

REGION 4—SUSQUEHANNA

LESLIE E. BEMONT

December was warm and wet with little snow in comparison with previous years. January was also warm, but snowfall was the heaviest since 1948. February was the coldest since 1936 and produced the heaviest February snowfall since 1893. March was about normal with respect to temperature and precipitation, but the snow that fell during January and February persisted on the ground all month. From Jan 10 to Mar 28 the ground was essentially covered with snow and at the end of the period six foot drifts were still very much in evidence at higher elevations. The heavy snow and the resulting bad driving put a big dent in the amount of time spent in the field by observers, especially in February.

Around Greene, in Chenango Co., where a large number of deer starved to death two years ago there was a great deal of activity on the part of sportsmen, cutting browse and putting out corn and hay, to prevent a recurrence of the disaster. Wholesale starvation has evidently been averted, but some of the smaller deer have died. The effects of the severe weather on the birds have not been so obvious. The rebuilding Carolina Wren population appears to have received another setback, and in the Oxford area, at least, Blue Jays have been absent. Horned Larks have seemed more common, probably because they have been forced to forage along roadsides where they are more easily seen, rather than because of any real increase in numbers.

For want of a better local explanation the persistent snow cover in March will have to take the blame for an approximately two week delay in the start of the migration of small land birds.

Loons — Ducks: On Feb 19 a Horned Grebe was found in a snow bank in Endicott (Loomis). It was held for several days, while its strength was being built up with a surprising number of live minnows, and then released with a band on its leg. No Pied-billed Grebes reported during the period. A few Great Blue Herons remained in the Binghamton area thru December. The last one was seen along the Susquehanna River as a byproduct of the Waterfowl Census Jan 12 (Hannans). The first spring record was of two at Whitney Point Dam Mar 25 (Beaver).

A flock of 30-40 Canada Geese over Endicott Mar 6 (Carter) was our first. The usual small number of Mallards wintered in the Triple Cities area, but of the 364 found in the region during the Waterfowl Census 350 were at the Sherburne Game Farm (Whites). Twelve Baldpates, the first spring migrants, were at Whitney Point Dam Mar 25 (Beaver). The male Green-winged Teal that was at the Sherburne Game Farm Mar 9 may have wintered there (Whites). Two Wood Ducks and 11 Ring-necked Ducks were at Whitney Point Dam Mar 30 (M. Sheffield). A Canvasback was found during the Waterfowl Census at Wells Bridge, in Otsego Co., Jan 12 (Wisner). One was on the Chenango River at Sherburne Feb 20 (Whites) and one was at Oxford Mar 9 (Stratton). Nine American Goldeneyes were at Sherburne Feb 20 (Whites) and four were on the Susquehanna River at Endwell Mar 16 (Bemont). Two Buffleheads were at Whitney Point Mar 25 (Beaver) and a pair of Hooded Mergansers was at Deposit Mar 27 (Wilson). American Mergansers were present in just about one half their normal numbers, judging by Waterfowl Census figures. In the Deposit area the drop in numbers was even sharper.

Hawks — Owls: Cooper's Hawks have been more in evidence than usual all winter in the Triple Cities area. No wintering Red-tailed Hawks were reported around the Triple Cities but they were seen regularly around Sherburne and Norwich (Whites). The one at Unadilla Feb 24 (Wisner) may have been a migrant. A Red-Shouldered Hawk was seen at Endicott Feb 18 (Carter). No more until Mar 31 at Choconut Center and Deposit. There were several records of Rough-legged

Hawks during January and one Mar 5, all at Oxford (Stratton), but none from the rest of the region. A Marsh Hawk was at Oxford Jan 4 (Stratton) but no more were seen until Mar 14 when one was at Choconut Center, just north of Johnson City (Sheffields). Sparrow Hawks were seen in their usual numbers until Jan 19, but from then until Mar 3 when one was caught and banded at Deposit (Mrs. Wilson) none were reported at all.

Of the 500 Bobwhites released in Broome Co. last year, by the Broome Co. Federation of Sportsmen's Clubs, at most six coveys are estimated to have made it through the rugged winter. They were helped out as much as possible by artificial feeding. When the snow was deepest Pheasants could frequently be seen in the road between the high drifts on either side. The need for grit coupled with more restricted escape routes no doubt increased the highway toll to some extent but how much is hard to say because few observers think to report dead birds found alongside roads regardless of weather conditions. At Owego Mrs. Mildred White had eight Pheasants, apparently in weakened condition, find her feeder in late January. From then thru February they were daily visitors. On Feb 5 a Virginia Rail was caught in a muskrat trap at Boland's Marsh, north of Binghamton, and the following day another was caught. Both birds that were caught of course died, but three others were seen in the vicinity and the traps were removed (Stockton). Our first Killdeer was at Endicott Mar 11 (Carter), late but not unusually so. Three Woodcock were found just north of Endwell Mar 18 (Zovolinsky) when flushed by a dog. One was at the same spot Mar 26. The usual small flock of Herring and Ring-billed Gulls was present around the Triple Cities all winter. The high counts were 39 Herring Gulls Dec 29 and five Ring-bills Jan 12, the Christmas and Waterfowl Censuses respectively. Herring Gulls were also reported from Newark Valley, Norwich, Unadilla and Oxford at various times during the period. Two Ring-bills were at Norwich Mar 30 (Whites). Several Mourning Doves fed regularly just under a picture window in Newark Valley during the bad weather (Dean) and were still coming at the end of March. The first migrants were reported Mar 16, eight at Sherburne (Whites) and one at Choconut Center (Sheffields). There have been more than the usual number of both Screech and Horned Owls reported. At Sherburne the Screech Owls have been using Wood Duck boxes for winter homes. One Snowy Owl was seen a few miles north of Deposit Jan 26 (J. E. Smith), but no more were reported. A Barred Owl was near Greene Dec 29 (Bartlett, Maxon) and an injured one that later died was picked up in the road near Cannonsville Jan 31 (Wilson). An unidentified hunter shot and injured a Long-eared Owl somewhere in western Broome Co. Jan 18 and then turned it over to Mr. Lee Lomis to care for, but it too died. At about noon Feb 20 a Short-eared Owl was found perched in a tree near the Norwich city dump. Two hours later it was seen flying in the same area (Whites).

Goatsuckers — Shrikes: A few Kingfishers stuck it out thru January, but by Feb 13 when one was at Greene (Stratton) they had evidently seen enough because no more were reported until Mar 29 when one was at Newark Valley (Dean). There were reports from Newark Valley (Dean) and Owego (Wright) of wintering Flickers. Two Pileated Woodpeckers were found around Greene Dec 29 (Bartlett, Maxon) and one appeared at Vestal Mar 10 and has been seen regularly since (Mapes) but those were the only reports. A Sapsucker came to a feeder in Binghamton all during January (Benyi). No Phoebe's by the end of March. Lots of Horned Lark reports, especially during late February and early March when they were seen in large flocks along roadsides. No Tree Swallows by the end of March.

Blue Jays were completely absent at Oxford all winter (Stratton) and near Windsor an active feeder attracted one Feb 16 and one Mar 18, but that's all (Neilsens). Crows were "awfully thin" at the Sherburne Game Farm (Elliot) and at Oxford none were seen until Feb 20 (Stratton). A Tufted Titmouse was banded at Deposit Feb 15 (Wilson). The colony at Chenango Bridge continues to thrive and a feeder in Endicott was hosting at least six at a time during the winter. Two Winter Wrens were at Greene Dec 29 (Bartlett, Maxon) and another was at Boland's Marsh the same day (Bemont). Still another was near Unadilla Feb 11 (Wisner). There were quite a few Carolina Wren reports from the Triple Cities area in December, but since the heavy snow and cold weather only two stations report them. One was seen at Oquaga Lake Feb 2 but it was no longer around Feb 15 (Wilson). The Mockingbird at Washburn's feeder in Endwell was around until Dec 31 but then disappeared until Feb 17. Since then it has been around regularly feeding on the multiflora

rose hips and jealously guarding them from Waxwings or any other birds that come around. Even Evening Grosbeaks seemed frightened of it, but the Cardinals were unconcerned.

There were several late Robin records, the last Jan 6 in Binghamton (Goetz). The next one was seen Mar 3, also in Binghamton (Collier), a week to ten days late. There were a number of scattered reports all thru March, but they were still not plentiful at the end of the month. A Bluebird at Oxford Mar 29 (Stratton) and another near Binghamton the same day (Marsis) were our first, ten days later than in any of the past six years. 25 Golden-crowned Kinglets were reported on the Triple Cities Naturalists' Club Christmas Census, a record high, but after Jan 1 they disappeared completely until Mar 28. Quite a few flocks of Cedar Waxwings were reported during February from the Triple Cities area. Most flocks included about a dozen birds, but one flock at Hillcrest, north of Binghamton, Feb 9 contained over 60 individuals (Gendle). A total of 20 individual reports of Northern Shrikes were received from the region during the period. Five of these, four immature and one adult, were banded at Deposit (Wilson). Another one was at Norwich Mar 19 to 27 and was seen eating the flies swarming on the house in the warm sun and also picking flies from the snow (Whites).

Vireos — Sparrows: A Myrtle Warbler was at Chenango Bridge for the Christmas Census Dec 29 (Bemont) and one in the same general area Jan 27 (Larkin) was, perhaps, the same individual. Another was at Sherburne Mar 30 (Whites).

A Meadowlark was at Boland's Marsh Jan 1 (Sheffields) and another was seen five miles south of Windsor Jan 30 (Goodnough). The first migrant was at Unadilla Mar 15 (Wisner). A male Redwinged Blackbird appeared at Unadilla Dec 2 and was back the next day with a female (Wisner). These, and one at Greene Dec 29 (Bartlett, Maxon) were, perhaps, late departees, but the female that visited a feeder in Newark Valley Feb 1 must have been a wintering bird (Dean). A flock of 100 at Whitney Point Mar 9 (Beaver) were the first migrants. They were reported from most of the region within a day or so. 40 or 50 females were seen in a flock at Deposit Mar 30 (Wilson). Two Common Grackles were at Binghamton Feb 27 (Marsi), three Cowbirds were at Greene Dec 29 (Bartlett, Maxon) and one Cowbird was near Binghamton Feb 21 (Barrus). Migrants of both species started coming in Feb 14.

Cardinals continue to appear at new stations throughout the region and in at least two areas, Owego (M. White) and Endwell, were seen in flocks of about a dozen. All areas report flocks of Evening Grosbeaks and at Deposit 646 were banded during the period and 14 foreign retraps taken (Wilson). The only Purple Finches reported were at Owego Jan 15 (M. White). Pine Grosbeaks were reported from several places but didn't seem common anywhere. Redpolls were also reported from several areas, and in the Binghamton area at least were quite numerous. One flock seen at Sherburne Feb 2 had some Hoary Redpolls in it (Whites). No Pine Siskins were reported and Goldfinches were scarce, but there was one report of twelve Red Crossbills Dec 22 in the Binghamton area and one White-winged Crossbill was seen in Endwell Jan 26 (Linaberry). North of Endwell (Fishers) and near Windsor (Neilsens) there were fairly large flocks of Slate-colored Juncos during the winter, but elsewhere there have been very few. A few migrants could be seen the last few days of March, but except at Deposit where 24 were banded in the last three days of the period (Wilson), they have been in ones and twos and none too conspicuous. Tree Sparrows were somewhat down in numbers around Norwich and Sherburne (Whites) but at Unadilla, Deposit and Endwell banding results show a substantial number to have been present. A Field Sparrow was banded at Deposit Dec 1 (Wilson) and a White-crowned Sparrow was at Binghamton Christmas Day (Hock). A White-throated Sparrow was at Binghamton Dec 29 (Barlow) and another was at Deposit from Dec 30 to Mar 2 (Wilson). Four Swamp Sparrows were still at Boland's Marsh Dec 8 (Bemont). Quite a few Song Sparrows stayed late as shown by the total of 20 found on the Christmas Census Dec 29, but they thinned out soon after. One die-hard was seen Feb 6 in Endwell (Mrs. H. Smith), but no more until Mar 17 near Endwell (Bemont). There were more scattered reports until around Mar 29 when a real wave of migrants moved in. There have been a lot of Snow Bunting reports, several flocks numbering in the hundreds. A flock at Oxford Jan 27 was estimated at 400 to 500 (L. H. Stratton).

710 University Ave., Endwell, N. Y.