

REGION 7 – ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

JOHN M. C. PETERSON

Seasonal weather over the four northeastern counties stayed quite close to long-term averages for snowfall, temperatures, and heating degree-days. Holding to these averages, however, required that birds and birders endure several brutal bouts. An Alberta Clipper cold snap sent the windchill to -60°F in the Adirondacks on 18 Dec. On the following day the air temperature was still -20°F in Ellenburg Depot. Conditions were about average for the four Christmas counts. The 21 Dec Ferrisburg, VT/NY Christmas Bird Count (hereafter FCBC) enjoyed snow cover of only 1-5 in. and L. Champlain was open. The Elizabethtown count (ECBC) on 28 Dec saw ideal conditions of $10^{\circ}\text{-}20^{\circ}\text{F}$ temperatures and 4-14 in. snow cover, and conditions were similar on Plattsburgh's count (PCBC) the following day. By 28 Dec the snow at Saranac Lake (SLCBC) was 16-20 in. deep and fresh water was mostly frozen.

The counts completed, a snowstorm on 5 Jan was followed by severe cold. This combination of conditions forced a Red-tailed Hawk to make a near-fatal mistake. The emaciated raptor struck a domestic duck, part of a small flock on a frozen residential pond near Westport. Locked in a struggle that proved fatal for the duck, the two tumbled into a tiny patch of open water. The raptor survived the plunge and struggled out, but almost immediately iced up. It was badly hypothermic when picked up by the High Peaks Audubon rehabilitation team on 8 Jan. Drs. Robert Lopez and Craig and Suzanne Russell applied heat and fluid therapy to stabilize the hawk, followed by a diet of mice donated by Trudeau Institute.

Open water could still be found along portions of L. Champlain, the LaChute R. at Ticonderoga, a bit of the St. Lawrence R. on the St. Regis Reservation, and Seventh Lake in Hamilton Co. for the 12 Jan NYS Waterfowl Count. Observers tallied 2,877 individuals, representing 14 waterfowl species plus a hybrid. They also counted an incredible 195 Great Black-backed Gulls (35 on L. Champlain, 160 on the short stretch of the St. Lawrence). Temperatures plummeted soon after the waterfowl count. Saranac Lake was the coldest spot in the nation at -24°F on 14 Jan, according to the Today Show, but that same day the Atmospheric Science Research Center recorded -25°F along the Ausable R. Thermometers registered -19°F at Ray Brook on 15 Jan, yet even with temperatures rising Saranac Lake claimed the low in the nation of -14°F on 16 Jan. Daytime temperatures finally climbed above zero, and on 19 Jan the rehabilitated Red-tailed Hawk was banded and released. The greatest storm of the season began 25 Jan, with 17 in. of snow in Plattsburgh and 21 in. in the Tri-Lakes by the following day. The storm continued, adding another foot of snow by 27 Jan. Birds began to be pushed into view of window-watchers: 20 American Goldfinches, for example, appeared at an Elizabethtown feeder 29 Jan, followed by an adult Northern Shrike on the last day of the month. Common Redpolls, which had been present since late Oct, began to appear at more feeders, but in modest numbers and only briefly; only eight redpolls could be banded near Elizabethtown 7-8 Feb.

February had no real extremes of weather, although temperatures dropped again at mid-month, providing a low of -7° F at Elizabethtown on 12 Feb.

A seasonal total of 88 species was reported, down from 96 during last winter's bumper food crop. Only 27 birds of just five species were banded near Elizabethtown during the season. Christmas count totals ranged from lows of 36 species at Elizabethtown and just 1,568 individuals at Saranac Lake to record highs of 57 species and 6,491 individuals at Plattsburgh, reflecting the tendency of birds to concentrate at lower elevations. Birding was poorest in forested areas at higher elevations. Bob McKinney found the northern finches around his Cedar R. camp in Hamilton Co. "as amazingly poor as they were amazingly good last year," spotting only a dozen Evening Grosbeaks in three days. Near Inlet, Gary Lee saw only a dozen Evening Grosbeaks all winter until a large group moved in during Feb, about the same time as some Blue Jays. From Tupper Lake, Charlie Delehanty reported that the arrival of redpolls in early Feb energized feeding stations, but that many still had no birds, not even a jay, by the close of the season; even her Sharp-shinned Hawk departed for the first time in three or four winters!

This reflects the wild food crop, which was judged poor to fair overall. Yet a good crop of staghorn sumac at lower elevations, augmented by a fair crop of buckthorn berries and wild grapes, attracted numbers of Bohemian Waxwings and Pine Grosbeaks—both species scarce during the previous winter. The Bohemian invasion, which had begun in early Nov, provided Christmas count totals of 1 ECBC, 11 SLCBC, and 32 PCBC. There were also 50 Bohemians at L. Alice 22 Dec, 15 at Tupper L. 2 Jan, flocks of 100 to 220 that delighted visiting birders near Port Douglas between 12 Jan-18 Feb, and ten along the Little Chazy R. on 23 Feb. Cedar Waxwings, so abundant the previous winter, were more difficult to find, with a flock of about 25 the seasonal maximum. Pine Grosbeaks were recorded on all four Christmas counts: 32 FCBC, 41 ECBC, 41 PCBC, and 46 SLCBC. The seasonal maximum was 100-150 seen on 1 Feb by the visiting Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club. At Tupper L, where wild foods were scarce, they fed on highbush cranberry in December and sunflower seeds at a feeding station during January.

Other species in better than average numbers included Am. Tree Sparrow (max. 226 PCBC); four reports of Lapland Longspur (with max. 5 in n. Clinton Co. 20-23 Feb); Snow Buntings on three Christmas counts (and max. 300 in n. Clinton Co. 20 Feb); a total of 14 Com. Grackles on all four Christmas counts (max 6 PCBC) plus one at the Inlet dump to mid-Jan and one at a Tupper L feeder in February, and Common Redpolls on four counts (max 113 ECBC). Note that except for the half-hardy grackles, all are fine seed eaters. Yet even forested Hamilton Co. reported Snow Buntings, with four wintering at an Inlet horse corral and six feeding on bird seed spread on the ground at a house next to L. Abanake.

A first-winter male **HARLEQUIN DUCK** was found at Essex harbor on the 12 Jan NYS Waterfowl Count by Ted Mack and Mike Peterson, and was subsequently seen by many observers. Although there are six previous records from the Vermont side of Champlain, dating back to 1929, this is the first in New York waters and constitutes a first record for Essex Co. and the Adirondack-Champlain

Region. The drake was last seen on 22 Jan by Norman Mason and Mike Peterson, and details have been submitted to NYSARC, together with photos by Gerard Lemmo. No details accompanied the report of a putative Broad-winged Hawk eyeing a feeder near Bluff Point during the PCBC. Geoffrey Carleton found a first-winter **ICELAND GULL** at Westport 5 Jan for a sixth Essex Co. record; Jeff also found the first for the county in 1937. A Common Barn-Owl was reported at Cumberland Head on the PCBC, but without details. No reports of Spruce Grouse or Wild Turkey were received, and local outdoor columnist Marty Rosenkranz writes that results of the first regional turkey season in 1985 were disappointing, perhaps due in part to poaching. Northern raptors were either scarce (Rough-legged Hawk, Snowy Owl, Northern Shrike) or absent this winter. Two of the 400 Canada Geese at Pt. au Roche 12 Jan wore yellow neck-collars, according to Mark Gretch.

Contributors: Merry Baker, Geoffrey Carleton, Ann & Walter Chapman, Glen & Malinda Chapman, Janet Chapman, Dewey & Joan Clark, Jim & Linda Cunningham, Charlie Delehanty, John D. Delehanty, John E. Delehanty, George Dill, Susie Frenette, Emily & Jack Geddes, Mark Gretch, Elsbeth Johnson, Bruce Landon, Gary Lee, William Lee, Theodore Mack, Larry Master, Robert McKinney, Susan Millar, Ron Miner, Toni O'Bryan, John Parke, John Peterson, Alan Pistorius, Martin Roddy, David Rutkowski, Arman Vaillancourt, Hollis White, and all of the Christmas Bird Counters.

LOONS-DUCKS: Com. Loon: max 3 FCBC. Horned Grebe: max 13 PCBC. Great Blue Heron: max 3 PCBC. Canada Goose: 436 NYSWC, but a flock over Keene Valley 7:30 p.m. 28 Jan took three min. to pass and was estimated at "a couple thousand" geese (RM). Wood Duck: LaChute R NYSWC only report. Am. Black Duck: max 346 NYSWC. Mallard: max 400 NYSWC. N. Pintail: 2 drakes, 1 hen Port Douglas NYSWC, late. Canvasback: max 505 PCBC, last 40 Plattsburgh 15 Feb (MG). Ring-necked Duck: drake Westport 23 Dec only report. Greater Scaup: max 500 PCBC. Com. Goldeneye: max 1,385 NYSWC. Bufflehead: max 16 NYSWC. Hooded Merganser: max 4 L Alice 8 Dec. Com. Merganser: max 1,000 Westport 4 Jan (EJ, JP).

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Bald Eagle: ad Meacham L 26 Dec (BL), ad Wickham Marsh 12 Jan (MG), subad Bay Pd 19 Jan (MR), Tupper L 20 Jan (CD) all encouraging. Red-tailed Hawk: ad shot Clintonville Feb, taken to Westport for rehabilitation. Am. Kestrel: 1 PCBC only report. Gray Partridge: max 12 (2 flocks, 6 each) n. Clin 20 Feb feeding, then disappearing *under* snow (D & JC). Ruffed Grouse: max 5 ECBC. Am. Coot: 1 PCBC unusual. Bonaparte's Gull: max 28 Westport 5 Jan. Ring-billed Gull: max 448 PCBC. Herring Gull: max 89 PCBC, arr Fourth L 14 Jan, staying several days (GL).

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Rock Dove: max 417 PCBC. Mourning Dove: max 149 PCBC, 1 caught by cat Westport rehabilitated and released 18 Jan. E. Screech-Owl: gray-phase in waterfowl nesting box Little Chazy R 17 Feb (MG). Great Horned Owl: max 6 ECBC. Snowy Owl: second-hand reports Crown Pt Jan and 2 killed by buses on Northway. Barred Owl: bird trapped 28 Nov died 13 Dec of infection. N. Saw-whet Owl: 1 ECBC only report. Downy Woodpecker: max 29 ECBC. Hairy Woodpecker: max 18 SLCBC. Three-toed Woodpecker: 1 SLCBC only report. Black-backed Woodpecker: Red R, Hami only report. N. Flicker: 3 n Fran only report (HW). Pileated Woodpecker: max 7 PCBC.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Horned Lark: max 125 n Clin 23 Feb (MG). Gray Jay: 2 SLCBC, good population Moose R Plains (GL). Blue Jay: max 300 ECBC, mate-feeding Tupper L 16 Feb. Am. Crow: max 384 ECBC. Com. Raven: max 15 SLCBC, 1 PCBC a first record, and 10 squabbling over carrion in Raquette R marsh 27 Dec (CD). Black-cap-

ped Chickadee: max 626 ECBC. Boreal Chickadee: max 3 SLCBC, 2 Newcomb feeder entire for *sixth* consecutive winter (A & WC). Tufted Titmouse: 2 reports Champlain Valley, low. Red-breasted Nuthatch: max 66 SLCBC. White-breasted Nuthatch: max 31 ECBC. Brown Creeper: max 8 PCBC. Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 17 ECBC. E. Bluebird: 4 males Essex 23 Dec, 2 males, 1 female Westport 18 Jan, and several Essex 10 Feb, late. Am. Robin: max 30 n Fran 12 Jan (HW). N. Mockingbird: Ticonderoga 15 Jan only report. N. Shrike: 6 reports. Eur. Starling: max 581 PCBC.

VIREOS-WARBLEDERS: Yellow-rumped Warbler: Elizabethtown 3 Dec late (JP).

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: N. Cardinal: max 23 PCBC, 2 females wintered Inlet, Hami. Fox Sparrow: 1 PCBC unusual. Song Sparrow: max 6 PCBC. White-throated Sparrow: max 2 SLCBC. Dark-eyed Junco: max 101 PCBC. Red-winged Blackbird: max 5 PCBC. Rusty Blackbird: Tupper L feeder 1-29 Dec late (CD, JDD, JED). Purple Finch: max 44 PCBC. House Finch: max 202 PCBC. Red Crossbill: max 35 PCBC. White-winged Crossbill: max 8 ECBC. Pine Siskin: max 48 PCBC. Am. Goldfinch: max 136 PCBC. Evening Grosbeak: max 331 ECBC. House Sparrow: max 259 PCBC.

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There is no Region 8 report because we have no Region 8 Editor.

REGION 9 – DELAWARE-HUDSON

EDWARD D. TREACY

Although there were a few very cold days this winter, there were no extremely cold or warm periods of any duration. The Hudson River never froze solid in the Region, although much floe ice drifted down from farther north. On occasion ice jams formed at bends where the river courses through the Highlands, but there were many open places where Common Merganser and Canvasback could dive for food. The floes had melted pretty well by mid-February, and only the deepest lakes and reservoirs had ice at the end of the period. Snows came once or twice a week but were of little depth, less than four inches at any one time. Melt and runoff occurred throughout the period. By its end, the drought of the last several years was over. Reservoirs which had been empty seas of grass at the start of the period were now filled and flooding through their spillways.