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REGION 9 – DELAWARE-HUDSON

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This was one of the coldest seasons on record with below freezing temperatures through most of December and all of January. The latter month brought the lowest temperatures in years, with higher elevations below 0⁰ F (-17.7⁰ C) most of the month. February brought a warming trend, and by mid-month the lower Hudson was almost free of ice. Snow came to stay on Dec. 25, and was frequently added to thru January. The ground did not clear until late February.

The biggest news of the period was the oil spill of Feb. 4, when a barge carrying 2.5 million gallons of No. 6 heavy fuel oil struck a rock just south of Conn's Hook in the Hudson R. (3 mi north of Bear Mt.). Over the next 4 days 420,000 gallons of its cargo spilled into the ice-choked river. Tides carried the oil several miles upstream, and the natural flow of the river carried it south past N.Y.C. to coat the outer beaches of Long Island. Its total damage to wildlife will never be fully known. Several hundred birds were observed to be affected by the oil. Of the 70 taken to the Hi Tor Animal Shelter and cleaned, many of the larger waterfowl, swans and geese, were found to be suffering from malnutrition. This was probably due to the very hard freeze for more than a month before. About 12 Herring Gulls and 20 female Common Mergansers were observed oiled as far north as Cornwall Bay, Feb. 12 and several oiled Herring Gulls were seen Feb. 25 as far away from the river as Rondout Res. some 40 miles from the scene of the spill. The ice was probably instrumental in preventing even greater destruction since much of the oil was kept in midstream and might have affected even more birds had it invaded shallows. Most of the oil was far downstream when a mid-Feb. thaw released the ice from shore and allowed some of the oil to get at some of the dabblers. Hopefully more information will be received for publication in future issues.

Most area Christmas counts did well with clear weather and numerous participants. Most counts experienced record Red-tailed Hawks, Goshawks and Hermit Thrushes. The latter was probably an echo of the big fall migration.

Northern Shrikes were present in most areas as were Yellow-rumped Warblers. House Sparrows have most reporters speculating on the reason for their steady decline. Turkey Vultures and the common blackbirds were returning by the last week in February. Northern finches went entirely unreported with the exception of Evening Grosbeaks in small numbers thru the period, and Pine Grosbeaks only once or twice.

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Abbreviations: The first four or five letters of each county, CB—Cornwall Bay; MC—Marshlands Conservancy, Rye; PL—Playland, Rye; BCC—Burroughs Christmas Count, 12/26; MCC—Mearns Christmas Count, 12/19; RCC—Rockland Christmas Count, 12/26; WCC—Waterman Christmas Count, 12/27; FWC—Federation Waterfowl Count, 1/9.

LOONS-DUCKS: Common Loon: sev scattered reports on open water dur Dec., max 5 Rye Dec. 26. Horned Grebe: several stranded on land; 2 along highways in Oran and 1 at a Sull hotel. The former were released in good condition, the latter died. Great Blue Heron: sev wintering along L.I. Sound, very few elsewhere. **GREAT EGRET:** 1 lingered at MC thru Dec. 12. Black-crowned Night Heron: 12 at PL early Dec., reduced to 2 by month's end. **WHISTLING SWAN:** at least 3 calling over Newburgh Feb. 25 at 5 a.m. (BS). Canada Goose: usual few wintering in open water. Local birds returned with the first thaw in mid Feb.; no major flights noted. RCC had 870, 300 over previous high of 1975. Brant: 4 at PL Dec. 26. Snow Goose: 1 Port Chester Dec. 30 (Kath. Bregman). Pintail: 1st 2 Rock L Feb. 28 (GB). Green-winged Teal: 1st 3 Feb. 28, Rock L. **BLUE-WINGED TEAL:** first time on RCC, a male on Hackensack R below L DeForest Dam. Am. Wigeon: 8 on FWC; 15 Iona Is Dec. 6. Wood Duck: 2 FWC; 1 Fishkill Jan. 23. Redhead: more than usual; first 4 Rio Res. Jan. 30 (KM); max 12 Rondout Res. Feb. 12 (Art Gingert). Ring-necked Duck: missed on FWC, probably due to poor West coverage; first 3 CB Feb. 25. Canvasback: FWC had 1/5 usual number; max 300 at MC Jan. 8. Oldsquaw: 2 Rondout Res. Dec. 28 were unusual. White-winged Scoter: second record for FWC; 1 at CB, 2 there Feb. 25 (BS). Ruddy Duck: only 1 on FWC; 2 doz at PL thru late Dec. Hooded Merganser: also missed for first time on FWC; max 25 on PL Dec. 5; first returns were 1 Feb. 23 and 5 Feb. 28 on Hudson in Dutch. RCC had unusual high of 22, 5 times the previous high in 1957. Red-breasted Merganser: on FWC for third time, 8 CB.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Turkey Vulture: 1 Pound Ridge Jan. 27; residents arr Feb. 25-27 in most areas. Goshawk: more winter reports than ever before; from 1 to 3 on all Christmas Counts, and several others thru season. Sharp-shinned Hawk: the usual few wintering. Cooper's Hawk: 1 Jan. 14-15 Amenia. Red-tailed Hawk: broke most Christmas Count records: 39 on RCC, 44 on WCC, 59 on MCC. Red-shouldered Hawk: 1 PL and another at MC in late Dec.; the latter remained thru mid Jan. **BROAD-WINGED HAWK:** has been reported in winter several times before, but reports usually rejected. This season 1 was well-observed and properly documented at Indian L. Dutch on Jan. 30 (Art Gingert). Rough-legged Hawk: scarce; max 4 at Galeville Airport thru Jan. and Feb.; scattered individuals elsewhere. Bald Eagle: usual wintering birds at Sull Reservoirs; 8 ad at Rondout Jan. 22, and 2 ad and 3 imm at Mongaup-Rio on Jan. 8. Scattered singles reported along the Hudson thru period. Marsh Hawk: more than usual; singles in most counties; max 3 Galeville Airport Dec. 11. Merlin: 2 west Oran reports in Dec. (no details). Am. Kestrel: 23 on RCC was twice previous best count. Turkey: 1 Feb. 5 near Stissing Mt. (Thelma Haight). Clapper Rail: 2 at MC thru Dec., reduced to 1 in Jan. and none after Jan. 8. Am. Coot: 76 on RCC was their lowest since 1969. Iceland Gull: only report 1 imm at Wappingers Cr. and the Hudson Feb. 28. Bonaparte's Gull: 95 on RCC was the 4th time in the past 4 years, none before.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Mourning Dove: 201 on RCC was low, 164 on MCC was high. Short-eared Owl: at least 12 at Galeville Airport thru mid Dec.; heavy snows of late month drove them out; none there Dec. 29. Saw-whet Owl: only 1 Feb. 14-16 Fishkill (Tom Storey). Belted Kingfisher: 13 on RCC tied last year's all time high. Red-bellied Woodpecker: 5 on WCC and 2 on RCC. Several others reported thru season. Red-headed Woodpecker: 1 imm Sylvan L Dutch from Dec. 15, 1 ad Dover Plains Jan.; usual Oran birds reported. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: 1 Cornwall thru period.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Eastern Phoebe: 1 on BCC; 1 Stissing Dec. 16-19 (Thelma Haight). Horned Lark: more birds than usual; max 100-300 in Dutch thru period. Common Crow: an estimated 8000 at Hudson River State Hosp. Dutch roost in Feb. Fish Crow: usual few in Dutch; at least 3 at Newburgh in Feb. White-breasted Nuthatch: 35 on RCC was lowest since 1969. Carolina Wren: more than usual thru period, indicates that cold is not the main factor in their cycle, and that probably ice glaze may be. A male and female survived the January sub-zero weather at Highland Falls from Dec. 25-Feb. 10. Long-billed

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