

whether evidence of hybridization, such as red in wings or tail and moustache color, is present. Museum specimens may be unintentionally biased by the tendency to collect the odd-plumaged birds.

In his doctoral thesis (Cornell University, 1959), "Hybridization in the Flickers (*Colaptes*) of North America," Lester LeRoy Short, Jr. stated (p. 73) that "the incidence of orange or reddish shaft color in eastern *auratus* population is rather high (table 20)." This table showed that of 266 specimens of Yellow-shafted Flicker from beyond 1000 miles east and north of the center of hybridization in Nebraska about one-third showed this color in some of the shafts and vanes of wings or tail, usually symmetrically. He also commented that "it would appear that the original source of this character in the eastern flicker population was the *cafer* population" probably by introgression. He concluded that "the various North American flickers, exclusive of *Colaptes fernandinae* of Cuba, . . . should be recognized as comprising one species, *Colaptes auratus*" with five subspecific groups—*auratus* (Yellow-shafted), *cafer* (Red-shafted), *chrysoides* (Gilded), *mexicanoides* and *chrysocaulosus*.

A hasty check of 59 New York State Yellow-shafted Flicker specimens, mostly Tompkins County, in the Cornell collection showed that at least eight of these had some orange or red color in the shafts and vanes of the wing and tail feathers.

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WINTER SEASON

December 1—March 31

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The term old-fashioned winter conjures up pictures of iced-over lakes and huge snow drifts; whether they were really more severe than some recent ones in New York State is open to doubt. It is, however, interesting to contemplate the differences in the species that the bird watcher might expect to see now as compared to fifty years ago. The old-timer probably saw more Sharp-shins and Cooper's Hawks than could be found today, but the total list has increased over the years. The Great Black-backed Gull did not penetrate into the Great Lakes until the mid-1930's and has increased greatly both on the coast and in the Great Lakes basin since then. The ratio of Mallards to Blacks has increased, due to an increase in the number of Mallards. The state-wide average from the waterfowl census for 1955-59 was just under 5000, compared to over 10,000 in 1962-66. It is among the landbirds that the increase in variety of species is the most marked. The Mourning Dove is now a common winter resident. The Evening Grosbeak was rare before the early 1940's. Cardinal, Tufted Titmouse, and Mockingbird are all part of the winter scene now. The increases of these species on Christmas counts has been tabulated previously in these summaries (*Kingbird* 16:93, 17:87). Undoubtedly some of these changes have been aided by the availability of food at feeders. Baltimore Orioles and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks winter regularly in small numbers. An Orange-crowned Warbler was at a Long Island feeder for a few weeks in January. While not related to feeders it is of interest that on December 31, King and Virginia Rails were re-

ported in Region 1, a rail of one or other of these species in the Adirondacks and five Gallinules were seen in Region 2.

It was, for most of the state, a poor winter for finches. The table used previously (*Kingbird* 14:93) is brought up to date. In this table, 1 denotes a slight flight, 2 a fair flight and 3 a large flight.

	58/59	59/60	60/61	61/62	62/63	63/64	64/65	65/66	66/67	67/68	67/68
										A	B
Evening Grosbeak	2	2	1	2	2	2	1	3		3	2
Purple Finch	2				3	1	1			1	1
Pine Grosbeak				3		1		3		3	
Redpoll		3		1		1		3			
Siskin	1	1	2		2	2		2		3	1
Red Crossbill			3			3		1		3	
White-winged Crossbill			2			3		2			

The contrast between the Adirondacks (A) and the remainder of the state (B) is clearly seen. The large flight of Pine Grosbeaks and Red Crossbills did not reach the lower regions at all, and the modest flight of Evening Grosbeaks was largely in the later part of the winter.

The reports of northern raptors were highly variable. Record numbers of Rough-legged Hawks were reported in the Finger Lakes and Hudson Valley. Other areas had very few. The Finger Lakes also had good numbers of Short-eared Owls whereas neighboring regions reported the species to be very scarce. A fine count of 36 Long-eared Owls was reported from Long Island. The flight of Snowy Owls and Northern Shrikes was light.

Over much of the state the spring flight of Whistling Swans was the largest ever recorded. The main flight started on March 22 and continued until the end of the month, the record numbers apparently being due to a combination of westerly winds, followed by a rain and snow storm which grounded the swans. In Region 1, where the species is regular in fair numbers, a count of over 1000 was made on March 26 in Conewango Valley. This appears to be the second largest flock ever recorded in the state, the record being 3000 on Chautauqua Lake on March 20, 1955 (Beardslee and Mitchell, *Birds of The Niagara Frontier Region*, p. 111). However the 1955 flight of swans was not as widespread as this year. In Region 2 there was a build-up in numbers from March 22 on the lake front, with a maximum count of 650 on March 30. A flock of 125 was reported from Montezuma and flocks of 30-100 were noted throughout the Finger Lakes Region. In Region 5, the maximum was 34, Oneida Lake, March 25; in Region 8, maximum 20, Watervliet Reservoir,

March 25. Both of these counts were regional records. Two reports from Dutchess County were the first for a quarter of a century. No Whistling Swans were reported on Long Island. It is regretted that the Region 4 report was not available for the compilation of this summary.

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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.

All numbers given are the numbers of individuals unless otherwise stated.

REGION 1 — NIAGARA FRONTIER

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December brought severe winter weather during the first few days tapering off rapidly to mild conditions with temperatures considerably above normal until Christmas. At this time cold temperatures and snow brought a quick return to seasonal conditions and inland waters froze up rapidly. The first half of January and especially the second week were characterized by some of the coldest temperatures ever recorded. On January 12 at least six communities in Chautauqua County reported unofficial readings of -30°F or lower including -40° at Clarks Corners. Temperatures during the second half of the month, particularly after the twentieth, were above average with a typical January thaw. Both months had average temperatures several degrees above normal. February was several degrees colder than average while the second week in March finally brought some relief from the firmly entrenched frigid arctic air and at the beginning of the third week temperatures rose into the fifties. Precipitation was generally below average throughout the Region but a notable exception was Little Valley in Cattaraugus County where 200 inches of snowfall accumulated compared with the winter norm of about 160 inches.

As is often true for this Region, interest centered around the gulls. On December 11 and 17 single adult specimens of *Larus argentatus thayeri* or *Larus thayeri* (depending upon the authorities followed) were collected at Lewiston on the Niagara River. This represents the first occurrence of this form in New York State. Of additional interest is the fact that there may have been as many as six individuals present during mid-December and furthermore that birds probably representing *thayeri* have been observed during the winter of several years dating back at least to 1954. It is possible that this form may be an occasional (or perhaps regular) winter visitor on the Niagara River. Other gulls of interest were Black-headed in December and March, a Franklin's lingering until the unusually late date of December 23, an estimated 15,000 Bonaparte's (well below the November peak) just above Niagara Falls on December 16, five Little on the Buffalo Ornithological Society Christmas Count December 23 and at least three immature Black-legged Kittiwakes.

Typical winter species such as the Rough-legged Hawk, Short-eared Owl and Northern Shrike were present in very modest numbers. About 12 Snowy Owls gave rise to approximately 20 reports. Except for the Pine Siskin and Evening Grosbeak (in Allegany County) the winter finches were poorly represented again this year. Interesting reports of unseasonal occurrences were those of Snow Goose, King and Virginia Rails, Phoebe, Yellowthroat, Baltimore Oriole, Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Dickcissel (the last three at feeders).

March brought the usual surge of waterfowl, hawks and blackbirds plus numerous other less conspicuous types. There was a count of over 1000 whistling Swans north-