

REGION 7 – ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

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Winter birding in the four county Adirondack-Champlain Region largely centers around five Christmas Bird Counts, which depend heavily upon outside observers, followed by a last foray by a few (fool?)hardy natives to scour the blustery Champlain shoreline and any other open waters for the NYS Waterfowl Count, before cabining in for a season of feeder watching. The regional Christmas counts are Elizabethtown (ECBC); the Essex Co. portion of Ferrisburg, VT/NY, within a circle that overlaps both shores of Champlain (FCBC); the Hamilton Co. portion of Old Forge (OFCBC); the Clinton Co. portion of Plattsburgh, which also crosses the lake (PCBC); and Saranac Lake (SLCBC). Field trips by the two regional Audubon chapters, High Peaks and Northern Adirondacks, and visiting bird clubs were fewer than usual during the winter of 1982-83, due to a shortage of snow, the failure of lakes and rivers (most notably, the Chubb) to freeze solidly, and a lack of the hoped-for northern species in the boreal forest, and thus on the dial-a-birds and birding hotlines. When rarities fail to appear, the expert birders tend to be scarce, too. Such was the case this past balmy winter. Yet, except for the important spruce cone crop which was mediocre in most areas, wild foods seemed abundant: ash, balsam, basswood, beech, birch, bittersweet, buckthorn, and so on through the alphabet to sumac and beyond.

Winter weather in this Region seems to have a greater effect upon observer activity and feeder concentrations than upon actual occurrence or abundance. A Brown Thrasher on the SLCBC, or birds like it, argue for a link between "half-hardies" and the mild winter, except that there was also a thrasher on the previous year's count when temperatures were lower and snow deeper. Still, this season's Great Blue Herons, Osprey, Northern Harriers, Belted Kingfishers, and the explosion of Tufted Titmice were undoubtedly weather-related. The 1982-83 winter was one of the warmest on record, with monthly temperatures running 9° F. above long-term averages in December, and 4° F. above average in January and February, or almost 7° F. above overall for the period. On 3, 4, and 6 Dec. record temperatures around the Region reached the high 50's and low 60's, with chickadees whistling and spring peepers calling. By 13 Dec. Newcomb and Tupper Lake were down to -18° F., before the thermometer went back up to record 50's on 16 Dec. Winds reached 50 mph on the 26 Dec. ECBC. And so it went with bare ground through the second warmest December on record. Then temperatures fell as low as -16° at Tupper Lake 4 Jan, -13° at Newcomb 9 Jan, and -16° at Ray Brook 20 Jan, but with other days almost 40° warmer than average, and 8" of snow at Plattsburgh on 16 Jan, the first storm of the season (Burlington, across Champlain, had 17½"). 3 Feb. saw 1" rain, with temps. 33° in Saranac Lake and 44° in Plattsburgh, just prior to a dump of 14" of snow at Tupper Lake and Wilmington on 8 Feb, followed by lows on 11 Feb of -26° at Malone and Newcomb. Mostly though, it continued warm, with daily highs in the 40's and still less than 3' snow accumulation on the High Peaks at the end of the season.

Over the three-month period, a total of 91 species, plus one hybrid (Mallard x Am. Black Duck) were reported, which seems a respectable enough total; at

least three of the Christmas Counts never reach half that. Feeder watching provided a few rewards: Black-backed Woodpecker at Lake Placid, Brown Creeper at Paradox, Golden-crowned Kinglet at Cadyville, and Pine Grosbeak at Witherbee. Where feeder birds assemble, avian raptors are not far behind. Window-watchers reported Sharp-shinned Hawks at Bloomingdale, Tupper Lake and Witherbee; Northern Goshawks at Paradox and Westport; a Red-tailed Hawk scattering Evening Grosbeaks at Wadhams; resident Barred Owl at Paradox; and Northern Shrike at Cadyville and Tupper Lake. Rarities for the period include Tundra Swan, Iceland Gull, and Red-headed Woodpecker. Evening Grosbeak was the most abundant winter finch, with a possible all-time North American record on the SLCBC on 2 Jan.

All Adirondack-Champlain birders join in extending heartfelt thanks to Theodore D. Mack of Paul Smiths for his outstanding service as Region Seven Editor of *The Kingbird* for more than a decade. Ted has set down a series of reports for Clinton, Essex, Franklin, and Hamilton Counties whose usefulness will endure.

Contributors and initialed observers: Russ Bailey, Merry Baker, Dirck Benson, Helen & Robert Booth, Bev Brown, John Bruce, Bob Budliger, Geoffrey Carleton, Bernard Carman, Greenleaf T. Chase, Dewey & Joan Clark, Dean Cook, Charlie Delehanty, David Dudones, Janet & Tom Dudones, Dot & Paul French, Greg Furness, Mark Gretch, Bea Guyett, Robert Hagar, Thomas Hale, David Harrison, Elsbeth Johnson, Sally Johnson, Charlotte Jones, Betty Karuth, Mr. & Mrs. Hughes Kilburn, William Krueger, Harmon & Jane LaMar, Gary Lee, William Lee, Frances MacMurtrie, Larry Master, Shami McCormick, Ruth Miller, Terry O'Connell, Raymond Payson, Eleanor Pearson, John Peterson, Helen Phinney, William Rutherford, Dave Rutkowski, Dean Spaulding, Pat Taber, Pat Tarkowski, Joanne Treffs, Mr. & Mrs. Richard Vaughn, Ken West, Betty Wilson, Jeanne Wisner, Cecelia Wojciukiewicz, and all of the Christmas Bird counters.

LOONS—DUCKS: A few Com. Loons lingered along L. Champlain thru 22 Jan; max six NYS Waterfowl Count. A max 17 Horned Grebes were diving in Essex harbor 22 Jan, with two on North West Bay and three off Willsboro Pt. the same day (EJ, JP). For perhaps the first time, Great Blue Herons were present during each winter month, with one at Westport 18 Dec; two there 4 Jan-14 Jan; one at a tiny pond with an opening for domestic ducks several miles inland 21 Jan, after NW Bay froze (RV); one at Ellenburg 2 Feb (HB, RB); and two flying north off Willsboro Pt. 15 Feb (RM). The three **TUNDRA SWANS** at Crown Point peninsula from about 28 Nov remained there thru 3 Dec, and were last seen on adjacent Bulwagga Bay 4 Dec (HK, *fide* GC); they apparently provide the fifth regional record. Canada Goose: max 412 Whallonsburg 18 Dec; less expected were 35 in a Gabriels potato field thru 7 Dec and one at Tupper L. 15-16 Dec. Two hypothermic canoeists flushed a Wood Duck on the Saranac R. 2 Jan (GTC, RH), a first for the SLCBC. Am. Black Duck and Mallard were widely reported, and a hybrid turned up near Ausable Pt. 16 Jan on the NYSWC. A N. Pintail and two Gadwalls were at the same location 1 Jan (MG, TO). NW Bay had two Canvasbacks 17 Jan (GC), while two Redheads were off the Peru dock 18 Dec (MG, TO). The only Ring-necked Duck was on Tupper L. 22 Jan (CD). The PCBC noted 85 scaup (sp.) and a male Oldsquaw, while a pair of Oldsquaws were at NW Bay 17 Jan, and one at Essex harbor 22 Jan. A string of 12 White-winged Scoters flew low over Treadwell Bay 18 Dec (WK). Com. Goldeneyes were on L. Champlain, L. George, Indian L., and Tupper L. thru the period on open water. Buffleheads were reported from L. Champlain only, thru 17 Jan. Hooded Merganser: max 16 at the north end of L. George 11 Dec (DC); also on L. Champlain and Tupper L. into Jan. Com. Mergansers were on the same three bodies of water Dec-Jan. A Red-breasted Merganser was at Westport 18 Dec (GC).

HAWKS—ALCIDS: An Osprey was over Bulwagga Bay marsh 17 Dec (GF). An ad Bald Eagle cruised the Champlain shoreline at Port Kent 20 Feb (HL, JL), while Tupper L. had an ad arrive 24 Feb, joined by an imm the next day, the younger bird present thru 28 Feb.

Twice the young eagle flew to where an otter was feeding on the ice; once the otter tried confrontation, but the eagle raised its wings, took a step forward, and the otter gave up (CD). N. Harriers were reported in all three months for the first time: one near Westport 26 Dec (GC, BG, JW); a male near Westport 4 Jan (EJ, JP); and one at Bay Pond 4 Feb (BL, *fide* TM). An ad Cooper's Hawk was at Saranac L. 2 Jan (DB). Several wintering N. Goshawks were reported from Clinton and Essex Cos; a breeding ad returned to Paradox 21 Feb. Several Red-tailed Hawk reports came from n. Clinton Co; Wadhams, Essex Co; and Bay Pond, Franklin Co. Rough-legged Hawks were regular in open areas of Clinton, Essex, and Franklin, with a max four on the NYS side of the FCBC circle. A few Am. Kestrels were reported from the Champlain Valley. A cock and two hen Ring-necked Pheasants wintered at a Tupper L. feeder. Ausable Pt. had 26 Bonaparte's Gulls 18 Dec, the last reported. Tupper L. had Ring-billed Gulls to 10 Dec; Herring Gulls to 6 Dec, although a few of both species probably remained around open portions of L. Champlain, which did not close entirely, thru the season. Two first-winter ICELAND GULLS were scoped out from among the Ring-bills and Herrings at Essex harbor 19 Jan (EJ, JP), the first winter report in this Region in over 45 years, though surprisingly there are several recent spring and summer records from the Four Brothers Islands and L. Placid landfill. Great Black-backed Gulls continue a dramatic increase in winter numbers along L. Champlain, including four FCBC; 14 PCBC; max 21 along the Clinton and Essex Co. shorelines in Jan on the NYSWC. Since only an estimated two to three pairs now nest on the Four Brothers, and no other Champlain island nesting locations in NYS or VT are known, at least some of the winter visitants must originate outside the Champlain basin.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Rock Dove: max 404 PCBC. Mourning Dove: max 49 FCBC; three at Indian L. (MM, RM) and seven at Wells (BW) in Hamilton Co. were surprises. An E. Screech-Owl answered a whistled imitation at Wadhams 18 Dec (EJ, JP); others were reported roosting in duck nest boxes at Little Chazy R. 19 Feb (MG). The fourth season for the NYS Breeding Bird Atlas began with Great Horned Owls calling near Auger Pd., Elizabethtown, Paradox, Plattsburgh, Reber, Ticonderoga, Tupper L., Wadhams, and Westport. Barred Owls were heard near Elizabethtown, Indian L., Paradox, Westport, and Willsboro; the resident Paradox pair started courting 2 Feb (MB). The first tooting N. Saw-whet Owls were heard at Tupper L. 25 Feb and E-town and Paradox 28 Feb. A Belted Kingfisher was at Essex harbor 21 Jan (RB) and four were along Champlain in Clinton Co. 22 Jan (MG). A RED-HEADED WOODPECKER appeared near Essex 28 Jan, remained thru Feb, by which time coloration suggested two birds might be present (SJ); this provides the first winter record for the Region. Three-toed Woodpecker: two males 8 Dec east of NY 3, and south of Second Pd. (TD). Black-backed Woodpecker reports included one east of Indian L., one Halfway Brook, two Moody Pd., one at a L. Placid feeder, and extralimital singles near Cadyville and Wadhams.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: An early E. Phoebe was near Sugar Bush, Franklin Co. 18 Feb (DD, TD). A few Horned Larks at Paul Smiths 2 Feb (TM); Sugar Bush 13 Feb (*fide* JD); and Tupper L. 22 Feb (CD), provided the only reports. A Gray Jay was near Brandon 3 Dec and seven were gleaning hunting camp scraps along Halfway Brook 6 Dec (TD). The survey of wintering crows focused in on small Am. Crow roosts near Keeseville, L. Placid, Wadhams, and Witherbee, averaging about 100 birds each; undoubtedly more roosts exist. Com. Raven is just that in the Adirondacks. Boreal Chickadees were reported from Bloomingdale Bog, Chubb R. (max 23 there), Hurricane Mt., Moody Pd., and Sabattis Rd. Bog, with a record 26 on the SLCBC. The number of Tufted Titmice reported was without precedent in this Region: two Crown Point; five Elizabethtown; two Keene Valley; three Moody; one Moriah Center; one Paradox; two Ticonderoga; two Tupper L.; and max seven Wells (BW), for a seasonal total of at least 25 titmice reported, and undoubtedly many more present. An E. Bluebird was catching cluster flies at Crown Pt. 12 Feb (GF). Am. Robin present thru Feb, with reports from Saranac L., St. Regis Indian Res., Tupper L., Wadhams, and Westport. A Gray Catbird visited a heated bird bath at Plattsburgh 20 Feb (Charles Woodruff, *fide* MG). A N. Mockingbird was near L. Placid 12 Feb (DH) and another at Sara-

nac L. 20-28 Feb, where there was a Brown Thrasher 7 Feb (both TD). Cedar Waxwings were widespread: 10 ECBC; 26 FCBC; max 106 PCBC typical numbers. N. Shrike: singles at Ausable Pt., Averyville, Cadyville, New Russia, Tupper L., and Whallonsburg.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: N. Cardinal: max 36 PCBC. Tree Sparrow: max 101 PCBC. Fox Sparrow: one Crown Point Jan (GF). Song Sparrow: a few reported from Crown Pt., Plattsburgh, Schroon L., Westport. White-throated Sparrow: two Crown Pt.; one Tupper L. Dark-eyed Junco: reports from all four counties; max 20 Halfway Brook 6 Dec (TD). Snow Buntings were scarce, with only three reports in Dec-Jan, totalling about 30 birds. Wintering Red-winged Blackbirds were at Essex, Rainbow, L. Tupper L.; max 17 PCBC; first migrant arr Crown Pt. 28 Feb. Single Com. Grackles were at Saranac L. and Tupper L. Pine Grosbeak: scarce all winter; max 22 PCBC. Purple Finch: widely scattered; max 125 Crown Pt. from 7 Feb. House Finch: a few Crown Pt., Essex, Ticonderoga, Wadhams; max 267 PCBC. Red Crossbill: a few Paul Smiths and Tupper L. White-winged Crossbill: two SLCBC the only report. Com. Redpoll: a few Elizabethtown, Wadhams, Westport, Saranac L. Pine Siskin: virtually absent, max seven SLCBC. Am. Goldfinch: widespread and abundant; max 208 FCBC. Evening Grosbeak: the most abundant winter finch; max 2,801 tallied in Bloomingdale, L. Placid, Ray Brook, and Saranac L. during the SLCBC! House Sparrow: max 464 PCBC.

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REGION 8 — HUDSON-MOHAWK

BILL COOK

This was the winter that wasn't. 1982-83 was the warmest winter in thirty years. NYS meteorologists claim that the average temperature was six Fahrenheit degrees warmer than usual and that one has to go back to 1954 to find a warmer winter. Three snowfalls, which scarcely covered the ground for a week each, comprised the entire winter accumulation. The first snow did not arrive until 15 January and was well gone after the rains of the 23rd. The other two storms both occurred within the second week of February. Even then the second February storm, which hit areas south of Region 8 heavily, barely affected Albany and left the Adirondack forest floor with no snow cover. With plenty of wild food available there wasn't any major invasion from the north and feeder activities were minimal. Yet for those of you that did have lemmings lashed to your suet there was hope because one Snowy Owl was reported in the Region.

Still, most northern species were scarce or absent. Few Rough-legged Hawks and few raptors in general characterized the Christmas counts. There was only one report of Pine Siskins and only two reports of Pine Grosbeaks. Crossbills and redpolls were not reported at all. Observers speculated that low counts of finches may have been due to their dispersal throughout fields and forests rather than being congregated at feeding stations. On the other hand, lingering "half-hardies" littered the locale. Several Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Hermit Thrushes, Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and a Northern Oriole were found through the winter. High numbers of Brown Creepers, Yellow-rumped Warblers and Swamp Sparrows were counted. A phoebe, a towhee and a Vesper Sparrow seem to offer fitting symbols of the season.