

REGION 4 — SUSQUEHANNA

LESLIE E. BEMONT

It was a cold winter with a little more snow than average. The cold was a matter of consistency rather than extremes, the lowest recorded temperature being 14 below zero Feb 8 at Broome Co. Airport. As a result of the persistent cold, snow cover was essentially complete from Dec 7 thru Mar 16 except for about one week in mid-Jan. The heaviest snowfall, about 8 inches, didn't come until Mar 1 and appeared to mark the end of winter in a practical sense. It was the warmest Mar since 1946, the temperature reaching 74° on the 26th.

It was not one of our most interesting winters for bird observations. A few "semi-hardies", such as the Baltimore Oriole at Johnson City and a Brown Thrasher at Owego, started the winter with us but soon succumbed or moved on, with occasional exceptions. Even Cowbirds thinned out in February. The snow cover kept northern raptors to a minimum, although Cooper's, Red-tailed and Sparrow Hawks seemed to do all right. Except for Goldfinches the winter finches were an empty chapter in most of the region until the latter part of February when Purple Finches and Pine Siskins moved in. Evening Grosbeaks also put in a belated appearance but were in somewhat disappointing numbers. Disappointing to all our bird banders, at least, but it must be admitted that it is interesting to see the progression of a more gradual invasion for a change rather than the usual rapid deluge that makes analysis difficult.

The early Barn Swallow and Purple Martin at least suggest that the migration is getting ahead of itself in response to the early warm weather. So we may have some tragedies if a cold snap comes along. The two most startling records of the period were the Scarlet Tanagers around Cortland and the Black Vulture at Greene. We can safely attribute the former to a freak occurrence, possibly of a meteorological nature, that has little significance with respect to the species involved. It is unfortunate, though, that a specimen could not be obtained. The Black Vulture, on the other hand, tempts one to speculate that it is an indication of things to come.

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Loons — Ducks: Common Loon: no reports. Red-necked Grebe: one, Feb 22, Oneonta (JN), now in collection at Oneonta State Teachers College; one, Feb 23, in snow bank near Maine, now in private collection of L. Loomis. Horned Grebe: Feb 10 (first), Owego, (RW et al); a few scattered reports until 8 plus, Mar 30, Whitney Point (MS). Pied-billed Grebe: one, Feb 12, Bainbridge (R, SW) and one, Mar 31, Whitney Point (MS); the only reports. Great Blue Heron: winter records at Owego (CG), Triple Cities area (M, AD) and Cortland (H. Axtell, JG); first migrant Mar 21, Chenango Forks (M, AD).

Whistling Swan: 2, Dec 2, in flight over Cortland (CW); 3, Mar 24, Owego (R. Gilfillan). Canada Goose: Feb 10, Owego (RW); migrants Mar 8, McLean (R. Haines) and small numbers in other areas Mar 9 and 10; Mar 16, another small flight; Mar 23 to 26, very heavy flights with numbers well into thousands; small daily flights to end of month. Mallards: 350, most of winter population, at Sherburne Game Farm (R, SW) and 80 at Margaretville (SW); migrants Mar 23. Black Duck: about normal winter population, but as usual more scattered than Mallards. Pintail: Dec 2, still at Whitney Point (NC); 6, Mar 23, back at Whitney Point (HM, GC). Green-winged Teal: 25, Mar 28, Owego (RW). Blue-winged Teal: 2, Mar 28, Owego (RW), very early. American Widgeon: 2, Mar 23, Whitney Point (HM, GC). Wood Duck: Mar 25, Geene (C, JB).

Redhead: Feb 10, Owego (RW et al); nine, (max), Mar 22, Endwell (N, EW); also reported at Little York and Homer (JG). Ring-necked Duck: Mar 3, Owego (CG, RW); 50 plus, Whitney Point, Mar 30 and 31 (MS). Canvasback: winter records

at Owego and Endwell; also at Little York and Homer in latter half of Mar (JG). Scaup: Feb 9 to Mar 9, regular reports of small numbers, mostly Greater; Mar 30, 10 plus Lessers, Whitney Point (MS). Common Goldeneye: the usual small number of wintering birds; noticeable increase in numbers about Feb 17 and present to end of period. Bufflehead: Feb 10, Owego (RW et al); two, Feb 17, Owego (SL) and seven, Mar 9, Owego (SL). Hooded Merganser: one, Mar 17, Endwell (LB et al); eight, Mar 23, Whitney Point (HM, GC); also at Cortland and Homer (JG). Common Merganser: noticeable increase in numbers in mid-Feb; 67, Mar 17, in one mile stretch of river at Campville (LB et al). Red-breasted Merganser: Feb 3, Owego (DB); Mar 3, Owego (RW, CG); nine, Mar 30, Whitney Point (MS).

Hawks — Owls: Turkey Vulture: two, Mar 28, Deposit (SW). Black Vulture: one, Mar 22, Greene (WB); Mr. Bartlett is well acquainted with the species having lived in the south and he still takes several trips a year to Virginia or South Carolina. Being fully aware of the rarity of the species in this area at any time, to say nothing of early spring, he took special care in observing the bird and reported the details in writing. The bird was low enough so that both the "white" patches in the wings and the toes projecting beyond the tail could be easily seen although it could not have been in sight for much more than half a minute. Goshawk: one report, Mar 10, Berkshire (M, DL). Sharp-shinned Hawk: Mar 11, Cortland (CW), the first spring report. Cooper's Hawk: reported fairly frequently all winter. Red-tailed Hawk: also reported frequently all winter. Red-shouldered Hawk: Feb. 22, Newark Valley (LD); Mar 14, Chenango (C. Wilson). Rough-legged Hawk: one at Owego dump all during period (CG); one, Jan 13, Oxford (LB, RP), dark phase; one, Mar 17, Chocanut Center (RS). Bald Eagle: Feb 6, Lounsberry in Tioga Co. (LD). Marsh Hawk: one, Jan 1, Binghamton (NC); Mar 6, Owego (D. Raftis); one, Mar 23, Whitney Point (HM, GC). Sparrow Hawk: quite plentiful all winter in the Binghamton-Owego area; at Oneonta none until Mar 11 (RB).

Bob-white: one heard Mar 24, Homer (J. Webster). Killdeer: one, Dec 7, Hancock (SW); Jan 12 and 16, Greene (C, JB); one, Mar 1, Ingraham Hill south of Binghamton (CH); Mar 14, first of main body of migrants, McLean (R. Haines). Woodcock: Mar 16 (first), Owego (TT); Mar 25 (next), Binghamton (R. & J. Saunders). Common Snipe: Jan 3, McLean Bog (C. Wilson); 3, Mar 26, Lounsberry (RW, W. White). Herring Gull: usual winter numbers. Ring-billed Gull: one, Jan 1, Endicott (N. EW); migrants Mar 17, Endwell (LB et al); 80 plus, Mar 24, Vestal (RS). Mourning Dove: quite a few winter records; the largest flocks were 20, Newark Valley (LD); 14, Homer (JG); migrants not obvious until Mar 23. Screech Owl: numbers improving; one was living in the basement of the Baptist Church in Homer during Jan (JG), there must be some hidden significance that escapes me; one, Dec 24, Johnson City (Dixon), observed in bright moonlight visiting feeder to eat peanut butter! Horned Owl: reported regularly from several areas. Snowy Owl: none.

Goatsuckers — Shrikes: Belted Kingfisher: reported fairly frequently all winter except for first two weeks of Mar. Yellow-shafted Flicker: one, wintered at Chocanut Center although seldom seen (RS, MS); Feb 26, Cortland (CW); migrants in numbers, Mar 30. Pileated Woodpecker: reports becoming frequent and were particularly so in Mar. Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker: one, Dec. 1, near Oxford (WB). Phoebe: Mar 15, Vestal (RP); regular reports from Mar 25. Horned Lark: seemed numerous at Oneonta (JN), Cortland (JG) and the Triple Cities (NC). Tree Swallow: Mar 25, Greene (C, JD), first report; 300, Mar 26, Chocanut Center (RS). Barn Swallow: one, Mar 19, McGraw (J. Greenfield) and Purple Martin: Mar 30, Smithboro in Tioga Co. (RW); both extremely early.

Blue Jay: abnormally plentiful everywhere. Crow: here in some numbers all winter: 100 plus, Jan 20, Waverly (RS, MS); increase in numbers noted in Oneonta in late Feb (RB). Black-capped Chickadee: down in numbers at Oneonta (RB) but in good numbers everywhere else. Tufted Titmouse: reported from Hancock (SW), Newark Valley (LD) and at least five stations in the Triple Cities area, several of them new. Red-breasted Nuthatch: at least 6 wintered in the Chenango Forks- Chenango Valley State Park area (M, AD-MS), but nowhere else were they reported regularly until Mar. Winter Wren: Dec 17 thru Feb 1, Owego (M. Middaugh); Mar 24, Owego (AE); Mar 31, Binghamton (HM). Carolina Wren: Mar 30, Owego (Mrs. A. Stiles); the only report. Mockingbird: Jan 1, Kattleville, north of Binghamton (LB); the only one. Brown Thrasher: Dec 29 and Jan 1, Owego (AE).

Robin: Dec and Jan records from the Triple Cities (NC), Oneonta (RB) and Homer (H. Stafford) but no specifically Feb records; Mar 4, Berkshire (ML) first migrants; regular from Mar 15. Hermit Thrush: Mar 26, Owego (TT), the only report. Bluebird: one Mar 16 (first), Ingraham Hill (CH); Mar 17, Berkshire, (ML); regular from Mar 23. Golden-crowned Kinglet: not many reported in Jan and Feb; numbers started picking up Mar 10. Ruby-crowned Kinglet: Mar 2, Johnson City, (RP); Mar 30, Berkshire (ML). Water Pipit: four, Mar 31, at Cranberry Lake in nearby Pennsylvania (N, EW). Cedar Waxwing: sporadic visitors at Oneonta (RB), Owego and in the Triple Cities area all winter. Bohemian Waxwing: one, Jan 7, Spencer (M. Wiita), larger size and rufous patch under tail noted and reported by letter. Northern Shrike: several reports; from Oxford (A. Stratton), Summer Hill in Cortland Co. (Mrs. W. Mulholland), Norwich (R, SW), Newark Valley (LD) and the Triple Cities.

Starling — Warblers: Starling: at Newark Valley (LD), Oneonta (RB) and Cortland (JG) a decrease in numbers during the winter was noted; after Mar 15 at Cortland and by the end of the period at Newark Valley numbers were back to normal. Myrtle Warbler: Dec 29, Berkshire (ML); the only warbler report during the period.

Blackbirds — Sparrows: Meadowlark: last fall record, Dec 12, Greene (C, JD); a winter record, Feb 1, Owego (RW); spring migrants, Mar 11, Greene (C, JD). Red-winged Blackbird: there were several winter records from Owego and the Triple Cities; one at Newark Valley took quite a fancy to suet (LD); 2, Mar 2, Cortland (P. McLaughlin) appear to be the first spring migrants; reported regularly from Mar 9 and in large numbers from Mar 15. Baltimore Oriole: one at Johnson City until Dec 15 (RP). Rusty Blackbird: 20, Feb 9, Owego (G. Kirk), no details provided; Mar 17, Greene (WB). Common Grackle: no winter reports; Mar 11, Owego (Tioga Bird Club), the first migrants; regular from Mar 15. Brown-headed Cowbird: frequent reports at feeders in Cortland and Triple Cities areas during Dec and Jan; very few in Feb until last few days, then gradual build up in numbers; regular after Mar 11; a flock of 20, Mar 17, Norwich (R. SW); 34 banded Mar 18 and 20 more Mar 20 at Deposit (SW). Scarlet Tanager: one pair, Mar 20, Cortland (Mrs. L. Leach); one male, Mar 24, near Skaneateles Lake (R. Davis); one male, Cortland Mar 30 (J. Songdahl); Dr. Gustafson questioned the observers carefully before forwarding the reports and, hopefully, a field note will be forthcoming.

Cardinal: the increase in numbers and colonization of new areas continues; "many around here", Newark Valley (LD); "gaining in Oneonta" (RB); "seen at Sherburne, Norwich, New Berlin and White Store" (R, SW); 24 in one flock, Dec 1, Chenango Forks (M, AD). Dickcissel: one, Dec 29 thru Mar 6, Owego (B. Hewlitt). Evening Grosbeak: only scattered reports, usually of very small numbers, until a substantial increase in numbers in late Jan at Oneonta (JN), RB), around Feb 6 at Norwich (R, SW), mid-Feb in the Triple Cities (NC) and late Mar at Cortland (JG); numbers never approached those of peak years. Purple Finch: 20 to 30 at a number of feeders in Oneonta throughout the winter (RB); appeared at Newark Valley and the Triple Cities in appreciable numbers Feb 21 and gradually increased to quite large numbers, by the end of the period, at Cortland and the Triple Cities. Pine Grosbeak: one, Dec 9, Chenango Valley State Park (RS); Jan 1, 5 at Owego (AE) and one at Berkshire (ML); the only reports. Redpoll: 27, Feb 23, Norwich (R, SW); 2, Mar 17, Preston (R, SW); very scattered reports at Oneonta (RB) but none elsewhere. Pine Siskin: "scattered reports", Oneonta (RB); Dec 29, Owego (CG); Jan 20, Chenango Valley State Park (M, AD); Feb 15, a banded one reported at Deposit (SW); these were the only reports before Feb 28 but from then until Mar 14 when 100 plus were at Binghamton (WY), numbers built up slowly in the Triple Cities area and they were very numerous there for the rest of the month. But nowhere else was such a build up reported. One, found dead at Cortland, Mar 18 (JG) was the only report from that area during the period. Goldfinch: reported in quite appreciable numbers all winter from several areas but in the Triple Cities numbers increased further in mid-Feb. White-winged Crossbill: 2 small flocks, Dec 1, Greene (WB); 5, Mar 16, Binghamton (CH); the only reports received. Rufous-sided Towhee: one, Jan 1, Chenango Bridge (LB); one, Feb 5 and stayed past the end of the period, Castle Creek (BB); one, Mar 5, Cortland (Mrs. L. Atkinson); one, Mar 14, Binghamton (WY).

Savannah Sparrow: one, throughout the period, Berkshire (M, DL). Vesper Sparrow: Mar 26, Owego (CG). Slate-colored Junco: fairly large, although well dispersed,

wintering population in the Triple Cities area and Deposit; migrants started appearing at Deposit Mar 16, but not in large flocks; at Cortland, where the winter population was almost nil, and Oneonta large flocks started appearing Mar 23. Oregon Junco: one, at Owego (Mrs. E. Williams); one, Mar 10, Castle Creek (BB). Field Sparrow: 2, Dec 18 and 5, Dec 19, Ingraham Hill (CH); one, Mar 1, Owego (M. White); migrants, Mar 26, Owego (CG). White-throated Sparrow: one, throughout the period, Tioga Center (P. Code); 2, Dec 17, Ingraham Hill (CH); one, Dec 25 to Dec 30, Choconut Center (RS, MS); 3 Chenango Bridge (LB). Fox Sparrow: Mar 19 (first) Owego (TT); 20 banded between Mar 25 and 30, Deposit (SW). Song Sparrow: 14, Jan 1, Binghamton Christmas Census (NC); several other Dec and Jan records; none in Feb until the 17th when migrants started arriving; numbers fairly small until Mar 16. Snow Bunting: small and medium sized flocks all during the period, particularly during Feb and Mar at Cortland; one "huge" flock at Newark Valley Jan 29 (LD).
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REGION 5 — ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

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The winter weather was characterized by temperatures below normal and snow-fall near to or somewhat below normal. A warming trend from the middle of March was unbroken to the end of the period.

Waterfowl census figures were low for most species, mainly due to ice conditions. However the increase of Redheads and Canvasbacks was encouraging. The almost continuous watching of hawk migration at Derby Hill on the shore of Lake Ontario by John Haugh has yielded interesting observations.

An outstanding feature of the winter was the fine late flight of Purple Finches. There were moderate numbers of Pine Siskins, especially in March; other winter finches were scarce. Rareties include Barrow's Goldeneye and a Magpie.

Abbreviations for places: HIGMA — Howland's Island Game Management Area; Hghld For — Highland Forest; L — Lake; Oakwood — cemetery, Syracuse; Onon — Onondaga; R — river; SSSP — Selkirk Shores State Park; Skan — Skaneateles; Syr — Syracuse; TRGMA — Three Rivers Game Management Area; Arr — Arrived; nr — near.

Regular observers and censuses: DA — Dorothy Ackley; BB — Benjamin Burt; BBFS — B. Burt's feeder survey (taken the first week of each winter month; numbers cited are per 100 feeder reports); CC — Christmas Census; EE — Emma Evans; DP — David Peakall; JP — Jean Propst; PP — Paul Paquette; MR — Margaret Rusk; BS — Betty Starr; FS — Fritz Scheider; IS — Ina Stone; RS — Roberta Seaman; SCC — Syracuse Christmas Census; WFC — Waterfowl Census.

Loons — Ducks: Common Loon: one, Jan 1-16 Onon L; one rescued from ice Oneida L Jan 19; no migrants reported to end of period. Red-throated Loon: one, Dec 22 Oswego (MR, FS) is first winter record. Red-necked Grebe rescued from roadside, Sherrill, Feb 11, remained on local pond where released until Feb 20 (DA). Horned Grebe: two, Jan 13 Skan L (WFC), lowest on any WFC; recent counts have been 20-60. Pied-billed Grebe: recorded during the winter at Fulton, Oswego, and Sherrill; first migrant Mar 27 SSSP. Great Blue Heron: two, SCC; one, nr Tully Jan 15 (fide BB); one, Gully Rd nr Skan Jan 7 (RS); one, nr Limestone Creek Feb 11 (fide BB); first migrant Mar 21. American Bittern: one, Mar 31 Boliver (MR), very early.

Whistling Swan: one, Fulton first week of Dec (Mrs. C. Hall); one, Lakeview Dec 18 (JP, MR). Canada Goose: excellent spring flight, 11,000 in HIGMA — Seneca flats area Mar 29 (DP). Snow Goose: two, HIGMA last week of Mar (R. Nevinger). Blue Goose: one, Seneca R flats Mar 29 (DP).

Numbers of winter dabbling duck were low; the WFC of Black Duck (957) was the lowest of recent years. There was no large-scale return flight by the end of the period. Pintail: one-two, Oswego thru winter; first migrant Onon L Mar 9. Green-winged Teal: one wintered, Syr (JP, BS); arr Seneca flats Mar 29. Blue-winged Teal: arr Mar 30 Mexico. American Widgeon: arr Mar 28 Seneca flats. Shoveler: one, Oswego Dec 22; arr HIGMA Mar 24. Wood Duck: last, HIGMA Jan 1; arr Phoenix Mar 9.