

could be watched from as little as two feet away; they usually regarded peering faces in the windows with little concern.

I had a similar experience with Pine Siskins on March 21, 1953, at Kripplebush, also in Ulster County. A pair of these birds was feeding on old pepper seeds near a refuse pile made up the previous fall. I had no field glasses with me at the time, and I decided to walk closer for a better look. Down to about 25 feet distance, I was regarded with little intent. Realizing their zest for the pepper seeds and apparent fearlessness, I continued slowly towards them to see how near I could get before they took wing. Near ten feet they became uneasy and would stop working on the seeds briefly to regard my actions, especially the movement of my feet which they watched very closely. Slowly I edged toward them, and since I made no wild motions to excite them into flight, one would believe they were pitting hunger against the instinctive fear to fly away. The two birds remained at the seeds, and I finally stood, fully exposed, at just three feet from them! They ceased eating and motionlessly eyed me for a few moments until the strain of fear broke and they flew up into the lower branches of a nearby tree.

Let me cite still one further example. In April, 1959, at Kripplebush I saw a lone Siskin feeding near the entrance of a driveway in which I intended to turn. As I slowly did so, the bird was so close that I couldn't see it over the hood of the car. It flew up only at being virtually driven off its ground.

Since all these cases occurred during the spring months, this unusual fearlessness reaction may be collaborated with a dearth of seed supply often found at that time of year and may reflect a hungry bird's desire to stay with a bountiful find until forced at the last minute to fly up. — Fred Hough, Accord 1.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WINTER SEASON DECEMBER 1 — MARCH 31

JAMES K. MERITT

The calendar states that spring officially arrives in March, but it certainly could not be otherwise proved this past season. The early part of the winter was generally mild, and just when it seemed we might escape the season relatively unscathed, the cold and snow arrived. March was, without a doubt, the most winter-like month of the period.

The mildish weather that prevailed until the latter part of February accounted for a relatively large number of late lingerers and winterers at feeding stations and elsewhere. There were several reports of such birds as the Brown Thrasher, Catbird, and Baltimore Oriole. Mourning Doves seemed to be present in quite good numbers. There were December reports of the Tennessee Warbler in Region 2 and the Black-throated Blue Warbler in Region 9. The Yellow-breasted Chat was reported from Long Island.

The effect of the March cold wave was apparently merely to delay the arrival of some of the early migrants. While there were a few late winter storms in the middle Atlantic region, there is no evidence at this writing that our early migrants suffered unduly. As you will recall, this was not the case two years ago. Our "southern" birds (i. e. Cardinal, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Mockingbird) were generally recorded in very good numbers, but it is a bit early yet to ascertain what effect, if any, the March weather had on these birds. The Mockingbird and Cardinal are quite hardy species, of course, but the Carolina Wren population seems to rise and fall in keeping with the severity of the winter.

— Among our winter birds Redpolls completely dominated the picture. A review of the regional reports which follow will indicate how widespread their movement into the state was. This was unquestionably the greatest

Redpoll invasion in many years, and it may well have been the greatest on record. The birds certainly appeared at feeding stations in unprecedented numbers. As might be expected, the slightly larger and lighter Hoary Redpoll was not infrequently observed, with reports coming from exactly half of the ten reporting regions.

The Evening Grosbeak flight was in some areas an outstanding one, in other areas a good one. On a state-wide basis, however, it could perhaps not compare to some that have taken place in recent winters. Pine Grosbeaks were inexplicably scarce, and some areas had no reports whatsoever. Purple Finches were scarce. There was a fair number of Snowy Owl reports. Pine Siskins were not generally well distributed, and it was one of the poorest Northern Shrike years in some time. Crossbills were observed in their usual few numbers. The Rough-legged Hawk flight was a very good one, certainly one of the best in recent years. Although the Boreal Chickadee was reported on several occasions during the winter in areas just to the south of us, the only observations mentioned in the regional reports come from Region 9. The rare and erratic Bohemian Waxwing was seen in Regions 2 and 5.

Foremost among the individual records was the observation of a Smew at Buffalo, perhaps a first record for the North American continent. This little European duck was independently identified by two parties on January 17, and the bird was present at the same locality for several days (check the Region I report for details). Another real wanderer was the Say's Phoebe observed over a period of seven days in the Rochester area. The very infrequently seen Ivory Gull was reported in Region 9, and a Western Tanager, a bird that occasionally turns up along the eastern seaboard in winter, was also recorded in that region. Other records of especial note include a dead King Rail in Region 3 and a Franklin's Gull and Red Phalarope in Region 5.

REGION 1 — NIAGARA FRONTIER

RICHARD C. ROSCHE

The winter season will long be remembered by most local field observers as one characterized by extremes. Both meteorological and ornithological events made this season outstanding even for the most seasoned and oldest observers. December was generally a mild month, with the temperature 3.3°F. above normal, and the precipitation one inch above the average. Only one major snowstorm deposited 7.2 inches of snow on the seventh, but this soon melted. The most severe ice storm in many years deposited a layer of ice more than half an inch thick on vegetation throughout the region. This lasted from December 28 until shortly after January 1. January temperatures averaged 1°F. above the mean and precipitation exceeded the norm by 1.12 inches. Of the four months included in this report, this one was perhaps the closest to normal. The first half of February continued the trends of the previous two months. However, a series of snow storms then occurred on the fourteenth, nineteenth and twenty-first which brought the total snowfall for the month, 49.5 inches, to near record levels. The old record for total precipitation was broken. Temperatures averaged 2.5°F. above normal. March was perhaps the most winter-like month of the season. A persistent high pressure system produced the longest sustained cold period and the second coldest March on record, the coldest being in 1885. The average temperature was only 24.1°F. Above normal temperatures characterized the last five days, during which a great percentage of the snowfall melted and local flooding occurred. The mercury soared to 54°F. on the twenty-seventh and the previous high of 69°F. was equalled on the thirtieth. Total precipitation for the month was 2.35 inches, thus making it the first month since September 1959 with below normal precipitation.