

REGION 8 — MOHAWK - HUDSON

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After a very cold and snowy Dec, temperatures in Jan and Feb were near average this past winter. Dec, with an average temperature of 18.1° at Albany was the fourth coldest Dec on record, 8.4° below normal. Snow accumulation by the end of the month was about a foot in most areas. Jan and Feb, in contrast, averaged close to normal in temperature. Precipitation in Jan totaled 3.35 in, 0.88 in. above normal, alleviating the critical shortage of water in many areas. Precipitation in Feb totalled 1.63 in, 0.64 in. less than normal, and in Mar 2.93 in, 0.21 in. above average. Mar temperatures were well above average the first ten days of the month, and below average over the last half.

The most notable developments of the winter were the fine flight of winter finches, marked by the widespread appearance of both species of crossbill, and the unexpected appearance of wintering White-crowned Sparrows in several areas. Birds of prey — notably hawks, owls and shrikes — continued to be uncommon, although hawks increased in abundance in many sections in Jan and Feb. Despite the bitter weather of Dec, which drove virtually all the waterfowl out of the area, many rather rare winter landbirds were reported in one or two areas in Region 8. These included Sapsucker, Winter Wren, Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Hermit Thrush, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Myrtle Warbler, Baltimore Oriole, and Savannah, Chipping and Fox Sparrows.

In late Jan and early Feb, warmer weather produced some open water in the Hudson River south of Albany, and several species — e.g., Herring Gull, Pintail and Common Goldeneye — appeared in the area at that time. On Mar 5, the warmest day of the period (71° at Albany) the first major influx of spring migration occurred, with the appearance of Redwings, Grackles, Cowbirds, Killdeer, and many gulls and ducks. Continued warm weather over the next ten days brought numbers of additional migrants into the Region. Colder weather over the latter half of the month (which averaged 3.7° lower in temperature than the first half) arrested migration in most areas (excluding waterfowl).

Especially unusual or rare species reported during the period included Snow Goose, Broad-winged Hawk, Bald Eagle, Iceland Gull, Saw-whet Owl, a hybrid Red-Yellow-shafted Flicker, Swainson's Thrush, and Bay-breasted Warbler.

Abbreviations used: com — common; cr — crowned; L — Lake; nr — near; NWW — Niskayuna Wide Waters; Res — Reservoir; R — River; Sar — Saratoga; Sch — Schenectady; SCRes — Stony Creek Reservoir; thr — throated; Tomh — Tomhannock; WRes — Watervleit Reservoir; w — winged; GCC — Greene County Bird Club (Catskill) Christmas Count; SCC — Schenectady Christmas Count; TCC — Troy Christmas Count; Colu Co — Columbia County.

Observers: ADBC — Alan Devoe Bird Club; GCBC — Greene Co Bird Club; SBC — Schenectady Bird Club; TB, AB — Thomas & Arlene Brown; LB — Lee Burland; JHB — James Bush; BB, DB — Barbara & Deborah Bush; JC — Juanita Cook; HE — Hazel Eddy; DE — David Eilers; PE, GE — Paul & Georgia Erlenbach; MWF — Mable French; JF — John Fuller; EH — Esly Hallenbeck; JH — Jean Hervey; MK — Marcia Kent; CK — Clarissa Ketcham; JP, EP — John & Eloise Payne; ER — Eleanor Radke; EMR — Dr. Edgar M. Reilly; WBS — Walton Sabin; WS — Walter Smith; RW — Robert Wernick; PPW — Peter Wickham; RPY — Robert Yunick; also, B-H, Guy Bartlett & Barry Havens; B-S, Guy Bartlett & Benton Seguin; B-S-H, Bartlett, Seguin & Havens.

Loons — Ducks: Com Loon: first Mar 15, NWW (EH, HE), only spring report. Red-thr Loon: one, Dec 8, Tomh Res (PPW) late. Horned Grebe: remained in numbers on Sar L to Dec 8 (B-S); first spring, Mar 21, NWW (PPW). Pied-billed Grebe: arrived in marked wave third week in

Mar, first Mar 20, Lock 6, Sch (BRS). Canada Goose: last a flock of 48, Tomh Res, Dec 8 (RPY, PPW); first arrivals at Stockport and SCR Mar 8 with slow increase thereafter. **Snow Goose**: late fall records as follows: two, Sar L, Dec 8 (WBS, B-S); one, Tomh Res, Dec 8 (RPY, PPW); one, Guilderland Center, Dec 15 (B-S). Gadwall: two appeared at SCR Mar 25 (B-H), an early record. American Widgeon: first reports Mar 8, Lock 6, Sch (BRS) and Stockport (PPW). Pintail: a female appeared on the Hudson R above Troy Feb 15 (PPW); migrants appeared in a marked wave Mar 7-8 in many areas. Green-w Teal: first Mar 8, Stockport (PPW) and in many areas by Mar 15. Blue-w Teal: reported early at SCR Mar 14 (B-S-H) and Cossackie Mar 15 (JHB) but only a few in area by end of period. Wood Duck: first Mar 16, Castleton (JC); a marked influx Mar 24-26. Redhead: two appeared at SCR Mar 25 and remained to end of period (B-S-H) the only report. Ring-necked Duck: remained at Sar L to Dec 8 (BS); first spring migrants appeared Mar 8, Stockport (PPW, TB, AB). Canvasback: up to 45 were at Sar L to Dec 8 (B-S); only spring reports, four, Stockport Mar 8 (PPW) and six, Mohawk R Mar 29 (B-S-H). Scaup: up to 70 were at Sar L to Dec 8 (B-S); first spring reports Mar 14-16, with larger numbers appearing after Mar 25. Com Goldeneye: a flock of 22 was on the Hudson R above Troy Jan 18 (SBC); with the advent of warmer Feb weather, there were 125 in that area Feb 15 (PPW); reported throughout region in Mar. Bufflehead: first reported Mar 23, Emboght (JHB), with only three spring reports in period; Last Dec 8, Sar L (B-S) and Tomh Res (PPW). Oldsquaw: last, nine, Dec 8, Sar L (B-S); no spring reports in Mar. Scoters: no reports. Ruddy Duck: last one, Dec 8, Sar L (B-S); first, SC Res, Mar 25 (B-H). Hooded Merganser: last Dec 8, Sar L (BS) and Tomh Res (PPW); first spring migrants Mar 13, NWW (EH) and Mar 14 in several areas. Com Merganser: only one present this winter on the upper Hudson R (SBC). Migrants appeared at Stockport and the Mohawk R Mar 8 (PPW, et al). Red-br Merganser: remained at Sar L in good numbers to Dec 8 (BRS); first Mar 14, NWW (PPW, JF).

Hawks — Owls: Turkey Vulture: a vagrant was observed Jan 5 at Chatham (EMR) — an unusual date; first migrants Mar 1-2, Greene Co (DB, WS). Goshawk: reported Jan 5, nr Round L (B-S-H); Jan 18, nr Rexford (SBC); Mar 1, Canaan (JP, EP); and Mar 14, Niskayuna (BRS). Sharp-shinned Hawk: five reports during the period. Cooper's Hawk: four reports during the period. Red-tailed Hawk: more prevalent than last winter, numbers increasing in the latter part of the period. Red-shouldered Hawk: at least seven reports during period, with no apparent influx in Mar. **Broad-w Hawk**: two very early reports — one Mar 14, SCRes and one Mar 29, along the Mohawk R (B-S-H). Rough-legged Hawk: reported regularly throughout period to Mar 21 (SBC); more than in previous winter, max 7, Feb 15, Meadowdale (BRS). **Bald Eagle**: an immature was at Sar L Dec 1 (BS, EH) and was observed at close range. This was the **only** record of the species in Region 8 in 1963. Marsh Hawk: probable wintering individuals were reported at Old Chatham, Castleton, Livingston, and Albany Airport; first migrant, Mar 14, Meadowdale (PPW, JF). Sparrow Hawk: very few in early winter, with only nine reported in four Christmas Counts, Dec 21-28; notable increase in Feb and Mar. Bob-white: at least six were still at Meadowdale Mar 14 (PPW, JF) and some were still at Athens Jan 20 (JHB, BB). Wild Turkey: reported irregularly from Greene and western Albany Cos. Killdeer: last Tomh Res Dec 8 (PPW); early migrants Mar 5, Castleton (PPW) and Rotterdam Junction (RPY). Woodcock: first spring migrants Mar 14 at Palenville (JH) and Niskayuna (EH). Com Snipe: one wintering at Meadowdale was shot about Feb 1; first migrants appeared Mar 20, Palenville (JH) and Mar 22, Meadowdale (B-S-H). **Iceland Gull**: one was at Niska Isle, Mohawk R, Mar 25 (B-H); this second-year individual was seen standing on the ice and in flight. Great Black-backed Gull: first recorded nr Castleton Mar 6, when 20 were observed (PPW); most observers reported a decrease in numbers after the initial appearance of gulls in the Region, although about 40 were seen in a large group of gulls feeding on stranded fish at Niskayuna Mar 24 (RW). Herring Gull: none reported on area

Christmas Counts. With the onset of somewhat milder weather in mid-Jan, five were reported over Colonie Jan 23 (JF) and eleven were at Albany Feb 5-6 (PPW) when the Hudson was (briefly) open there. Colder weather forced most of these out, although one was on the Hudson R north of Troy Feb 15, and several remained at Castleton all month (JC). The first wave of migration was reported Mar 5 (PPW) with the species widespread by Mar 10. Ring-billed Gull: reported throughout the winter at Castleton (JC) but otherwise not reported until Mar 8 (BRS, PPW). Numbers increased rapidly the latter half of Mar. Screech Owl: very few reported. Great Horned Owl: status about as usual. Snowy Owl: four reports in Dec, including individuals at New Scotland (MK), Reidsville (MK), Dolgeville (fide WBS) and at a high school in downtown Schenectady (SBC). Only other record, one nr Rexford Feb 1 (BRS). Barred Owl: individuals reported at Hudson (TB, AB), Lisha Kill (BRS) and Purling (CK). **Saw-whet Owl:** one was at New Concord Jan 29 (ER) for the only record of the period.

Goatsuckers — Shrikes: Belted Kingfisher: reported from Canaan, Cohoes and Sch during the winter; first migrant Mar 22, Wices (B-S-H). Flicker: reported from Red Rock, Old Chatham, Kiskatom, Sch (2) and Melrose during the winter. One of the two in Sch was found to be a **hybrid Red-Yellow-shafted Flicker** when it was trapped and banded Dec 22 (RPY). The tail feather shafts of this bird were partly dark red and partly salmon, but in other respects the bird resembled a Yellow-shafted Flicker. Pileated Woodpecker: regular in several areas. Yel-bellied Sapsucker: one appeared in Sch at a feeder until Jan 15 (RPY). Phoebe: first migrants Mar 17, Catskill (JHB, BB) and Mar 21, New Concord (ER). Horned Lark: considerably smaller flocks than last winter. Tree Swallow: first Mar 15, Rotterdam (B-S-H), more generally at end of period. Boreal Chickadee: one appeared in Sch Dec 21 (SBC) and was banded Dec 22 (RPY). no other reports. Tufted Titmouse: many reports, still increasing. Winter Wren: two reports; one, Chatham, Dec 7 and Jan 6 (P. Mickle) and two, Durham, Dec 22 (GCBC). Mockingbird: reported from Ghent (PE, GE) and Latham (B. Hicks) during Jan and Feb and from four areas in Colu Co during Mar (ADBC). Catbird: one was at Spencertown to Jan 14 (F. Woodward) and one in Troy during Jan. (fide PPW). Brown Thrasher: one Jan 18, Ghent (PE, GE). Robin: more widespread and numerous than usual this winter, with flocks of up to 40 reported. Hermit Thrush: one at Tomh Res Dec 28, TCC the only record. **Swainson's Thrush:** one at Lock 7 Jan 17 was observed in good light and described convincingly (RW). The bird was observed in the same location as that in which a late migrant of this species was seen in the last period. Bluebird: six wintered at Ghent (PE, GE); other winter reports were from Meadowdale, Catskill, Mariaville and Dormansville. First spring report Mar 5, Luther (J. Alexander) with many others after Mar 15. Golden-cr Kinglet: rare this winter, with only two reports after Dec. Ruby-cr Kinglet: reported from Tomh Res Dec 8 (PPW), Sch Dec 21 (SBC), Catskill Jan 8 (JHB, BB) and Ghent Feb 26 (PE, GE). One was at a Niskayuna feeder Feb 15-29 (HE). Cedar Waxwing: few reports during winter; migrants appeared Mar 14 and during the succeeding week with some areas reporting 50-100 birds. Shrikes: a Migrant Shrike remained nr Round L throughout the winter (B-S-H). Northern Shrikes were reported from New Concord Feb 10 (ER) and Catskill Dec 28 (GCBC). Other shrikes (sp) were reported from Meadowdale Mar 28 (B-S-H) and Westerlo Dec 17 (MK); they seem very scarce.

Vireos — Sparrows: Myrtle Warbler: One appeared at a Loudonville feeder Dec 26-Jan 13 (MWF) and another was at a Catskill feeder Dec 26-Jan 5 (E. Rusack). Another observed at Catskill Mar 3 (CK) may have been that at the Catskill feeder earlier in the winter. **Bay-breasted Warbler:** one was seen sitting in a small tree in Schodack on the remarkable date of Dec 14 (LB). Some chestnut on the flanks of this bird as well as wing-bars, back-stripping and the greenish color was noted. Meadowlark: reported all winter, with migrants appearing in mid-Mar. Redwing: a few reported

throughout winter. Returning migrants appeared Mar 5 in large flocks at Castleton (PPW) and Guilderland (RPY), and widely by Mar 7. Baltimore Oriole: one was at Sch Dec 22 (SBC) at a feeder, and another was at a Loudonville feeder in mid-Dec for a few days (Mrs. O'Meara). One was reported from Castleton Dec 7 (JC). Rusty Blackbird: several winter reports, but only two in Mar, when flocks usually noted. Grackle: several wintered at widely scattered location. Returning groups noted at Delmar, Castleton and Guilderland Mar 5 (DE, RPY, PPW) and widely in the next few days. Cowbird: many wintered; returning individuals noted after Mar 2 (JHB). Dickcissel: two were found dead in Colu Co, one Dec 15, Ghent (PE, GE) and one Jan 14, Chatham (E. LaPointe). Evening Grosbeak: common this winter, with high counts of 199 and 339 Dec 21 and 28, SCC and TCC respectively. Although numbers seemed to decrease in late Feb and early Mar, late Mar saw an influx of additional birds. In one feeding station at Sch, 128 were banded during Dec-Apr 13 (RPY). Purple Finch: very few reported from most areas, with no evidence of a return movement in Mar, max 25 Feb 20 Colonie (RW). Pine Grosbeak: present in many areas after Dec 20 through early part of winter, mainly in small groups, max 109 Jan 15 Mariaville (BRS); fewer in Mar, last Mar 15 Mariaville (B-S-H). Redpoll: reported throughout the winter in small flocks, more common late Feb to mid-Mar, last Mar 22 (BRS). Pine Siskin: reported regularly throughout winter. Red Crossbill: the most widespread invasion in years, with small groups reported throughout the region, and remaining past the end of the period, max 37 TCC Dec 28. White-w Crossbill: also reported in several areas early in period, but disappeared in late Jan, last Feb 1 Colonie (JF), max 25 Dec 13 Westerlo (MK). Towhee: two reports, one Jan 7 Cairo Junction (N. Bondy) and one Feb 13 Loudonville (MWF). Savannah Sparrow: one was at Meadowdale Dec 15 (B-S) and four were recorded Dec 28, TCC. Vesper Sparrow: one recorded occasionally during winter at Schodack (LB); others reported Dec 7, Ghent (PE, GE); Dec 25, Meadowdale (B-S); Jan 25, Vischer Ferry (B-S). Slate-colored Junco: wintered in larger numbers than usual, max 268 Dec 21 SCC and 355 Dec 28 GCC. Oregon Junco: at least four well-identified birds were reported as follows: one Dec 18-22, Sch (Guy Bartlett); one Dec 19 Scotia (EH); one Jan 11-13 Colonie (JF) and one at Loudonville Dec 26-27, Jan 2 and 14-17 (MWF). Tree Sparrow: also wintered in high numbers, max 880 SCC Dec 21. Chipping Sparrow: one was at a feeder in Sch during Dec (SBC). Field Sparrow: 1-6 were seen in Colonie Jan 1-Feb 22 (JF). White-cr Sparrow: two of this species were reported in Dec — an adult at Troy (PPW et al.) and an imm at Castleton (JC). In Jan another appeared in Colu Co (ADBC) and still a fourth was located nr Tomh Res (RPY). These or others were then reported throughout the period into Mar. The previous rarity of the species in winter in Region 8 may be illustrated in that it had never previously been recorded in either the TCC or SCC, despite the fact that the latter has been conducted for 35 years. White-thr Sparrow: unusually large numbers reported wintering, max 11 TCC Dec 28. Fox Sparrow: several lingered into late Dec, and one was reported at Clarksville Jan 15 (MK). Returning individuals were noted Mar 10 and thereafter in good numbers. Swamp Sparrow: a few individuals were reported into Jan. No return migration noted in period. Lapland Longspur: a few reported, in groups of 1-10, Dec 14 (B-S) — Mar 18 (LB). Snow Bunting: reported throughout period to Mar 21 (SBC), max 500 Jan 15 Mariaville (BRS); considered scarce by most observers.

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