

REGION 4—SUSQUEHANNA

Tom Salo

5145 St Hwy 51, West Burlington, NY 13482

Matthew A. Young

2910 Crumb Hill Rd., Georgetown, NY 13072

Temperatures varied considerably through the winter. In December, temperatures ranged from 53 to — 6; F at Binghamton but averaged very close to normal for the month. Precipitation totaling 4.18 in December was 38% higher than normal but fell mostly on warm days as rain. Only 10 of snow fell. January was 2; F colder than normal. Again, temperatures varied widely, from 59; F on 13-14 January to —13; F on the 22nd. Precipitation at 3.93 was 52% higher than normal. Snow falls of 2 or 3 were regular. Warmth followed by a significant amount of rain on the 13th and 14th melted most of the snow. The temperature dropped rapidly on the 14th as a cold front passed. Two weeks of below normal temperatures followed this front. 22 and 23 January brought the month's only

significant snow fall totaling 13-18 across the Region. February was unseasonably warm during the first 10 days of the month. Due to cooler weather later, the average temperature was only 2.6; degrees higher than normal. Precipitation was very close to average. Snow fell in small amounts. The single greatest February snowfall, which fell on the last day of the month, was only 4.2 .

Cones were scarce except for red pine, which had one of its best cone crops in 5-6 years. The mast and fruit crop was poor except for a bumper crop of white ash samaras, particularly in Tioga, Chenango, and Cortland counties. However, ground- foraging birds that pick through manure had a relatively easy winter.

There were no big surprises during the annual waterfowl count. It was conducted just after the 14 January cold front arrived. High murky rivers from several days of warm rain, and the dramatic cooling, very likely affected the results. A Cackling Goose, (formerly Richardson's race of Canada Goose,) was reported at Grippen Park in the Town of Union by Marie Petuh and the Naturalists Club of Broome County in December. A Ruddy Duck was found on the Cortland Christmas Bird Count. It is rare in the Region and even more so in winter. Other notable waterfowl seen that are rare for the area in winter were Brant at Grippen Park in December, 4 Wood Ducks on the Sherburne Christmas Bird Count, and six Northern Pintails at Boland Pond through the reporting period. Apparently this is a good location to see this rare wintering duck in upstate New York.

The Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society turned up a very respectable 16 Bald Eagles on their annual eagle trip to Delaware County. Turkey Vultures are staying later and returning earlier, given one was seen on the Owego Christmas Bird count and one was witnessed returning to the area on 18 February. The Owego Christmas Bird Count set a count high, with five Northern Harriers, which was a nice tally for this usually rare to uncommon winter resident. Cooper's Hawk and Sharp-shinned Hawk numbers were very close to equal on the Christmas Counts,. However, Cooper's were the season's dominate accipiter. In Broome County, Cooper's Hawks were noted at 31 locations while Sharp-shinned Hawks were observed at only 9. Although Region 4 is perhaps the nesting stronghold for this species in the state, Northern Goshawks continue to be under reported in the area with only two reports. Red-shouldered Hawk was a very nice find on 16 January in Otsego County. In recent years, only one or two have been seen each winter usually in Broome County. After good numbers were seen in December, Rough-legged Hawks were a bit hard to come by as the season progressed. A number of Golden Eagles were present in December. The Kortright pair returned in early December accompanied by an immature bird. Two Golden Eagles were recorded on the Oneonta Christmas Bird Count. The Cortland Christmas Bird Count had count firsts of Golden Eagle and Merlin. Additionally, a Golden Eagle was seen in Cuyler at the end of January giving credence to the fact Region 4 more than likely holds a small wintering population of Golden Eagles most winters. A second Cortland Merlin was observed nearby later in the winter. This raised the possibility of breeders remaining on territory in Cortland through the winter, like they now do in the Binghamton area. It should be noted however, that there have been no confirmed nesting Merlins in Cortland to date. However, wintering Merlin reports are increasing in towns and cities across the state. Some more than likely are nesting much like the Binghamton birds. The Binghamton nesting pair

of Peregrine Falcons was seen through the period. Lastly, American Kestrels continue their decline, with only a few seen in the Region during the winter. One must wonder if Merlins might at some point become more common in winter than the once common wintering American Kestrel.

Seven species of owl were reported, including single individuals of four uncommon species. All the uncommon owls were found in Otsego County within an eight-day period in December. A Northern Hawk- Owl was observed for about an hour near the shore of Canadarago Lake in the Town of Richfield by Irvin and Monica Peters the morning of 21 December. A strong cold front had passed through the area a day earlier. The bird did not persist at that location. The Region's only Snowy Owl was seen in West Burlington by John Parker from 18-20 December. It left as the Northern Hawk- Owl arrived in Richfield. The season's only Short-eared Owl was flushed from a pine tree very close to where the Snowy Owl was found. The Oneonta Christmas Bird Count recorded its first ever Northern Saw-whet Owl.

There were some nice songbirds finds for Region 4 during the winter. A very rare wintering upstate Eastern Phoebe was a very nice find on the Cortland Christmas Bird Count. Northern Shrike numbers appeared to be slightly higher than usual across the rRegion, with 2-5 reported per month. A few Fish Crows continue in the Owego/Tioga areas. One must wonder why they're not in Cortland given there are Fish Crow populations in Owego, Syracuse, and Ithaca. Perhaps a more diligent search will eventually turn up a few. A wintering max of 13 Common Ravens was found in the German area on 15 January. Area Christmas Counts tallied 1-4. Common Ravens appear to be less common in Region 4 in winter than during the breeding season, when it continues to expand and increase. However, larger flocks of 5-10+ presumed to be immature birds are occasionally seen in Region 4 in winter.

Tufted Titmice continue to further establish themselves across this relatively high elevation rRegion. The Sherburne Christmas Bird Count set a count high for Tufted Titmouse. After last year's bumper spruce cone crop led to higher than normal numbers of Red-breasted Nuthatches, they were reported in expected lower than usual numbers this year. Despite the last two winters being a bit harsh, Carolina Wren numbers appear to be stable, with good numbers reported across the area in locales they usually can be found. The increase in bird feeders is without a doubt helping many Carolina Wrens survive harsh winters. A Winter Wren was a very unusual find on the Sherburne Christmas Bird count, especially considering much of the circle is at high elevations above 1400 ft. Scattered small flocks of American Robins wintered in the area. Eastern Bluebirds were seen in lower numbers than recent winters, which was more than likely due to the last two winters being a bit colder. However, their wintering numbers are still much higher than they were just 10 years ago. Very unusual was the find of all three mimic thrushes in the Tioga area. A Gray Catbird wintered through the reporting period and a Brown Thrasher put in a brief appearance in January. Northern Mockingbird, a half-hardy, continues to be a relatively rare winter resident in Region 4 unlike half-hardies, Northern Cardinal, Tufted Titmouse, and the becoming more established Red-bellied Woodpecker. A rare winter American Pipit was found at Hillcrest Pits on 10th January.

There were single reports of White-crowned Sparrow and Fox Sparrow from Tioga in December. Snow Buntings and Horned Larks were seen in decent to good numbers throughout the period. Another rare winter bird found was a single Rose-breasted Grosbeak at a feeder in Tioga the first few days of December. There were a few wintering Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Grackles, and Brown-headed Cowbirds in the Region. However, an unseasonable warm front in mid February caused an early push of sizable flocks of 10-50 migrating Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Grackles. A few Brown-headed Cowbirds were also noted in these early returning blackbird flocks.

Winter finches were surprisingly present after last year's moderate redpoll invasion, and significant siskin and crossbill nesting event. However, most species were seen in very small numbers. The Purple Finch was one species that did irrupt in central New York in numbers not seen in a very long time. This normally very scarce Region 4 winter bird was seen widespread in flocks of 5-50+. The bumper white ash samara crop is what held Purple Finches in parts of Region 4, particularly in Tioga, Chenango, and Cortland counties. Many birds were seen feeding on the white ash samaras in addition to visiting feeders. Conifers except red pine had poor cone crops contrasting with last year's bumper white and Norway spruce crop. It appears few species actually utilize red pine even in bumper cone crop years. Red-breasted Nuthatches and some medium to large-billed Red Crossbills will utilize red pine but not to the same extent as they do spruce. There were a few Red Crossbill pairs and individuals seen and heard in the Otselic and Pharsalia areas in late February. Some of these birds appeared to be small-billed Type 3s that were more than likely holdovers from last year's modest nesting event. However, some birds appeared to be medium or larger-billed type 1 or 2 birds that were associating more with red pine than spruce. These birds were a deeper red, had significantly larger bills, and had a different call note with a sweeter song. After the reporting period, birds were heard singing and seen acting territorial. There were much fewer birds involved in this nesting event than last year. At a few locations transient small flocks of 2-7 Pine Siskins were present, as were smaller flocks of 1-4 Common Redpolls. There was a small flock of 6-12 Evening Grosbeaks through the reporting period in Truxton, Cortland County and another small flock of 3-5 Evening Grosbeaks in December and January in Jefferson, Delaware County. However, this species continues to be harder and harder to find in winter across the state. A couple of other scattered individuals were noted as well. Also of note was a **European Goldfinch** at a feeder in Oxford from 20 December through the winter period. The bird was well documented and seen by others.

All in all, there were 97 species reported for the winter period.

Contributors

Cutler & Jeanette Baldwin, Jim Barry, Lois Bingley, Steve Broyles, Ryan Butryn, Gerianne Carillo, Rod Carter, Cortland-Lime Hollow Bird Club, Kay Crane, John Davis, Bob Donnelly, Bruce & Janice Downie, Lisa Gorn, Steve Hall, Dorian Huneke, Spencer Hunt, Gail Kirch, Diane Krein, Andy Mason, David McCartt, Jim McKenna, Bobbi Monroe, Naturalists Club of Broome County, Robert Pantle, John Parker, Sandy Perry, Irvin and Monica Peters,

Marie Petuh, Don Quataert, Jo Ann & Tom Salo, Charles Scheim, Julie Siler, Tioga Bird Club, Scott VanArdsdale, Fred Von Mechow, Donald Weber, Jon Weeks, Sue & Tom Whitney, Colleen Wolpert, Paul Worden, George Wade, Matt Young.

Abbreviations

BCBC - Binghamton Christmas Bird Count; CCBC - Cortland Christmas Bird Count; DOAS — Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society; FMHW - Franklin Mountain Hawk Watch; FWC - Federation Waterfowl Count; LHNC - Lime Hollow Nature Center; OnCBC - Oneonta Christmas Bird Count; OwCBC - Owego Christmas Bird Count; SCBC - Sherburne Christmas Bird Count; SkanL - Skaneateles Lake; TBC - Tioga Bird Club; NCBCWW - Naturalists Club of Broome County Weed Walkers.

WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

Snow Goose: Max 300 Springfield 2

Dec; regular early Dec.

Canada Goose: Max 1349 OwCBC

31 Dec;

CACKLING GOOSE: Town of Union
8 Dec NCBCWW.; 23 Dec (MP).

Brant: Grippen Park Endicott Dec, late.

Mute Swan: 2 BCBC 26 Dec; 2 NYSOA
Waterfowl Count mid-Jan.

Wood Duck: Max 4 SCBC 18 Dec.

American Black Duck: Max 60 BCBC
26 Dec.

Mallard: Max 818 BCBC 26 Dec.

Northern Pintail: Max 6 Boland Pond
16 Feb; 4 NYSOA Waterfowl Count mid-
Jan; Boland Pond 8 Jan; good numbers,
sometimes missed.

Ring-necked Duck: Max 38 CCBC 18
Dec; 20 SkanL 29 Jan; several reports
from BROO and TIOG.

Greater Scaup: 2 CCBC 18 Dec,
only report.

Lesser Scaup: 2 NYSOA Waterfowl
count mid-Jan; SkanL 29 Jan,
only reports.

Bufflehead: 16 SkanL CCBC 18 Dec,
only report.

Common Goldeneye: Max 125 SkanL
29 Jan; 43 CCBC 18 Dec; 4 other reports
of small groups; good numbers.

Hooded Merganser: Max 19 CCBC 18

Dec; 12 NYSOA Waterfowl Count
mid-Jan.

Common Merganser: Max 130 NYSOA
Waterfowl Count mid-Jan.

RUDDY DUCK: CCBC 18 Dec (JB),
rare.

Ring-necked Pheasant: Max 4 BCBC 26
Dec.

Ruffed Grouse: Max 3 OnCBC 18 Dec;
low number of reports.

Wild Turkey: Max 238 OnCBC 18 Dec;
120 New Lisbon all season thru.

Common Loon: 4 NYSOA waterfowl
count mid-Jan, only report.

Pied-billed Grebe: Arr Delhi 28 Feb.

Great Blue Heron: Max 6 BCBC
26 Dec.

Turkey Vulture: OwCBC 31 Dec, late;
Vestal 18 Feb, early.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: Max 16 DELA DOAS trip
Jan 29; concentrated in Delaware River
basin; reported from all areas; regular in
BROO.

Northern Harrier: Max 5 OwCBC 31
Dec, high; Burlington 22 Jan, unusual
winter location.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: 5 BCBC 26 Dec;
few reports.

Cooper's Hawk: 5 BCBC 26 Dec;
regular.

Northern Goshawk: OnCBC 18 Dec; Triangle 11 Dec; scarce.
RED-SHOULDERED HAWK: OTSE 16 Jan, only report; rare.
Red-tailed Hawk: Max 130 FMHW to 1 Jan; 59 BCBC 26 Dec; 52 OwCBC 31 Dec.
Rough-legged Hawk: 14 OwCBC 31 Dec; 13 in Region 4 SCBC 18 Dec; high numbers early, few reported after Dec.
GOLDEN EAGLE: Ppair returned to Kortright with juv early Dec; Cortlandville near LHNC CCBC 18 Dec(RB); Cooperstown 17 Dec; 2 OnCBC 18 Dec; Cuyler 28 Jan; good numbers.
American Kestrel: Max 3 OwCBC 31 Dec; scarce after Dec.
Merlin: E. Homer CCBC 18 Dec(JM); Cortland 25 Feb (MY); Binghamton all seasonthru.
Peregrine Falcon: Binghamton all season, 2 at times, expected.
American Coot: Max 24 NYSOA Waterfowl Count mid-Jan; Otsego Lake all seasonthru.
Ring-billed Gull: Max 836 CCBC 18 Dec, high.
Herring Gull: Max 301 CCBC 18 Dec, high.
Great Black-backed Gull: Max 249 CCBC 18 Dec, high.

PIGEONS — WOODPECKERS

Rock Pigeon: Max 1868 BCBC 26 Dec.
Mourning Dove: Max 418 BCBC 26 Dec.
Eastern Screech-Owl: 8 reports, good numbers.
Great Horned Owl: 9 BCBC 26 Dec; 5 OnCBC 18 Dec; high CBC numbers, 5 other reports.
SNOWY OWL: W. Burlington 18-20 Dec (JP), only report.
NORTHERN HAWK OWL: Richfield 21 Dec (I&MP,), NYSARC).

Barred Owl: On CBC 18 Dec; TBC Feb.
Short-eared Owl: W. Burlington 14 Dec TS, only report.
Northern Saw-whet Owl: OnCBC 18 Dec, only report.
Belted Kingfisher: 3 OwCBC 31 Dec; Ffew reported, but several reported early Feb.
Red-bellied Woodpecker: Max 11 OwCBC 26 Dec; numbers appeared a bit low perhaps due to poor oak crop.
Downy Woodpecker: Max 115 BCBC 26 Dec.
Hairy Woodpecker: Max 44 BCBC 26 Dec.
N. Flicker: Max 16 OwCBC 26 Dec.; Just a few reported on other local CBC s; scarce in Reg. throughout winter.
Pileated Woodpecker: Max 6 BCBC 26 Dec.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

EASTERN PHOEBE: 1 CCBC 18 Dec (BM), well documented;, only report; rare.
N. Shrike: Scattered inds. throughout Reg; reported numbers of 3-5 per month in Reg. were slightly above average.
Blue Jay: Max 178 OnCBC 18 Dec.
Am. Crow: Max 1556 CCBC 18 Dec; all birds counted on CCBC presumed to roost in City of Cortland.
Fish Crow: Few Town of Tioga (SH), local.
Com. Raven: max 13 German CHEN 15 Jan (MY, JS); 1-4 seen on all area CBC s; appears to be less common in Region 4 in winter than during breeding season when it continues to expand and increase. However, larger flocks of 5-10+, presumed to be immature birds, occasionally seen in Reg in winter.
Horned Lark: Max 30 OwCBC 26 Dec.; numbers low and few reports.
Tufted Titmouse: Max 164 BCBC 26 Dec; set high of 17 on SCBC, high count; continues to expand.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: Max 15 OnCBC 18 Dec.; low numbers compared to with last year due to poor cone crop.
Brown Creeper: Max 12 BCBC 26 Dec.
Carolina Wren: Max 18 BCBC 26 Dec; fairly stable numbers reported throughout Reg.
Winter Wren: 1 SCBC 18 Dec, only report; rare.
Golden-crowned Kinglet: Max 8 BCBC 26 Dec.
E. Bluebird: Max 16 BCBC 26 Dec; low numbers compared to recent years
Am. Robin: Max 30 Bradley Creek Rd. TIOG 20 Jan; scattered small numbers wintered throughout
GRAY CATBIRD: Dec-Feb TIOG (CB&JB), only report; rare
N. Mockingbird: Max 3 BCBC 26 Dec; low numbers
BROWN THRASHER: Jan TIOG (PW), only report; rare
European Starling: Max 2452 SCBC 18 Dec.
AMERICAN PIPIT: 1 Hillcrest Pits 10 Jan (JW), only report; rare
Cedar Waxwing: max 137 BCBC 26 Dec.

TANAGERS - WEAVERS

Am. Tree Sparrow: Max 62 BCBC 26 Dec.
Fox Sparrow: TIOG 10 Dec (JB), only report; rare.
Song Sparrow: Max 3 OnCBC 18 Dec.
White-throated Sparrow: Max 13 BCBC 26 Dec.
White-crowned Sparrow: TIOG Dec (DW), only report; rare.
Dark-eyed Junco: Max 250 BCBC 26 Dec.

Snow Bunting: Max 171 SCBC 18 Dec.
N. Cardinal: Max 128 BCBC 26 Dec; fairly well established even at higher elevations.
ROSE-BREADED GROSBEAK: At feeders in TIOG first few days of Dec, accidental in Dec.
Red-winged Blackbird: few wintered in area; returning migrant max of 50+ Maine 17 Feb.
Common Grackle: singles wintered in area; returning migrant max of 20+ Maine 17 Feb.
Brown-headed Cowbird: few wintered in area; returning migrant max of 4 BROO 23 Feb.
Purple Finch: Max 52 SCBC 18 Dec; much higher than usual winter numbers of 5-50+ in small flocks in Reg. Dec-thru.
House Finch: Max 385 BCBC 26 Dec.
RED CROSSBILL: a few scattered inds/pairs in Pharsalia and Otselic CHEN in late Feb (MY). Perhaps some birds still hanging around from last year's nesting event.
Common Redpoll: max 4 Homer CCBC 18 Dec; 3 TIOG 18 Feb (DW); a few scattered inds throughout Reg in Jan-Feb.
Pine Siskin: Max 7 TIOG Jan (LB); 6 BCBC 26 Dec.; few small transient flocks of 2-7 scattered throughout area.
Am. Goldfinch: Max 189 SCBC 18 Dec; average numbers seen throughout winter.
EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH: 1 at feeder Oxford CHEN 20 Dec thru, photos and well documented, origin?
Evening Grosbeak: small flock of 6-12 Truxton CORT Dec- thru (MY); small flock of 3-6 DELA Dec-Jan (AM); 1 Vestal 7 Dec (DQ).
House Sparrow: Max 1073 BCBC 26 Dec.