

to only a few small flocks, mostly in Ulst. House Finch: numbers off at feeders, probably foraging in the snowless countryside. Am. Goldfinch: most obs report numbers down. Only 47 on WCC which usually averages 150. White-winged Crossbill: only winter finch reported—four in Garrison Dec. 27. Did not stay for PCCC (Ralph O'Dell). Rufous-sided Towhee: more reports than usual, all at feeders. Ab a dozen birds scattered through region. Tree Sparrow: only 63 on WCC which usually averages ab 400. Field Sparrow: only three on RCC compared to 75 in 1974. White-crowned Sparrow: one at MC Jan. 1 was noted there thru month. White-throated Sparrow: ab one-third of usual numbers at Dutch feeders. Fox Sparrow: sev reports of wintering birds east of the Hudson in Dutch, Putn, and West. In all about a dozen birds. Lapland Longspur: two near Middletown at Warren Sod Farm. Dec. 2 was the only report. Snow Bunting: only report 150 at Warren Sod Farm Dec. 2.

Pellwood Lake, Highland Falls, New York 10928

REGION 10 – MARINE

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The winter was relatively mild and snowless, with good weather conditions through the Christmas count period. Blossoms appeared in December on winter jasmine and persisted through January, until a cold snap discouraged them toward the beginning of February. At that time there was some freezing of shallow salt water areas. Strong northeast winds and high tides combined to cut a new inlet through the barrier beach just east of Moriches Inlet in mid-January. Heavy snowstorms passed to the south of us as semi-arid conditions developed. A drop to 10° F or lower on February 29 produced the coldest day of the season as March came in like a polar bear.

The season lacked excitement and change of pace as far as birds were concerned. Apart from scattered reports of some late-lingering individuals and the overwintering of some species, including at least fourteen species of shorebirds, most expected winter movements did not materialize. There were no "winter finches," few "white-winged" gulls, no feeder rarities, and sea and diving ducks were in low numbers. Apparently waterfowl and smaller birds felt little pressure to move south as far as our area.

Christmas Count Highlights

The Montauk count Dec. 15 tallied 130 species, one shy of the count record. (Although both totaled 130 species, the present count included Rock Dove.) While winter finches were absent, shorebirds filled in the gap. Turkey Vulture and Willet were new to the count, while Parasitic Jaeger and Western Kingbird had been reported only once before. Also of interest were two Yellow-breasted Chats. The absence of a Bald Eagle was unusual for this count. One generally winters on Gardiner's Island.

The Quogue-Watermill count, also held on Dec. 15, totaled 111 species including a first record of American Oystercatcher. Of interest were kittiwake, Laughing Gull, Black-headed Gull, and all three accipiters.

The Captree count, Dec. 16, located 113 species, none new to the count. European Wigeon, Peregrine Falcon, and three Red-necked Grebes were noteworthy.

Central Suffolk counters found 118 species Dec. 26, the lowest for the area since 1969. Shorebirds were in good numbers with a Short-billed Dowitcher found for the first time, Willet and Marbled Godwit for the second time. Other uncommon species included kittiwake, Blue-winged Teal, Cooper's Hawk, and Northern Oriole. The most notable absence was the Sanderling, usually one of the most common shorebirds in the area.

The Northern Nassau count Dec. 29 totaled 107 species, about average for that area. New to the count was Turkey Vulture, possibly the same individual seen at Montauk two weeks earlier. An Orange-crowned Warbler was found for the second time, having last been reported in 1957. Sanderlings were absent from this count also. Of interest were two Goshawks, nine Sharp-shinned Hawks, a Rough-legged Hawk and a Merlin. Blue Jay numbers showed a sharp drop.

Unverified count totals for other areas include Southern Nassau 110, Queens 105, Brooklyn 114, Lower Hudson 128, and Bronx-Westchester 103.

Geese versus Golf

Large flocks of Canada Geese, occurring both winter and summer in suburban areas, create some problems when their habits conflict with the wishes of some of the residents. Glen Cove's newly elected mayor sided with the gun and golf crowd when he permitted local hunters to attempt to shoot some of the 400 geese which gather on the fairways and greens of the municipal golf course. Protests from the neighbors ended this "sporting" event with only two or three casualties (all geese). During the uproar and publicity that followed, the mayor was quoted as saying that only the geese ended up happy. The golfers were mad that more geese weren't shot, and the other groups were very vocal in their condemnation of his actions.

Notes on Feeding Behavior

Art Cooley noticed an interspecific feeding association between Bonaparte's Gulls and Red-breasted Mergansers at Shinnecock Inlet. The gulls followed the mergansers and sought food at the point where the mergansers emerged from a dive. Apparently small items were stirred up by the submerged mergansers. On the Connetquot River, Cooley saw three Mallards, a drake and two hens, diving for food. The birds stayed down 30 to 45 seconds during each dive.

Positive seasonal features included good numbers of Hooded Mergansers and Oldsquaws reported by several observers. The Fish and Wildlife Waterfowl survey found the numbers of Brant up with a good proportion of young birds present. "Myrtle" Warblers were abundant along the beaches. Mild conditions permitted half-hardy species to survive the winter and helped establish new winter records for several species.

Species in low numbers included loons and grebes, Great Blue Herons, scoters, scaup, and most small land birds. Northern finches were virtually absent, and Blue Jays scarce.

Rarities were few: Tufted Duck, Barrow's Goldeneye, Black Guillemot, and Boat-tailed Grackle.

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LOONS-DUCKS: Loons and grebes were rather scarce this winter in general. Two Red-necked Grebes Jan. 13 at Montauk were a good find (AJL). Eighty Great Cormorants Feb. 17 was a good concentration at Sands Point where they winter regularly (GQ). Green Herons lingered for the Brooklyn count Dec. 15, the Staten Island count Dec. 16, Southern Nassau Dec. 30, and one was at Jamaica Bay Jan. 6 (J. Ash, D. Riepe). A Snowy Egret was a rare mid-winter find Jan. 23 on the Forge River in Moriches (GSR, RA). Louisiana Herons were still present Dec. 15 at Jamaica Bay (W. Reilly *et al.*), Dec. 16 on Ward's Island (J. Machado *et al.*). Five Glossy Ibises stayed for the Brooklyn count Dec. 15. A high count of 22 Whistling Swans was present Dec. 1 at Hook Pond (DL, GSR, G. & M. Dremeaux). Seven remained Jan. 12 (GSR); five were still there Jan. 23. By Jan. 27 the five birds had moved to Mecox Bay where they remained through the period. Also on Jan. 27, two whistlers were seen flying over Sands Point (GQ). Several Blue-winged Teal lingered: one evaded the N. Nassau count but was present in Manhasset on Dec. 30, as well as before the count day (PG). Another was reported from Easthampton Jan. 16 (RA), four were found on the Central Suffolk count Dec. 26. Drake European Wigeons were reported from several places with at least two wintering in the Mecox region. One seen Dec. 1 at Hook Pond (G. & M. Dremeaux), was still there Dec. 12 (MC). Another was in Baldwin Dec. 29 to Jan. 19 with many observers, and seen again there Feb. 3 (SBD). A bird was at Mecox Jan. 13 (AJL), at East Moriches Jan. 14 to 16 (GSR); two were at Mecox Feb. 23. A female **TUFTED DUCK** was seen by many people in the Central Park reservoir Dec. 30 to Jan. 13. Mecox Bay came up with a **BARROW'S GOLDENEYE** on Jan. 12 (J. Ruscica, J. Clinton *et al.*). Oldsquaws were present in good numbers in the Fire Island Inlet area. Two female Harlequin Ducks were at Montauk Dec. 15, while a single bird was seen at Shinnecock Inlet Jan. 1 (GSR). Common Eiders were present in low numbers at Montauk with 16 to 20 birds reported. A few King Eiders were present also. Scoters numbered in the low 1000's at Montauk compared to more than 50,000 present during the past two colder winters. Hooded Mergansers seemed in good numbers in suitable locations. Six Common Mergansers were at Hempstead Lake Feb. 18 (GSR); the same observer reported single birds at Ridge Dec. 26, Montauk Jan. 16 and 23, and Feb. 18 at Jamaica Bay.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: A Turkey Vulture present at Montauk Dec. 9 to 15 (MC *et al.*) may have been the same bird seen Dec. 27 at Hempstead Lake (SBD), and at Mill Neck Dec. 29 (O. Dunning *et al.*). Reports of Goshawks seemed few this year. One wintered in the Sands Point area (M. Crandall *et al.*) while another was found at Jones Beach during the S. Nassau count. Sharp-shinned Hawks were plentiful on the N. Nassau count Dec. 29 with nine found. Single birds were seen in several locations during Dec., and one was at Muttontown Jan. 3 (AL). Cooper's Hawks were reported from Muttontown Dec. 24 (AL), from Southampton Dec. 15 (J. Hastings). Rough-legged Hawks were not much in evidence this winter. An individual was seen sporadically in the Montauk area, one was in Southampton Jan. 13 (APC), and another was seen at Muttontown Jan. 3 and Feb. 12 (AL). A Bald Eagle was reported at Shinnecock Inlet Dec. 14 (DL), and an immature was at Jamaica Bay Feb. 8 (W. Friton). Several Peregrine Falcons were reported: one Dec. 16, on the Captree Count, two Dec. 30 on the S. Nassau count, another bird was reported wintering at a Staten Island dump (C. Ward *et al.*). A maximum of four Merlins was present Dec. 30 for the S. Nassau count with individual birds reported on several other counts. On Jan. 11 a dead Merlin was picked up

in Jamesport; the specimen was taken to the Quogue refuge (AD). An American Oystercatcher was found on the Quogue-Watermill count Dec. 15. Perhaps the same individual was located Jan. 1 and 27 at Shinnecock (GSR) and observed by others through the period. Several Ruddy Turnstones wintered at Jones Inlet where they would be found with some regularity. A Whimbrel was present Jan. 19 to Feb. 10 at Jamaica Bay for a first mid-winter record (R. Cook *et al.*). Three Willets were found on the Central Suffolk count, and one remained Jan. 1 in East Moriches (GSR). A single Willet was present in Acabonack Dec. 15-Feb. 17, a first mid-winter record (J. Ash, R. Kelly *et al.*). Scattered Greater Yellowlegs wintered on Long Island. More unusual were several Lesser Yellowlegs present through Dec. Two were at JFK airport Dec. 15, three same day were found on the Brooklyn count, and three were present Dec. 30 on the S. Nassau count. A maximum of 200 Red Knots were present at Jones Inlet Jan. 6 where they were associated with 300-400 Dunlin (R. Paxton). Ten Red Knots were at Shinnecock Dec. 15 (GSR). Four Purple Sandpipers were unusual at Sands Point on Long Island Sound Feb. 17 (GQ), although they occur regularly on the Westchester side of the Sound. The largest flock of Purple Sandpipers wintered at Jones Inlet where 35 to 50 could be found. A late Short-billed Dowitcher was located at Moriches Inlet Dec. 26 (DL). Several reports of Marbled Godwits were received involving at least two individuals. One bird was present at Jamaica Bay until Dec. 15. Another, found Dec. 26 at East Moriches, was present to Dec. 29, and Jan. 1 (GSR) and Jan. 22 (RA). Two Marbled Godwits roosting on rubble, and later standing on the ice of a small pond in Merrick, along with some misbegotten ducks, Canada Geese and Ring-billed Gulls, were a curious sight Feb. 17-23, and established a first mid-winter record (T. Zwarico, BJS *et al.*). At least 14 species of shorebirds were reported locally in Feb. The blunt central rectrices of a light phase Pomarine Jaeger were observed Dec. 2 at Montauk. Another jaeger species was seen at a distance the same day (BJS). A light phase adult Parasitic Jaeger was present at Montauk Point from Dec. 1 (GSR, DL) to Jan. 15, a first mid-winter record (BJS, BC). The now fully adult Iceland Gull (*Larus glaucooides kumlieni*) returned to winter for the third year at the Jones Beach restaurant. Two adult *kumlieni* were seen at Montauk Jan. 15 (BJS, BC, S. Melum) where an adult and an immature Iceland Gull were found Feb. 9 (GSR, RA, DL). Fewer Lesser Black-backed Gulls were seen this winter than in recent years. An adult was present to Jan. 1 at Montauk Point, and an adult was seen at Riis Park Dec. 23 (P. Bernath). A Black-headed Gull was reported on the Quogue-Watermill count Dec. 15. Possibly the same bird, an immature, was seen Jan. 13 at Shinnecock Inlet (APC). Immature Little Gulls were noted Dec. 8 at Shinnecock Inlet, Feb. 18 at Jones Inlet (GSR, RA, DL) and Christmas day at Captree (AJL). Single adults were noted at Montauk Point, Fire Island Inlet Jan. 19 (BJS), Captree Feb. 17 (AJL, SBD). Black-legged Kittiwakes were present in varying numbers at Montauk Dec. 1 through Jan. 23, with several hundred or more present in the area the day of the count, Dec. 15. A record date for Forster's Tern was established Feb. 3, at Plum Beach Brooklyn (T. Stiles, A. & H. Richard). One or two *Sterna* terns were reported in that vicinity during the previous two weeks. A late Common Tern was seen at the fishing station at Jones Beach Dec. 9 (EL). An adult Sooty Tern was found dead Dec. 23 at Cedar Beach; the specimen was sent to the American Museum of Natural History (W. Wilkins). As previously reported, a BLACK GUILLEMOT was seen Dec. 1 at Montauk Point (M. Cashman) where two had been seen the day before. Two Razorbills Dec. 15 at Montauk Point were the only other alcids reported (K. Able, P. A. Buckley).

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Two pairs of Mourning Doves apparently took advantage of the mild weather and nested early. A pair of birds were feeding two small young during Jan. in East Northport (F. Margiotta) while a nest with two "feathered young" was observed Feb. 14 on the Queens College campus (F. Purnell). Barred Owls wintered in unusual numbers in the metropolitan area. Up to three were seen at the Bronx Botanical Gardens (S. Hait *et al.*), another was about five miles away at Pelham Bay Park, while two more wintered in Central Park, pleasing many observers. Long-eared Owls were sparsely reported.

One was at Muttontown Jan. 13, Feb. 16 (AL). Short-eared Owls also seemed scarce this winter. Two were observed Feb. 9 at Sagaponack (GSR). A Red-headed Woodpecker was seen at a feeder on Shelter Island Dec. 28 (GSR). A Western Kingbird Dec. 10 at Sands Point was new for that location (BJS). Another was found Dec. 15 at Montauk Point (BJS, GQ). Eastern Phoebees were found on several counts: one Dec. 16 for Captree, one Dec. 29 for N. Nassau, and three Dec. 26 in Central Suffolk. The late date for a phoebe was set Feb. 3 in Montauk (J. DiCostanzo *et al.*). A very late *empidonax* species was located in Alley Pond Park Dec. 15 (H. Freeman *et al.*). Meager details and the late date suggested that the bird might be of western origin, but specific determination was not made. A late Barn Swallow was seen at Jamaica Bay Dec. 15 (W. Reilly *et al.*). Five Carolina Wrens were located on Shelter Island during the Orient count (GSR). This number cannot compare to the larger population on nearby Gardiner's Island, yet seems to show renewed strength for this species. A Brown Thrasher wintered in Sea Cliff at a feeder (AMB). Another was seen in Sands Point Jan. 27 (GQ). Three Eastern Bluebirds were seen Dec. 7 in Manorville (GSR). The only N. Shrike reported this winter was present Dec. 10-11 in Kissena Park, Queens (W. Astle).

VIREOS-WARBLERS: Late lingering and overwintering warblers provided some interest in an otherwise dull season: a late Black-and-white Warbler was in Hewlett Harbor Dec. 2 (R. Sloss). Orange-crowned Warblers were found Dec. 29 in Port Washington (BJS, BC), and Jan. 20 at Tobay (AJL). A Cape May Warbler was at Tobay Dec. 2 (EL). A male Black-throated Blue Warbler was at a feeder in Smithtown from Nov. 18 to Mar. 9 eating peanut butter mixed with suet and wheat germ, cranberries and bananas (N. Sloane). Another was at the Montauk dump Dec. 1 (DL). An "Audubon's" Warbler was carefully observed Dec. 12 in Babylon (K. Malone). A Pine Warbler lingered for the Montauk count Dec. 15. A maximum of seven Palm Warblers was found Dec. 30 on the S. Nassau count. An Ovenbird overwintered in Southold, present Jan. 7-Mar. 16 eating seed on the ground (V. Moore). A Common Yellowthroat was found Feb. 9 in Easthampton (GSR). Two Yellow-breasted Chats were found Dec. 15 on the Montauk count. One lingered until Feb. 3 (J. DiCostanzo, *et al.*). A female American Redstart lingered to Dec. 9 at Bridgehampton (J. Ash).

WEAVERS-SPARROWS: A Northern Oriole was at a feeder in Williston Park from Jan. 13-20 (R. Rosenberg). A female **BOAT-TAILED GRACKLE** was associated with Redwings at Oakland Lake, Queens Dec. 15-22, with many observers. "Ipswich" Sparrows, which are so different behaviorially from Savannah Sparrows, are still found along Island beaches: six were found on the Captree count Dec. 16, four were seen on the Central Suffolk count Dec. 26, one was at Montauk Dec. 1 (GSR), and stayed for the count Dec. 15, another was seen at Jan. 13 in Mastic, and at Jones Beach Feb. 18 (GSR). Three Vesper Sparrows were found for the Captree count, one on N. Nassau, and a Vesper was at Shinnecock Dec. 15 (GSR). A Lark Sparrow was seen at a feeder in N. Babylon Feb. 16, and remained through the end of the month. Four White-crowned Sparrows were observed Jan. 16 at Mecox and one in Easthampton Feb. 9 (GSR).

A correction: In the summer 1979 report, the Black-headed Gull reported should be a Lesser Black-backed Gull. The bird was in sub-adult plumage, possibly approaching its third winter.

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