

REGION 10 - MARINE

SEYMOUR SCHIFF & ALVIN WOLLIN

A description of the "winter" weather follows. The temperature in New York City reached 60°F. on 8 Dec. This was followed by the first arctic air of the season, which brought the temperature below the freezing mark and eventually to 5°F on 12 Dec. The remainder of the month was more seasonable, but it returned to 60°F on 29 Dec. At the end of the month it was back below freezing. This diversity resulted in an average temperature of 35.9° against the norm of 36.2°. Rainfall for the month was 1.14 inches; normal is 3.81. Included in these New York city records was the mere light dusting of snow on 15 Dec, but which brought eleven inches of snow to eastern Long Island. Just a normal month in the Region. The daily highs during January gradually moved up to 61° on 24 Jan before dropping again. But a week later February began with a 5° increase to the previous daily high for the date, when an unprecedented 67° was recorded in Central Park. As to rain/snow, the bulk of the winter storms roared up the coast and surged out to sea when they reached New Jersey. This resulted in little snow and a potential water shortage for the Region due to lack of precipitation both here and upstate.

This mild weather, particularly in the early part of the season resulted in more sightings than usual of a number of birds normally found during milder periods. These included Wood Ducks, Tree Swallows and Chipping Sparrows. The season was notable for an almost complete lack of both northern birds and winter finches. Probably the best bird of the winter was a stray migrant which arrived just after the end of the Fall period. On 3 Dec Tony Lauro reported a displaced **Western Tanager** which showed up at Fire Island State Park. It stayed a few days in the shelter of an *Eleagnus* (Russian Olive) grove feeding on the berries with robins, a Northern Oriole and a Solitary Vireo. Most lucky observers who came to see it were also rewarded with a view of a Western Kingbird on the nearby Cedar Beach golf course.

The one special bird most contributors reported, from Staten Island to Montauk and throughout this winter season, was the Peregrine Falcon. These reports cannot be attributed to just a few birds moving around. The Region is seeing a significant increase in the winter population. In addition, Cooper's Hawk and N. Goshawks, less common among the wintering hawks, were more widely reported this season.

Almost all of the rarer birds normally seen during the winter (as few as half a dozen birds staying in the Region but seen every year) were reported on one or more of the Region's Christmas Bird Counts. These included Eurasian Wigeon, Common and King Eider, Harlequin Duck, Little, Common Black-headed, Iceland and Lesser Black-backed Gull, Snowy Owl, Pine Warbler, Common Yellowthroat and Rusty Blackbird. The Central Suffolk Christmas Count reported twelve birds of prey, six hawks and six owls, and the various Suffolk Co. counts reported a total of 25 Eastern Bluebirds. None of the the

Christmas counts reported particularly large numbers of scoters and many birders believe that scoter numbers are down considerably in recent years. However, the Amagansett to Montauk Point Waterfowl Census on 14 Jan found over 20,000, half of them Surf Scoters. More than the usual number of phoebes also turned up during the warm month of Dec.

For the most part little exciting happened during the period after the Christmas counts. The usual early February migrants failed to be sufficiently noticeable to be mentioned by our contributors. However, observers continue to comment on the increase and spread of birds into the Region from other areas. Among those species mentioned are Red-bellied Woodpecker, Tufted Titmouse and Carolina Wren. Others like the Great Cormorant, which has become rather widespread at present, are just reported without comment. On 7 Feb Arthur Morris and Elaine Belsky carefully counted Boat-tailed Grackles at the Howard Beach roost. The total was a high of 103, including 14 adult males.

Christopher McKeever reported on the final moments of the Chilean Flamingo. It was last seen alive 17 Dec, and duly reported on the Quogue Christmas count. The body was found thereafter and was to be conveyed to the American Museum of Natural History in New York. Conjecture on cause of death, either lead poisoning or the cold weather freezing the bottoms on which it fed; an autopsy had not been completed as of this report. Finally, it is the responsibility of the Regional editor to decide what is and what is not a bona fide record to include in each submission. This period's dilemma was a Barnacle Goose which wintered on the north shore of Long Island this winter. No bands were seen. Is it a European bird or an escape? A difficult question! In this particular case we report it here and leave it to the experts to evaluate.

Contributors: Bob Adamo, Thomas W. Burke, James Clinton, Sr., Henry F. Flamm, Paul H. Gillen, Dave Kunstler, Anthony J. Lauro, Christopher K. McKeever, Peter Martin, Arthur Morris, Michael O'Brien, Herbert H. Roth, John J. Ruscica, John S. (Jack) Ruscica, Harriet Sato, Seymour Schiff, Lore J. Schore, Steve Walter, Alvin Wollin.

Abbreviations: APP - Alley Pond Park; CSCBC - Central Suffolk Christmas Bird Count 27 Dec; CP - Central Park; JBCh - Jones Beach; LI - Long Island; MPt - Montauk Point; QCBC - Queens Christmas Bird Count 17 Dec; RMSP - Robert Moses State Park; ShIn - Shinnecock Inlet; SHP - South Haven Park; SNCBC - Southern Nassau Christmas Bird Count 2 Jan; WEJB - west end Jones Beach.

LOONS-DUCKS: Red-necked Grebe: a few scattered reports, mostly from Christmas counts. Green-backed Heron: one Twin Lakes Preserve, Wantagh 26 Dec (PM). Tundra Swan: two Hook Pd, E Hampton 3 Dec (JJR). Snow Goose: 2-300 JBWS during Jan, 25 Hook Pd, E Hampton 18 Jan (AD,PG), blue morph Caumsett SP 23 Feb. Barnacle Goose: *intro*. Wood Duck: *intro*. Tufted Duck: one CP 29 Jan (Brenda Renshaw). Com. Eider: five MPt 11 Dec, two MPt 13 Feb (PG). King Eider: one to two MPt entire period. Harlequin Duck: two WEJB 5 Dec, six ShIn 14 Jan, eleven Ditch Plains 26 Feb (PG). Eurasian Wigeon: singles widely distributed.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Osprey: one Connetquot R SP 22 Jan (PM). Bald Eagle: imm JBCh 11 Jan (HR,HS,LS). Cooper's Hawk: *intro*. N. Goshawk: *intro*, one wintered CP. Red-shouldered Hawk: one wintered Hempstead L SP (mob). Peregrine Falcon: *intro*. Wild Turkey: 70 Montauk CBC 17 Dec. Clapper Rail: on SNCBC. Virginia Rail: eight MPt 17 Dec, one MPt 26 Feb (PG). Semipalmated Plover: on QCBC. Lesser Yellowlegs: on SNCBC. Laughing Gull: on QCBC. Little Gull: one WEJB 12 Dec (PM), one ShIn. Com. Black-headed Gull: on SNCBC, ShIn 22 Jan (PG), 25 Jan (HR,HS,LS), one Pt Lookout 8 Feb (PM).

Iceland Gull: two wintered MPt. Glaucous Gull: singles MPt 17 Dec, East River 31 Jan, MPt 19 Feb.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Snowy Owl: one Hampton Bays LI 29 Dec (PG), still there 4 Feb (JJR).

FLYCATCHERS-STARLING: E. Phoebe: one APP 19 Dec (Art Wagner, Sam Yaeger), three CSCBC. W. Kingbird: *intro*. Carolina Wren: 110 Orient CBC 31 Dec. Winter Wren: SHP 7 Jan (JSR). E. Bluebird: *intro*. N. Shrike: two CSCBC.

VIREOS-WARBLERS: Solitary Vireo: *intro*. Orange-crowned Warbler: John F. Kennedy Wildlife Sanctuary, Tobay 3 Dec (PM), one Northern Nassau CBC. Pine Warbler: one wintered MPt. Palm Warbler: several CBC reports, one MPt 14 Jan (JJR). Yellow-breasted Chat: one RMSP 4 Dec, one MPt 29 Dec.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: Summer Tanager: one Oldfield LI at feeder to 4 Dec. **Western Tanager**: *intro*. Dickcissel: one Whitestone feeder 7 Jan, one Brooklyn feeder 28 Feb. Lapland Longspur: one wintered at JBCh Coast Guard Station, seven SNCBC 2 Jan, eight St Charles Cemetery 22 Jan. Boat-tailed Grackle: *intro*. N. Oriole: one RMSP 3-18 Dec, two Montauk CBC 17 Dec, one QCBC. White-winged Crossbill: one SNCBC. Evening Grosbeak: SNCBC, six SHP 6 Jan (JSR), APP 10 Jan (Sam Yeaton, Art Wagner).

EXOTICS: Chilean Flamingo: *intro*.

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