

REGION 4 – SUSQUEHANNA

LESLIE E. BEMONT

The weather for the period can be described in one word—snow. In other years we in the Binghamton-Owego part of the Region would read of heavy snow storms in the Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and Albany areas and many times see only a few inches or none at all in our area. This year was different. If it snowed anywhere upstate below the Adirondacks, the Binghamton-Owego area got its share and we even felt singled out on occasion. Temperatures were seldom below zero but were persistently in the teens so that the ground was covered with appreciable amounts of snow all period and in Jan. and Feb. there were two to three undrifted feet on the ground most of the time.

In spite of the snow cover it was a reasonably good year for raptors, mainly Sharp-shins, Red-tails and Rough-legs. Because of food preferences one might expect Sharp-shins to be relatively unaffected by solid snow cover, but not the buteos. The Golden Eagle record, on a Christmas Census yet, was particularly gratifying but it must compensate for the complete lack of Snowy Owls. It has been so many years since any number of Snowy Owls was reported in the Susquehanna Region that we've lost track of where the current year should be in the four year cycle.

Of the winter finches only Evening Grosbeaks and Am. Goldfinches were common all period. Pine Siskins and, more especially, Common Redpolls were scarce in Dec., but became very numerous by the end of Feb. Purple Finches followed the same pattern but never did become particularly common. At Christmas Census time, all observers agreed that natural food supplies were in poor shape. Multiflora rose hips, sumac berries and birch catkins had already been well-worked over and many of the tall field weeds had been bent over and buried by snow. How much of the increase in siskins and redpolls was a move to the feeders where they were seen more regularly and how much a move into the Region? Of the non-feeder frequenting winter finches only Pine Grosbeaks were reported in significant numbers but there were isolated reports of both crossbills.

Titmice, Mockingbirds and a few Carolina Wrens are still hanging on and there was even a Brown Thrasher left after a relatively severe December. The Pine Warbler appeared right after one of the worst storms so may have been blown in against its will, so to speak.

The showcase rarities of the season were the Golden Eagle and apparently two Varied Thrushes, although it is possible both thrush reports were of the same bird.

Observers: Cutler and Jeanette Baldwin (C, JB); Jean Barnes (JB); Dewey Bendle; Reynolds Bennett (RB); Gail Corderman; Betsy Darlington; Anna and Marilyn Davis (A, MD); Louise and Warren Dean; Malcom and Sadie Dorber (SD); Ester Fraats; Polly and Earl Getkin (E, PG); Elva Hawken (EH); Jim and Kathy Hoteling (J, KH); S. Hunt; Martha Knowlton; Alice Kohr (AK); Florence Linaberry (FL); Paula Mallery; Harriet Marsi (HM); Rick Marsi; Peter and Dorothy Martin; Evelyn and Bud Mead; Robert and Rita Pantle (RP); Mary Sheffield (MS); Josephine Tuttle (JT); E. and F. Vermilya; Elizabeth Washburn (EW); Don Weber; Anne Whitaker; Kathryn Wilson; Tom and Beryl Wilson; Mrs. G. S. Wright (GW); Martha Zimmerman; Mary Dobinsky.

Abbreviations: BCC—Binghamton Christmas Census, Jan. 1; Bing—Binghamton; TCC—Tioga (Owego) Christmas Census, Jan. 1; WFC—Waterfowl Census.

LOONS—DUCKS: Horned Grebe: 1 Whitney Point Dec. 12; Bing Jan. 25 and 27. Pied-billed Grebe: reported in Owego area in Jan. and Feb. Great Blue Heron: 1 BCC; also in Tioga Co. in Jan. and Feb. Canada Goose: 45 BCC; a flock of 90-100 at Oneonta Dec. 11; no more before the end of the period. Mallard: 217 BCC; 2 TCC; 328 WFC. Black Duck: 35 BCC; 3 TCC; 75 WFC. Redhead: 3 on Chenango River north of Bing Jan. 15 for WFC. Lesser Scaup: 1 BCC and again Jan. 25; Feb. 26 Owego. Common Goldeneye: 2 BCC; 6 TCC; 27 WFC; conspicuous all Feb. along Susquehanna R. Bufflehead: 3 TCC; next reported Feb. 11. Hooded Merganser: 1 BCC. Common Merganser: 5 BCC; 5 TCC; 19 WFC; more common during Feb. Red-breasted Merganser: 1 Bing, Jan. 11 for WFC (EW), not seen again.

HAWKS—ALCIDS: Goshawk: 1 BCC; 1 TCC; also Jan. 7 at Choconut Center and Feb. 6 at Vestal Center. Sharp-shinned Hawk: 11 reports, best winter total in years. Cooper's Hawk: 1 BCC; 1 TCC. Red-tailed Hawk: 7 BCC; 14 TCC; 20 other reports. Red-shouldered Hawk: 1 BCC (J, KH); the only one. Rough-legged Hawk: 4 BCC; of the 9 other reports, 3 in Milford-Portlandville area Jan. 28 was the best count. GOLDEN EAGLE: 1 BCC (EH, SD), seen at close range under favorable conditions and well-described. Bald Eagle: 1 adult Dec. 29 Owego (JB); 1 Middleburg (actually in Region 8) Jan. 29 (GW), feeding on deer carcass; 1 Hale Eddy Feb. 4 (AK); 1 Cannonsville Feb. 19 (SD). Marsh Hawk: 2 BCC. Am. Kestrel: 9 BCC; 7 TCC. Ruffed Grouse: 21 BCC; 2 TCC. Bobwhite: 2 BCC; another came to a back yard in s. Bing for several days around Feb. 10. Ring-necked Pheasant: 6 BCC, 2 TCC. Turkey: a flock of 38 seen repeatedly on the same hillside near Windsor during Jan. and Feb. and two presumably different flocks of about 17 each seen other hillsides in same general area; a flock of about 25 reported at Willseyville, in n. Tioga Co., Feb. 26; 8 other reports of smaller numbers. Am. Coot: Feb. 20 Owego. Am. Woodcock: 1 on a farm at Greene, in Chenango Co., Jan. 7 (A, MD), not reported again. Herring Gull: 13 BCC; 1 TCC; the usual small numbers present along the rivers all period. Ring-billed Gull: Feb. 26 Owego.

PIGEONS—WOODPECKERS: Rock Dove: 334 BCC; 465 TCC. Mourning Dove: 134 BCC; 64 TCC. Screech Owl: 2 BCC; 1 TCC; only 3 other reports. Great Horned Owl: 19 BCC. Barred Owl: 3 BCC; 1 Oneonta Jan. 19. Long-eared Owl: 1 Chenango Valley State Park Jan. 2. Belted Kingfisher: 7 BCC; 1 TCC; small numbers present all during the period in Broome and Tioga Cos. Common Flicker: 5 BCC; 1 Choconut Center all period fed on suet; also at Owego and Candor. Pileated Woodpecker: 2 BCC; 1 TCC; 6 other reports. Hairy Woodpecker: 23 BCC; 18 TCC. Downy Woodpecker: 75 BCC; 52 TCC.

FLYCATCHERS—STARLINGS: Blue Jay: 467 BCC; 255 TCC. Common Crow: 433 BCC; 275 TCC. Black-capped Chickadee: 651 BCC, a record high; 298 TCC. Tufted Titmouse: 47 BCC; a record high, 33 TCC. White-breasted Nuthatch: 100 BCC; 49 TCC. Red-breasted Nuthatch: 38 BCC, up from 10 or less for the last 4 years; 9 TCC; regular visitors at half a dozen feeders in Jan. and Feb. Brown Creeper: 20 BCC; 1 TCC. Winter Wren: 1 BCC, no others. Carolina Wren: 2 BCC; 2 TCC; also 2 at a feeder in e. Vestal during Feb. Mockingbird: 10 BCC; reports from Owego and 3 Oneonta localities. Brown Thrasher: 1 BCC (EH, SD). VARIED THRUSH: a brightly colored male bird at Endicott Dec. 10 and 11 (*vide* HM, FL); about 10 miles west, at Owego Dec. 20 (C, JB) to Jan. 2, apparently another brightly colored male bird came to chopped apple, raisins and dried currants and was seen by many observers. Am. Robin: 2 BCC; Dec. 6 Owego; Feb. 15 Cannonsville. Golden-crowned Kinglet: 13 BCC. Cedar Waxwing: 12 BCC; 20 TCC. Northern Shrike: 1 Endwell Jan. 24; 1 Milford-Oneonta area Jan. 28; Candor Feb. 10; no others. Starling: 3972 BCC; 1015 TCC.

VIREOS—WARBLERS: Yellow-rumped Warbler: Jan. 7 Bing (HM). Pine Warbler: 1 at Conklin, s.e. of Bing, Feb. 6 to 16 (*vide* EH, SD), came regularly to feeders to feed on "re-mains of sunflower seeds and on suet."

WEAVERS—SPARROWS: House Sparrow: 706 BCC; 616 TCC. Redwinged Blackbird:

1 BCC; 1 TCC; 3 other reports. Common Grackle: 1 BCC; 3 Whitney Point Dec. 4; Oneonta Feb. 23; no others. Brown-headed Cowbird: 130 BCC; 4 TCC. Cardinal: 219 BCC; 89 TCC. Evening Grosbeak: 444 BCC; 260 TCC; regular at many feeders but numbers down from previous 2 years. Purple Finch: 3 BCC; 7 TCC; a couple of regular visitors to a feeder in Oneonta all month were the only Dec. birds reported but more frequent reports of small numbers came from all over the Region Jan. and Feb. House Finch: 249 BCC; 95 TCC; obviously increasing in Oneonta, too. Pine Grosbeak: 7 BCC; 18 TCC; no more reported until Jan. 28 but 40 Milford Feb. 18, feeding on maple buds, sumac and apples, max of 10 reports Jan. 28 on. Common Redpoll: 64 BCC; small numbers at Vestal and Endwell during Dec. with many stripped birch catkins suggesting larger numbers, not really common until Jan. 24, but then everywhere. Pine Siskin: 57 BCC; 34 TCC; not many in Dec., becoming more common in Jan. and thru Feb.—more common than redpolls in Dec. and Jan. but considerably less common than redpolls in Feb. Am. Goldfinch: 266 BCC; 183 TCC; also increasing in numbers as the season progressed. Red Crossbill: 1 BCC; 25 Gilbert Lake State Park, n. of Oneonta, Feb. 4; the only reports. White-winged Crossbill: 5 BCC; 1 Vestal Center Jan. 14; also reported from Owego area during Jan., but no others. Vesper Sparrow: 2 TCC (RP). Dark-eyed Junco: 302 BCC; record high; 154 TCC. Tree Sparrow: 507 BCC; 200 TCC. Field Sparrow: 1 or 2 Oneonta until Dec. 21 (RW); 1 Unadilla until Jan. 7 (JT); Jan. 4 Owego (RB); Apalachin Jan. 5 and 11 (P, EG). White-throated Sparrow: 49 BCC; 17 TCC; 1-4 at a number of different Triple Cities area feeders all season. Fox Sparrow: 1 BCC; at Vestal Center until Dec. 9. Swamp Sparrow: 1 BCC. Song Sparrow: 19 BCC; 6 TCC. Snow Bunting: Dec. 19 Owego; Jan. 11 Chenango Bridge; max 200 Milford area Jan. 28.

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REGION 5 — ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

FRITZ SCHEIDER

Deep snow, cold nights, gray days, no birds, and damn near eternal—that about sums up the winter of 1977-78 in Region V. Record-breaking snowfall and unremitting cold combined to make this season a rerun of that last awful winter—1976-77. A brief warm spell in early December gave way to sub-zero degree weather in the first week of the month and both Sandy Pond and Oneida Lake were frozen over by December 8. The local Christmas Bird Counts managed to collect enough half-hardies and winter finches to make a decent showing, but by late December the deepening snow and advancing ice portended another ferocious winter. January fulfilled all signs and portents—72.2 inches of snow, only two days above freezing (both early in the month), and day after day of northerly gales. February maintained the severe winter pattern and by late February bird life away from feeder-supported populations was negligible. The deep snow covered the rodent population so thoroughly that the numbers of even such tough species as Rough-legged Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, and American Kestrel declined. Heaven knows how much subnival rodent damage the local farms and orchards will show come spring. The field birds (Horned Lark, Lapland Longspur, Snow Bunting) also evacuated the area as their food supplies became snow-covered; the local accipiters became conspicuous (and notorious) by haunting feeding stations for prey.

The ice build-up on Lake Ontario achieved an arctic magnificence and im-