

REGION 8 — HUDSON-MOHAWK

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The winter weather in the Schenectady area followed a somewhat unusual pattern. December and March temperatures were below average. January temperatures were 3.7 degrees above normal, and February temperatures were almost 6.3 degrees above the average. Much of the winter's snowfall came during March, and principally in the latter part of the month.

The winter season was marked by the scarcity or apparent complete absence of certain winter finches and by the presence of others in good, and even exceptional, numbers. Robins were recorded in small numbers throughout the winter, but during February, when spring weather had apparently arrived, flocks of up to 100 or so were observed. Among the outstanding individual records during the period were a Barrow's Golden-eye, a Hoary Redpoll, and an Oregon Junco. The relatively heavy snows and cold weather that prevailed during the last two weeks of March undoubtedly account for the lack of any records of such early land bird migrants as the Phoebe and Tree Swallow. The waterfowl migration, however, developed about as expected along the central Hudson during March. The larger area lakes and reservoirs remained completely frozen over.

The Schenectady Christmas Count, taken on December 26, yielded 44 species, which equalled the high set in 1954. Thirty-four species were observed on the Troy count of January 2.

One word on terminology: local birders refer to that portion of the Hudson between Albany and Dutchess County as the "lower Hudson," although in a geographical sense this is not, of course, correct. Similarly, the upper Hudson comprises the river and river valley north of the Capital District.

LOONS — DUCKS: The first Pied-billed Grebe report of the spring season was from the upper Hudson on March 3 (Byron Hipple). Canada Geese reports were few that month. Two American Widgeon were seen along the lower Hudson on March 11 (Marjorie Foote), and there were scattered March reports of the Pintail. A Green-winged Teal was seen near Troy on January 2 and on several February dates. A Redhead was observed along the upper Hudson on January 15 (Schenectady Bird Club). Ring-necks and Canvasbacks were reported in fair numbers during March. One of the highlights of the season was a male Barrow's Golden-eye first seen on January 21 on the Hudson about four miles south of Mechanicville; this bird, which was with a group of American Golden-eyes, was first spotted by Ken Hart of New York City. The Barrow's was seen that same day and subsequently by other observers through February 4. This constitutes our first local record for the species since 1952. No Wood Ducks were reported throughout the period. Such waterfowl species as the White-winged Scoter and Red-breasted Merganser are not normally considered "inland" birds, and yet 2 White-wings and 40 Red-breasts were observed along the upper Hudson on January 15 (SBC). Another Red-breasted Merganser was recorded in that area on March 3 (Esly Hallenbeck). American Mergansers, like the Black Duck, wintered wherever there was suitable swimming room. Hooded Merganser reports were relatively numerous. Eighteen were seen at Saratoga Lake on December 6 (EH); one was observed at Schenectady on December 26 (SBC — this was the first local Christmas count record); three were along the upper Hudson March 10 (BH); one was seen near Cohoes on March 18 (Walt Kashan), and a pair was seen near Schodack on March 31 (James Meritt).

HAWKS — OWLS: On March 21 Lillian Stoner saw a Turkey Vulture along the Thruway a few miles north of Saugerties. The record is either just within or just outside of Region 8, but it is certainly of interest in any case. On December 26 a Goshawk was seen at Vischer's Ponds near Schenectady (SBC). Two Rough-legged Hawks were seen near Meadowdale on December 26 (SBC); another was seen

there on March 10 (EH, JM), and a black-phase bird was observed just south of Ravena on March 31 (JM). An adult Bald Eagle was observed near Thacher State Park on December 26 (SBC), and another was seen near downtown Schenectady three days later (Ben Seguin). An Eagle was observed near Troy on January 2 (SBC), and an immature bird was observed at Castleton on March 31 (JM). Two Peregrine Falcons were recorded near Albany on December 26 (SBC). One was seen at Scotia on February 19 (Rudd Stone), and another was observed near Troy on February 26 (Brother Austin). Reports of the more common hawks were quite frequent, especially late in the period.

Although Pheasants were present locally in good numbers, reports of the Ruffed Grouse were few. The Woodcock is an expected March arrival, but apparently none were recorded. Seven Great Black-backed Gulls were observed along the upper Hudson on January 15 (SBC), and there were several March reports for the species along the lower Hudson. There were scattered Mourning Dove reports throughout the winter.

Four species of Owls were reported. On December 20 a Screech Owl was seen near Scotia (fide Guy Bartlett), and another was heard near Albany (Sam Madison). A Great Horned was heard at East Chatham on December 22 and seen there on January 29 (Eleanor Radke). A Great Horned was recorded at Schenectady on December 26 (SBC). The only report of the Barred Owl was from the Ballston Lake area on March 14 (Gladys Hackett). A Snowy Owl was seen by the ranger at Saratoga National Historical Park either in very late February or in very early March (fide MF); I am unable to determine the exact date.

SWIFTS — SHRIKES: A Pileated Woodpecker was observed in Gallupville on January 5 (Grace Zimmer); another was seen at Ballston Lake on February 5, and one was recorded near Charlton on February 21 (MF). Eleanor Radke reported the Pileated as a resident at East Chatham throughout the period. One was recorded near Vischer's Ferry on March 18 (WK). Flickers were quite scarce, and Sapsuckers were apparently completely absent. Red-breasted Nuthatches were observed in good numbers in Thacher Lake in December, and there were several winter reports of the Brown Creeper. A Winter Wren was observed at Scotia on February 19 by Frazier Turrentine, Rudd Stone, and Robert Yunnick. A Mockingbird was reported near Ballston Lake on several dates during December, January, and February (MF). A Hermit Thrush was observed at Scotia on February 28 (EH). As stated earlier, there were several reports of wintering Robins, with a heavy influx occurring during February. A Golden-crowned Kinglet was seen at Scotia on March 2 (EH). Gray Shrikes moved into the region in mid-December in average numbers. Six or eight individuals were seen in the Schenectady area during the winter. On March 6 a Loggerhead Shrike was seen at Scotia, and another was seen at Vischer's Ferry on March 13 (EH).

BLACKBIRDS — SPARROWS: Two Rusty Blackbirds were seen at Loudonville on March 3 (Mabel French). A Grackle was a winter resident at an Albany feeder (Alice Shaffer). The Cardinal was recorded from Niskayuna throughout the period (Caroline Diggs, Hazel Eddy), and the species was also reported from the lower Hudson area (fide Lucille Grace). Evening Grosbeaks appeared early and in very good numbers. These birds were even more generally distributed this year than last. Although they could be consistently seen at at least a dozen area feeders, there were many other reports submitted. In contrast, I know of only three or four reports for the Pine Grosbeak. Eleven were seen on several December dates at East Chatham, and the species was recorded there once in January (ER). Two were seen in Thacher Park on December 26 (SBC), and another report comes from the Saratoga area on March 11 (fide Marjorie Foote). The heavy influx which occurred last winter certainly did not materialize again this winter. There were only scattered reports of the Purple Finch, the high count being twenty on March 21 (GB).

Last year's good Redpoll incursion looked pale in light of the heavy influx this winter. Both last year and this Redpolls were scarce early in the winter, but by late January of both years they were quite widely reported. This winter numbers reached a peak in March, when the birds were reported from feeders, downtown areas, and virtually all outlying regions. On March 3 Byron Hipple reported the rare Hoary Redpoll near Vischer's Ferry. With Redpolls present in such good numbers, it would seem that Siskins should be present also. Yet I know of no Siskin records throughout the period. Crossbills, too, were absent, but this is a little easier to explain.

A male Towhee was present near Scotia for about two weeks in mid-December (fide GB). On December 12 a well-marked Oregon Junco appeared at Mrs. Louis Novak's feeder in Niskayuna, and the bird has been seen there off and on throughout the winter. Several observers have confirmed the identification. Three Field Sparrows were seen near Troy on January 2 (SBC), an addition to the composite Christmas Count list there. Four White-throated Sparrows appeared at an East Chatham feeder on January 12 and were more or less regular thereafter (ER). There were one or two December reports for this species. Snow Buntings were observed in better than average numbers. The high count of 300 was obtained by Robert Yunnick at Sacandaga Reservoir on December 29. There were other reports from Fultonville, Vischer's Ferry, Rexford, Rotterdam, and Mechanicville.

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REGION 9 — DELAWARE HUDSON

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A delightfully crisp early winter, marred for waterfowling only by the heavy freeze even of the brackish Hudson, turned suddenly snowy in March. Even in Ulster County, high and northerly, the snowfall was insignificant through February; then 16 to 18 inches fell in two weeks (Fred Hough). Near New York City, December was 5.4 degrees below normal—coldest for the month in 29 years—without any extremely cold days; January and February were near normal in temperature, far below normal in precipitation.

Southerly counties of the region may have had more snow than northerly ones in March. Through February, for example, Rockland County had less than 3 inches of snow; in March and the first week or so of April, it had nearly 3 feet of snow.

This late snowfall caught many birds in transit. Such migrants as Mourning Dove, Robin, Phoebe, the blackbirds, and Fox Sparrow come to feeders in villages in such numbers that birders were deluged with phone calls from non-birders, asking for indentifications and explanations. Fortunately, we escaped severe icing conditions that might have taken a heavy toll of bird life.

Your compiler must make special note of the excellence of this season's reports from cooperators in the various counties: Mrs. William Grierson, Northern Westchester and Putnam; Wilber P. Carr, Sullivan; Fred Hough, Ulster; Edward D. Treacy, Orange; John C. Orth, Bear Mountain Park, and many Rockland Audubon Society members. Coverage was the best yet attained, as it was also for the January waterfowl count.

LOONS — DUCKS: A new reservoir, two and a half miles long and barely half a mile wide, started filling up in February between West Nyack and New City, in Rockland County. It replaces an area that was superlative for nesting Least Bitterns, Pileated Woodpeckers and other species, but local birders' sense of loss is eased by the readiness of waterfowl to take advantage of the open water. Through March, Mrs. Marjorie R. Hooper had seen the Canada Goose, Horned and Pied-billed Grebe, and ten species of ducks, including such "bay" ducks as Canvasback, Red-head and Bufflehead.

A Great Blue Heron at Rock Hill, Sullivan, on Mar. 29 was quite early (Furman). An American Bittern at New City, Rockland, on Mar. 18 was either very early or had wintered (Frank R. Steffens). Hooded Mergansers wintered in notable numbers in northern Westchester (Stanley Grierson et al.).

The waterfowl migration was in full swing by Mar. 10, on which date Ed Treacy found 11 species on Orange Lake, near Newburgh: Mallard 6, Black 112, Baldpate