

appeared in Gabriels in late Feb. which is early. Gray Jays were at Moose R. Plains. Blue Jay: max 35 screaming in alarm over a dead jay at the foot of a tree Jan. 10 (CD). Com. Ravens were widespread and really an every day bird from Moose R. Plains and Indian L. to the Union Falls Flow. There was a very strong influx of Black-capped Chickadees that stayed all winter. Boreal Chickadees were easy to find. White-breasted and Red-breasted Nuthatches were about equal in numbers even in the deep forest. This is unusual. Two Mockingbirds were seen on the Dec. 20 Plattsburgh count. They are to be expected there. Am. Robin: two Dec. 20 at Plattsburgh; one Dec. 27 at E'town; three Macomb Park in Clinton Co. Jan. 17 with the first migrants there the third week of Feb., along with Red-wings and Grackles. Bohemian Waxwings were reported at least ten times. CD had a single bird at Tupper L. Dec. 16. Clinton Co. had a few. The last was a flock of 44 at Westport Jan. 24 (FB, PB). This species is expected in winter at Ottawa. They have been at Essex three winters so this may be indicative of an extension of the winter range. 24 Cedar Waxwings were seen on Dec. 20 at Plattsburgh. Five No. Shrikes were reported including one at Tupper and one at Saranac L. JP banded two.

VIREOS-WARBLES: no reports.

WEAVERS-SPARROWS: Red-winged Blackbirds were found on the Christmas counts. The first migrants were early. Ten arrived at Bay Pond near Paul Smiths Feb. 19. Within two days the species was seen in many areas as a migrant. Two Rusty Blackbirds were at Plattsburgh Dec. 20 (HK, PK); one at Lake Placid Dec. 25 (BC); and two were at Wadhams Feb. 19 (LC). There were a lot of Clinton Co. Brown-headed Cowbirds all winter. Purple Finches were elsewhere for the season. Plattsburgh had 85 House Finches Dec. 20, indicating a successful range expansion. Pine Grosbeaks were still around at the end of Feb. A Hoary Redpoll was at a Westport feeder with about 30 Com. Redpolls Feb. 8 (MD, GD). Another was at E'town Jan. 18-19 (JT, DT); one at Moriah Jan. 19; four at another feeder in E'town Feb. 4 (GC, EJ). Thousands of Com. Redpolls reported from Whallonsburgh Feb. 12 by the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club. Pine Siskin numbers increased rapidly toward the end of Feb. Both crossbills were at the Chubb R. but very scarce elsewhere. CD had ten White-winged Crossbills at Saranac L. Feb. 4. A few Field, White-throated, and Song Sparrows wintered at feeders, as did a Fox Sparrow at Tupper L. MG reports lots of Lapland Longspurs Dec. 21 to Jan. 10 in Clinton Co. It was a good Snow Bunting season.

Paul Smiths, New York 12970

REGION 8 – HUDSON-MOHAWK

BILL COOK

It was the coldest Christmas on record in Albany, -17° F. followed by a mid-winter heat wave in February. Residents of Fulton County near Johnstown greeted Christmas day with December's minimum temperature of -31° F. The coldest day of the period was still to come as the mercury hit -40° (that's the point where fahrenheit and centigrade are equivalent) on January 13 in Cambridge, Washington County. But February changed all that. Warmth arrived early in the month, (53° F. at Albany on February 2) and lasted until nearly March. The maximum temperature for the period was 70° F., set at higher elevations in Columbia and Schoharie Counties around February 19. A 66° F. reading at Albany on that date beat the old record by eleven degrees.

As one contributor describes it, this winter contrasted "record heat and cold; drought and flood; and a drought at feeders in the face of what earlier had the makings of a heavy winter finch invasion." (RY).

In December snowfall quickly exceeded last year's total accumulation, but then it stopped. However, what had fallen remained. Persistent low temperatures prevented melting and, in addition, froze the river to a depth of sixteen inches, according to Hudson residents. Then, in the midst of a drought year, the third wettest February ever recorded at Albany, coupled with abnormally high temperatures, released ice-laden flood waters in rivers and streams throughout the area. The last few days of February began a return to winter cold and drought.

Christmas Bird Count (CBC) participants suffered inhospitable bitter low temperatures during late December and early January. Yet CBC activities did produce a few species that would otherwise not have been reported during the period. These were Great Blue Heron, Gadwall, Red-bellied Woodpecker and White-crowned Sparrow.

Christmas Bird Counts also emphasized the presence of several species lingering through the winter that should have vacated. Carolina Wren, Gray Catbird, Hermit Thrush, Eastern Bluebird and Rusty Blackbird normally winter south of our area. There is speculation that "hardy" populations of some of these species will spread their winter range northward.

Frequently joked about, and often worried about—well it finally happened. Two participants in the Schenectady CBC working on opposite sides of the Mohawk River with tape recordings were delighted to call up a Screech Owl, from the other bank, of course. It didn't occur to them that they were responding to each other's tapes, for some time, until one hapless lister set up his scope to catch the other in re-wind. He kept his discovery secret until reporting time when the explanation for such cooperative owls was shared. By the way, amidst all the ruckus, a genuine (maybe) Screech Owl joined in the chorus and was tallied in the count.

Feeder specialties this year include Debbie Shaw's Rusty Blackbird in East Greenbush and the return of two Field Sparrows to Bill Gorman's feeder also in East Greenbush. This is the sixth year in a row that a Field Sparrow has wintered at his feeder.

The severe cold of December and January had several major avian consequences. Waterfowl and waders were scarce or nonexistent. Most winter finches flew over our area. However, there were notable local invasions of some species. Among the northern invaders were Snowy Owls, a Glaucous Gull or two, a Common Raven, large numbers of Black-capped Chickadees and Red-breasted Nuthatches. The chickadee invasion, measured by seed consumption at Jenny Lake (RY), was nearly double the previous record set in '78-'79 for eleven years of study.

Bald Eagles made an impressive opening for the New Year as they gathered at infrequent open waters in and around Region 8. Another raptor that found refuge from the cold, in human company, was a Barred Owl. Following the high winds and extreme cold of January 10-11, a janitor at Bethlehem H.S. in Delmar discovered the owl in a protected courtyard, perched in a mountain ash. On a

negative note, observers mention lower numbers of American Kestrels than normal.

Woodpeckers seem to be on the upswing in our area. Reports of Pileated Woodpeckers have increased significantly. Reports of Red-headed Woodpeckers, Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers and Red-bellied Woodpeckers are also notable for the winter season. With seven of nine of New York woodpeckers and six of eight New York owls, these two orders were well-represented in the 97 species that were recorded in Region 8 this winter.

A report of a Lesser Black-backed Gull is being filed with the NYS Avian Records Committee. There has only been one previous record of this species in Region 8. The bird was observed flying, standing on ice and swimming in the Hudson River at New Baltimore, by Andrew Guthrie on February 17.

With the spring breeding season upon us, the Atlas project for recording evidence of breeding birds is getting underway for the second of the five years of the effort. Help is desperately needed in the northern counties of our Region. Warren, Washington, Fulton and Montgomery counties went practically untouched last year. Even common species have yet to be atlased in these areas, so birders in these counties are urged to contact Regional Co-ordinator: Dick Guthrie, Box 46, New Baltimore, NY 12124; 518-756-9094.

Contributors: V. & B. Able, Dean Amadon, S. Anderson, Roberta Bernstein, George Bowman, Rachel Brody, William Brooks, Arlene & Tom Brown, Bob Budliger, Bill Cook, Juanita Cook, Will Craik, R. Dodd, R. Drowne, Kate Dunham, Peter Feinberg, Barbara & Hugo Gardina, Bill Gorman, Elisabeth Grace, Andrew Guthrie, Richard P. Guthrie, Philip Ingalls, Carol Kirk, Ron & Carolyn LaForce, B. Laros, Bill Lee, Sam Madison, E. Mansell, Charles Mason, Roger Menges, James Mesick, Sherrie Orne, Tom Palmer, Anthony Passero, Elsie Powell, Jon & Sue Powell, Walt Sabin, Debbie Shaw, Janet Silvernail, Jim Swozzo, M. & B. Ulmer, Elizabeth Walsh, Tommy Williams, Robert P. Yumick.

LOONS-DUCKS: A Horned Grebe was grounded by the fog on Dec. 29 in the vicinity of Schenectady. It was banded by Bob Yumick and released near some open water on the Mohawk River. Three Great Blue Herons were reported on two separate Christmas Bird Counts: Kinderhook Cr. Dec. 20; two Troy Jan. 3. Canada Geese were well-represented on Christmas Bird Counts, not reported in Jan. but observed returning north through Catskill Feb. 28. A SNOW GOOSE was spotted among a large flock of Canada Geese in an open field by Peter Feinberg for the Chatham CBC Dec. 20; another was seen returning north through Catskill Feb. 28 (EW). Mallards and Black Ducks could be found through the winter where open water and food were available. GADWALL: one found on Hudson R. Troy CBC first count record Jan. 3 (RG). Wood Duck: Columbia Co. Feb. 28. Com. Goldeneye: Troy CBC Jan. 3; New Baltimore Feb. 17-28. Com. Merganser: Troy CC Jan. 3. New Baltimore Feb. 14-21.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Three reports of Turkey Vultures this winter: one in Leeds Feb. 15; two in Col Co Feb. 21-22. Goshawks were reported four times through Dec. and Jan. 2, showing up on two CBC's. The same was true for Sharp-shinned Hawks except that three of the four were on CBCs, and two more reports were received for Feb. from Col Co. Cooper's Hawks doubled the accipiter count with *ten* reports. Perhaps this high number is due to repeated observations of the same birds and/or "half-hardy" individuals that probably left during January's numbing cold. A female was captured inside a service station in Ravena on the morning of a CBC day but unfortunately outside the count area. It was banded and released at dawn Dec. 29 (RG & BC). Red-tailed Hawks and Rough-legged Hawks have been reported in excellent numbers thru the winter. Red-shouldered Hawk: Albany Co Feb. 3

(PF). **BALD EAGLE**: Troy CBC Jan. 3 (SM), Schodack Jan. 5-17, Blenheim-Gilboa Jan. 3-Feb. 1, New Baltimore Jan. 23. Marsh Hawks were seen regularly by several contributors thru the winter. Am. Kestrels, although always present, were noted to be less numerous or even scarce by two contributors (RY & RG). Ruffed Grouse reported in average numbers thru the winter. Bobwhite: Old Chatham Jan. 2 (WC). Ring-necked Pheasants were recorded on two CBCs as well as numerous other reports. Turkeys were also recorded on the Greene Co and Chatham CBCs along with four other Columbia Co reports. The only "shorebird" reports were of a Killdeer in Schuylerville Feb. 18, and an Am. Woodcock near Lake Taghkanic Feb. 27. A **GLAUCOUS GULL** was seen at Cohoes Falls Jan. 12 (RG) and Jan. 23 (PF). There were fifteen reports of Great Black-backed Gulls thru the winter while the usually abundant Herring and Ring-billed Gulls seemed to disappear around CBC time as ice locked up the Hudson River. **LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL**: New Baltimore Feb. 17 (AG).

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Rock Doves and Mourning Doves reported in large numbers as usual. Over 300 for each on Greene Co. CBC. Mourning Doves were "singing" during the mid-winter "heat wave" in Schenectady Feb. 17 (RY). The Cocksackie Barn Owl is still in residence. Screech Owl reports confined to a Rexford road kill Feb. 14; and several called out for CBCs in Greene and Schenectady Cos. Great Horned Owl: eleven reports; one on a nest in Clarksville Feb. 11 (CM). The **SNOWY OWL** invasion resulted in ten reports from Albany, Schenectady, Fulton and Washington Cos. thru Feb. 11. A Barred Owl found shelter from extreme cold (-20° F.) and high winds between wings of the Bethlehem H.S. Jan. 10-12 (BB); another was recorded near Old Chatham Dec. 17 (KD & EG); and another from Charlton Feb. 18. Short-eared Owl: nine max Cocksackie Flats; two other reports from Albany Co Jan. 29-Feb. 1 (JS). Belted Kingfisher: eight reported thru Dec. 29. Com. Flickers reported in good numbers wintering in Columbia, Greene and Montgomery Cos. Pileated Woodpeckers, with more than fifteen reports, seem to be increasing in numbers. **RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER**: Ghent Dec. 20-22 (B & HG). **RED-HEADED WOODPECKER**: Lake Taghkanic Jan. 28 (A & TB). Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: New Baltimore Dec. 24 (AG); Coeymans Feb. 4 (TW). Downy Woodpeckers outnumbering Hairy Woodpeckers by about four to one at feeders and in the field.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Horned Lark: up to about 600 at the Cocksackie Flats where they gather at manure spreads thru the winter. Blue Jays and Com. Crows in usual numbers, 401 and 243 respectively on the Greene Co. CBC. **COMMON RAVEN**: Spier Falls Feb. 21 (RY). A record invasion of Black-capped Chickadees at Jenny L., 228 banded by RY Dec.-Feb. There seemed to be lower numbers of Tufted Titmice, with only 29 on the Greene Co CBC Dec. 29. White-breasted Nuthatches, although common at feeders, were reported scarce at Jenny L. where a Red-breasted Nuthatch invasion resulted in 57 banded by RY; ten on the Greene Co CBC is notably high. Brown Creeper: appeared on at least three CBCs with 28 more reports thru the winter. Wren reports totaled three: a Winter Wren in Schenectady Dec. 18, one **CAROLINA WREN** in Colonie Dec. 19, and another wintering in New Baltimore. Mockingbird: numbers staying about even (49 Greene Co CBC). **GRAY CATBIRD**: three winter individuals: Chatham CBC Dec. 20, Greene Co CBC Dec. 29, Old Chatham Jan. 12 (EP). Brown Thrasher: two Schenectady CBC Dec. 20. Am. Robin: wintering numbers in the thousands at roosts on the Cocksackie Flats and near Olana, Columbia Co, late Dec.-early Jan. Hermit Thrush was amazingly common this winter with thirteen individuals on area CBCs. E. Bluebird: high numbers on Chatham CBC: two New Baltimore Dec. 25, two wintering near Cornwallville, three wintering in Clarksville, Golden-crowned Kinglet: six reports thru, Cedar Waxwing: large flocks wandering through area. No. Shrike: two of the four sightings on CBCs, three in Dec., one on Feb. 1. Starlings in large flocks throughout the area as usual.

VIREOS-WARBLED: The only warbler species reported in the Region this winter was, as might be expected, the Yellow-rumped Warbler, with six reports thru Jan. 25.

WEAVERS-SPARROWS: House Sparrow: numbers remain high thru the winter; large flock at Port of Albany, 621 on Greene Co CBC. E. Meadowlarks remained in the area thru the winter: 45 on Greene Co CBC Dec. 29, Col Co Jan. 6-23. Red-winged Blackbirds, Com. Grackles and Brown-headed Cowbirds reported at feeders in small numbers thru the winter months; 24 max for Cowbirds at Colonie Dec. 13. Mild Feb. weather brought back grackles and Red-winged Blackbirds to Schenectady at mid-month, about two weeks early (RY). **RUSTY BLACKBIRD:** two Selkirk Dec. 27 (RG), East Greenbush Jan. (DS). Winter Cardinal numbers seem to have been up, a carry-over from abundant numbers in autumn (RY). Winter finch numbers never materialized as expected. The following CBC numbers may indicate relative frequency: Cardinal 123, Evening Grosbeak 342, Purple Finch 7, House Finch 169, Pine Grosbeak 40, Com. Redpoll 12 (found feeding on birch seeds more often than at feeders), Pine Siskin, one, appeared to go south abundantly, but very few stayed locally (RY), Am. Goldfinch 95, probably more abundant than that number indicates. Only two reports of Red Crossbills for the period, from Jenny Lake: one Dec. 6, three Feb. 28. Rufous-sided Towhee: one from Greene Co CBC Dec. 29. Savannah Sparrow: two Greene Co CBC Dec. 29. Dark-eyed Junco: numbers were good, 243 on Greene Co. CBC. Tree Sparrow: wintered in good numbers in most areas. Field Sparrow: Schenectady CBC Dec. 20, Greene Co CBC Dec. 29, Delmar mid-Jan. (BB); East Greenbush thru (BG). White-crowned Sparrow: Ghent Dec. 20 (SO), Greene Co CBC Dec. 29 (AG). White-throated Sparrow: successfully wintered in good numbers; 249 Greene Co CBC. Fox Sparrow: appeared on at least three CBCs; not reported in Jan., reappearing Feb. 1-8 in Old Chatham (KD & EG). Swamp Sparrow: recorded on at least three CBCs in numbers as high as five; and Jan. 16-Feb. 21 in Ghent (B & HG). Song Sparrow: wintered in usual numbers; 20 on Greene Co CBC. Lapland Longspur: five min. wintered with at least 500 Snow Buntings on the Cox-sackie flats manure spreads.

Remember Dial-A-Bird for Hudson-Mohawk area bird news at 518-377-9600.

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REGION 9 – DELAWARE-HUDSON

EDWARD D. TREACY

December 1980 was the driest on record, and very cold. Temperatures averaged 2.6° F. below average, rarely getting above freezing, and often going to 20° below zero in the northern portion. January averaged 6° F. below average, with precipitation of only .35 inches. February temperatures moderated by mid-month, and about six inches of warm rain removed most of the ice by month's end.

The lack of snow cover was blamed for the dearth of winter finches at feeders. Most were off feeding on the abundant weed seeds and fruit exposed upon the ground. With the exception of the crossbills, most species were reported, but in low numbers. A phenomenal number of "half-hardies" are recorded in the report, belying the nomenclature by having survived such low temperatures.

The deep freeze of December and lack of coverage in three counties reduced the high count of 14,000 individuals of 25 species counted last year on the Waterfowl Count in mid-January, to only 5,000 individuals of 12 species. The latter number of individuals was still twice the usual average count of individuals.