

REGION 4 – SUSQUEHANNA

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

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

LOONS – DUCKS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Am. Black Duck: max 73 BCBC 30 Dec.

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

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

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

Greater Scaup: SkanL CCBC 14 Dec, only report.

Lesser Scaup: SkanL CCBC 14 Dec, only report.

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

Bufflehead: max 20 SkanL CCBC 14

Dec; 2 other reports.

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

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

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

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

HAWKS – ALCIDS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

DOVES – WOODPECKERS

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

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

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

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

WARBLERS

None

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

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

Red-winged Blackbird: missed after 15 Dec.

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

Com. Grackle: only 3 reports.

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

House Finch: max 297 BCBC 30 Dec.

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

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

House Sparrow: max 426 BCBC 30 Dec.