

Rusty Blackbird: one at feeder, Pillar Pt. 11 Dec (RW); one Potsdam 9 and 14 Feb (SCDeG). Com. Grackle: two Pillar Pt. 11 Dec; eight WCC. Brown-headed Cowbird: 12 MCC; ten Mannsville 17 Dec. No. Oriole: one Colton in Feb (JW). Pine Grosbeak: 73 MCC; none WCC, TICC; 44 others in seven reports, few and far between. Purple Finch: 16 WCC; five TICC; three Canton early Dec; three Massena thru. House Finch: 31 WCC, down from last year; one Canton early Dec (MEH). Com. Redpoll: four MCC; none WCC, TICC; max 60 Rensselaer Falls 22 Jan; a few other reports. Pine Siskin: 14 MCC; none WCC, TICC; 14 Massena 19, 21 Jan; 15 Potsdam and 20, 31 Jan, 1, 19, 20 Feb; three other reports. Am. Goldfinch: max 48 TICC; flocks of up to 18 at feeders thru. Evening Grosbeak: max 658 MCC; otherwise spotty, some report lots at feeders thru, others had few.

Dept. of Biology, St. Lawrence University, Canton, New York 13617

REGION 7 - ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

JOHN M. C. PETERSON

This winter's flight of Great Gray Owls illustrates both the wider appeal of birds and the changing nature of avian records. Not only are many more observers submitting records, but they are also gathering and passing along increased numbers of secondhand sight records. Many of these newer observers and most of their network are unknown to the editor, and at the same time few of them see *The Kingbird*. In the era when taxidermists and collectors supplied information on northern owls, there was little doubt about accurate identification (although a study skin of a Boreal Owl in the Middlebury College collection was originally mislabeled as a Northern Saw-Whet Owl). Every effort is made to obtain details of rarities, yet the fact remains that of *eight* Great Gray Owls reported in the region this winter, only three were actually seen by observers of known reliability. Most, if not all, of the others are undoubtedly correct, but the lingering uncertainty, especially with secondhand, verbal records, draws attention to a problem that increases along with the widening interest in birds.

The winter season from December through February was the sixth coldest on record nationwide, the coldest in 53 years, with fuel requirements 2% higher than normal. Yet within the Adirondack-Champlain Region, fuel needs were actually 7% lower than average. By early December, seasonal snowfall at Newcomb had reached 9 inches, while Piseco had a foot. Mid-month saw heavy rains, with 24-hour totals of 1.7" at Ray Brook on 13 December and 2.0" at Elizabethtown 14 December. By 16 December, after almost four inches of rain had fallen, Lake Champlain had risen to 99.88', or over five feet higher than a year earlier. Each inch added to the lake level represents 149,750,000,000 gallons of water. Many of the usual feeding and resting areas for waterfowl and gulls had been largely abandoned by the morning of the Ferrisburg and Plattsburgh Christmas Bird Counts (FCBC and PCBC) on 17 December. Happily, the ground

was bare or only covered with about 1½ inches with snow. Temperatures dropped to -22° in the Tri-Lakes 20 December and -19° at Ray Brook 21 December, followed by a snowstorm to welcome winter on the 22nd. There were some 4 to 24 inches on the ground during the Elizabethtown count (ECBC) on 26 December, and 8 inches to a foot for the 30 December Saranac Lake count (SLCBC). In spite of high waters, snow, and temperatures down to five below, eighty observers took part in the counts.

On 12 January the mercury dropped to -20° at Plattsburgh, -21° at Elizabethtown, and -22° at Ray Brook. The mid-point of a normal degree-day season, the theoretical ½-woodpile mark, came on 22 January, with the remaining firewood at Newcomb being rapidly consumed by a -33° F Siberian Express. Winds hit 40+ m.p.h. on 26 Jan. The first day of February hit Newcomb with -25°. Unofficial overnight temperatures approaching the forty below mark were reported during this period, helping to maintain the reputation of the mid-January NYS Waterfowl Count as the nadir of the entire birding year, Bald Eagle and Barrow's Goldeneye notwithstanding. Finally, just in time for the annual Gorp & Glogg Expedition up the Chubb River on 11 February, a great thaw set in, with eastern chipmunks out on 20 February and the temperature a balmy 49° in Plattsburgh on 23 February. The month ended with a more expected 6° at Ray Brook on 27 February, followed by a snowfall only 4 times as acid as it should be, one of the cleaner storms. A total of 96 species were reported, five more than last year's milder winter produced.

Thomas Dudones (30 Ampersand Avenue, Saranac Lake, NY 12983) of High Peaks Audubon is working on a manuscript of *Birds of Franklin County, New York*. Mark Gretch (P.O. Box 748, Champlain, NY 12919) of Northern Adirondack Audubon is preparing a supplement to Warren's *Birds of Clinton County* (1979). Any contributions to these works-in-progress would be greatly appreciated and should be directed to the appropriate author.

Contributors and initialed observers: Merry Baker, Thomas Barber, Sharon Bissell, Helen & Robert Booth, Beverly Brown, Geoffrey Carleton, Ann & Walter Chapman, J. Chapman, Dewey & Joan Clark, Janet Cooper, Phil Cox, Jim Cunningham, Charlotte Daley, Charlie Delehanty, Thomas Dudones, Gregory Furness, Emily Geddes, John Gillen, Dan Greenwood, Jennifer & Mark Gretch, Thomas Hale, Helen Jock, Elsbeth Johnson, Hal Klein, William Krueger, Gary Lee, William Lee, J. Littlefield, Norman Mason, Larry Master, Louise Meisenheimer, Sue Millar, Victoria Morey, Dan Nickerson, Antoinette O'Bryan, Terry O'Connell, Chet Orzack, John Parke, John Peterson, F. Rose, Jerry Rosenband, John Russell, David & Kathy Rutkowski, Carole Slatkin, Armand Vaillancourt, Phil Walker, Hollis White, Robert Yunick, and all of the Christmas Bird Counters.

LOONS-DUCKS: Six Com. Loons were reported on CBC's, four on the NYS side of the Ferrisburg (VT/NY) circle and another two on the Plattsburgh count. North West Bay had 20 Horned Grebes by 3 Dec, max 36 FCBC. A Red-necked Grebe was also found on the Ferrisburg count, while another located during the Saranac L count was later learned to have been an iced-up bird released on the Saranac R by the NYSDEC. Last Great Blue Herons were at NW Bay 17 Dec and Ausable Pt 18 Dec. An imm MUTE SWAN, perhaps the same bird seen earlier in Vermont waters, was on NW Bay from 26 Dec (GC) to 28 Dec (TB); this represents a first record for Essex Co. Canada Geese wintered on LaChute R where there were up to 22 present, and lingered on Whallon's Bay in large numbers, max 366 FCBC; three arrivals were resting on the ice of Racquette Pd near open water

23-24 Feb, and another was heard at Rouses Pt 25 Feb. Six Am. Black Ducks wintered at Bartlett Carry (FR); 23 were found on the waterfowl count. A Gadwall was at Ausable Pt 18 Dec (BB, TO). Canvasbacks included three on the PCBC, one at NW Bay 28 Dec (TB), and a pair at Rouses Pt 25 Feb (MG). Ring-necked Duck: one Saranac R (SLCBC). Greater Scaup: 405 PCBC, subadult male at Essex 15 Jan NYSWC. Com. Goldeneye: max 405 PCBC; one on a tiny pond with an opening for domestic ducks provided a new species for the ECBC; four arrived Tupper L 27 Feb (CD). An adult male Barrow's Goldeneye was at Port Kent 14 Jan (MG, TO). Bufflehead: max 16 FCBC. Hooded Merganser: max 23 Tupper L 1 Dec (CD). Com. Merganser: max 269 NYSWC.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Bald Eagles were reported from the Champlain district between 26 Dec-22 Feb by many observers, with four locations and perhaps five or more eagles involved: adult Ausable Pt (MG, TO, and many others), imm Crown Pt (GF), both adult and imm Whallon's Bay (J. Parke), and an inland adult Westport (ECBC, EG). No. Harrier was reported from Chazy Landing and Westport in Dec. Sharp-shinned Hawks were spotted at Elizabethtown, Tupper L, and Westport; max 3 PCBC. The most frequently reported accipiter was Cooper's Hawk, with sightings at Bear Swamp Rd., Champlain, Chazy, Chubb R, Elizabethtown, Miner, and Plattsburgh. No. Goshawk was found near The Glen and Willsboro. Red-tailed Hawk: max 1 ECBC. Rough-legged Hawk: max 3 PCBC. Only a few Am. Kestrels were reported, with sightings in eastern Essex and northern Franklin Cos. Good numbers of Gray Partridge were noted in northern Clinton Co. Ring-necked Pheasant: max 3 SLCBC. Ruffed Grouse was drumming at 10:30 p.m. on 15 Dec near Elizabethtown, max 7 PCBC. The Killdeer at Cumberland Head on the PCBC and Am. Woodcock during count week on the ECBC were unexpected. Bonaparte's Gull: max 38 FCBC. Ring-billed Gull: max 267 PCBC. Herring Gull: max 65 PCBC. Lesser Black-backed Gull: one Willsboro Pt NYSWC (TB, EJ, JP). Glaucous Gull: one Cadyville and later Dock & Coal PCBC (BB, TO). Great Black-backed Gull: 4 FCBC and 12 PCBC on the same day; same max 16 recorded on NYSWC along Clinton and Essex Co. shorelines.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Rock Dove: max 550 PCBC, from a city where there are still no Atlas records. Mourning Dove: max 67 PCBC. An E. Screech-Owl was calling near Wadhams at dawn on the ECBC. Several Great Horned Owls started off the final season of the NYS Breeding Bird Atlas at Chilson, Paradox, and Tupper L, while the ECBC and PCBC teams found five each. A Snowy Owl was reported from Westport. Barred Owls began giving the slow, high hoots near Paradox 7 Jan. **GREAT GRAY OWLS** were reported from Brushton, Chazy, Cumberland Head, Ray Brook, Westport, and Wilmington, and at least two of those present on the St. Regis Indian Reservation were seen inside Franklin Co.; one wonders how many may have gone unrecorded along the border district between Hogsburg and Rouses Pt, an area not visited by birders, but with good habitat and near known concentrations. A No. Saw-whet Owl replied to a Barred Owl tape on the ECBC, a second was found perching in a hemlock near Paradox 21-22 Jan and gave snoring calls at mobbing Blue Jays before seeking the solitude of dense conifers to escape mobbing Black-capped Chickadees, and a third visited Tupper L feeders from 6-10 Feb (CD, AV). A Belted Kingfisher was still along LaChute R 4 Feb (JC). A **RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER** started visiting a Ticonderoga feeder 20 Jan and it later appeared that a pair was present (AO); this represents a first record for the Region. A Three-toed and two Black-backed Woodpeckers were found on the SLCBC.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Four Gray Jays were also noted on the SLCBC. The 552 Am. Crows on the PCBC suggest nearby roosting. Com. Raven: max 7 ECBC, and reports of mated pairs near Elizabethtown, Newcomb, and Paradox. Two Boreal Chickadees visited a Newcomb feeder for the third consecutive winter (AC, WC), while Tufted Titmice returned to a Crown Point feeder (GF). A suet feeder at Tupper L attracted a Ruby-crowned Kinglet from 6-16 Dec (CD). Am. Robin: max 10 Westport 4 Jan (TB). The PCBC recorded two No. Mockingbirds and a Brown Thrasher. Bohemian Waxwings were reported from

L Alice and Westport, with max 38 on the PCBC. Meanwhile, the only Cedar Waxwings were at Westport in early Dec (GC). Individual No. Shrikes turned up on the FCBC, PCBC, near Moira and Westport, and in the vicinity of feeders at Cadyville and Elizabethtown. Still not recorded in several Plattsburgh Atlas blocks, perhaps a few of the 457 Eur. Starlings found wintering there on the PCBC will remain to nest.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: No. Cardinal: max 35 PCBC. Am. Tree Sparrow: max 72 ECBC. Two Field Sparrows were at Westport 27 Dec, during the ECBC count period (JR, CS). Song Sparrow: four visited a Crown Point feeder in Dec (GF); max five PCBC. White-throated Sparrow: max 9 PCBC. Less expected was the White-crowned Sparrow at Ticonderoga 17 Feb (JC). Dark-eyed Juncos wintered at Crown Pt, Elizabethtown, and Tupper L feeders, max 41 ECBC. Snow Bunting numbers were improved over last winter, with reports from three CBCs, as well as Newcomb and Whallonsburg, and a max 200+ near Westport 28 Dec (TB). The usual few Red-winged Blackbirds wintered, then the mid-Feb thaw brought the return of mostly male flocks from the south. There were 60 at Ticonderoga 22 Feb (JC), a max of about 1,000 in northern Clinton Co. 25 Feb (MG), and territorial males scattered about. Even Newcomb had 10-15 at a feeder 28 Feb (WC) and Tupper L had up to 44 by 29 Feb (CD). These false harbingers disappeared with the return of cold weather. An E. Meadowlark showed up near a Cadyville feeder from 7 Jan (TO). A few Com. Grackles also wintered, with max 3 SLCBC and returning birds showing up in northern Clinton Co. and Tupper L on 25 Feb. The adult male No. Oriole near Keeseville stayed at least through 3 Dec (JG); this constitutes the second Essex Co. winter record. Pine Grosbeaks were probably more abundant this winter than the eight reports indicate, with a max 61 on the SLCBC. Purple Finch was virtually absent, with only one on the FCBC, three on the ECBC, none on SLCBC, and the max 37 tallied on the PCBC were overshadowed by (and hopefully not confused with) the 91 House Finches on the same day in Plattsburgh. A single Red Crossbill visited a Clinton Co. feeder 9-11 Dec (LM), while small numbers were heard near Elizabethtown and Paradox. A "Probable-Pair" of the early-nesting White-winged Crossbill was seen on the 26 Dec ECBC in spruce-balsam habitat on the west end of Wells Hill Rd. (TB), while the only other report came from Chubb R (LM). A light flight of Com. Redpolls passed through during Dec with max 40 FCBC; the last were a small flock of about 10 in an alder swamp near Paradox 25 Jan (MB). Pine Siskins were widely reported, but erratic, appearing to decline somewhat in Jan-Feb; max 45 ECBC. Am. Goldfinches showed a similar pattern, with a max 158 PCBC. Daily flocks of from 10 to 100 Evening Grosbeaks visited most feeders, but numbers were somewhat reduced from last winter; max 1,026 tallied in Elizabethtown, Lewis, New Russia, and Wadhams during the ECBC. House Sparrow: none was noted among the record 53 species, 5,408 individuals on the PCBC, an area where Atlas records are also lacking; max 119 SLCBC.

Corrigendum: Delete "Com. Nighthawk arr Newcomb 25 Apr," *Kingbird* Vol. 33: p 212. Discovery Farm, R.D. 1, Elizabethtown, New York 12932