

REGION 6 — ST. LAWRENCE

FRANK A. CLINCH

Many people believe that the winter of 1962-63 was the most severe they have ever experienced. There is ample evidence to support this belief. The first major snow storm started on December 10, and left 18 inches of snow. The total for December was 51 inches of snow or double the average amount for that month. The temperature was three degrees below normal. Most lakes and streams were frozen before Christmas. January added some 58 inches more of snow with major storms on Jan. 15 and 25. Late in the month snow fell on nine consecutive days. There was only one brief thaw in Jan. February, 1963 was the coldest February since 1934 and the third coldest in 63 years. The average daily temperature was 13.8 degrees or 7.7 degrees below normal. The only warm day was Feb. 19 with a temperature of 40 degrees. Early in February the snow depth in the woods at Sears Pond was 52 inches with a water content of 14.8 in. By March 23 the snow depth there was 70 inches with a water content of 27.2 in. Between Oct. 25 and the first day of spring 64 snowy days produced 160 inches or more than 13 ft. of snow. High winds often caused deep drifts.

The deep snow made birding difficult. The roads became "canyons", too narrow for parking and often too deep to see even the tops of trees a hundred yards away. This was a problem in looking for Hawk-Owls. One person said that she could see very little while traveling on a Greyhound bus.

The most unusual birds were the three Hawk-Owls, one in each county. Evening Grosbeaks were scarce until early February when they appeared in Potsdam and about five days later many were seen at several feeders in Watertown. There were always more females than males. Purple Finches began to appear at feeders early in Feb., and their numbers slowly increased. During March they were seen in unusual numbers in most of the region. During the latter half of March birds began arriving at about their usual times.

Loons — Ducks: An emaciated Red-necked Grebe found in the snow in Copenhagen late in Feb died a few days later. Canada Geese: 26 seen flying over Watertown Mar 17 at which time there was little open water. In late Mar 1000-2000 were at Perch Lake Game Management Area. Whistling Swan: One at Pt Peninsula Dec 20 (Belknap). Mallard: a female with injured wing found in the snow in Watertown, Jan 1, one in the River at Watertown in Jan. There is always open water in Black River below the city power plant where ducks come when most of the river is frozen. Black Duck: one in the river at Watertown. Green-winged Teal: 2-3 pairs at Sulphur Springs Mar 28. Red-head: in the River at Watertown Mar 1 and remained several days. Canvasback: 3 at Tibetts Pt Jan 20. Scaup: a few in the river at Watertown. Common Goldeneye: in Black River at Watertown, max 13. Bufflehead: 2 in Watertown Feb 3. Hooded Merganser: a male in Watertown from late Dec to middle of Jan; at Black Lake Jan 24.

Hawks — Owls: Red-tailed Hawk: first, Mar 10. Rough-legged Hawk: Belknap reports a max count of 14, Jan 9 and 13, Jan 29; numbers decreased in Feb, but scattered birds were seen nearly every day, but only a few in Mar; Last, near Dexter Mar 29. This year they were seen southwest of Watertown and north to the Theresa section. They were not seen often near Pt. Peninsula where they were so numerous a year ago. Coot: One, in river at Watertown Dec-Jan, stayed there nearly three weeks. Killdeer: came a little late and were not seen until late Mar. Great Black-backed Gull: Two, in Watertown in late Dec and in Jan. Herring Gull: several in river at Watertown until late Jan. Snowy Owl: two, at Pt. Peninsula Dec 2 and a few others reported, but numbers down greatly from last year. Hawk-Owl: Three seen — Dec 20 near Potsdam in St. Lawrence County (Cerwonka); Jan 4 between Fargo and Natural Bridge, Jefferson Co. (Dye); and Feb 8 at Sears Pond, Lewis Co. (Gordon). Saw-whet Owl: near Potsdam, no doubt the snow made it hard for small owls to find food. Short-eared Owl: Dec 16 Sackets Harbor; Feb 9 in Watertown, Mar 29 near Perch River.

Woodpeckers — Shrikes: Black-backed Woodpecker: Dec 2 near Henderson. Phoebe: Mar 28. Horned Lark: seen in Mar, but less common this year. Mocking-

bird: Dec 2 east of Chaumont (Spofford). Bluebird: a Male near Felts Mills Mar 19 and one near Adams late in Mar. Northern Shrike: a few seen this winter.

Blackbirds — Sparrows: Meadowlark: first, in Watertown Mar 17. Red-winged Blackbird: at Calcium Dec 15; near Watertown Dec 20 and Mar 17. Common Grackle: Watertown Mar 16. Brown-headed Cowbird; Watertown Mar 10. Cardinal: about as many as last year. Evening Grosbeak: Very few until Feb; they appeared at Potsdam about Feb 1; in Watertown a week later, becoming numerous in late Feb and most of Mar, but decreasing somewhat in numbers at the end of Mar. In most flocks there were 5-6 times as many females as males. Among the ones trapped for banding less than 20% were males. An albino appeared several times at three feeders near Watertown. Purple Finch: numerous at many feeders over much of this region in Mar. Seen at Adams Center, Lowville, Watertown, Canton and Potsdam. Redpoll: 15 at Deferiet Mar 16, but very few seen. Pine Siskin: seen less often than Purple Finches, but still more common than in any recent year. Goldfinch: Mar 3 at Canton. Slate-colored Junco: 3 at a feeder in Adams Center most of Feb-Mar. Fox Sparrow: in Watertown late Mar. Snow Bunting: several flocks in Dec, less common in Jan and few or none after the middle of Jan.

173-Haley St., Watertown

REGION 7 — ADIRONDACK - CHAMPLAIN

THOMAS A. LESPERANCE

It is now universally known about the winter just endured and to remark about it here, when it is best forgotten, would be like adding fuel to a dying fire. Bird life as far as activity was concerned came to a standstill in most areas. A few secluded spots did produce some exceptional winter residents, which should have wintered south of here, but even these hardy individuals no doubt succumbed to the icy blasts before it was over. Total accumulations at higher elevations were reported to have been 182 inches while along Lake Champlain it was measured at 70 inches. Snow which fell in the middle of December was still on the ground by mid March. All in all it was, in most cases, a total loss birdwise until the first weeks of March when the first migrants began to appear.

Abbreviations: A — Amstutz; HD — H. Delafield; D — Delahanty; K — Keji; TL — Lesperance; L — lake; R — River; thru — throughout.

Loons — Ducks: Great Blue Heron: one, Mar 29-30, Tupper L, (D); one, Mar 30, Sunmount (A). Black Duck: two, Saranac R, Jan 20, fewer than usual, none on Christmas count (HD). Common Goldeneye: few, Tupper L and Ausable R (as long as water remained open). Bufflehead: Tupper L. Common Merganser: Tupper L and Ausable R.

Hawks — Owls: Bald Eagle: one, Feb 19 (A); one, Mar 25, Tupper L. (D); several reported by various individuals near Willsboro Point on L. Champlain. Sparrow Hawk: returned by Mar 25 (HD). Usually a winter resident in most of the region but not reported this winter. Ruffed Grouse: apparently normal, but hard to see on account of snow depth (HD). Killdeer: two, Mar 27, on L. Champlain ice, at Westport (HD); Mar 30, Saranac L (HD); one, Mar 30, shore of Tupper L (A). Herring Gull: three, Mar 27, on ice at Westport, L. Champlain. Saw-whet Owl: one, Raybrook, Jan 25 (K). Barred Owl: common in the Keeseville area. Screech Owl: two (one red and one grey phase) along Peru Rd.

Goatsuckers — Shrikes: Belted Kingfisher: one, Jan 8 to 30 nr Powerhouse at Ray Brook (K). Pileated Woodpecker: one or two seen at intervals on Forest Home and McKenzie Pond Rds, Saranac L (HD). Red-headed Woodpecker: one, Chateaugay (John Hotchkiss, fide B. P. Burt) this is a most unusual record since it occurred Christmas week. Hairy Woodpecker: normal (HD); common in areas where seen. Downy Woodpecker: not as common as Hairy (HD); common in areas where seen (TL). Eastern Phoebe: Mar 27, Westport Station (HD). Horned Lark: E.a. alpestris mixed with E.a. praticola common in expected areas, some with Snow Bunting, others with Tree Sparrows and Juncos (TL). Very few reports due to deep snow, few