

REGION 4 – SUSQUEHANNA

HARRIET MARSI

Region #4, Dec., 1984: Skiers and children were disappointed in it; "regular" people rejoiced in it; birders . . . well, birders were confused by it. The fact is that December, 1984, was warm – the second warmest in the 35 year history of weather records at Edwin A. Link Field National Weather Station and the second warmest of the century in the Village of Cooperstown where weather records have been kept since 1854.

Accompanying the warmth was precipitation well below average (10.5" of snow as against a normal of 18.7"), a record wild food crop and constant queries, "Where are the birds?", "Why no birds at my feeder?", "How come so few birds this year?", etc. All Christmas Counts reflected this condition. Although the number of species was not alarmingly low, augmented by several to-be-expected Stay-Behinds, the number of birds per species was often down. An abundant wild food crop – the heaviest in 20 years (Mike Hall, DEC) – plus open fields probably kept the birds scattered through. The new year also started out on the warm side, but not for long. After less than a week the realities of January asserted themselves. By the 9th bitter cold had set in (mean temp. 8° F.). For the next two weeks a series of cold fronts, combining with intermittent high and low pressure systems and gusty winds, produced Arctic conditions that included several sub-zero nights. A -15°F matched the previous record low for its date. The term "Siberian Express" was quite appropriate. Snow there was, too, but it came in dribs and drabs and there were no major storms. Nevertheless, its total of 23.5" for the month was more than enough to cover fields and meadows. Birds did begin to show up at feeders. A few complaints persisted, however. There were no winter finches, N. Cardinal counts were low, Am. Tree Sparrows and goldfinches seemed sparse at feeders. February didn't exactly derail the "Siberian Express" either – at least not immediately. Friday, 8 Feb., registered a mean temperature of 7° F. and brutal, driving winds forced the wind chill factor down to the 45° to 50° below zero range. Fortunately, the remainder of the month was less cruel. One could call it "seasonal," crisp and chilly, but not life-threatening. Then February did a turnabout and ended in a final week that was a lovely warm "preview of spring."

For most birders it had been a rather negative winter. Even so, there were a few highlights – some actually spectacular. 1. A Snowy Owl showed up on the CCBCCC. 2. In Vestal, where those who watched the feeders were counting 20 to 25 Purple Finches daily, a bander tallied over 100 Purple Finches (GK) and there were always unbanded birds still flying about. 3. Late in February in Vestal, a N. Saw-whet Owl was heard several times in the same area but at different locations. Because it moved so often, the listening birders decided it was a male with a nest site in the area already chosen but still seeking a mate (GK, RM, HM). 4. In Dec. a farmer in Franklin, crossing a shallow stream by tractor, flushed a Wood Duck. Suddenly from the top of a nearby hemlock a large hawk shot out, faster and straighter than any bird he had ever seen – "like a Kamikaze plane" – and collided directly with the duck. The two birds fell to the ground.

As the farmer raced toward the landing site the hawk took to the air, flying directly away from him. Then, it suddenly veered and circled back, allowing him to observe the facial marking that proclaimed it a Peregrine Falcon! Looking down at the ground he watched the Wood Duck—bedraggled but alive—sneaking shakily off thru the grass toward the creek (RMi). 5. And finally the explosion of the crossbills! The reporting of a Red Crossbill on the Chenango Bird Club's Christmas Count encouraged members to search elsewhere in the county for these birds. As a result, all winter, club members have diligently combed the county, clocking an unprecedented number of hours afield (CC, RD, JL, DM, DW) and meticulously keeping detailed records (JL). Mostly they have concentrated on State Forest Lands where large stands of spruce are bearing the heaviest cone crop in years. They found both Red and White Crossbills (and lots of other birds as well!) and all the evidence, such as songs, flight songs, courting behavior, carrying nesting material, etc., suggests breeding. Members are searching hard for a nest. Congratulations to all who participated! Maybe it wasn't such a dull winter after all.

Abbreviations: Br—Broome; Chen—Chenango; CBC—Chenango Bird Club; CCBC—Cortland County Bird Club; DOAS—Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society; NBC—Naturalists Club of Broome County; TCBC—Tioga County Bird Club; CC after any of the above means Christmas Count; CR—Cannonsville Reservoir; OPM—Oneonta, Portlandville, Milford; SOFH—South Otselic Fish Hatchery; WPR—Whitney Point Reservoir. Crossbill Hunters: Chad Covey, Roger Daigle, Jay Lehman, Dave Messineo, Don Windsor.

Observers: C. & J. Baldwin, J. Becker, D. & J. Bell, L. Bemont, R. Bennett, L. Bingley, B. Bozdos, B. Cormier, A. Carpenter, M. Clark, C. Covey, R. Daigle, A. & M. Davis, J. Davis, L. Dean, M. Dobinsky, S. Dorber, A. Douglas, R. Eckhardt, S. Hartman, C. Howard, C. Jordan, E. Kirch, G. Kirch, C. Knapp, C. Lehman, J. Lehman, F. Linaberry, H. Marsi, R. Marsi, D. Messineo, H. Messineo, R. Miller, D. Newby, D. O'Neil, J. & R. Saunders, J. Sedlacek, G. Wade, A. Whitaker, K. Wilson, D. Windsor, C. Yates.

LOONS-DUCKS: Com. Loon: one CBCCC; still there 16 Dec, gone 22 Dec (CC). Pied-billed Grebe: one 1 Dec WPR (A & MD); one 12 Feb, Tioga Co. (HM). Horned Grebe: one NBCCC. Great Blue Heron: one CCBCC; two DOASCC; two TCBCCC; Jan. Tioga Co. (C & B, RE). Tundra Swan: Jan. Tioga Co. (C & JB, CY). Canada Goose: 38 CBCCC: one 31 Dec. Binghamton (DO'N); Dec. Tioga Co. (C & JB); Jan. Tioga Co. (C & JB); four Tioga Co. 12 Feb. (HM); first flights north 23 Feb. So. Otselic (DM), Binghamton several; thousands 24 Feb. Wood Duck: one 23 Dec. Franklin, attacked by Peregrine Falcon. Green-winged Teal: one 10 Jan. CR (SD). Am. Black Duck: two CBCCC; 21 COBCC; 12 NBCCC; four 12 Jan. Tioga Co. (GK); eight 12 Feb. (HM). Mallard: 87 CCBCC; 228 NBCCC; 19 TBCC; four 10 Dec. nine 17 Dec. OPM (MD, KW); 50 CR 16 Dec. (SH); 300 Jan, Feb CR (several). N. Pintail: two NBCCC; one 29 Jan. CR (HM); Feb CR (TCBC). Am. Wigeon: one NBCCC. Redhead: one NBCCC. Lesser Scaup: 12 12 Feb. Tioga Co. (HM), still there 18 Feb. (FL). Oldsquaw: two CBCCC; 16 Dec. still there, gone 22 Dec. (CC). Com. Goldeneye: 26 CCBCC; one 15 Dec. WPR (A & MD); Dec. Jan. TCBC; 40 13 Jan. Tioga Co. (GK); one 16 Jan. Br. Co. (FL, HM); 20 12 Feb. Tioga Co. (RM, HM); 18 18 Feb. Tioga Co. (FL). Hooded Merganser: 15 CCBCC; one 13 Jan. Tioga Co. (GK); one Feb. Chen. Co. (DW). Com. Merganser: 50 15 Dec. CR (SH); one NBCCC; one TBCC; nine 25 Jan. Delhi (CK); 20 13 Feb. Tioga Co. (RM); 98 18 Feb. Tioga Co. (FL).

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Bald Eagle: from one to six Jan. CR, seen by several. N. Harrier: two NBCCC; seven TCBCCC: one 26 Dec. Br. Co. (GK); one 24 Feb. Chen. Co. (JL). Sharp-shinned Hawk: one NBCCC; one TCBCCC: one 7-31 Dec, Delhi (MC); one Dec. So. Otselic (DM); one Jan. and Feb. Tioga Co. (LD); one Jan Norwich (DW); one Feb. So. Otselic

(DM). Cooper's Hawk: three TCBCCC; one NCBCCC; one Dec. Norwich (DW); one off and on Dec thru Feb Br. Co. (FL); one off and on Jan-Feb Tioga Co. (LD). N. Goshawk: one 19 Jan. Chen. Co. (JL, DM); one 26 Jan. Chen. Co. (JL, DM); one 24 Feb. Chen. Co. (JL) all different locations. Red-tailed Hawk: seven CBCCC; 13 CCBCCC; four DOASCC; four NCBCCC; 21 TCBCCC; otherwise normal numbers thru. Rough-legged Hawk: one CBCCC; one CCBCCC; two 10 Dec. OPM (MD, KW); one 26 Jan. Tioga Co. (GW); one 13 Feb. Tioga Co. (RM); one 21 Feb. Br. Co. (FL, HM); one 28 Feb. Otsego Co. (MD); five 5 thru 24 Jan. Chen. Co. (RD, JL, DM, DW); "normal numbers" Chen. Co. (CC). Am. Kestrel: one CBCCC; four DOASCC, four NCBCCC; ten TCBCCC; normal thru. **PEREGRINE FALCON**: one 23 Dec. Franklin, seen attacking a Wood Duck (RMi). Ring-necked Pheasant: three DOASCC; six NCBCCC; Jan. Tioga Co. (SEV); "a few stocked birds doing well into Jan. So. Otselic" (DM). Ruffed Grouse: five CBCCC; four DOASCC; nine NCBCCC; two TCBCCC; a few others during period; numbers low. Wild Turkey; two 8 Dec. Delhi (MC); Dec. Tioga Co. (J & CB, D & JB, LD); thruout So. Otselic (DM); in general numbers low. Am. Coot: three CCBCCC. Com. Snipe: one Feb. Greene (JD). Ring-billed Gull: one CBCCC; 94 CCBCCC; six DOASCC; five NCBCCC; three TCBCCC; 30 1 Dec., 25 22 Dec. Otsego L (MD); two 23 Feb., 16 23 Feb. Chen. Co. (JL). Herring Gull: 35 CCBCCC; 110 NCBCCC; eight TCBCCC; three Dec. records OPM (MD, KW); several Dec. and early Jan. SOFH until freeze up (DM); regularly Jan., Feb. Br. and Tioga Cos.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Rock Dove: 507 CBCCC; 512 CCBCCC; 253 DOASCC; 207 NCBCCC; 856 TCBCCC. Mourning Dove: 286 CBCCC; 43 CCBCCC; 33 DOASCC; 122 NCBCCC; 70 TCBCCC. E. Screech-Owl: one CBCCC; only report. Great Horned Owl: three CBCCC; one DOASCC; 11 NCBCCC; six TCBCCC; one or two Dec. Delhi (MC); regular Br. and Tioga Co. thru, one nest Feb. Br. Co. (JS). **SNOWY OWL**: one CCBCCC. Barred Owl: one NCBCCC; one 24 Jan. Norwich (DW); one 13 Feb. Tyner (JL); two 13 Feb. Smithville Flats (JL). N. **SAW-WHET OWL**: one 23, 27, 28 Feb. Vestal (GK, RM, HM). Belted Kingfisher: one CBCCC; one CCBCCC; one DOASCC; eight NCBCCC; three TCBCCC; "many until Jan. freeze - back 23 Feb" S. Otselic (DM). Red-bellied Woodpecker: Tioga Co. all period (D & JB, LB, LD). Downy Woodpecker: 29 CBCCC; seven CCBCC; 37 DOASCC; 41 NCBCCC; 39 TCBCCC. Hairy Woodpecker: 25 CBCCC; four CCBCCC; nine DOASCC; nine NCBCCC; eight TCBCCC. N. Flicker: two CCBCCC; three NCBCCC; four TCBCCC; one thru period Chenango Bridge (JBe); one Jan. So. Otselic (DM). Pileated Woodpecker: three CBCCC; two DOASCC; two NCBCCC; three TCBCCC; "occasional" Dec. Delhi (MC); Jan. Tioga Co. (LD); "several thruout" So. Otselic (DM).

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Horned Lark: Jan. Tioga Co. (LD); 12 22 Feb. Pitcher (DM); 12 Feb. Otselic (DM). Blue Jay: 176 CBCCC; 77 CCBCCC; 169 DOASCC; 116 NCBCCC; 210 TCBCCC. Am. Crow: 264 CBCCC; 221 CCBCCC; 237 DOASCC; 227 NCBCCC; 390 TCBCCC. Black-capped Chickadee: 338 CBCCC; 68 CCBCCC; 277 DOASCC; 501 NCBCCC; 305 TCBCCC. Tufted Titmouse: two CBCCC; none CCBCCC; two DOASCC; 29 NCBCCC; eight TCBCCC; strong in southern counties, less so farther north. Red-breasted Nuthatch: 12 CBCCC; five DOASCC; one NCBCCC; Dec. Tioga Co. (BC); 14 Chen. Co. (Crossbill Hunters). White-breasted Nuthatch: 29 CBCCC; seven CCBCCC; 18 DOASCC; 58 NCBCCC; 30 TCBCCC. Brown Creeper: six CBCCC; two CCBCCC; 22 NCBCCC; one TCBCCC; one 4 Dec. Tioga Co. (RM); two 14 Dec. Delhi (SH); six Jan.-Feb. Chen. Co. (Crossbill Hunters). Golden-crowned Kinglet: 33 CBCCC; 29 NCBCCC; two TCBCCC; six 1 Dec. Walton (SH); 32 Chen. Co. (Crossbill Hunters). E. Bluebird: three CBCCC; four TCBCCC; one 17 Jan. Tioga Co. (SD); Feb. Tioga Co. (several); 23 Feb. Br. Co. (EK); 24 Feb. Br. Co. (AD, JS). Hermit Thrush: one Br. Co. 23 Jan. thru Feb. (J & RS). Am. Robin: one Dec. "off and on" Jan., Feb. Tioga Co. (D & JB, RE, AW); one 15 Jan., later 24 Jan. Vestal (GK); one 23 Jan. Endwell (FL); one 23 Jan. off and on thru early Feb., Chenango Bridge (JBe); one 24 Feb. Norwich (JL); eight 24 Feb. Br. Co. (JS); Feb. Newark Valley (LD). N. Mockingbird: two NCBCCC; five TCBCCC; three Dec. Br. Co. (JS); one Feb. Br. Co. (JS). Brown Thrasher: one Jan. Tioga Co. (LD). Cedar Waxwing: 179 CBCCC; 57 CCBCCC;

50 DOASCC; 137 NCBCCC; 530 TCBCCC. N. Shrike: one CCBCCC; one 10 Dec. OPM (MD, KW); one 20 Jan. Plymouth (HME); one 1 Feb. So. Otselic (DM). Eur. Starling: 947 CBCCC; 891 CCBCCC; 424 DOASCC; 1370 NCBCCC; 2401 TCBCCC.

VIREOS-WARBLED: Yellow-rumped Warbler: one 31 Dec. Norwich (DW). Com. Yellowthroat: one CBCCC.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: N. Cardinal: 18 CBCCC; nine CCBCCC; eight DOASCC; 45 NCBCCC; 34 TCBCCC. Am. Tree Sparrow: 235 CBCCC; 35 CCBCCC; 27 DOASCC; 89 NCBCCC; 106 TCBCCC. Chipping Sparrow: one Dec. Tioga Co. (LD). Field Sparrow: one NCBCCC. Song Sparrow: seven CBCCC; one CCBCCC; two DOASCC; 27 NCBCCC; six TCBCCC. White-throated Sparrow: three CBCCC; seven NCBCCC; 52 TCBCCC; one 17 Dec. Oneonta (MD); eight 23 Jan. Br. Co. (GK, HM). Dark-eyed Junco: 184 CBCCC; 12 CCBCCC; 29 DOASCC; 216 NCBCCC; 281 TCBCCC; good numbers thru. Snow Bunting: one large flock (100+) 17-23 Jan. Br. Co. (AC, CJ, GK, HM); Jan-Feb Chen. Co. "normal numbers" (CC); seven locations Chen. Co. (JL, DM, HME, DW). Red-winged Blackbird: one CBCCC; one CCBCCC; 15 TCBCCC; one 18 Feb. Norwich (JL); three Feb. Norwich (DW); 100 24 Feb. Br. Co. (JS); 100 28 Feb. OPM (MD); one 28 Feb. So. Otselic (DM); Feb. Tioga Co. (LD). E. Meadowlark: one 24 Feb. Br. Co. (JS). Com. Grackle: one CBCCC; one NCBCCC; one 31 Dec. thru 31 Jan. Delhi (MC); ten 1 thru 31 Jan. Walton (SH); 30 18 Feb. Br. Co. (HM); general return 23-24 Feb. Br. Chen. Cos., OPM, Tioga co. Brown-headed Cowbird: 200 DOASCC, "in one field"; three 5 Dec, one 19 Dec. Delhi (MC); one Feb. Norwich (DW); 20 10 Feb. (CL) two 17 Feb. two 19 Feb. Norwich (JL). Pine Grosbeak: two DOASCC. Purple Finch: 24 CBCCC; 26 DOASCC; 17 NCBCCC; one TCBCCC; one to seven off and on Dec., Jan. Delhi (MC); one to eight Feb. OPM (MD); five to ten mid-Jan. thru Feb. So. Otselic (DM); Tioga Co. (LD); 105 banded Feb. Vestal (GK). House Finch: 114 CBCCC; 101 CCBCCC; 37 DOASCC; 616 NCBCCC; 607 TCBCCC. **RED CROSSBILL:** 30 17 Dec. OPM (MD, KW); two CBCCC; thereafter approx. 25 locations Chen. Co. 25 locations Chen. Co. (Crossbill Hunters). White-winged Crossbill: 15 11 Jan. Chen. Co. (DN); thereafter approx. 28 locations (Crossbill Hunters). Pine Siskin: one 1 Dec. Br. Co. (CH); over 40 locations Jan., Feb. Chen. Co. (Crossbill Hunters); six 24 Feb. Br. Co. (JS); eight 27 Feb. Br. Co. (FL, HM). Am. Goldfinch: 47 CBCCC; 32 CCBCCC; 162 DOASCC; 115 NCBCCC; 158 TCBCCC; sporadic reports thru except Chen. Co. where Crossbill Hunters found approx. 15 locations. House Sparrow: 326 CBCCC; 312 CCBCCC; 348 DOASCC; 395 NCBCCC; 860 TCBCCC.

Box 1, H.C. 61, Powderhouse Road, Binghamton, New York 13903

REGION 5 – ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

PAUL DeBENEDICTIS

An ornithologically dull fall portends only bad things for the coming winter. So it was. Everyone wondered where all the birds were, although surprising numbers of some species were found. However, one had to work for everything.

The weather again duplicated that of the previous winter. December was generally mild, with two cold snaps and exceedingly warm temperatures at the end of the month. Runoff from the thaw caused severe flooding in northeastern Oswego and northern Oneida Counties. January turned sharply, though not brutally colder, with snow in Syracuse every day of the month, and into early