

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WINTER SEASON DECEMBER 1 — MARCH 31

JAMES K. MERITT

The winter season of 1961-1962 was, overall, considerably more pleasant than the preceding one. Temperatures were generally normal or close to it, although the St. Lawrence region reported an abnormal number of sub-zero days in February. Heavy snowfalls were the exception, not the rule, and accumulations were usually light. Far and away the most damaging storm of the season was the coastal blow of early March which devastated the Atlantic seaboard from Long Island south to Virginia.

Insofar as our winter birdlife was concerned, there was again a distinct change over the preceding winter. The Boreal Chickadee and Pine Grosbeak invasions were, of course, well under way by late fall, as has been previously reported, and there was no reason to doubt that these birds would dominate the winter scene. As is indicated in the regional reports which follow, these birds did just that, but the title of most exciting northerner of the year could probably be awarded to the Bohemian Waxwing. During the four-month period ending March 31 Bohemian Waxwings were reported in Region 1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 9. There was, in addition, a belated late November report from Region 7, and I strongly suspect that there would have been a number of winter reports from the Adirondacks had that vast area had as many observers per square mile as the more populated regions. As Frank Clinch indicates, the Watertown flock of 300 Bohemian Waxwings is apparently the largest recorded in New York State, and to my knowledge it is the largest recorded in any of the northeastern states, either this year or in previous years. While the number of Bohemian Waxwing records was perhaps not high, there can be little doubt that they indicated a very substantial movement of birds into the state. It must be borne in mind that, unlike many of our northern visitors, the Bohemian Waxwing is not a feeding station bird and thus would tend to be not as frequently reported in any case. Also, and again unlike most of the other northern birds, the Bohemian Waxwing can be overlooked, if one is not aware of its possible presence, because of its similarity to another species. A further indication of the extent of the flight is provided by the fact that there were at least three New Jersey reports, the first good records for that state and now the most southerly records for the species along the Atlantic seaboard.

Pine Grosbeaks were observed in all reporting regions, and this flight was undoubtedly the heaviest in many years. Boreal Chickadees were observed in nine of the ten reporting regions, and their presence too attracted much attention. Evening Grosbeaks were generally reported in good numbers, but a definite scarcity of these birds was reported in portions of the Adirondacks. Unlike the two preceding species, Evening Grosbeaks were not evident in peak numbers. Redpolls were observed principally late in the season, as is very often the case, and usually in very modest numbers. Pine Siskins and Crossbills were few and far between everywhere. Snow Buntings were seen in better than average numbers. Three-toed Woodpeckers were unreported except for one Northern in Region 7.

Short-eared Owls put in one of their better showings, especially in Regions 1, 2, and 3 where extensive flockings were noted; on Long Island

they were described as numerous. Most areas reported at least several Snowy Owls, but the only concentration of these birds was in Region 6 where a count of 16 was made. Rough-legged Hawk concentrations were reported in Regions 1 and 6, but elsewhere numbers were few.

A Boreal Owl at Syracuse was one of the highlights of the season, and details of this find are furnished in the field notes section of this issue. There were, as usual, several western birds that appeared in the state during the winter, the most notable being a well-observed Black-headed Grosbeak in Region 1, a Western Grebe on Long Island (on the Federation Waterfowl Count), and two Yellow-headed Blackbirds, also on Long Island. There were the usual sporadic winter reports of such regulars as the Oregon Junco and Dickcissel.

No less than seven warblers were reported, most of the records being in December. In addition to the Myrtle these included Orange-crowned (Regions 9 and 10), Palm (Region 10), Wilson's (Region 9), Ovenbird (Region 9), Yellowthroat (Regions 1 and 4), and Chat (wintering, Region 10). A few other birds abnormal as to date included Baltimore Orioles in Regions 3, 8, and 9, a Rose-breasted Grosbeak in Region 3, and a Scarlet Tanager in Region 8. Most of the latter records pertained to feeding stations. Of note also is the presence again this winter of numbers of White-crowned Sparrows in Region 2.

The latter part of March produced the hoped-for warming trend instead of (as is sometimes the case) a rash of tantalizing snowstorms. Blackbirds were on the move, and there were reports of such other early arrivals as the Woodcock, Phoebe, and Tree Swallow. The Upland Plover which appeared on Long Island, however, was unexpectedly early. There were notable late March hawk flights in several central and western regions.

There seemed to be a surprising number of relatively large Cardinal concentrations at various feeding stations, and other southern regulars continued to be reported with increasing frequency. It is gratifying to note the continued presence of a few Cardinals in the Adirondacks, and it is hoped they will gain a firm foothold, as their predecessors did several years ago in other eastern parts of the state.

REGION 1 — NIAGARA FRONTIER

RICHARD C. ROSCHE

A mild winter was the prediction late last autumn — and for those who gamble with such unpredictables — they were correct. Many major storms during the period which seriously affected other sections of the country missed Western New York entirely. Weather Bureau data from Buffalo indicate that average temperatures and precipitation during December, January and February were slightly below normal. March, however, was very atypical — with slightly half the normal amount of precipitation occurring and an average temperature about two degree above the normal. January was the most windy month of recent years. The pattern of snowfall deviated greatly from the usual during the period. Metropolitan Buffalo and its immediate surroundings received more than its usual amounts, with a fall of 17.8 inches on December 30 being a near record for any given 24-hour period. Elsewhere, especially in the southern tier counties, snowfall and the resultant accumulations were far below the normal.

Continuing a trend initiated during the fall season, the number of many water-birds were generally lower than during the average winter in the Niagara River Region. Referring to a probable displacement of gulls in particular, one observer formulated several reasons as such: 1) an early, solid freezing over of Lake Erie