

Marsh Wren: 1 at MC was last observed Dec. 12. Mockingbird: MCC 106, RCC 170, more than twice their previous high. WCC on WCC. First on any count in 1951. Gray Catbird: 1 Dec. 14-Jan. 11 at Cornwall. 7 on RCC. Am. Robin: unusually high numbers, second only to last year's high; sev flocks in Dutch and Ulst averaged between 200-500 thru period; 218 on RCC and 577 on WCC. The RCC count was just under previous high and the WCC count was twice prev high. Hermit Thrush: RCC had 14, twice prev high; 4 on WCC was a record; 8 in Dutch dur Jan. Others were reported from most areas every month. Water Pipit: 1 or 2 Dec. and Jan. in Dutch. Northern Shrike: an excellent year; reported from most areas; 1 at Cruger's I. seen thru period. Starling: an extremely large roost of more than 10,000 on Mid-Hudson Bridge, pk. in Jan.; the 3506 on RCC was lower than usual.

VIREOS-WARBLED: Yellow-rumped Warbler: many thru period; BCC 8, MCC 3, RCC 5, WCC 7.

WEAVERS-SPARROWS: House Sparrow: many reporters feel numbers definitely reduced; 297 on RCC was the lowest since 1948. Numbers in 1960's avg 1200. Red-winged Blackbird: a few scattered reports thru period; numbers arr Feb. 25 in most areas. Rusty Blackbird: several reports in Dec. and Jan.; 121 on RCC was a new high. Common Grackle: a few thru winter; fall birds lingered thru Dec. 25.; spring birds returned en masse Feb. 25-26. Cardinal: RCC had 227, a good comeback from lows of the past several years; WCC had 212 with a usual avg of 100. DICKCISSEL: 1 Dec. 25-27 near Stanfordville (FG). House Finch: RCC'S 190 was an all time high; MCC 52, WCC 209; continues to increase. Pine Grosbeak: 1 Slide Mt. Jan. 8 (Al Brayton); another, a dead female, found at Rio Res same date (Pete Both). The only flock was 18-20 at Monticello Jan. 20. Am. Goldfinch: 180 on RCC was well up from the low of 88 in 1975. Rufous-sided Towhee: 2 Dutch in Jan.; 2 males at Gardiner Ulst thru early Mar. Dark-eyed Junco: numbers up on RCC to 531, best since 1972; 900 on WCC was well above their usual 300. White-crowned Sparrow: 3 wintered Amenia and another 1 at Wawarsing. White-throated Sparrow: 445 on RCC; 362 on WCC; well above avg for each count. Fox Sparrow: several reports of wintering birds at feeders. Snow Bunting: flocks of 300-500 in Dutch thru period; several reports of smaller flocks elsewhere.

Pellwood Lake, Highland Falls, New York 10928

REGION 10 - MARINE

ANTHONY J. LAURO

The winter season was, of course, bitterly cold with the combined December-January temperature range the coldest since the winter of 1917-1918. The average temperatures were: Dec. 29.9° F (1.2° C), Jan. 22.1° F (-5.5° C), Feb. 33.5° F (8° C). The average rainfall in inches was 2.29 (5.8 cm) for Dec., 2.25 (5.7 cm) for Jan., 2.51 (6.4 cm) for Feb.

After at least 8 years of relatively mild winters, record low temperatures in January applied severe survival pressures to the avifauna throughout the region.

Although high mortality would seem to be likely with such temperature ranges as experienced, this observer believes that the loss was surprisingly low. In the area extending from Jamaica Bay to the Shinnecock Inlet, the count of dead waterfowl was about 1,000 birds, ± 250. Black Duck and Brant accounted for about 75% of the total mortality. Most mainland Long Island ponds and streams froze over, thereby causing widespread displacement of species to habitats not normally associated with that species, i.e., pond ducks to

bays and ocean and bay ducks to the ocean. This displacement severely affected feral pond ducks from mainland Long Island. The Brant population largely vacated the region in mid-January and the birds which remained could be seen feeding on grass along parkways, golf courses and interior farm areas.

The day *after* the *extended* hunting season ended, Long Island hunting associations called for a major feeding program to save the starving waterfowl. The hue and cry was taken up by the media and the outer beach areas of Long Island were soon inundated with well-meaning folk loaded down with white bread, Oreos, bagels and popcorn which they tossed out to rafts of Greater Scaup and stray groups of Brant. The waterfowl wisely ignored this gastronomic onslaught but the gulls waxed famously on the offerings. Indeed, the gulls had a banner winter; not only feeding on the aforementioned tidbits, but also on the dead waterfowl and the corn placed by the hunting groups. Those groups were chagrined at the Brant's unwillingness to feed upon their corn which, however, was taken by the Black Ducks and undoubtedly helped some survive.

The ice cover broke up in mid-February and with the exception of the Brant which never seemed to reappear in "before-freeze" numbers, most *wild* populations returned in normal numbers to normal feeding habitats.

Some heron mortality was recorded by David Martin who found several dead Great Blue Herons and American Bitterns in the Jones Beach area marshes.

Passerines were also severely affected and their disappearance from the region can be attributed to both displacement and/or death. Yellow-rumped Warblers were very scarce and only a few warblers were reported on Christmas counts. Fran File of Deer Park has nurtured a few Northern Orioles through past winters at her feeders. This year's oriole died. Spring breeding censuses will perhaps tell how "southern" species such as Cardinals, Mockingbirds and Carolina Wrens fared.

Winter finches were spotty with scattered reports of a few Evening Grosbeaks and with several reports of good numbers of Purple Finches at feeders. A few Common Redpolls were reported from the Jones Beach area but few crossbills and no Pine Grosbeaks, or Pine Siskins.

Rarities for the period include a probable "European" Whimbrel, Sabine's Gull, an incredible Burrowing Owl, and Green-tailed Towhee.

Observers: JA—Jim Ash, THD—Thomas H. Davis, AJL—Anthony J. Lauro, GSR—Gilbert S. Raynor.

LOONS—DUCKS: Both Common and Red-throated Loons were scarce this year with most records coming from Eastern L.I. where THD noted a strong flight of Red-necked Grebes with a maximum of 5 at Montauk on Feb. 19. Six Whistling Swans (mob) were noted feeding in the fields around Mecox Bay from Dec. 18 through the end of the season. Three European Wigeons also wintered in this area through the season. The perennial Tufted Duck returned to Ward's Island Dec. 16 (J. A. Machado *et al.*) and W. Sedwitz had a pair at Jerome Reservoir on Feb. 9. Harlequin Ducks were reported at Shinnecock Inlet Dec. 11 (pair) and a single bird was seen at Montauk Jan. 8 (GSR). JA *et al.* found a drake **BARROW'S GOLDENEYE** on Feb. 4-12 at Shinnecock. An awesome mixed flock of about 20,000 scoters was present at Montauk during the period but eiders were scarce with only 2 King and 5 to 10 Common counted.

HAWKS—ALCIDS: An immature and an adult Goshawk wintered in the JBSP area (mob). Bill Paterson had a Red-shouldered Hawk at Muttontown Preserve through the period and the Southern Nassau Count turned up 2 in the Lawrence area on Jan. 4. An immature **GOLDEN EAGLE** turned up at Connetquot River State Park Dec. 25-Jan. 4 (G. Bergin *et al.*). 2 subadult Bald Eagles were found in Woodhaven Cemetery by J. Capiti-

lupo *et al.* early Jan.-mid Feb. Another immature Bald Eagle was shot by hunters in Dec. in the Southampton area and widespread publicity in the media plus an offer of a reward led to the arrest of the culprits shortly thereafter. Merlins were almost common this winter as at least 8 birds were reported. C. Ward had the only report of a Peregrine Falcon, Freeport, Feb. 4. A late flock of 22 Am. Golden Plovers was seen at JFK Airport on Dec. 7 by A. & H. Richards and GSR had a late or early (take your pick) Piping Plover on Jan. 8 at Shinnecock. A large WHIMBREL seen at Brookhaven on Dec. 27 by P. Puleston *et al.* was identified to be the European race. No head-stripping was seen at close range, but bill, size and white rump would seem to indicate the Eurasian form. White-winged gulls were present in small numbers with Glaucous and Iceland Gulls most common in the Shinnecock area. The LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL reported last fall by B. Spencer lingered at Hempstead Harbor until Jan. 6 when the freeze caused the bird to disappear. Another one was reported in subadult plumage at Sagaponack Pond on Feb. 27 (JA). The winter freeze also drove out the 2 to 3 Black-headed Gulls which had been frequenting the Zach's Bay area. THD had an adult at Shinnecock on Jan. 22 and B. Dieterich another on Feb. 12 at Flushing Meadow Park. A late, immature SABINE'S GULL was discovered feeding with Bonaparte's Gulls on Dec. 4 at Democrat Point (AJL, B. Dieterich, R. Kelly). Up to 2,700 Bonaparte's Gulls with 4 Little Gulls wintered at the Fire Island Inlet. Although the Cape Ann to Cape Cod area had a major flight of alcidae this winter, few birds reached our area. With the exception of a flock of 38 Razorbills seen at Montauk Jan. 23 (THD *et al.*) the other sightings of Razorbills were spotty, i.e., 1, Jan. 8 Montauk (GSR), 5 Jan. 16 Montauk (J. Gee *et al.*), 1 Jan. 22 Montauk, 4 Feb. 20 Montauk (THD). Massachusetts had "hundreds" of Thick-billed Murres this year. Our area reported one, seen on Dec. 24 at Moriches Inlet (GSR). This leads us to the best story of the period: On January 8, Harvey Richardson and Susan Rackett reported a COMMON MURRE at Brookhaven Lab and I quote, "The bird was discovered staggering across a roadway and dove headfirst into a snowbank when approached. It seemed very weak and had a slight scrape on one wing but otherwise was alert and in good condition. There had been a big wind storm the day before. It was released in a pond at the Lab and was sighted for several days afterward."

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: On Dec. 27, 1976, T. Rodney Gardner discovered a BURROWING OWL at Cedar Beach, Long Island. It was seen by numerous observers until the next day, when it was captured to keep it from starving. For the full story see page 69 of this issue. Snowy Owls were scarce this year and widely distributed: Jan. 9 Great Kills Park, S.I. (W. Flamm); Jan. 12 Greenport (G. Rackett); Jan. 25 Flushing (W. Douzak); Jan. to Feb. Bellport (*fide* A. Cooley). Saw-whet Owls were also scarce with only 3 reported from the Jones Beach area. 8 sightings of Short-eared Owls were reported, all from the south shore of L.I.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: There were 22 scattered reports of Eastern Phoebe during the period, all in December. B. Spencer had a Loggerhead Shrike on the Northern Nassau Count in late December.

VIREOS-WARBLES: The Northern Nassau C.C. also turned up a very late Northern Waterthrush (J. Doran). Except for Yellow-rumped and a few Com. Yellowthroats, this was the only warbler reported.

WEAVERS-SPARROWS: A male Rose-breasted Grosbeak lingered at a feeder from Dec. 14 to Dec. 21 in Babylon (J. Smith, F. File) and a Blue Grosbeak amazed observers (A. Dignan) at a feeder in Freeport Jan. 7-13, reportedly the first January record for the area. The first Long Island record of GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE also showed up at a feeder in Wading River, Dec. 8 to Feb. 21 (R. Adamo *et al.*); recognizable photo by THD. J. Stoneck had a Grasshopper Sparrow on Jan. 10 at Great Kills, S.I. and AJL had a LINCOLN'S SPARROW at The Springs on Dec. 18 along with B. Lauro, F. File.

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