

There had been a few reports of Red Crossbills in December and January. Then, near the end of March, they moved into the area and aroused interest and excitement comparable to that of the Redpoll invasion last year, except that they did not come to feeders. But every hemlock around Ithaca had its little flock of crossbills — with a large percentage of males in every case. Some fed on pine and spruce, but the heavy hemlock cone crop seemed the chief attraction. The birds were tame; they sometimes fed on the ground and allowed close approach. Except for one report in mid-February (P. Allan) White-winged Crossbills were not seen in Ithaca. They were noted at Burdett on Mar 27 (Bardeen).

Towhees wintered —one at Freeville, one at Elmira, and two at Geneva. A Savannah Sparrow was present in Elmira at the Van Duzer feeder until Jan 2 when it was caught by a Sparrow Hawk. There were two reports of Oregon Juncos: one at the Champions in Watkins Glen on Mar 11 and one at Canandaigua, also in March (Mrs. E. Long). Tree Sparrows were considered less common in the western part of the region, but I had more this winter than last, and our Sapsucker Woods flock was larger, especially toward the end of the reporting period. Field Sparrows wintered in at least two localities. A White-crowned Sparrow was found on the Jan 1 count at Ithaca, and another was seen and heard **singing** on Feb 22 on the edge of the Cornell campus (R. Fischer). Almost no White-throats wintered this year, and Song Sparrows were very scarce. Lapland Longspurs were found more frequently than usual in flocks of Horned Larks or Snow Buntings. There were good flocks of Buntings throughout the region; one of 1000 at the Seneca Ordnance Depot on Dec 3 was noteworthy.

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REGION 4—SUSQUEHANNA

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After a mild November December became abruptly cold. The snowfall and cold of Dec 1 seemed to set the pattern which held until the end of January. One of the heaviest snowfalls came Jan 1 and caused the first postponement in the history of the Binghamton Christmas Count. The cold intensified as Jan 18 to Feb 1 the temperature never went above freezing. Feb 1 was the coldest day of the season, and the record snowfall of all time, 22 inches, came Feb 4, but that seemed to mark the winter's turning point. There was quite a bit of cold and snow to follow but the rest of the way was down hill in comparison to what came earlier. By the weekend of Mar 3 - 5 temperatures as high as 72 were establishing record highs instead of the record lows of late Jan. That weekend was of considerable importance in the return of migrants although there was still snow and cold to follow, but not in sustained doses. In short, spring started early but progressed slowly.

In spite of the severe conditions there was an interesting assortment of semi-hardy winterers such as a Catbird, a Brown Thrasher, a Vesper Sparrow, a Savannah Sparrow and a possible Brewer's Blackbird. Mockingbirds were missing but Carolina Wrens survived in at least two locations. Some of the slightly harder species such as Robins, Meadowlarks, Redwinged Blackbirds and Cowbirds were reported more frequently than in most years.

The northern predators such as Rough-legged Hawks, Snowy Owls and Northern Shrikes were strangely more prevalent during Dec and Jan when snow cover was deepest and most persistent. But the prize finds, a Hawk Owl and a Saw-whet Owl, waited until March.

Purple Finches, Pine Siskins, Goldfinches, Snow Buntings and later on Evening Grosbeaks represented the bulk of the winter finches with Red Crossbills numerous in Chenango County only. Cortland County missed even the Purple Finches and Siskins. Redpolls and Red-breasted Nuthatches, after especially good years last year, were scarce.

Early migrants, both land and water varieties, seem to have been influenced by spring's early start and arrived a little early on average, but in the case of most species numbers had not built up much by the end of the period.

It's a pleasure to note the start of the Cortland County Bird Club. This will bring to three the known bird clubs in the region, one in each of the three western-most counties.

Loons — Ducks: A Common Loon was found in a small patch of open water in the Susquehanna River at Deposit Dec. 17. It was caught, banded and released at a point where there was plenty of open water but was caught again on the ice Dec 29. Again it was released in open water but about ten days later it was found dead (S. Wilson). A Horned Grebe spent a week or so on the Susquehanna River in the city of Binghamton in late Dec and early Jan and another landed in a back yard near Sidney Center Feb 12 (H. Wisner) but no more were reported during the period. There were no wintering Pied-billed Grebes reported. Mar 12 saw the first migrants at Endicott (N. & E. Washburn). A Great Blue Heron at Endwell Jan 15 (E. Washburn) was the only wintering record and the only migrants reported before the end of the period were at Owego Mar 27 (R. Williams).

The Canada Goose migration got an early start with the first report from Owego Feb 28 (C. Gerould). Another flock of about 50 seen at Oxford Mar 3 (A. Stratton) was also early. Half a dozen flocks were reported Mar 12 but numbers were otherwise relatively low. Wintering Mallards and Black Ducks were not far from normal with the former perhaps a little more common than usual. The main gathering point in the Triple Cities area was on the Susquehanna River, inside the city of Binghamton, just below the mouth of the Chenango River, rather than at Chenango Valley State Park as in past years. Four Gadwalls, an unusual species in the region, were found along the Susquehanna River in the Triple Cities area Jan 19 (H. Marsi, F. Linaberry). They were seen a few more times after that until Feb 13. American Widgeons were reported only from the Triple Cities — Whitney Point area, the first Mar 15 and the most so far were 40 or so Mar 25. Two Pintails at Whitney Point Mar 4 (M. Sheffield) and two more at the same place Mar 26 were the only ones before the end of the period. Green-winged Teal arrived at Whitney Point Mar 15 (H. Marsi, F. Linaberry) and two Wood Ducks were at Sherburne Mar 11 (R. & S. White). Fifteen Canvasbacks at Afton Feb 12 were an unusual concentration of the species in this region (R. & S. White). One other one was reported in the city of Binghamton (C. Morehouse). Two Scaup, probably Greater, were found along the Susquehanna River in the Triple Cities area during the Christmas Count Jan 2 (H. Marsi). Two or three were noted several times during Jan and in early Feb as many as ten were seen at a time in the same area. The species was also noted at Afton in mid-Feb and Owego in late Mar. A Bufflehead was seen on the Chenango River north of Binghamton Jan 28 and 29 (C. Jennings) and fifteen were at Afton Feb 12 (R. & S. White). Two Oldsquaw at the junction of the Chenango and Susquehanna Rivers Feb 7 (C. Howard) were the only ones reported during the period. A female Hooded Merganser was at Binghamton Jan 2 for the Christmas County and one was at Afton Feb 12. Another appeared on a rather small pond within about 100 yards of two houses Feb 26 at Choconut Center north of Binghamton (R. & M. Sheffield). What were apparently the first migrants were seen Mar 15. Wintering Common Mergansers were present in relatively good numbers. Eight Red-breasted Mergansers, never common in the region, were at Bainbridge Mar 12 (R. & S. White).

Hawks — Owls: One Goshawk was reported from Franklin Mountain, in Otsego County, Dec 4 (R. Burland) and another from Owego in late Dec (Mrs. W. Tinna), but neither with observational details. There were few other accipiter reports. Red-tailed Hawks wintered in the usual numbers. A Red-shouldered Hawk apparently wintered in nearby Pennsylvania (N. & E. Washburn) but none were reported in the region proper until two were noted at Otsego Mar 5 (R. Burland). There were quite a few Rough-legged Hawks, mostly in Dec and Jan. The only winter Marsh Hawk record is from Emmons, near Oneonta, Jan 1 (R. Burland). Sparrow Hawks were present throughout the winter in normal numbers.

Ruffed Grouse were noted in moderately good numbers in the Triple Cities area, but were scarce at Oneonta. The low number found during the Binghamton Christmas Count, a single bird, was due to the heavy snow cover which kept observers pretty much out of grouse habitat. One Bob-white was reported at Owego (Mrs. W. Tinna) in late Dec. Perhaps a stray remnant of the Broome County stocking program of almost two years ago. Ring-necked Pheasants were reported to be very scarce in the Oneonta area (R. Burland) but seemed normal elsewhere. A Killdeer was at Chenango Valley State Park Jan 7 (M. Sheffield).

and another was seen at Sherburne Jan 24 and several times thereafter (R. & S. White). Still another was near the Broome County Airport Feb 15 (H. Marsi, F. Linaberry). Migrants started filtering in at the beginning of March but the frequency with which they were reported increased only gradually. They were still not common at the end of the month. Woodcock were first heard calling Mar 4 at Choconut Center (R. & M. Sheffield) and Mar 9 at Owego (W. Thomas), both rather early. Herring Gulls were more numerous in the Triple Cities this past winter than in any of the past eight if Christmas Count figures can be considered indicative. The 140 recorded this year were better than twice the previous high. There were the usual small number of winter Ring-billed Gull records, then in early March several moderately sized flocks in a three day period seemed to indicate a brief migratory movement. A Bonaparte's Gull was seen in Binghamton on the very early date of Mar 10 (R. Sheffield). Wintering Mourning Doves were reported from Spencer (H. Meyer), Newark Valley (L. Dean) and Owego (Mrs. C. Hills) in Tioga County, Homer (J. Gustafson) in Cortland County and from several spots around the Triple Cities. March records give no indication of migrants moving in.

Screech Owls continue quite scarce and Horned Owls common. Snowy Owls were reported from several areas; the first Greene Dec 12 (W. Bartlett), McGraw, in Cortland County, Dec 19 (B., G. & L. Stone), two in the Triple Cities area, Dec 26 (J. Warren) and Dec 27 (Bentz) and Feb 12 from Barton in Tioga County (via M. White). In addition there were "several reported in the area around Walton" (R. Burland). On Mar 16, about five miles north of Binghamton, a drawing was made of a bird while it was being observed through a telescope (J. Saunders). The drawing, which is on file, is the basis for what appears to be a valid record of a Hawk Owl. It is planned to provide further details in a field note in a future issue. Barred Owls were reported from Franklin Mountain, Deposit, Owego, Cortland and the Triple Cities area. Short-eared Owls were reported from both the Triple Cities and Oneonta (R. Burland) areas during Jan. On Mar 5 one was observed at the Whitney Point Flood Control Dam, apparently attracted by the large number of meadow voles that had been forced out of the area flooded by the dam. On Mar 27 a dead Saw-whet Owl was picked up along the highway at Berkshire (M. Bates via S. Hoyt). The specimen is now in the Cornell University collection. This is only the third record on file for the region, one in each of the last three years.

Goatsuckers — Shrikes: A Flicker is known to have wintered in each of two different localities in the Triple Cities area and in a third locality one was reported once, Jan 2 on the Christmas Count. Pileated Woodpeckers continue to be reported too sporadically to give a reasonable idea of their status. Phoebees were reported from several places during the last few days of the period, the first date at 27 at Deposit and Owego. Horned Larks could be found along almost any back road in the Triple Cities area from the beginning of Jan on. For several days early in arch large flocks of the were seen on the river flats near Oneonta (R. Burland). Tree Swallows were reported from Owego Mar 30 (R. Williams) and from Chenango Valley State Park Mar 31 (S. Lincoln). Blue Jays were plentiful wherever mentioned and at Owego a "partially albino" became a regular visitor at a feeder (M. White, R. Williams) (Ed — see field notes section, this issue). There were larger numbers of wintering Crows than usual in several parts of the region. At Norwich it was noted there were lots of Black-capped Chickadees around but they weren't coming to feeders; instead the hemlocks were full of them (R. & S. White). Tufted Titmice were reported from three new areas, Oneonta and Schenectady in Otsego County and Andes in Delaware County (R. Burland). Red-breasted Nuthatches were back to their normal winter status; rather scarce. They were reported only from Sherburne, Norwich and three or four spots around the Triple Cities. The only Winter Wren reported was at Owego Jan 1 (M. White). A Carolina Wren was at Owego Feb 8 (M. White) and two were near Vestal Mar 11 (E. Washburn, MacDonald, C. Morehouse). No Mockingbirds. A Catbird was at Katellville, north of Binghamton, Jan 1 (H. Thomas) and a Brown Thrasher was found on the Tioga Christmas Count (C. Gerould). There were quite a few winter reports of Robins but the ten or so recorded as a by product of the Waterfowl Census, Jan 15, was the highest count until the first few days

of March when the influx of migrants became obvious. The winter records came from all parts of the region except Cortland County where they weren't seen until Mar 9. Mar 22, when a large meadow near Bainbridge was observed to be "completely covered with them — there were several hundred" (E. J. Smith), seems to be the date when they became truly abundant. Bluebirds were reported from two localities in the Triple Cities area Mar 5 and have been seen regularly since. Northern Shrikes were not very common and the few reported were all seen Jan 15 or earlier.

Vireos — Warblers: A Myrtle Warbler at Endwell Dec 2 (G. Smith) and another found on the Binghamton Christmas Count Jan 2 were the only winter warbler reports received.

Blackbirds — Sparrows: Several late or wintering Meadowlarks were noted up to Jan 13 when one was at Whitney Point (P. Kelsey). Then no more were seen until Mar 5. They were still not common by the end of the period. A similar pattern was followed by Redwinged Blackbirds, the last of the late records Jan 17 at Homer (J. Gustafson) and the first of the migrants Feb 21 near Cortland (McLaughlin) with the difference that they soon became common with a major influx around Mar 4. The earliest spring Rusty Blackbirds were six at Oneonta Mar 10 (R. Burland). During the Tioga Christmas Count a bird appeared at a feeder that was described as smaller than a Grackle with a "purple head blackish body" and a squared off tail. It was seen by several observers and identified as a Brewer's Blackbird (Mrs. R. Richards, fide M. White). There were several Jan and Feb Common Grackle and Cowbird reports. The Grackles became generally distributed Mar 4 and the Cowbirds Mar 9.

Cardinals were reported at Oneonta, Unadilla, Norwich and Newark Valley all winter and at Cortland there seemed to be more and more at feeders as winter progressed (J. Gustafson). In the Triple Cities area they have become commonplace. At Deposit Evening Grosbeaks arrived towards the end of Dec and have been plentiful since (S. Wilson), but elsewhere in the region there were few seen before various dates in Feb but then numbers built up quickly and they became as common as ever. Purple Finches were particularly numerous after Jan 1 and continued so until the end of the period. There were only a few Pine Grosbeaks reported; two at Franklin Mountain Dec 4 (R. Burland), ten at Norwich Dec 30 and twelve at Oxford Jan 15 (R. & S. White), and two at Unadilla Feb 12 (H. Wisner). There were very few Redpolls reported, especially in comparison with last year, and all these few reports came from the Triple Cities — Owego area. Pine Siskins took up the slack and were seen in moderately large flocks throughout the period all over the region, with the notable exception of the Cortland area where they didn't appear until Mar 20 and only in small numbers then (J. Gustafson). Goldfinches were also quite common during the period and on Feb 22 a male was found in full summer plumage (L. Hevey) near Binghamton. From mid-Jan on Red Crossbills were quite numerous, but only in Chenango County (R. & S. White, W. Bartlett). The only White-winged Crossbills reported were at Newark Valley Feb 11 (P. Biehl). A Rufous-sided Towhee remained at Choconut Center until Dec 18 (R. & M. Sheffield) and another was found during the Tioga Christmas Count (C. Gerould). Still another turned up at a feeder in Norwich Feb 4 and stayed until Mar 26. It disappeared once when the snow melted off but returned when it snowed again (R. & S. White). A Savannah Sparrow was at a feeder in Newark Valley Dec 26. It returned several times and was seen at close range (Mr. & Mrs. W. Dean, P. Biehl) but the requested description has not been received yet. Migrants were noted at Unadilla Mar 10 (H. Wisner) and at Binghamton Mar 23 (Jordan, Casperlin). A Vesper Sparrow, described as striped like a sparrow with white outer tail feathers, came to a feeder in Owego during the period of the Tioga Christmas Count (M. White, R. Williams). It appeared droopy and sick and disappeared after the first week of Jan. A migrant appeared Mar 31 at Binghamton (H. Marsi). Slate-colored Juncos and Tree Sparrows were quite plentiful generally. An Oregon Junco was at Binghamton Jan 5 (H. Marsi, L. MacArthur). One White-throated Sparrow was at Spencer in mid-Dec (H. Meyer), another was reported during the Tioga Christmas Count (R. Williams) and two were found on the Binghamton Christmas Count. In addition there was one Feb and one Mar record in the Triple Cities area. Winter Fox Sparrow records were

obtained at Oneonta, Binghamton and Corbett (S. Wilson), in Delaware County. Migrants were first seen Mar 4 at Newark Valley (L. Dean) and continued through the month but were always seen in small numbers. There seem to have been Song Sparrows wintering everywhere. Migrants started swelling numbers recorded about Mar 4. Four Lapland Longspurs were reported at Greene Jan 2 (W. Bartlett) and another was at Endicott Jan 7 (M. Marsi, J. Vivier, A. Watkins). Numerous flocks of Snow Buntings were reported and from all parts of the region, numbering all the way from one or two up into the thousands.

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REGION 5 — ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

Fritz Scheider

Weatherwise it was a wretched winter. Dec was cold (mean temperature 4.5° below normal with four days zero or lower) and snowy (27.8 inches, ten inches above average.) Severe freezing and heavy snow prior to Christmas dimmed local Christmas Count hopes, but at Syracuse a surprising all-time high of 72 species, a compliment to diligent observers and many feeding stations, was recorded. Jan was even colder (6.7° daily below normal) and the maximum temperature reached 20° or higher on just **one** day. Snowfall of 37.3 inches (all but one inch in the first 15 days) was twice the normal amount. The severe cold and snowfall were the doom of many half-hardies (Wrens, Icterids, Sparrows, q.v.) but in turn produced high waterfowl counts, especially in Scaup, Common Goldeneye and Common Merganser, presumably from icing over of more northerly wintering quarters. The high raptor counts of Dec (e.g. 111 hawks, 32 owls, 11 Northern Shrikes and the Dec 26 Syracuse Christmas Count) held up fairly well thru Jan despite the snow cover, except for a moderate drop in Sparrow Hawks and a complete absence of Marsh Hawks. Early Feb had the same weather as Jan but worse — a 21.8 inch snowfall on Feb 3-4 was the greatest Feb fall ever recorded. Rapid thawing Feb 18-24 engendered early flooding in the last third of the month, especially in the bottomlands of Black, Limestone, Butternut, and Chittenango Creeks. The consequent excellent waterfowl habitat, however, remained unutilized and regarding early migrant ducks many wet bottoms were bare of same. Mar continued the persistent cold of the winter with daily mean temperatures below normal every day between Mar 2 and Mar 23. Over 26 inches of snow fell, the majority in the second week of Mar. A surge of south winds and warmth on Mar 26-28 initiated a splendid influx of early migrants and redeemed an otherwise wearying month.

The abundant mice in the Kirkville-Bridgeport-Cicero farmlands attracted and held many open-country raptors (Rough-legged-Hawk, Short-eared Owl, Northern Shrike, q.v.) crops seemed quickly depleted, but local cone crops appeared to hold up well despite repeated onslaughts by hordes of Pine Siskins and lesser numbers of crossbills. Icterids and Starlings fared well at pigsties, garbage dumps, and local feeders, but the small groups of Redwings and Cowbirds in local marshes and farmlands disappeared with the first corn-deep snowfall of Jan.

Notable and quotable thru the past season were 1) the superb Snowy Owl flight, 2) the equally good but less spectacular invasion of Rough-legged Hawks and Northern Shrikes, 3) the high counts of winter diving ducks (q.v. and also 1961 Waterfowl Census), 4) the crossbill-siskin flight, 5) the early winter spate of half-hardies and 6) the continuing spread of permanent-resident southern species (Red-bellied Woodpecker, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Mockingbird, and Cardinal q.v.). Negatively 1) the persistent paucity of Redheads and Canvasbacks, 2) the meager flight of white-winged gulls, 3) the very poor showing of wintering sparrows, especially Tree, White-throated, and Song, and 4) the decimation of half-hardies by the Jan weather received the most comment.

The loving cup for rarity of the season goes to the adult male Barrow's Goldeneye on Fischer's Bay, Oneida Lake Mar 31 (Peakall, Scheider, et al) to Apr 5 (see Field Notes this issue). Other notables observed include King Eider, Goshawk, Black-backed Woodpecker and two Oregon Juncos.