

REGION 9 – DELAWARE-HUDSON

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It was a strange winter as seasons go. December started off with a cold first week, and then warmed up to make many late migrants stay put. New temperature records were established on 17 December – 60° F., and 29 December – 68° F. January turned quite cold, and remained that way into February when a warming trend set in by the second week. A record of 72° F. was established on the 24th. Most larger bodies of water were still open for Christmas Counts, but frozen for the Federation Waterfowl Count on 13 January, and open again in the warm weather of mid-February. Ice left the lower Hudson by mid-February and the upper Hudson by 23 February. Almost every week of the period had some precipitation, but most of it was negligible; less than an inch of snow and only a trace of rain. The exceptions were 27 December when the southern portion had four or five inches, but the northern portions had less than an inch; and about six inches everywhere on 6 February. The light snows largely evaporated rather than melted, and, at period's end with no runoff, reservoirs were dropping toward the 50% level with no relief in sight. A look at water supplies at this writing brings apprehension about conditions this summer.

The most frequent comments heard thru the period were about the abundant food supply and the lack of winter visitors. Conifers were loaded with seeds beyond belief, and in most areas snow surfaces were blackened by birch seeds. No need for finches to move south for food, and no need for residents to come to feeders. Frank Murphy made an interesting comment to watch out for next year. It is improbable that trees would expend as much energy in seed production two years in a row, and next winter could be bleak in terms of available food. It could be rough on the birds, but great for the feeder watchers. Let's wait and see.

The N.Y.S. Federation Waterfowl Count on 13 January was the second best in both numbers of individuals and species in 31 years. Even with no counts made in Sullivan, Putnam and northern Westchester, the total was more than 19,000 individuals with more than 12,000 of them Canada Geese. Of these, 8,000 were in Dutchess alone.

A warm December induced many migrants to stay long enough to be counted on Christmas counts. Records were made for a number of species including Double-crested Cormorant, Spotted Sandpiper, Gray Catbird, Rufous-sided Towhee, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Eastern Phoebe, wrens, thrushes, Red-eyed Vireo and several species of warblers. Other quality visitors reported during the period were Red-necked Grebe, Greater White-fronted Goose, Glaucous Gull, Snowy Owl, Common Raven, Bohemian Waxwing, Red Crossbill and Broad-winged Hawk.

Contributors and observers cited: Al Brayton, Tom Burke, Judy Cinquina, Robert F. Deed, Stan DeOrsey, Jan & Francis Fitzpatrick, Valerie Freer, Sibyll Gilbert, Frank Murphy, Dan Niven, Eleanor Pink, Brian Schiefer, John Tramontano, Ed Treacy, Marion Van-Wagner, and Berna Weissman.

Abbreviations: Ashokan–Ashokan Reservoir; CP–Croton Point; EP–Esopus Point; FWC–

Federation Waterfowl Count on 13 Jan.; MC—Marshlands Conservancy; PL—Playland, Rye.

Christmas Counts cited: BCC—Burroughs, Ulster, 22 Dec.; BMCC—Bear Mountain, 9 Jan.; BWCC—Bronx Westchester, Rye, 23 Dec.; GSCC—Greenwich Stamford, SE Westchester, 16 Dec.; HCC—Housatonic, NE Dutchess, 16 Dec.; MCC—Mearns, E. Orange, 15 Dec.; RCC—Rockland, 23 Dec.; SCC—Sullivan, 29 Dec.; WCC—Waterman, Dutchess, 28 Dec. No reports received from Putnam and Peekskill Counts.

LOONS-DUCKS: Red-throated Loon: five off Rye 23 Dec. on BWCC. Com. Loon: one on Greenwood L on FWC was the first since 1978 for that count. Horned Grebe: six of the 25 on GSCC were found on Kensico Res. Red-necked Grebe: always unusual in winter. One on Ashokan thru 6 Jan. Two on BCC (no details). Double-crested Cormorant: remained thru period in unprecedented numbers. RCC has only had them for the past three years in 38 counts. This year a "whopping" 36 individuals. One on BMCC was a first for that count. Another adult at CP 12-15 Dec. was a winter first for that location. Another was at PL 23 Dec. Great Blue Heron: reached a peak of 52 on 8 Dec. at PL. RCC had ten; the previous high count was five in 1956 and four in 1975. Black-crowned Night-Heron: one remained at PL to 29 Dec. Mute Swan: the 145 on FWC was up from 110 last year. **GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE**: one returned for the third year to Round Pond near Amenia on 28 Feb. (D. Fleury). Snow Goose: many more reports than usual of from one to a few individuals at such locations as Mamaroneck, CP, Dobb's Ferry, Dover, Amenia and Montgomery; 16 reports from various ponds in Dutch. Of the six on FWC, five were in Dutch. Canada Goose: 11,946 on FWC was up from 2,123 last year and made up more than 50% of the entire count. Am. Black Duck and Mallard: numbers up 300% over last year's count on FWC. N. Pintail: the two found on FWC belies their higher than usual numbers thru the period. Gadwall: six on Wappinger's L 29 Dec. was a good date for Dutch. Three continued there for FWC. Am. Wigeon: usually a few on FWC, but none this year. Canvasback: the 916 on FWC was better than average, but down slightly from last year. Greater Scaup: 759 on BWCC in the Rye area. Lesser Scaup: one on the Hudson at Bear Mt. was a first for the BMCC. Eight were on Wampus Pd. Armonk on BWCC. Oldsquaw: rarely found up river in winter; one at EP 25 Dec. White-winged Scoter: one on MCC was a first for that count. Com. Goldeneye: 53 on FWC was down from 219 last year. Bufflehead: a paltry seven compared with last year's 36 on FWC. Hooded Merganser: the 124 on GSCC included 43 from inland West. Com. Merganser: 2,823 on FWC was less than half last year's total.

-**HAWKS-ALCIDS**: Turkey Vulture: single birds reported thru the period from the eastern and southern parts of the region were probably not residents, but rather scouts probing northward from N.J. on the warmer days of the period. Most residents were back on territory by the end of Feb. Osprey: one at Byram L. Mt. Kisco 1 Dec. was very late. Two on RCC was the fourth time for that count in 38 years; all since 1978, and the sixth winter record for that county. Observed in the Hackensack Swamp area between Blauvelt and West Nyack. Bald Eagle: more than usual and more widespread; reported from all areas. At least six wintered at Iona I. Of the 65 birds reported on the Jan. survey of NYS, 49 of them were in the Sull-Ulster area. This number was composed of 31 adults and 18 imm. At least 12 spent Feb. at Rondout Res. One caught at Mongaup Res. 27 Feb. by the DEC had been previously tagged at the same location 25 Feb. 1980. N. Harrier: more than usual. At least two wintered at Galeville Airport and four others reported from Dutch during Feb. Accipiters: all local species reported well during period. A Sharp-shinned was trapped accidentally in a summer screen house at your reporter's home and had to be released by hand on 23 Feb. One N. Goshawk at Wawarsing observed on 23-24 Jan. and 12 Feb. seemed to have a predilection for Mourning Doves at a feeder. Red-shouldered Hawk: nine passed the Butler Sanctuary on 7 Dec., a very late movement. **BROAD-WINGED HAWK**: the occasional mid-winter report is usually ignored by your reporter, but this year there were three well-documented events. We report them here and leave it to the

reader to accept or reject them. One adult well observed and described by Liz and Lew Dumont (experienced hawkwatchers) 9 Feb. near Warwick. Three imm over Pauling 22 Dec. (SG). On Sunday, 17 Feb., at about 4 pm, Andy Cszasz was stopped for a traffic light near Port Jervis when two went over his car. He pulled over and in the next 20 minutes observed 16 more raptors; ten Red-tails, five Rough-legs and one Osprey. They came in small groups of twos and threes. Rough-legged Hawk: very well reported. At least three wintered at Galeville and two more in the Red Hook area. Many scattered reports of single individuals. **GOLDEN EAGLE**: one and possibly two were in the Rio-Mongaup area thru the period. Am. Kestrel: numbers severely down in the Rock area where only two were on the RCC. That count had as many as 18 as recently as 1979. Peregrine Falcon: a heartening reappearance of this species. One was on offshore rocks at MC on 9 Dec. Another took up residence on the Tappan Zee Bridge 21 Dec., and was observed repeatedly thru period. Another was harassing blackbirds below Mt. Peter on 25 Feb. Ring-necked Pheasant: six reports in Dutch during Dec.; max eight along Clove Rd. 9 Dec. Wild Turkey: from 12 to 25 regularly during Feb. near Amenias. Appearing more and more on Christmas Counts for the first time. FM reports them down in the Ulster area. He observed none, and received no reports of any. Clapper Rail: three at MC on 23 Dec. Killdeer: one report of 22 birds on 1 Jan. in Dutch (no details). Greater Yellowlegs: one at PL thru Dec. Spotted Sandpiper: after the first winter record on BMCC last year, RCC had its first this year when one turned up in the Town of Ramapo (P. French). Purple Sandpiper: as many as 100 on rocks off Rye during Dec. Com. Snipe: two on BWCC in Rye. Am. Woodcock: one at MC 30 Dec., seven at Verbank 27 Feb. Observed in courtship flight 23 Feb. at West Point, and at Saugerties. Gulls: the Westchester Co. dump at CP was finally closed to garbage and only about 700 gulls were counted there during the period. There used to be thousands – oh well, the price of progress. Laughing Gull: the last two of a few late birds at PL were reported on 26 Dec. **LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL**: the usual bird at Harbor I. Pk., Mamaroneck was there during Dec., but became more elusive later on. **GLAUCOUS GULL**: one Ashokan 2 Dec. Three on Wanasink L, Sull 28 Nov. was a new county record for Sull (E. Scott).

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Mourning Dove: around in exceptional numbers; 213 on BCC, 546 on WCC and 773 on MCC. E. Screech-Owl: residents in five areas of Dutch this year compared to nine last. Great Horned Owl: many reports. AB had five different birds calling near his home at Saugerties the night of 25 Dec. Observed calling in at least five locations in Dutch during Jan. Snowy Owl: the only report, one flying near 6½ Station Sanct. in Goshen (Bob Frederick). Barred Owl: very few reports. Long-eared Owl: only a single report, one bird roosting all day on 10 Feb. in an ornamental tree outside a window in Upper Nyack. Short-eared Owl: very poorly reported, one at Hamptonburgh 29 Jan. JT reported six at Galeville Airport 25 Feb., but other birders who frequent the place saw none for the season. N. Saw-whet Owl: more than usual. One moved south, tree by tree along the road in front of JFF's home in Campbell Hall, calling all the way, on the eve of 24 Dec. Another was calling near AB's home in Saugerties 29 Dec. The latter was heard regularly thru 10 Feb. when it was joined by a second, unreported thereafter. Red-headed Woodpecker: a small group of five was found near Walden on MCC. Red-bellied Woodpecker: many feeders have single individuals. More commonly reported than Red-headed. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: BW reports more than usual in west central Westchester, three at Pound Ridge Res. 9 Dec. and another in Rye 23 Dec. N. Flicker: 46 on MCC was an excellent number, as was 32 on WCC. Pileated Woodpecker: six on WCC and four on RCC. One of the latter was being pursued by a Sharp-shinned. One can only wonder what the hawk would do with it if he caught it. The observer did not see the chase concluded.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: **EASTERN PHOEBE**: extremely rare in winter. One 29 Dec., Wurtsboro (DN). Horned Lark: sparingly reported, max 450 Warren Sod Farm near Pine I 27 Jan. 400 Red Hook 5 Feb., down to 49 on WCC from a high of 490 in 1966.

Probably due to a loss of manured farms. Am. Crow: it's assumed that the usual roosts are still working, but no one reports them. Fish Crow: excellent winter numbers. Remained at MC thru 23 Dec. Three at CP 15 Dec., observed regularly thru winter across the river at Haverstraw Dump. One Kingston Point 23 Feb. RCC had its 11th occurrence in 38 counts with a record high of 38 birds. **COMMON RAVEN**: one observed soaring over Butler Sanct. on 7 Dec. (Frank Nicoletti), appears to be the third record for West. Two were again at Slide Mt. 1 Dec. Tufted Titmouse: RCC had a record high of 212. Red-breasted Nuthatch: eight observed together at Mongaup Res. in mid-Feb., five there again on 2 Mar. Very few elsewhere, and missed on most Christmas counts. Brown Creeper: seem to be many around this winter. The Rye group tallied 14 on BWCC. Carolina Wren: numbers up and seems to have done well thru period. Many at suet feeders and singing loudly by end of period. House Wren: one very late bird at Purchase on 16 Dec. and another at Rye 23 Dec. Winter Wren: six in Rye for BWCC was excellent. Marsh Wren: MC contributed one to the BWCC, another was at CP 15 Dec. Kinglets: both species well up in numbers thru period. Rye added 27 Golden-crowned and 13 Ruby-crowned to BWCC, which made for record totals for each. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: one at CP 15 Dec. was probably the same bird found there on 30 Dec. (D. Panko). E. Bluebird: found in excellent numbers in areas where nest box trails exist. FJF had an interesting experience of six roosting together overnight on a tree branch near their home in Campbell Hall. They would arrive about a half hour before sunset, feed for a while, and then huddle next to each other for the night. Both BCC and WCC report 25 each. **SWAINSON'S THRUSH**: one on RCC at Clarkstown (Mary Wilfred), third time in 38 counts. Hermit Thrush: six in Rye for BWCC; one on BCC. Am. Robin: another one of those winters where they abound. A flock of well over a thousand at Dover, Dutch on 26 Jan. Several reports of flocks from 25 to 75 at various locations in Dutch thru Jan. and Feb. 31 at Wawarsing in early Dec. increased to 64 in early Jan. 730 counted on BCC and 128 on WCC which usually average 20. Gray Catbird: six at Rye on BWCC; MCC had five. Water Pipit: three over Rye's Milton Pt. 23 Dec. **BOHEMIAN WAXWING**: three at Middletown 12 Feb. was a first for Oran (JT). None elsewhere for many years. Cedar Waxwing: more than usual, many reports of small flocks thru region for period. N. Shrike: one was at Kingston Pt. from mid-Jan. to mid-Feb. Another, possibly the same bird, was at the IBM plant at Kingston for third week of Feb. (R. Terwilliger). Loggerhead Shrike: JT found one at Galeville from 29 Dec-23 Feb., but he was the only observer.

VIREOS-WARBLES: **RED-EYED VIREO**: one at a feeder in New City 23 Jan. (Ed Bieber). Bird was seen only that day during a record-breaking cold spell. Orange-crowned Warbler: one at PL 23 Dec. was an excellent find for BWCC. Yellow-rumped Warbler: 68 on RCC was an excellent comeback from lows of recent years, 15 on MCC was also excellent. **AMERICAN REDSTART**: a female at Clarkstown on RCC was a new record for the count. Com. Yellowthroat: an extraordinary four at MC for BWCC. One at CP 15 Dec. (D. Panko). RCC had its fourth record and the fifth for the county with a single bird at Hackensack Swamp, s.w. of Nyack (Donald S. Deed).

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: Rufous-sided Towhee: at least three wintered in Dutch, and single birds were on two local Christmas Counts. Chipping Sparrow: two remained at a feeder at Wanasink L, Sull thru early Dec. Sharp-tailed Sparrow: one remained at MC for the BWCC. Swamp Sparrow: 11 in Rye on BWCC. White-throated Sparrow: RCC had a record high of 587; numbers good elsewhere, but not nearly that high. White-crowned Sparrow: on several Christmas Counts. One on GSCC at Armonk, and another at MC on BWCC. Another remained at the IBM plant in Kingston thru 24 Feb. One was at Wawarsing in early Dec. and another was on WCC for the fifth record in 27 counts. Lapland Longspur: three at Red Hook on 5 Feb. were in various stages of plumage, and feeding with a few Horned Larks and Snow Buntings (MVW). Snow Bunting: max 500 Magee Hill, Dutch 22 Jan., 200 Red Hook 5 Feb., 50 Warren Sod Farm 27 Jan. Many other reports of smaller flocks. Icterids: local breeders returned early in Feb. Max a flock of from 3000 to 3500

observed several times near Chester Elementary School, last week of Feb. Bobolink: one well-described bird near Pawling 15 Dec. could be a record late date for the region. Report submitted to NYSARC (SG). E. Meadowlark: a heartening 19 at Nichols Preserve in Armonk 13 Dec. and again 16 Dec. (BW); missed completely on most Christmas Counts. Brown-headed Cowbird: a "whopping" 2,300 in the Town of Northeast 16 Dec. on HCC. N. Oriole: one at Wawarsing until 2 Dec. Purple Finch: the only northern finch in good numbers. HCC had 52 in the Town of Northeast, Dutch. House Finch: astronomical increase; 342 on WCC was 30% higher than House Sparrow count. 814 on MCC, 698 on BCC were twice the House Sparrow counts. Red Crossbill: two at Pound Ridge Res. on 9-11 Dec. (Frank Nicoletti). Another pair was in spruces along Fir Brook north of Willowemoc on 23 Feb. (BW). Com. Redpoll: their scarcity makes any report suspect. Only report four at a feeder in Forestburgh in early Jan. Pine Siskin: almost totally absent from the southern portion. A number of small flocks reported from northern Sull on 23 Feb.; missed on every Christmas Count. Am. Goldfinch: numbers poor on Christmas Counts and at feeders, but they were out there. More than 50 in early Dec. at Twin Pds., Sull. Several flocks of 25-30 at Monticello in late Dec., and more than 200 at Rondout Res. 30 Dec., RCC had a high of 391. Evening Grosbeak: most reports from Sull. Most Christmas Counts had only a few or none.

Pellwood Lake, Highland Falls, New York 10928

REGION 10 – MARINE

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It was a winter of sharp contrasts. It started with the warmest December on record. The warmest day of the month was the 29th, with a high of 70° F. The day's mean of 63° was 30° above normal. The month's average of 43.8° F. was 7.6° F. above normal. Ironically, the only significant snowfall of the month, 4.8 inches on the 27th, preceded the "heat wave." December's total precipitation of 3.26 inches was 0.55 below normal. The late December warm spell carried over into early January until temperatures dropped below normal on the 8th. The real arctic blast came, however, on the 21st when temperatures plummeted to two below zero. January's mean of 28.8° F. was 3.0° F. below normal. The new year continued the dry spell of late 1984 with January's total precipitation of 1.00 inches, 2.21 below normal. The only major snow was 4.1 inches on 17 January. The first nine days of February continued cool, but after that temperatures were mostly above normal with a record breaking high of 75° F. on the 24th. February's total precipitation of 2.41 inches continued on the deficit side, this time by 0.72 inches. The only measurable snowfall was 4.3 inches on the 2nd and 5.7 inches on the 5th-6th. (All weather data from New York City.)

Despite December's mild weather there seemed to be very few birds around. There were very few rarities, either on the Christmas Bird Counts or later. With the exception of Southern Nassau, most counts reported near or slightly below normal totals. Southern Nassau - 133, Montauk - 127, Brooklyn - 122, Queens