

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WINTER SEASON

December 1 – March 31

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As far as flights of winter finches were concerned the heading would be more appropriately called lowlights of the winter. The almost complete lack of winter finches rivaled the winters of 1964/65 and 1956/57 making three non-invasion winters in the last twelve years. Perhaps because of the poor showing of northern species several regional editors commented on the southern invaders, the Tufted Titmouse, Mockingbird and Cardinal. The increase of the Mockingbird has been documented in this column previously (*Kingbird* 16:93, 1966). Using the regular Christmas counts, the increase of the other two species are shown in the table below.

	49/50	50/51	51/52	52/53	53/54	54/55	55/56	56/57
Tufted Titmouse								
(Region 10)	3	0	5	2	10	7	18	18
(Upstate)	0	0	0	0	6	9	5	10
Cardinal								
(Region 10)	41	45	57	22	72	81	73	134
(Upstate)	65	62	116	136	160	168	182	199

	57/58	58/59	59/60	60/61	61/62	62/63	63/64	64/65	65/66
Tufted Titmouse									
(Region 10)	47	17	74	196	158	153	286	165	160
(Upstate)	6	8	47	30	85	46	49	40	48
Cardinal									
(Region 10)	146	119	220	311	297	389	362	428	303
(Upstate)	312	369	537	498	685	943	1003	623	856

In 1949/50 the Tufted Titmouse was recorded on only two counts, the Bronx-Westchester and Rockland County. The only large count (94) was Rockland County which is excluded from the table since no counts were made over the period 1956–1960. The Tufted Titmouse increased in Region 10 in the late 1950's but substantial numbers are still confined to the Bronx-Westchester, Manhattan and Staten Island counts. Upstate it was recorded regularly at Binghamton from the mid 1950's and by the end of the decade was regularly observed on the Jamestown, Rochester, Schenectady and Troy counts. However the numbers have never risen to high levels except in the lower Hudson Valley. In 1965/66 four counts, Bronx-Westchester, Peekskill, Putnam and Rockland County, accounted for 407 out of the 629 recorded on the 45 New York State counts.

In 1949/50 the reports of Cardinal were confined to the lower Hudson (Rockland County with 35 individuals had the highest count in the state), western Long Island and the Lake Ontario—Lake Erie coastal plain. The overall rise both in Region 10 and upstate was steady over the next decade but has remained approximately constant over the last five years. However, during this period there has been some filling in of areas where the species had been scarce, for instance at Fort Plain there was a large increase in the winter of 1965/66. In several instances small numbers have been recorded in an area for a few years followed by a rapid increase to a higher level. For example the cardinal was first recorded on the Schenectady count in 1956 and the numbers remained low until 1960/61 when there was a sharp rise. Thirty or so individuals were recorded on each count since, until this winter when 69 were found. The pattern in Troy was similar with the first record in 1958/59, followed by a plateau of 30–40 individuals over the period 1962/63 to 1965/66 and then a record count of 95 this year.

The Brewer's Blackbird collected in Region 1 is the first specimen for the state, and indeed for the northeastern United States. There have been a number of sight records of this difficult species but the nearest specimens have been Ohio and the Carolinas. Eared Grebes were reported in Regions 1, 2, & 3 and there were more records than usual of both eiders along the Great Lakes. Other rarities included Lark Bunting from Region 1 (first upstate record), Lesser Black-backed Gull (Regions 3 & 5), a full plumage male Painted Bunting and a Varied Thrush (Region 8), and Region 10 produced a Tufted Duck, Lapwing, and Bridled Tern.

The above completes, for me, five years of writing 'The Highlights of the Season'. I would like to thank all those who have borne my questions about their records so patiently.

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Abbreviations used in regional reports: arr—arrival, arrived; Co—County; imm—immature; L—Lake; max—maximum one-day count; mob—many observers; Pk—Park; Pt—Point; R—River; Rd—Road.

REGION 1 — NIAGARA FRONTIER

ROBERT A. SUNDELL

In general, December and January were characterized by above average temperature, particularly for a week in mid-January, and by subnormal precipitation. A notable exception occurred during early December when two violent lake-effect blizzards deposited from 50 to 60 inches of snow in the Mayville-Hartfield area of Chautauqua County. February and March brought temperatures several degrees below the average. On February 16 a severe cold wave and accompanying high winds resulted in freezing of much open water, including Lake Erie, and tem-