

REGION 6 — ST. LAWRENCE

KENNETH L. CROWELL

This was the first good old-fashioned winter since 1978-79. Those who ventured out—or even watched their feeders—were rewarded with an unusual variety and abundance of boreal and arctic visitors. December began mildly, but by the second week snow cover was established which was to remain until March. Sub-zero readings occurred for the first time 17 Dec. There was rain 1 Jan, and a heavy rain 3-4 Jan was the only storm during the period with more than one inch of precipitation. Then, severe and steady cold set in with only two readings above freezing in five weeks. There was only slightly more open water for the New York State Waterfowl Count in mid-January than in 1981. A half-dozen Bald Eagles wintered again along the St. Lawrence River. Increasing numbers of Rough-legged Hawks, Snowy Owls, Northern Shrikes and one Gyrfalcon and one Hawk Owl were reported between late December and mid-February. Rain, the first of February, resulted in an impenetrable crust. Hawks seemed much less abundant after this. It is my surmise that the crust sealed off rodent populations, causing the hawks to move elsewhere. In mid-February temperatures began moving toward the freezing mark and Joe VanRiet points to the arrival of Canvasbacks and increasing numbers of Greater Scaup and Common Goldeneyes as harbingers of spring, followed by Horned Larks and Common Crows and Starlings.

A review of Christmas Counts for the past six years shows 1981 to have the greatest numbers of Common Redpolls, Crossbills, and Tree Sparrows since 1978. Numbers of other species apparently built up later in the period with 25 reports for Snowy Owl and over 25 for Northern Shrike. Evening Grosbeaks and Purple Finches were down and the numbers of Pine Grosbeak dwindled as winter progressed. Is there a pattern here? It looks to me as if we had more arctic and tree-line species such as redpoll, shrike and Snow Bunting and fewer species from the boreal forests (i.e. grosbeaks and Pine Siskins and Purple Finch).

Numbers of Tufted Titmice were up, with individuals wintering in Jefferson Co. and in St. Lawrence Co. for the first time. Resident species, including Black-capped Chickadee, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, and both nuthatches were abundant. Chickadees were even more abundant than last winter. We color banded 23 at our feeder and saw 18 of these in one day. Waxwings and winter finches were down this winter as previously discussed. Rarities include a dark-phase Gyrfalcon on Lake Ontario 20 Dec; Hawk Owl, possibly two, at ULLWMA in Canton 6 Jan thru (a second individual may have appeared about 26 Feb); and four or five Hoary Redpolls in late February.

There were few lingering summer residents and transients: a Wilson's Warbler 1 Dec in Canton, meadowlarks and Red-winged Blackbirds in Massena, and a Great Blue Heron looking very reptilian, oriental and cold in sub-zero temperatures at ULLWMA in mid-January. Weather (from *St. Lawrence Plaindealer*): Daily mean and extreme maximum and minimum temperatures (0° F) were: Dec, mean high of 29°F, low 18°F, extreme high 50°F, extreme low -6°F; Jan means 18°F and -5°F, extremes 44°F and -28°F; Feb means 25°F and 6°F, extremes 47°F and -12°F. Total precipitation was Dec, 1.58 in.; Jan, 2.79 in. and

Feb, 1.9 in. Snow depths at the end of the period ranged from 15 to 46 inches. There were heavy winds on 10, 16, 23 Jan and 1 Feb.

Abbreviations: HPt—Hawkins Point; Jeff Co.—Jefferson County; MCC—Massena Christmas Count (27 Dec); St. Law Co.—St. Lawrence County; ULLWMA—Upper and Lower Lakes Wildlife Management Area; WCC—Watertown Christmas Count (19 Dec).

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LOONS—DUCKS: Com. Loon: one on St. Lawrence River, Massena 30 Dec; one Adams 14 Jan—grounded in a field (probably from storm on 11 Jan), released in Black River at Dexter (SB). Horned Grebe: one grounded at Lake Bonaparte 24 Feb—released at Dexter (SB). Great Blue Heron: one at Muskalonge Creek near Sackets Harbor 17 Dec (W. Gordon); one ULLWMA below outlet of Rensselaer Falls 14-20 Jan (D. Hamelin). Mute Swan: one Perch River WMA 19 Dec (WCC). Canada Goose: two thru period at HPt; 300 near Henderson 11 Dec; 260 WCC 9 Dec; 76 MCC 27 Dec; 80 Three Mile Pt 1 Jan; 30 Henderson 2 Jan. Snow Goose: 21 Potsdam 27 Jan (D. MacKentley). Mallard: 29 WCC; 95 MCC; three males, one female ULLWMA 7 to 22 Jan; 150 HPt 14 Feb; two Lakeview WMA 3 Mar. Black Duck: 15 WCC; 35 MCC; three ULLWMA 14 Jan; 150 HPt 14 Feb. Am. Wigeon: two PRWMA (WCC). Ring-necked Duck: one male ULLWMA 14 Jan (D. Hamelin). Canvasback: ten HPt 14 Feb. Redhead: ten HPt 30 Dec; four HPt 14 Feb. Greater Scaup: 40 WCC; seven HPt 14 Feb. Lesser Scaup: one female HPt 28 Dec. Com. Goldeneye: 260 MCC; 100 St. Lawrence River near Morristown 13 Feb; 700 HPt 14 Feb. **BARROW'S GOLDENEYE**: one female HPt 13 Feb (JV). Bufflehead: two Pt. Peninsula 1 Jan; one female HPt 14 Feb. Oldsquaw: one thru period HPt (JV). White-winged Scoter: one HPt 29 Dec. Hooded Merganser: one thru period HPt; 18 St. Lawrence River near Morristown 20 Jan; two Black River Bay (WCC). Com. Merganser: 15 Pt. Peninsula 1 Jan; 3000 MCC; 1100 HPt 14 Feb. Red-breasted Merganser: one to two thru period HPt.

HAWKS—ALCIDS: Goshawk: one HPt 28 Dec; one Dry Hill 30 Dec (R & JW). Sharp-shinned Hawk: one imm Canton at feeder in Jan (Howard); one Canton 10 Feb (M. Heaney). Cooper's Hawk: one WCC; one repeatedly in Henderson—9 Dec caught and ate a Starling, at feeder 25 Dec caught and ate a Mourning Dove; 13 Jan on ground eating cottontail rabbit, harassing birds at feeder 14 Jan; attempted to catch Mourning Dove 6 Feb (LC); one at Paddy Hill 3 Jan (SB). Red-tailed Hawk: 47 WCC; one MCC; fair numbers in Jeff Co.—increasing toward end of period (LC); three or four singles in Canton area in Jan; two Robt Moses State Pk 16 Feb. Rough-legged Hawk: 20 WCC; early in period dark phase outnumbered light two to one, dark phase decreasing toward the end of period; most birds in Jeff Co. between I-81 and Rt. 3; two to four a day (LC); frequent sightings—all light phase—Canton-Pierrepont and ULLWMA mid-Jan to mid-Feb, unusual numbers for this area on edge of foothills. **BALD EAGLE**: one imm HPt 2 Jan; three St. Lawrence River 8 Jan; one Chipewewa Bay 13 Jan; one adult, one imm near Brownville 16 Feb (Gerry Spaziani); at least seven on St. Lawrence River wintering area thru—four adults and three imm (LC). Marsh Hawk: one WCC; one Henderson 22 Jan attempting to catch birds at feeder; one Pt. Peninsula 2 Jan; one Chaumont 21 Feb; one female with injured wing near Potsdam in Feb. Am. Kestrel: five WCC; one Massena area 26 Dec; two Pt. Peninsula 1 Jan; one on Rt. 68 near Langdon Corners 16 Dec and 21 Dec (KC); "a few around this winter—mostly close to Lake Ontario" (LC); one Canton 16 Feb. **GYRFALCON**: one Henderson Harbor 20 Dec (SB & N. Leone). Ruffed Grouse: two WCC; six MCC. Ring-necked Pheasant: one WCC; one Pt. Peninsula 21 Feb. Gray Partridge: 25 WCC; 13 MCC; common Jeff Co. (Orleans, Pamela and Housefield), small coveys six to ten birds usually; 20 Chaumont 31 Jan (R & JW); two coveys of five HPt 16 Feb (KC). Glaucous Gull: 8 MCC; 22 HPt 26 Jan; 12 HPt 14 Feb. **ICELAND GULL**: one MCC; two Robt Moses Power Dam 3 Dec, HPt 14 Feb (JV). Great Black-backed Gull: two WCC; six Henderson Harbor 25 Dec; 177 MCC; 300 HPt 14 Feb. Herring Gull: 44 WCC; 430 MCC.

PIGEONS—WOODPECKERS: Rock Dove: 1341 WCC; 426 MCC. Mourning Dove: 77 WCC; 9 MCC; two Brownville Jan-Feb at Brownville Game Farm; up to 20 at feeder Henderson thru—four banded in Feb, older birds had no toenails—frostbite?; one at feeder Canton 13 Feb (J. Green); several all winter at Watertown, a few singles reported. Screech Owl: one WCC. Great Horned Owl: two MCC (one subsp. *wapacuthu*); heard Henderson thru; one ULLWMA 4-5 Dec (P. VanDongen); one Canton 17-18 Dec; one S. Colton 19 Dec; one Dry Hill 11 and 31 Dec; four Stony Point 27 Dec (R & JW); one Canton 25 Jan. **HAWK OWL:** Rt. 68 ULLWMA 6 Jan thru (H. Gerbis *fide* KC). Snowy Owl: two WCC; one near Adams Center 15 Dec; four Pt. Peninsula-Chaumont 2 Jan; one ULLWMA Rensselaer Falls 6 Jan; one ULLWMA Canton 12, 15, 20 Jan; one east of Potsdam in late Feb one between Canton and Potsdam 15 and 16 Feb; two Evans Mills 28 Feb; singles Stone Mills, Ashland WMA, LaFargeville, Somerville, Pillar Pt., Chaumont, Housefield, Pt. Salubrious, Sackets Harbor, and Pamela 6 Jan to 28 Feb. Barred Owl: all reported sightings from Canton-Potsdam area, one Pierrepont 15 Jan; one ULLWMA 31 Jan; one outside Canton 3 Feb; one calling W. Potsdam 3 Feb; one 9 Feb; one 22 Feb. **LONG-EARED OWL:** one found dead Henderson at Briggs Farm underneath outdoor light 22 Jan—specimen. Short-eared Owl: five Pt. Peninsula 2 Jan; 15 Chaumont 2 Jan; one Chaumont 11 Jan; one Henderson hunting over field 27 Jan; one same location on post with *microtus* 28 Jan; one Housefield 29 Jan; six Watertown 18-28 Feb (FC). Saw-whet Owl: one found dead Brookside Cemetery near Watertown 30 Jan—specimen; one Watertown—picked up alive and released (A. Smith); one Henderson near feeder 14 Feb; one Canton mid-Feb. **BARN OWL:** one road kill Hannawa Falls in late Feb—specimen (KC). Belted Kingfisher: one Perch River WCC. Pileated Woodpecker: three singles Canton area in Jan; one Henderson 5 Feb; one ULLWMA 13 Feb. Red-bellied Woodpecker: one male Henderson at feeder thru. Hairy Woodpecker: up from last two winters in Henderson (LC); 16 WCC; 4 MCC; pair present thru in Pierrepont. Downy Woodpecker: 24 WCC; 13 MCC; pair plus second male thru in Pierrepont. Black-backed Three-toed Woodpecker: fresh borings on spruce in Sevey's Corners bog (B. Chaisson).

FLYCATCHERS—STARLINGS: Horned Lark: 12 WCC; 25 MCC; 70 Housefield 21 Jan; 50 Rt. 3 near Fort Drum 22 Jan; increasing numbers in Canton area 21 Jan thru; greater numbers toward end of period (LC). Blue Jay: 79 WCC; 43 MCC; moderate numbers thru (KC). Com. Crow: 103 WCC; one MCC; 65 Housefield 21 Jan; a few 8 Feb thru ULLWMA; increasing from mid-Feb thru Henderson. Black-capped Chickadee: 117 WCC; 130 MCC; abundant thru in Canton-Pierrepont area. **TUFTED TITMOUSE:** one Henderson at feeder thru—captured and banded; one in Henderson Harbor thru—captured and banded; one in Henderson Harbor regularly thru (Mike Flood); one Canton 9 Dec (S. Ekfelt); one (same?) Goodrich St., Canton 15 Dec (R & C Carlisle). White-breasted Nuthatch: 17 WCC; 13 MCC; good numbers in Canton area. Red-breasted Nuthatch: present in St. Lawrence Univ. Kip Tract. **MOCKINGBIRD:** three weeks in Feb Canton (Marge Parker). Am. Robin: one WCC; one MCC; one near Henderson 15 Feb (LC). Cedar Waxwing: six WCC; none MCC; seven Henderson 14 Feb—only ones seen during period. No. Shrike: two WCC; two MCC; one or two ULLWMA, one Watertown near feeder in early Feb; one Brownville 4 Feb; one Greig (Lewis Co.) 11 Feb; one killed sparrow at lumber yard Watertown 10 Feb; one Henderson attempting to kill redpoll in banding trap and did kill another bird—probably a redpoll 28 Feb; one killed a *microtus* in Canton 18 Feb; one five times in Pierrepont 4 Feb thru—singing 19, 22 Feb, killed a *microtus* 27 Feb; singles from Colton, Potsdam, Pierrepont, Canton in St. Law Co. and Henderson, Sackets Harbor, Chaumont, Pt. Peninsula in Jeff Co. Jan 10 thru. Starling: 1113 WCC; 216 MCC; one Canton-Madrid Rd. 15 Feb (J. Ross); six Cray Mills 2 Feb (first since winter).

VIREOS—WARBLERS: WILSON'S WARBLER: one Canton 1 Dec (D. Sibley).

WEAVERS—SPARROWS: House Sparrow: 658 WCC; 289 MCC; E. Meadowlark: a group of seven Massena 28 Dec (JV). Red-winged Blackbird: four WCC; one cripple MCC; one female in flock of Starlings at feeder Henderson 9 Jan. Rusty Blackbird: one cripple MCC. Brown-headed Cowbird: 6 MCC; two male and two female Canton 23 Dec (J. Green); six

females Canton 12 Feb (K. McCarthy). Cardinal: 30 WCC; 3 MCC; several in village of Canton thru—up to three females and one male seen at once. ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEEK: one WCC (J & P Pattengill). Evening Grosbeak: 233 WCC; 193 MCC; few and seldom at Watertown feeder (FC), increasing at Henderson in Feb—sporadic at feeders—mostly males; very few in St. Law Co. at the end of the period; five Pierrepont 13 Feb. Purple Finch: 23 WCC; decreasing at Henderson from Jan on. House Finch: one WCC; one to three daily Watertown—down from ten daily last year (FC). Pine Grosbeak: 33 WCC; 109 MCC; flocks of three to six in Dec and early Jan in Canton area then only two singles 8 Feb and 11 Feb; scattered singles at Henderson, 5 Robt Moses State Pk 16 Feb. HOARY REDPOLL: one regularly in a flock of hundreds of Commons at Potsdam feeder 12 Feb—aggressive toward other birds (J & N Ackermann); one Watertown 20-21 Feb (R & JW); one Watertown 26 Feb (FC); two at feeder at Henderson with Com. Redpolls—one male and one sex unknown 27 Feb—banded and photographed by LC. Com. Redpoll: most common finch of the winter—ten to 20 at feeders from the middle of Dec thru—decreasing toward end of period; 127 WCC; 513 MCC; 1500 Pt. Peninsula 2 Jan (R & JW). Pine Siskin: three WCC; no other reports. Am. Goldfinch: 21 WCC; 14 MCC; one to ten daily at Watertown feeder (FC), 60+ at Henderson feeder thru. Red Crossbill: one Watertown 18 Feb (Nagel). White-winged Crossbill: one MCC; “a few in Watertown last week of Feb for at least two days” (FC). Dark-eyed Junco: six WCC; one MCC. Tree Sparrow: 290 WCC; 155 MCC; at feeders thru mid-Feb in Canton; one or two daily, numbers seem down (R & JW), common Jeff Co., increasing thru period Henderson (LC). White-throated Sparrow: one WCC; one MCC. Song Sparrow: two MCC. Lapland Longspur: two Massena 26 Dec; ten or so Rt. 3 near Fort Drum 22 Jan (A. Brayton). Snow Bunting: 30 WCC; 387 MCC; six Robt Moses Power Dam 3 Dec; 300 and 500 near W. Lowville 9 Dec; 200 W. Lowville 12 Dec; 200 Pierrepont 1 Jan; 80 Housefield 21 Jan; 600 (one flock) Rt. 3 near Fort Drum 22 Jan (Al Brayton); 145 Three Mile Pt. 1 Jan. Flocks of five to 40 Canton-Pierrepont area thru; 16 Massena 21 Feb.

R.D. 4, Canton, New York 13617

REGION 7 – ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

THEODORE MACK

The winter season was not marked by any appreciable thaws. Temperatures were in the twenty below to twenty above range for much of the period. Winds were moderate for the most part but bitter just the same, so that outdoor activity for humans could be an unpleasant experience. This may have discouraged birders if not birds.

Evening Grosbeaks were fewer than usual. Perhaps they went farther south. Purple Finches were absent. This probably indicates a better food supply elsewhere and not scarcity of the species. There were quite a few Common Redpolls and at least two Hoary Redpolls, as well as a few Bohemian Waxwings. A number of Hawk Owls were seen in the eastern border states. Our region had one for at least two months. No Great Gray Owls were reported.

Observers: Merry Baker; Dirck Benson; Mary Benson; Geoffrey Carleton; Dan Christmas; Denise Christmas; Dean Cook; Marnie Cook; Warner Cook; Charlie Delehanty; Mark Gretch; Anne Hungerford; Elsbeth Johnson; Harold Klein; Paul Koehler; Anne Lacy; Bruce Landon; John Lemieux; Dorothy McIlroy; NYSWC—New York State Waterfowl Counts