

REGION 4 — SUSQUEHANNA

Region four consists of the six counties of Tioga, Cortland, Broome, Chenango, Otsego and Delaware. Rolling and hilly uplands cut by a few broad river valleys, many narrow valleys and ravines of smaller streams, would characterize the whole region except for those parts of Delaware county in the Catskills which are truly mountainous.

Drainage is almost entirely by way of the Susquehanna and its tributaries, the Chenango, Tioughnioga, Unadilla and Otsego Rivers. Most of Delaware County and the eastern parts of Broome County are drained by headwater tributaries of the Delaware River. Some small parts of Cortland County drain into Skaneateles and Cayuga Lakes. The only important lakes in the region are Otsego and Schuyler Lakes in Otsego County and a small part of Skaneateles Lake bordering on Cortland County. There are a moderate number of smaller lakes and ponds.

Elevation above sea level varies from about 800 ft. in the Susquehanna and Delaware river valleys to about 3400 feet at Mount Pisga in the Catskills. Outside of the Catskills the uplands have an elevation between 1200 and 2100 feet, being higher in the north and east and lower in the west. The differential between uplands and valleys ranges between 250 feet in some parts of Tioga County to 600 or 800 feet in Otsego and Chenango Counties. The whole region is on the northern spurs of the Allegheny Mountains.

Almost invariably the hills, especially the side slopes, are wooded, and the river valleys are cleared for farming. The birch-beech-hard maple association accounts for a large part of the forest covering on the hills with the oak-hickory group mixed in on the south slopes, and some balsam and spruce in the Catskills. Along the river banks in the valleys the trees are mostly sycamore, basswood, elm and willow with some ash and silver maple. An appreciable amount of land, especially on the hill tops, is deserted farmland which is going wild again. The characteristic trees in these areas are gray and black birch, poplar and red maple with a little pitch pine mixed in.

Industry can be discounted as an important influence on the bird population of the region. Manufacturing is almost if not completely confined to Oneonta, Norwich, Cortland, Bainbridge, Sidney and the Triple Cities area.

There is only one interested club in Region Four, The Naturalists' Club of Binghamton. There are several unattached individual observers in Chenango County and western Delaware County that push the boundaries of the effectively covered area out in those directions, but Cortland, Otsego and most of Delaware and Tioga Counties are virtually "untouched" as far as *The Kingbird* is concerned. The search is still going on. Anyone in those areas please note!

Generally speaking, this has been a mild winter in the Susquehanna Region. There was some cold weather in December and January, but it came in spurts and was more than offset by the warmest February in the history of the Triple Cities area. A few of the first land bird migrants showed up a little early, but most were just about on schedule or even somewhat late, perhaps because of a cool March.

LOONS — DUCKS: Wintering Black Ducks and American Mergansers were present in the usual small numbers, but migrants of both species were more numerous this year than last. Again wintering Mallards were absent around Binghamton (Naturalists' Club). A Whistling Swan was taken into custody by the Endicott Police Department March 29, apparently injured, but when turned over to the Conservation Department was found to be all right and was released. A Lesser Scaup spent the latter half of February on the Chenango River inside the city limits of Binghamton (Bemont).

So far this has been a good year for Hooded Mergansers. One female was seen Jan. 1 at Chenango Valley State Park (Bemont, Harris). The next report was Mar. 7 when 2 were seen at Campville (Washburn). There have been a half dozen other reports with the maximum being 9 at Deposit Mar. 27 (S. Wilson).

Some first dates: At Deposit Pied-billed Grebe 3/24, Green-winged Teal 3/28, Wood Duck 3/20, Bufflehead 3/29, Old Squaw 3/30. Red-breasted Merganser 3/30 (S. Wilson). At White's Pond near Norwich Great Blue Heron 3/27 (R. White). At Binghamton Green Heron 3/28, Baldpate 3/7 (Nat. Club). At Campville Pintail 2/21, Ring-necked Duck 2/21, American Goldeneye 3/7 (Nat. Club).

HAWKS — OWLS: A Turkey Vulture was reported Mar. 20 and 2 more Mar. 29 at Deposit (Wilson).

Buteos and Accipiters have been non-existent around Binghamton all winter as usual, and there were very few reports from other areas. A Bald Eagle was seen Mar. 16 and again Mar. 18 at Deposit (Wilson). The first Killdeer was at Choconut Center Feb. 25 (Sheffield's), and 2 Wilson's Snipe were at Boland's Marsh Mar. 28 (Nat. Club).

53 Herring Gulls and one Ring-billed Gull Jan. 1 around Binghamton tells the gull story for the whole winter and that is just about normal.

Wintering Mourning Doves have been reported fairly frequently.

There were 3 different reports of Snowy Owls during December. One of these was an injured bird found near Oxford 12/29 (Manwarren). It is now in the Ross Park Zoo in Binghamton. Another Snowy Owl was seen near McGraw Feb. 13 (Fessenden, Doren). A Barred Owl was heard near Deposit Dec. 5 (S. Wilson) and a Long-eared Owl was at Bainbridge Jan. 6 (E. J. Smith).

SWIFTS — SHRIKES: A Belted Kingfisher was seen regularly along the Chenango River at Chenango Bridge all winter (Bemont). At least two Flickers are known to have wintered around Binghamton. One near the middle of town (Fessenden) and one at Chenango Bridge (Bemont). The first Sapsucker was seen Mar. 30 near Binghamton (H. Marsi).

Three Phoebes were seen Mar. 20 at Deposit (Wilson). The first one elsewhere was at White's Pond Mar. 28 (S. White). The first Tree Swallows were at Binghamton Mar. 27 (Sheffield's). A large flock of over 100 Horned Larks was seen Feb. 7 at Nanticoke (Nat. Club).

Tufted Titmice are definitely on the increase in the Binghamton area. They have been reported from a half dozen localities this year as compared to none last year. The only other report in the region in recent years came from Mr. W. S. Knight of Unadilla who wrote that one was seen there Jan. 20, 1952. The two Carolina Wrens at Chenango Bridge wintered through successfully and have been in full song since Mar. 24 (Bemont).

The first obviously migrating Robins were a flock of 15 seen Feb. 28 at Colesville (Vogelin's) but there were several reports of individual birds earlier, from several areas. A late Hermit Thrush was seen Dec. 5 at Deposit (Wilson). The first Bluebirds were 2 at Deposit Mar. 4 (Wilson). Some very early Ruby-crowned Kinglets were seen Mar. 19 near Binghamton (Sheffield's & H. Marsi).

An immature Gray Shrike was seen at Chenango Bridge Jan. 16 and presumably the same bird was caught and banded Jan. 19. It was released several miles away and wasn't seen again. One at Deposit Jan. 31 (Wilson). One at Unadilla Feb. 13. One Mar. 20 and two Mar. 28 at Bainbridge and two more Mar. 28 at Afton (E. J. Smith). One seen at Union Center in late November (C. Beasor) was reported too late for the last issue.

VIREOS — WARBLERS: Two Myrtle Warblers seen Jan. 1 (Nat. Club) at Binghamton, were the only wintering warblers noted.

BLACKBIRDS — SPARROWS: A wintering Meadowlark was seen at White's Pond Jan. 15 (R. White). The first migrants were two at Cincinnatus Mar. 5 (A. Carter). Red-wings arrived very suddenly Feb. 20 when a flock of over 50 were seen near Binghamton (Bemont) and 3 near Deposit (Wilson). They have been very much in evidence ever since. The first females in Binghamton were seen Mar. 27. A Baltimore Oriole appeared at a feeder in Hillcrest near Binghamton in late November and stayed around until late in February (C. O'Brien). This report was verified by the writer and at least one other observer. The first Rusty Blackbirds were 12 at Boland's Marsh Mar. 27 (Sheffield's). Two cowbirds Mar. 3 at Deposit (Wilson) and 3 Mar. 4 at Bainbridge (E. J. Smith).

A flock of 20 Evening Grosbeaks spent the winter at a feeder in Sidney, but there were very few others reported. Purple Finches have been very common near

Deposit since Jan. 2 — 116 were counted at a feeder on Feb. 8 and 10 and during March the daily count was near 200 several times (Wilson). More normal numbers in other areas. A flock of about 30 Redpolls was seen at White's Pond Mar. 15 and again Mar. 20 (R. & S. White). There have been only scattered reports of Pine Siskins, but Goldfinches have been quite common through the winter in both Binghamton and Deposit. The same is true of Slate-colored Juncos, which were also seen regularly in Bainbridge (E. J. Smith). An early Field Sparrow record — 4 at Deposit Mar. 4 (Wilson). A White-throated Sparrow showed up at Mr. Wilson's feeder Jan. 8 and has been there ever since. Fox Sparrows appeared at Deposit Mar. 4 and at Binghamton Mar. 14. They have been noted frequently since with the highest count being over 20 at Binghamton Mar. 30 (H. Marsi). 6 Swamp Sparrows were present at Boland's Marsh up to Jan. 1 (Bemont). After a poor year last year Snow Buntings are back to normal this year and numerous large flocks have been seen. One flock of over 1000 birds was found near Hawleyton by Miss Helen J. Kent Feb. 2.

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REGION 5 — ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

The counties of Herkimer, Oneida, Madison, Oswego, Onondaga, and that part of Cayuga north of the Seneca River constitute Region Five. It has within its boundaries many population centers such as Syracuse, Utica and Rome, and many lakes and rivers.

The most prominent water feature of the region is Oneida Lake with its main tributaries, Chittenango, Wood, Fish, and Scriba Creeks, and its outlet, the Oneida River, which in turn flows into the Oswego River. Other important bodies of water are Skaneateles and Otisco Lakes of the Finger Lakes, Onondaga Lake, Delta Lake, and the Fulton Chain in Herkimer County. The northeastern part of the region drains largely through the Moose River, the eastern part largely through the Mohawk, and most of the western half through the Seneca and Oneida Rivers, which form the Oswego River. The northwest corner is drained through the Salmon and Little Salmon Rivers and their tributaries. The area around Hamilton drains south through the Chenango River.

The lower elevations are centered largely along Lake Ontario, around Oneida Lake, and along the Mohawk River. These low altitude areas, which tend toward Appalachian and Carolinian bird life, are encroached upon by the hill country on the south (the northern limit of the Alleghany Plateau), by the Tug Hill Plateau on the north, and the southwestern and western fringe of the Adirondacks in Herkimer County. Generally, as one passes from the low altitude areas to those of higher elevation, the percentage of forested land increases, although little of the wooded area is in original stands.

Three of the major life zones are present in the Region. The vast majority of the country falls in the maple-beech-birch-hemlock class, but the northern and eastern part of Herkimer County has a good percentage of the spruce-fir association. Very small areas of the oak-hickory group are found in the outlet valleys of the Finger Lakes, along the south shore of Oneida Lake, and in those parts of Oswego and Cayuga County abutting on Lake Ontario. Swamp-wise, four very rich areas are located in Region 5 — 1.) the large wooded swamps scattered around Oneida Lake, 2.) the large aquatic plant marshes of the Sandy Pond area, 3.) the spruce-sphagnum bog known as Cicero Swamp, between Syracuse and Oneida Lake, and 4.) the many flooded areas, both wooded and cat-tail, along Lake Ontario between the Salmon River and Fair Haven. Many marshes are also located along the Seneca and Oneida Rivers and at the southern ends of the Finger Lakes.