

REGION 7 – ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

JOHN M. C. PETERSON

December was cloudy, January snowy, and February cold. Except for the lack of birds and a January thaw, the season was about average, at least meteorologically. First the weather . . .

The 20 Dec Ferrisburg Christmas Bird Count was done on 3-4 inches of fresh snow in the Champlain Valley, good for both hikers and skiers. By 27 Dec some of the High Peaks in the Elizabethtown count circle had 18 inches, but at lower elevations the ground was bare. On 28 Dec, the Plattsburgh counters enjoyed mild temperatures and minimal snow cover. That same day, Saranac Lake had similar conditions, with only 5-8 inches of crusted snow and the Saranac River open for nine miles of coverage by canoe. About 27% of available sunshine made for a dreary month.

A storm 2-3 Jan brought dry, drifting snow behind a massive coastal low, stalled on a line from Newfoundland to the Gulf of Mexico. Another storm 10-11 Jan also brought blowing snow and near classic conditions for the infamous New York State Waterfowl Count on 11 Jan. Before the month ended, another foot of snow fell over much of the Region on 23 Jan.

Overnight temperatures then plummeted to the -30°F range between 13-18 Feb. Lake Champlain froze over completely on 19 Feb, the first complete closing since 1982.

A poor to nonexistent cone crop and a generally weak supply of other wild foods discouraged birders, but not all birds. Bohemian Waxwings were abundant, especially where good amounts of staghorn sumac and buckthorn fruits were available at lower elevations. Flocks were reported from six general locations: Wadhams, Lake Placid, the Lake Shore Road between Essex and Westport, near Keeseville, north of Elizabethtown (all in Essex County), and Hogansburg in Franklin County. Following their November arrival, Common Redpolls also staged an invasion and were the common feeder bird throughout the Region for most of the period, although numbers were not as high as in some major flight years. Only a single Hoary Redpoll was reported. Only 128 individuals of eight species were banded near Elizabethtown 6 Nov-16 Feb, with 45 Common Redpolls the most abundant species.

Raptors also visited feeders, as usual. The Sharp-shinned Hawk dining on a Downy Woodpecker on North Jay Road 26 Jan was typical, as were several Northern Shrike attacks witnessed by feeder watchers. The weather, however, seemed to put more stress on owls. There was an increase in reports of Barred Owls sitting out during the daytime, with several of them visiting feeders. Merry Baker watched a Barred Owl at her log cabin near Paradox on the morning of 22 Jan as it carried off and then devoured a 5" square of suet in spite of being harassed and even struck by Blue Jays. On 24 Feb a Barred Owl sat in the snow all day at Armand Villiancourt's Tupper Lake feeding station. When approached, at 3:30 p.m., the owl flew off leaving behind a decapitated Ring-necked Pheasant; the pheasant's remains disappeared that night. A weakened "small owl" found

at an Elizabethtown feeder in late Feb probably was a Northern Saw-whet. Other unusual feeder visitors included a Gray Jay near Saranac Lake in Dec, the Carolina Wren that stayed at the Hagar feeder in Saranac Lake for count day and the male Lapland Longspur at the Furness feeder in Moriah Center on 3 Feb. Greg Furness also reported Common Redpolls excavating snow caves on the garage roof on 9 Feb, and snow bathing on the same burrow-riddled roof on 1 Mar.

Plattsburgh, with 43 species and 4589 individuals, had the highest totals of the four Christmas Bird Counts. A total of 13 species were tallied in Clinton, Essex, and Hamilton Counties on the NYS Waterfowl Count. Just 82 species were recorded during the period, quite low compared to recent years: 91 in 1983, 96 in 1984, 89 in 1985 and 88 last year.

The recent NYS DEC study of Common Loons has found that the New York population is stable and may be on the increase. Breeding of 157 pairs was noted on 128 Adirondack lakes and three sites in the St. Lawrence River, fledging 196 young. Data collected in the DEC survey was supplemented by additional reports from volunteers. "The Common Loon in New York" report, which was partially funded through the Return a Gift to Wildlife tax checkoff program, is available from the NYS DEC, Wildlife Resource Center, Delmar, NY 12054.

Contributors: Bartlett & Isabelle Bailey, Russell Bailey, Merry Baker, Sylvia Campbell, Geoffrey Carleton, Glen & Malinda Chapman, Dean Cook, Charlie Delehanty, John E. Delehanty, Joe DiCostanza, Sean Duffy, Bill, Katherine & Nan Eagleson, Greg Furness, Anne Hungerford, Chris & Dave Keefer, Brian & Eileen Keelan, Marie Kuhnen, Anne Lacy, Gary Lee, William Lee, Theodore Mack, Larry Master, Sue Millar, Drew Panko, John Peterson, William Peterson, Gary Randorf, David Rutkowski, Andy Saunders, Laura Sells, Ann Shaw, Anna Straight, Gen Sutter, Karen Sylvester, Jan Trzeciak, Armand Villiancourt, Hollis White, and all the Christmas bird counters.

LOONS-DUCKS: Com. Loon: singles FCBC, PCBC, NYSWC only reports. Horned Grebe: max 66 PCBC. Red-necked Grebe: 2 NYSWC only sightings. Great Blue Heron: 1 FCBC late, but typical of recent years. Snow Goose: 1 FCBC only report. Canada Goose: max 995 FCBC. Wood Duck: 2 NYSWC late. Gadwall: hen North West Bay 11 Dec (GC) unexpected. Canvasback: 35 Essex harbor 30 Jan late, but 2 drakes wintered there at artificial opening with Am. Black Ducks and Mallards. Ring-necked Duck: 1 PCBC only report. White-winged Scoter: max 2 NYSWC. Com. Goldeneye: max 821 NYSWC. Bufflehead: max 20 FCBC. Hooded Merganser: five reports of 1-2. Com. Merganser: max 270 NYSWC. Red-breasted Merganser: two reports of 2-3.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Bald Eagle: im Heart Bay 6 Dec, subad Tupper L 6 Dec-14 Jan, im Tupper L 10 Dec-1 Jan, 2 ad North West Bay 20 Dec, im Grog Harbor 20 Dec, ad Westport 28 Jan, a healthy showing. N. Harrier: 1 FCBC late. Sharp-shinned Hawk: 2 reports. Cooper's Hawk: Elizabethtown-Wadhams Rd. 15 Jan. Red-tailed Hawk: max 3 ECBC. Rough-legged Hawk: max 5 PCBC. Peregrine Falcon: Westport 5:30 p.m. 21 Feb (JP) unexpected. Ruffed Grouse: max 10 on two CBCs an improvement. Ring-billed Gull: max 476 PCBC. Herring Gull: max 183 PCBC. Great Black-backed Gull: max 65 PCBC high.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Rock Dove: max 780 PCBC. Mourning Dove: max 107 PCBC. Great Horned Owl: max 4 ECBC. Downy Woodpecker: max 37 ECBC. Hairy Woodpecker: max 32 ECBC new record. Black-backed Woodpecker: female Hurricane Mt and female Ray Woods Rd 27 Dec new to count, singles Chubb R and Riverside Dr 30 Dec made SLCBC count period, but none found on count day. Pileated Woodpecker: max 10 ECBC.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLING: Horned Lark: max 50 Whallonsburg Jan-Feb, one Inlet landfill 18-19 Dec and six Keene 23 Feb (EJ) rather unusual. Gray Jay: three reports, including one visiting feeder Saranac L. Blue Jay: max 363 ECBC, eating brittle polyurethane plastic (for grit?) Paradox Jan-Feb. Am. Crow: max 289 ECBC. Com. Raven: recorded on all four CBCs, max 11 SLCBC. Black-capped Chickadee: max 803 ECBC. Boreal Chickadee: singles SLCBC and Moose R. Plains 29 Dec only reports. Tufted Titmouse: one Elizabethtown 29 Dec only report. Red-breasted Nuthatch: max 62 SLCBC. White-breasted Nuthatch: in song Paradox 13 Dec; max 31 ECBC. Brown Creeper: max 6 SLCBC. **CAROLINA WREN:** *intro*. Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 58 SLCBC. E. Bluebird: two apparently wintered near Whallonsburg, with reports 18 Jan (JD, AS)-28 Jan (GR). Am. Robin: one Lake Shore Rd 18 Jan only report. Bohemian Waxwing: six locations included max 300 near Wadhams 26 Dec-19 Jan, 14 Lake Placid 27 Dec, max 150 Lake Shore Rd between Essex and Westport 6 Jan-20 Feb, 450 between Keeseville and Port Douglas 11 Jan, 200 Hogansburg, Fran, 2 Feb, and 22 Roscoe Rd north of Elizabethtown 21 Feb; one wonders how many others went unrecorded. Cedar Waxwing: 20 Lake Shore Rd 19 Jan only report. N. Shrike: 12 reports, involving perhaps 10 birds. Eur. Starling: max 214 PCBC.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: N. Cardinal: max 10 PCBC. Am. Tree Sparrow: max 100 ECBC. Song Sparrow: max 3 PCBC. Dark-eyed Junco: max 31 PCBC. Lapland Longspur: *intro*. Snow Bunting: none on CBCs and reports from just four locations, max 15 Whallonsburg 20 Feb, low. Red-winged Blackbird: max 4 PCBC, also reports from Elizabethtown, Saranac Lake, and Tupper Lake areas. Com. Grackle: 50 PCBC extraordinary, singles near Saranac Lake and Tupper Lake. Brown-headed Cowbird: max 21 SLCBC. Pine Grosbeak: generally scarce, with only nine reports, max 15 Paradox 24 Jan. Purple Finch: 18 PCBC (without comment) the only report of the winter. House Finch: max 82 PCBC, plus reports from Elizabethtown, Essex, Wadhams, and Westport. Red Crossbill: present at Paradox thru period with male in full song 21-24 Dec and still singing 1 Feb, max 35 there on 27 Jan (MB); also reports from Owl Pate Pd and Wadhams. White-winged Crossbill: small flock Limekiln L 11 Dec (GL); 1 SLCBC; singing near Paradox 26 Dec-4 Jan (MB). Com. Redpoll: abundant through most of period, max c. 200 Moriah Center 3 Feb. (GF). Hoary Redpoll: one among flock of redpolls at Lewis landfill 27 Dec (KE, NE), plus other possibles near Elizabethtown and Moriah Center. Pine Siskin: max 16 Elizabethtown 1 Jan (12 banded). Am. Goldfinch: max 41 ECBC and 40 at Elizabethtown feeder 29 Dec. Evening Grosbeak: max 846 ECBC. House Sparrow: max 280 PCBC.

Discovery Farm, RD 1, Elizabethtown, NY 12932