively been identified as **Rufous Hummingbirds**. The records and photos await NYSARC review.

On 3 January, Mike Shanley and Chris and Lauren Nuzzi found a *Tyrannus* flycatcher at Mt. Loretto Park on Staten Island. It was identified as a Western Kingbird.

On 1 February, Dorothy Poole and Gaye Fugate found a **Bohemian Waxwing** along the entrance road into Camp Hero State Park, Montauk. It was not relocated.

On **16 January**, Michele Claeys and Hugh McGuinness saw a **Cape May Warbler** feeding on the stone paths at the Ross School, East Hampton, only the second state record after December. Pine Warblers were found on four CBCs in Suffolk County and also appeared elsewhere during the winter, including at several New York City parks. While wintering Pine Warblers are not atypical, the combination of severe weather and such large numbers is a bit unusual.

On 7 December, John Fritz, Gerta Fritz and Patricia Lindsay, during an afternoon drive down Ocean Parkway on the Jones Beach strip, found a single Clay-colored Sparrow and a Grasshopper Sparrow in a patch scraped bare by snow plows just west of Cedar Beach. Both species are very rare at this time of year. Other birds seen in similar patches in early December included Horned Lark, American Pipit and various more expected sparrows. On 3 December, at Jones Beach West End, Al Wollin and Sy Schiff found a very late Lincoln's Sparrow on the pine edge to the east of the Coast Guard Station entrance. Finally, on 20 December, Peter Stoutenburgh found a **Harris's Sparrow** on Gardiners Island during the Montauk CBC. Because of restricted access to the island, no follow-up was possible.

Northern finches this season consisted mainly of rather small numbers of Common Redpolls and lesser numbers of Pine Siskins. Both species were widely scattered throughout the Region. An Evening Grosbeak appeared at a Central Park feeder on 8-9 December. Seth Ausubel noted a modest flight of finches and late migrants at Jones Beach West End on 3 December that yielded 55 Common Redpolls, 15 Pine Siskins and small numbers of American Goldfinches and Purple Finches. The flight also included 20 American Pipits, a few Horned Larks, about 500 Red-winged Blackbirds and 12 Rusty Blackbirds.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BP – Breezy Pt; CB – Cedar Beach; CLP – Clove L P, SI; CP – Central P; FBF – Floyd Bennett Field; FP – Forest P; FTT – Fort Tilden QUEE; HLSP – Hempstead L SP; HP – Hook Pd, Southampton; In – Inlet; JBCH – Jones Beach; JBWE – Jones Beach West End; JBWR – Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge; MEB – Mecox

Bay; MNSA – Marine Nature Study Area, Oceanside; MOR – Moriches; MP – Montauk Pt; PB – Pikes Beach, Westhampton; PL – Pt Lookout side Jones Inlet; PP – Prospect P; RMSP – Robert Moses SP; SHIN – Shinnecock Inlet; SI – Staten Island; VCP – Van Cortlandt P BRON.

Christmas Bird Count Designations: (Note: these 4 letter identifiers are the official assigned codes as used in the *American Birds* Christmas Count Issue). NJLH-Lower Hudson 14 Dec; NYBR-Brooklyn, 20 Dec; NYBW-Bronx-Westchester, 28 Dec; NYCA-Captree, 14 Dec; NYCS-Central Suffolk Co, 27 Dec; NYMK-Montauk, 20 Dec; NYNN-Northern Nassau Co, 27 Dec; NYOR-Orient, 3 Jan; NYQU-Queens, 20 Dec; NYQW-Quogue-Watermill, 20 Dec; NYSG-Sagaponack, 21 Dec; NYSI-Staten Island, 20 Dec; NYSM-Smithtown, 27 Dec; NYSN-Southern Nassau Co, 3 Jan.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Greater White-fronted Goose: 1 or more various sites E LI mid Dec-31 Jan; 2 CLP 19 Feb thru.

Snow Goose: 100s wintered JBWR; others.

ROSS'S GOOSE: JBWR 20-21 Dec; NYBR, BP 20 Dec.

Barnacle Goose: 1 or more various E LI sites 1 Jan-late Feb; the provenance of recent sightings of this species in NYS remains unknown; single birds continue to be seen throughout the NE and continue to create problems for various state records committees; are all of these birds from escaped or feral stock?

Tundra Swan: South Fork LI early Dec thru.

Eurasian Wigeon: 2 Marratooka L Mattituck 27 Dec; NYSN 3 Jan; West Sayville 11 Jan thru; FBF 18 Jan thru; West L Patchogue 22 Feb.

Blue-winged Teal: NYCS 27 Dec; NYSM 27 Dec.

Green-winged "Common" Teal: Spring Creek KING 20 Dec.

"Common" x "American" Green-winged Teal, hybrid: HLSP 21 Feb thru (BB); showed characteristics of both races.

King Eider: f continued JBWR; PL mid Dec-mid Feb; small numbers MP mid Dec thru; others.

Com. Eider: 2 then 1 PL mid Dec-early Jan; several 1000 wintered MP.

Harlequin Duck: up to 11 PL; MP; a few

others.

Barrow's Goldeneye: Ransom Beach, Bayville 23 Dec thru; Caumsett SP 24 Dec, possibly the same bird.

Wild Turkey: Riverside P Manhattan 13-14 Dec; NYQW 20 Dec; 20 NYSG 21 Dec; 110 NYCS 27 Dec; 45-50 former Navy/Grumman airfield 16 Feb.

N. Bobwhite: East Hampton feeder 2, 11 Jan; 7 hills north of Theodore Roosevelt County P Montauk 5 Feb; 4 Eastport exit Sunrise Hwy 15 Feb.

Red-necked Grebe: few and scattered this winter, a more normal pattern.

BROWN PELICAN: SHIN 19 Dec (JC); NYQW 20 Dec; NYSG 21 Dec; a single bird is assumed.

Great Egret: 2 Cutchogue 16 Dec; JBWR 1 Jan; NYQU 20 Dec; NYQW 20 Dec; Dune Rd SHIN 1- 6 Jan; Orient & Mashomack NYOR 3 Jan.

Snowy Egret: NYSM 27 Dec.

BLACK VULTURE: Riverhead 17 Feb (RA).

Turkey Vulture: a few mid Dec-late Jan; scattered throughout early Feb thru.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Osprey: last NYSG e of Sagaponack 21 Dec; arr Shelter I 26 Feb.

Bald Eagle: on ice floes in Hudson Ri, seen from vantage points BRON & Manhattan & flying over CP; numerous SUFF thru, indicated 1 or more wintering Connetquot Ri SP and/or Gardiners or

Shelter Is.

Rough-legged Hawk: 5 JBCH strip 2 Feb; 6 both light and dark morphs SI landfill 21 Dec-4 Feb.

Black Rail: Quogue 11 Jan (TB, AG).

Virginia Rail: 2 Dune Rd Quogue 11, 17 Jan.

Am. Oystercatcher: to early Jan.

Willet: 2 NYSN Massapequa Preserve 3 Jan (A&KM); NYSM 27 Dec.

SPOTTED SANDPIPER: NYSN 3 Jan.

Ruddy Turnstone: PL 19, 28 Dec, 3 Jan; 15 Orient Beach SP 12 Dec; 25 Springs 1 Jan; Three Mile Harbor 1 Feb; 10 Accabonac 16 Feb; South Beach SI 16 Feb.

Red Knot: 23 NYSN 3 Jan; JBWE 8 Feb; absent in Dunlin flocks along JBCH strip this winter.

Purple Sandpiper: small numbers on rock jetties SI, BP, both sides Jones Inlet, Georgica, Orient Pt, L Montauk.

Long-billed Dowitcher: Massapequa Preserve 1 Dec; last NYSN 3 Jan.

Laughing Gull: SHIN 19, 22 Dec; JBCH NYSN 3 Jan.

Little Gull: SI 26 Mar.

Black-headed Gull: NYMK 20 Dec, 27 Dec; FBF 18 Jan; Bergen P 8 Feb.

Bonaparte's Gull: scarce everywhere, as were the small rarer gulls associated with them.

Iceland Gull: 3 NYMK 20 Dec; NYSG 21 Dec; NYCS 27 Dec; SHIN 19, 30 Dec, 17, 19 Jan, 3 on 18 Jan; NYSN 3 Jan; Montauk 17, 24 Jan; Southampton 8-11 Feb; Argyle L Babylon 22 Feb; HLSP 22 Feb; others.

Glaucous Gull: Mecox 19 Dec; NYQW 20 Dec; CP 24-27 Jan; SHIN 24 Jan; Great Kills Harbor SI 1 Feb; L Patchogue 21 Feb.

Black-legged Kittiwake: 5180 on pelagic trip out of Belmar NJ to both NJ & NY waters 13 Dec.

Com. Tern: marina west of ferry terminal Orient Pt 5 Dec (PS).

Forster's Tern: NYCS Forge Ri 27 Dec.

Dovekie: several in NY waters, pelagic trip 13 Dec; NYMK 20 Dec, 2 on 2 Jan, 1 on 2 Feb.

Razorbill: NYQU East Rockaway Inlet 20 Dec, first on count; 46 NYMK 20 Dec; NYSG 21 Dec; 2 JBWE 29 Dec; 6 MP 30 Dec; 10 MEB 30 Dec; 2 SHIN 30 Dec; 17 NYSN 3 Jan; 40 MP 2 Jan, 4 Jan; 1 MP 24 Jan; 8 MP 30 Jan; 35 MP 1 Feb; 20 MP 7 Feb; others MP thru; PL 14 Feb; others.

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Barn Owl: NYMK Gardiners I 20 Dec; NYQU 20 Dec; CP 5-26 Jan; 4 NYSN 3 Jan; JBCH strip 17 Jan; SI 22 Feb; others.

Great Horned Owl: JBWE 27 Dec (RB), unusual at the beach.

Long-eared Owl: up to 4 CP 7 Dec-25 Jan; PP mid to late Dec; NYBW East Bronx 28 Dec.

Short-eared Owl: 2 NYMK 20 Dec; NYQU 20 Dec; NYBR 20 Dec; NYSG 21 Dec, same area 27 Dec; JBWE 28 Dec; Dune Rd SHIN 9, 10, 12, 17 Jan, 1 Feb; JBWR 1, 18 Jan; East Quogue 8 Jan.

N. Saw-whet Owl: NJLH CP 14 Dec; NYMK Accabonac 20 Dec; NYBW East Bronx 28 Dec; 2 NYSG Northwest Woods 21 Dec; CP 5-13 Jan; MP 3 Jan; SI 21 Feb.

RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD: Orient thru 22 Dec; East Hampton thru 9 Jan; both from last season; tentatively identified by observations and ph; final determination awaits NYSARC review.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

E. Phoebe: JBWE 16 Dec; PP 26 Dec; 3 NYMK Gardiners I 20 Dec; NYCS Brookhaven National Lab 27 Dec; NYSN 3 Jan; NYOR Shelter I 3 Jan, 8 Jan; Brooklyn Botanic Garden 4 Jan; Manorville 10 Jan.

Western Kingbird: Mt. Loretto P SI 3 Jan (MS, C&LN).

N. Shrike: Brookhaven National Lab 11 Dec; Amagansett 13 Dec; NYMK Napeague 20 Dec, 31 Jan-7 Feb; NYSN

intersection Loop Causeway & Meadowbrook Pkwy 3 Jan.

Tree Swallow: Big Reed Pd Montauk 17 Jan.

House Wren: NYMK 20 Dec; NYSN 3 Jan.

Marsh Wren: 4 NYMK 20 Dec; 2 NYSG at HP 21 Dec; NYSN 3 Jan; NYOR Mashomack 3 Jan; SHIN 11 Jan.

Am. Pipit: JBCH 7 Dec after snow; NYQU 20 Dec; VCP 22 Dec; 3 NYMK 20 Dec; 4 NYQW 20 Dec; 5 NYSG 21 Dec; 6-7 JBWE 27 Dec; PL 1 Jan; NYSN 3 Jan; 20 JBWE 13 Jan; 14 Mecox 1 Feb; PP 7 Feb; FBF 8 Feb.

BOHEMIAN WAXWING: Camp Hero SP Montauk 1 Feb (DR, GF).

WARBLERS

Orange-crowned Warbler: JBWE 16, 28 Dec; 2 NYBR 20 Dec; NYSM 27 Dec; Flax Pd Old Field 26-27 Dec; BP 3 Jan; NYSN 3 Jan; Brookhaven 10-31 Jan, 15 Feb.

CAPE MAY WARBLER: Ross School East Hampton 16 Jan (MC, HMG), 2nd state record after Dec.

Pine Warbler: 3 NYMK 20 Dec; NYQW 20 Dec; 2 NYSG 21 Dec; NYOR, Southhold 3 Jan; PP feeders 6-25 Jan; Quogue mid Jan; NY Botanical Garden 21 Jan.

Palm Warbler: Riverhead Dec 8; Napeague Dec 9; Lazy Pt Napeague Dec 25; 3 NYSN 3 Jan; NYOR 3 Jan.

Com. Yellowthroat: NYMK 20 Dec; NYOR 3 Jan; FTT 23 Feb.

Yellow-breasted Chat: NYMK 20 Dec; 2 NYSG 21 Dec; 2 H 1 Jan; MP 3 Jan.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

Chipping Sparrow: wintered CP & PP; a few others.

Clay-colored Sparrow: spot scraped bare by snow plows west of CB JBCH 7 Dec (JF *et al*).

Vesper Sparrow: NYQU 20 Dec;

Culloden Pt Montauk 24 Jan.

Grasshopper Sparrow: spot scraped bare by snow plows west of CB JBCH 7 Dec (JF *et al*).

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow: none reported.

Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow: 9 NYSN 3 Jan; Dune Rd East Quogue 24 Jan; MNSA Feb.

Seaside Sparrow: NYMK 20 Dec; SHIN marshes 17 Jan.

Lincoln's Sparrow: JBWE 3 Dec (AW, SS).

HARRIS'S SPARROW: NYMK Gardiners I 20 Dec (PS).

White-crowned Sparrow: 77 NYSG 21 Dec, probably a winter max for Reg.

Lapland Longspur: mostly singles SI, KING, JBWE (max 10), Farmingdale, Riverhead, Calverton, Watermill, Sagaponack, Cutchogue.

Dickcissel: 2 Montauk 19 Dec; Montauk feeder 15 Jan; Peconic feeder 15 Jan; Sag Harbor feeder 6 Feb.

E. Meadowlark: 12 north of Riverhead 13 Dec; NYQU 20 Dec; 6 Riverhead 1 Jan; FTT 23 Feb.

Boat-tailed Grackle: resident in and around JBWR, SHIN, JBCH.

Baltimore Oriole: 2 Elmont 13 Dec; Southhold feeder 19-20 Dec; PP 26-27 Dec; Brooklyn Botanic Garden 4 Jan.

Com. Redpoll: CP mid Dec; then scattered throughout, small numbers frequented feeders; 55 JBWE 3 Dec & 60 Weld Nature Conservancy property Nissequoque were the largest groups.

Pine Siskin: a few at feeders CP thru; others at feeders, less as season progressed.

Evening Grosbeak: CP feeder 8-9 Dec.

CORRIGENDUM

Delete: **YELLOW-HEADED**

BLACKBIRD: Orient Pt SP 23 Sep 2004; reported in error.

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



THE POET'S CORNER

Roger Tory Peterson

Your brush strokes are
two flickers in scarlet-turning Virginia Creeper vine,
Bobwhite clustered in covey under goldenrod,
Road Runner giddyapping past Prickly Pear Cactus,
Great Horned Owl ensconced in Red Pine,
Golden Eagle eyeing valley from olympus overlook.

Your arrows - these are your guiding strokes
in A Field Guide to the Birds, the green-bound "Peterson"
tucked into belts, pushed into pockets, stuffed into backpacks.

Your arrows have led eyes of millions
squinting through binoculars
to the red-brown cap, black "stickpin"
that identifies the passerine in snowy branches.
"That's it," the new birder exclaims,
pulls out list, checks off the "Winter Chippy,"
American Tree Sparrow.

Your arrows point to crest and black necklace of Blue Jay,
reddish breast stripes of Yellow Warbler,
purple throat, decurved bill of Lucifer Hummingbird,
white tail tip of Eastern Kingbird,
"golden slippers" of Snowy Egret.
Bald Eagle with white head and tail is "all field mark."

In salt marsh in May
the birder thinking "Life Bird!"
focuses on the shorebird
prodding mud flat with Short-billed Dowitchers,
Red Knots, Ruddy Turnstones, Greater Yellowlegs,
Semipalmated and Least Sandpipers,
Semipalmated and Black-bellied Plovers.
She has identified all with the dried out, wrinkled pages of her "Peterson."

She studies the plover in your book,
focuses glasses on the bird feeding
by greening shoots of Spartina grass.
Again, she studies your art.
Your arrow points to black undertail coverts.
She ponders your description,
"spangled with golden spots above."

Suddenly, her freckled face is all smile,
her whisper a bursting
"Golden Plover!"

Maxwell Corydon Wheat, Jr.

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Publication of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, Inc.
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