

[This report arrived too late to be included in the previous issue of *The Kingbird*.]

REGION 4 – SUSQUEHANNA

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In contrast to the cold, snowy weather of late November, December was quite mild at Binghamton. The weatherman was right when he predicted a fifty-five percent chance that the entire Northeast would be warmer than normal. There were 25 days in December with a mean temperature above the norm and no white Christmas for the first time in four years! Only 5.2 inches of snow, low temperatures of 6 and 9 degrees, and mean temperatures well below the norm on 12 and 13 Dec, respectively, reminded us that winter would soon officially arrive. The 9.2 inches of snow in December was less than the November snowfall! This changed abruptly with 12.5 inches on 2 Jan! Regular snowfall continued through January; every storm seemed to hit us. By the end of the month 43.1 inches of snow had fallen at Binghamton, surpassing the previous January record of 41 inches in 1978. There was only one period of severe cold from 23 to 28 Jan during which the mean temperature was six to seventeen degrees below the norm, and lows reached -3 degrees.

Average to above average temperatures returned for the first half of February, but the snow continued with an accumulation of 7.2 inches by 13 Feb. An abrupt change occurred when a storm on 9 and 10 February finally missed us. There were twelve consecutive days of below normal mean temperatures and essentially no more snow. Record breaking low temperatures of -10 F and -7 degrees on 15 and 16 Feb, respectively, were recorded at Binghamton. The rest of the month was quite sunny with nearly normal temperatures. By the end of February, normally quite snowy, only 9.2 inches of snow had fallen. Our weatherman claimed that the winter so far was decent with above average temperatures except for only two periods of extreme cold. However, not every Regional resident, except for skiers, agreed with that assessment, because the 74 inches of snow was more than usual.

The diversity of waterfowl was lower than normal, probably due to the cold weather during the waterfowl count period in January and the early cold period in November which apparently pushed waterfowl south. The number of species was the lowest in nine seasons. Diving ducks, such as Bufflehead, Redhead, Canvasback, and scaup, normally reported about fifty percent of the time, were notably absent.

Over-wintering Rough-legged Hawks and Bald Eagles were present in average numbers. The Cannonsville Reservoir and west branch of the Delaware River continue to be a good location for wintering Bald Eagles due to the concentrations of waterfowl, mostly Mallards and Black Ducks, on the open water. Accipiters again took advantage of the "grocery stores" provided by bird feeders. Mildred Clark reported a Mourning Dove killed by a Sharp-shinned Hawk in Delhi,

where the largest concentrations of Mourning Doves were reported for the period. One dedicated observer chased a Cooper's Hawk away from her Johnson City feeder twice on 17 Jan and once on 25 Jan because very few birds were present at the feeder during the once per week visits by the hawk during January. Many of us with feeders have observed this phenomenon, but perhaps we should consider the hawk's point of view. How would we feel if someone shut down our favorite neighborhood grocery store?! **GOLDEN EAGLE**, rare here in this season, was reported for the second consecutive winter. Is the eastern population of these eagles increasing or are observers spending more time in the field and/or becoming more skilled at finding them? The **PEREGRINE FALCON**, rare especially at this season in this Region, was observed for a considerable period of time near the observer's home and may have responded to the mild December by staying north. Mild weather and little snow cover, which created better mouse-hunting conditions, probably induced a **LONG-EARED OWL** to stay north long enough to be found by Christmas Bird Count counters. A short-lived invasion of Snowy Owl which started in November continued into the first few days of December and then stopped. Could this have been caused by the abrupt change from cold, snowy weather in November to milder conditions in December?

The relatively mild winter induced Northern Flicker and Brown-headed Cowbird to stay north in greater numbers. Northern Oriole, Brown Thrasher, Eastern Bluebird, and Rufous-sided Towhee apparently lingered for the same reason. Other birds seemed to respond to the mild conditions. Joe Sedlacek observed Mourning Doves starting to *coo* on 12 Feb, while House Finches started to sing here in Norwich at my house on 7 Feb. Immediately thereafter the weather turned severely cold. I wonder if that cooled their ardor!?

There were only a few reports of birds taking advantage of natural food sources. In December Evening Grosbeaks fed on box alder seeds. According to Bent's *Life Histories of North American Birds*, they are especially fond of box alder fruit, and plantings of this tree may have contributed to range expansion of these birds to the East. In Johnson City Marie Petuh observed Cedar Waxwings eating viburnum berries in mid-January. A **TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE** was observed by Chad Covey and Roger Daigle eating nannyberries in an area with a large concentration of berries. This is typical of this bird in its normal range. This solitaire came a long way but obviously not just to eat nannyberries! Fortunately, the birders did not have "a long way to tick a rarity"!

Southern birds expanding their range north - Northern Mockingbird, Carolina Wren, and Tufted Titmouse - are still doing well, especially in the Southern Tier. This mild winter will undoubtedly help to maintain their populations. **FISH CROW** at Vestal are apparently in some way connected with records of this species at that site in recent years. Red-bellied Woodpecker occurred at traditional locations in the Southern Tier and in northern Cortland County near suspected or known breeding sites.

There was a good winter finch invasion this year. Common Redpoll was quite common at feeders stocked with niger seed. These friendly denizens of the north are always great fun, especially during feeder restocking when early morning hunger further reduces their lack of fear of humans. Although Pine Grosbeak was scarce to nonexistent this season, the Red Crossbill more than filled that

void for me. On 7 February I saw five Red Crossbill feeding on Red Pine cones, calling, and singing along the Pharsalia Truck Trail near Preston. One male performed its aerial display with flight-singing, while another male and female were apparently paired. This is the same location where a pair were seen collecting nesting material in March 1985.

Several European Goldfinches were seen in Delaware County. These birds are apparently the residual from a misguided and illegal release in Delaware County of approximately twenty pairs in mid-July 1986.

The species list of 80 is the third lowest in nine years. Peregrine Falcon, Golden Eagle, Long-eared Owl, Northern Bobwhite, Fish Crow, Townsend's Solitaire, and European Goldfinch are rarities. Only a few Christmas Bird Count records were included in this report to fill voids in the species synopsis. In addition, December populations are not usually indicative of midwinter and Christmas Bird Counts are published elsewhere.

Observers: Les Bemont, Bruce Bozdos, Anna Casselberry, Mildred & Lynn Clark, Chad Covey, Carlton & Jeanette Davis, Anna & Marilyn Davis (MDv), Louise Dean, Mary Dobinsky, Sadie Dorber, B. Dubben, E. & P. Getkin, Claire Gotshall, Shirley Hartman, Gail Kirch, Ken Knapp, Margaret Layton, Jay Lehnun, Matt Leslie (vils), Florence Linaberry, Harriet Marsi, Andrew Mason, Leona McDowell, Stella McPherson, Sandy Paston, Marie Petuh, Karen Phillips, Halliday Pierce, Martin Podskoch, R. & J. Saunders, Joe Sedlacek, Helen Snyder, Shane Stalter, Elizabeth Washburn, Kathryn Wilson, Don Windsor, Irene Wright.

Abbreviations: BCBC-Binghamton Christmas Bird Count 28 Dec; CCBC-Cortland Christmas Bird Count 20 Dec; CRes-Cannonsville Reservoir; FHNC-Finch Hollow Nature Center; hr-hour; JCity-Johnson City; mo-month; OPM-Oneonta, Portlandville, Milford; OCBC-Oneonta Christmas Bird Count 20 Dec; SCBC-Sherburne Christmas Bird Count 20 Dec; TCBC-Tioga Christmas Bird Count 1 Jan; WFC-Waterfowl Count 14 to 18 Jan; VSpr-Valonia Springs.

LOONS-DUCKS: Com. Loon: only one CCBC, fourth in nine years. Pied-billed Grebe: only one Binghamton 14 Jan (EW,ML). Red-necked Grebe: only one Binghamton 14 Jan (EW,ML). Great Blue Heron: few scattered singles, last Vestal 20 Jan (SP). Canada Goose: max 75 Sherburne 21 Dec (JL,CC); midwinter max 62 on WFC. Am. Black Duck: midwinter peak 45 on WFC. Mallard: max 75 Otse L 27 Dec (MD). Com. Goldeneye: only two on WFC. Hooded Merganser: max three CRes 14 Jan (HP). Com. Merganser: midwinter peak 42 on WFC, max 11 Oneonta to Unadilla 26 Feb (MD).

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Bald Eagle: max six (3ad,3im) CRes 17 Jan (JL,DW,CC). N. Harrier: only two TCBC. Sharp-shinned Hawk: three to five scattered singles/mo at feeders. Cooper's Hawk: one to four scattered singles/mo at feeders. N. Goshawk: only one BCBC, unusual there. Red-tailed Hawk: mid winter lull five reports in Jan increasing to 13 in Feb. Rough-legged Hawk: increasing to ten reports for Feb, max 4 U Lisle 16 Feb (MP). **GOLDEN EAGLE**: two reports at Smithville Flats 30 Dec and CRes 5 Jan (SD,AC). Am. Kestrel: peak seven/317 party hr on five CBC's; midwinter low one to two/mo Jan-Feb. **PEREGRINE FALCON**: one Cortland 2 Jan (CW). Ruffed Grouse: max three Windsor 6 Dec (JS); only one Jan-Feb Tiog. Ring-necked Pheasant: peak five/three CBC's; only one f Homer 22 Feb (BB). Wild Turkey: peak frequent reports 25-40 Delhi Jan-Feb; max 50 Jefferson 6 Feb (MC). N. Bobwhite: three OCBC, only second report there since 1969. Killdeer: only one Franklin 20 Dec (SS). Com. Snipe: one Broome Community College 19 Jan (ML), unusual; arr one Milford 27 Feb (MD). Ring-billed

Gull: max 30 Otse L 6 Dec (MD); seven CRes 17 Jan (JL), unusual. Herring Gull: max 30 Otse L 6 Dec (MD); scattered singles S Tier Jan-Feb.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Mourning Dove: many feeder reports; max 53 Delhi 8 Feb (MC). E. Screech Owl: max three/ten hr owling BCBC; only three other scattered singles. Great Horned Owl: max 19/ten hr owling BCBC; only five other scattered singles. Snowy Owl: arr one Delhi (MP) & a heavily barred im Sherburne (KP fide DW) 1 Dec, found dead along road am 2 Dec. Long-eared Owl: one BCBC, first in eight seasons. Belted Kingfisher: midwinter singles CRes 5 Jan & Hamden 9 Jan. Red-bellied Woodpecker: max five TCBC; singles Tiog all season, Oxford after 20 Jan, and E. Homer 2 Jan, only others. Downy Woodpecker: frequent, to six/day all season. Hairy Woodpecker: max seven VSpr 7 Dec (JS); midwinter peak five to seven singles or pairs/mo Jan-Feb. N. Flicker: max nine/three CBC's quite high; only one other Vestal 19 Feb (MP). Pileated Woodpecker: five scattered singles Dec decreasing to only singles/mo Jan-Feb, low.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Horned Lark: reported six sites Feb, high; max 50 Unadilla 26 Feb (MD). Blue Jay: midwinter peak 16 to 23/day 9 Jan to 15 Feb. Am. Crow: increasing from 20 to 50/report Dec to midwinter max 200/day Chenango Forks (MDv). **FISH CROW:** two BCBC (GK,HM), rare in winter. Black-capped Chickadee: max reports 20 to 30/day all season. Tufted Titmouse: max 58/five CBC's; one to two/day six sites all season, still increasing. Red-breasted Nuthatch: five to seven reports/mo all season; max four Pharsalia 8 Feb (JL). White-breasted Nuthatch: one to two/day widespread Jan-Feb; max five OPM 9 Feb (MD,KW). Brown Creeper: midwinter peak three to five reports/mo; max three Delhi 21 Feb (MC). Carolina Wren: singles three sites Jan one site Feb. Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 12 Windsor 6 Dec & 15 VSpr 7 Dec (JS). E. Bluebird: three TCBC 1 Jan, unusual; arr one m two f FHNC 3 Feb JCity. **TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE:** one SCBC (NYSARC). Am. Robin: singles OPM 1 Dec & SCBC, late; arr one 1 Feb & two 28 Feb Broome (DD). N. Mockingbird: max eight BCBC; singles four locations Jan-Feb, average. Brown Thrasher: one Sunrise Terrace 20 Jan (MLs), unusual. Cedar Waxwing: max 75 JCity 18 Jan (MP). Northern Shrike: only reports two SCBC & one CCBC.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: N. Cardinal: max six pairs Norwich 25 Jan (JL). Rufous-sided Towhee: only one 3,4, & 18 Feb FHNC, unusual. Am. Tree Sparrow: midwinter max 21 Jan 11, to 17/day Feb Delhi (MC). Field Sparrow: only singles BCBC & TCBC. Song Sparrow: only singles Norwich 10 Jan (JL), OPM 9 Jan (MD,KW), & Vestal Center 20 Feb (SD). White-throated Sparrow: max ten JCity 4 Jan (MP); midwinter peak four to seven daily there Jan-Feb. White-crowned Sparrow: im SCBC only report. Dark-eyed Junco: midwinter max seven/day. Snow Bunting: max 30 Norwich 1 Feb (JL) & E Homer 3 1 Feb (KS). Red-winged Blackbird: daily Chenango Forks Dec, late; only singles CRes. 5 Jan & Tiog Feb. Brown-headed Cowbird: singles BCBC, Delhi 22 Dec (MC), & Tiog, late; max two Norwich 31 Jan (DW), unusual. N. Oriole: one Hobart feeder 24 Dec to 30 Jan (AM), unusual. Pine Grosbeak: several FHNC 25 Feb only report. Purple Finch: max three m Norwich 29 Jan (JL); one to two/report five sites Feb, above average. House Finch: max 175 JCity 31 Jan (MP); midwinter max 100 there 14-28 Feb. Red Crossbill: max 20 OCBC; *intro*. Com. Redpoll: widespread reports of 20 to 100 Jan-Feb; max 200 Milford 11 Jan (IW). Pine Siskin: max 30 Oneonta 8 Jan (MD); decreasing to one to six/report Feb at six sites. Am. Goldfinch: regular reports of one to ten all season; max 14 Oneonta 3 & 20 Jan (MD). European Goldfinch: singles Delhi 23 Jan & 19 Feb and Hamden 9 Feb, *intro*. Evening Grosbeak: max 198 OPM 29 Dec (MD,KW); midwinter max 75 Norwich 1 & 21 Feb (JL), decreasing thereafter.

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