

REGION 7 - ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

JOHN M. C. PETERSON

More clues to the puzzle of wintering geese, the return of an Old World duck, Arctic gulls, a tantalizing glimpse, and a shortage of Evening Grosbeaks at lower elevations marked the winter of 1988-98. Given the generally mild conditions, with no major snowfalls to push birds into feeders, many felt that this was another "birdless" winter, yet much like last year variety and numbers proved to be high on local Christmas Bird Counts. The Elizabethtown CBC found 42 species, just one shy of a record, and established a new 16-year record of 3,588 individuals. Across the region, there were 84 species reported.

Birds and birders enjoyed a fairly temperate season, with an Eastern Chipmunk still out at Elizabethtown on 3 Dec. On 11 Dec, however, Saranac Lake was the coldest spot in the nation at a frigid -27°F. By the time of the Saranac Lake CBC on New Year's Eve, there were only 6-11 inches of snow in the Adirondacks, and most of the Champlain Valley was bare. The new year began with Newcomb -21°F on 6 Jan, yet the month ended with Plattsburgh a balmy 46°F on 30 Jan, and monthly temperatures were 5.2% warmer than average (and after averaging 6% warmer last winter, as well). The still bare Champlain Valley received only 6.6" monthly snowfall, while there were 11" on the ground at Newcomb and 20" at Inlet. February had just 1.06" precipitation and 8.5" of snowfall at lower elevations. A cold spell on 17 Feb sent thermometers plunging to -22°F at Ray Brook, -23°F at Newcomb, and -30°F at Saranac Lake. Yet the month was 1.6°F warmer than average, and by 27 Feb the Eastern Chipmunk was back out at Elizabethtown. For the first time in memory, NYS Waterfowl Counters ambled along the bare sands of the lakeshore in shirtsleeves; if this is the Greenhouse Effect, we can learn to stand it.

One blue morph Snow Goose and two yellow-collared Canada Geese were picked out of the flock of almost a thousand geese at Westport during the 17 Dec Ferrisburg CBC. One male collared in North Carolina in Jan 1984 had subsequently turned up in Maryland (Oct-Dec '84), New York (Mar '85), and Delaware (Jan '87). The other male, collared in New Jersey in Jan 1987, had its collar number reported from Delaware in Feb '88. Canada Geese continued feeding in corn stubble near Westport even after Champlain froze over.

Bob Hagar and Ted Mack again provided Clinton County coverage of the recently established Champlain Islands, VT/NY, CBC on 18 Dec. They were rewarded with the return of the Ruddy Shelduck found 20 Dec 1987 on last year's count at Monty Bay.

"White-winged" gulls are scarce in this region, so it was doubly joyous to have Jeff Carleton spot an imm Iceland Gull at Westport on Valentine's Day, just after Bob and Charlotte Ladwig noted the first-winter Glaucous Gull on Whallon's Bay on 25 Jan.

During the course of the 17 Dec Ferrisburg CBC, Ted Mack, Keith Murphy, and Mike Peterson visited a Crater Club camp just south of Essex, where this editor

resided and banded during the mid 1970s. The brushy yard just above Lake Champlain was alive with robins, waxwings, and numerous feeder birds at midday. One plain bird, seen by all observers at point-blank range through a 15x spotting scope, showed a grayish-tan thrushlike head with eye ring giving a blank expression. Upon reflection, Mack was comfortably satisfied that it was a Townsend's Solitaire, a bird that he alone of the party knew well from the West. The bird was neither seen again, nor included in the Ferrisburg CBC totals; details will not be submitted to NYSARC. Bull (*Birds of New York State* 1974) lists two downstate specimen records in November and March.

Evening Grosbeaks seemed most abundant at middle elevations, around 2,000 feet. The Ferrisburg CBC (ca. 100 ft el.) found just 17 grosbeaks, all on the New York side and none in Vermont. The Elizabethtown CBC (ca. 1,000 ft el.) had a relatively low 94 grosbeaks. Only the Saranac Lake CBC (ca. 2,000 ft el.) could find as many as 682, which was still far from a record for that count. The attraction in the Sara-Placid region was undoubtedly the good spruce cone crop. There were no reports from higher elevations (3,000' High Peaks), where winter observations are scarce in any case.

The ubiquitous finch was American Goldfinch. Other finch species appeared in mixed numbers. Siskins were mixed with goldfinches at many feeders, but numbers were greatly reduced after last winter's remarkable invasion, as might be expected.

A total of 111 individuals of six species were banded near Elizabethtown between 25 Jan-16 Feb, with 59 Black-capped Chickadees outnumbering the winter finches. Combined with the record 974 Black-capped Chickadees tallied on the Elizabethtown CBC, it appears that this was an invasion year.

Contributors: Geoffrey Carleton, Bruce Craig, Sean Duffy, Greg Furness, Robert Hagar, Marie Kuhn, Charlotte & Robert Ladwig, Gary Lee, Sue Liepmann, Theodore Mack, Gary McChesney, James Meritt, Sue Millar, Keith Murphy, John Peterson, Barbara Sweatt.

Abbreviations: CICBC - Champlain Islands Christmas Bird Count; ECBC - Elizabethtown Christmas Bird Count; FCBC - Ferrisburg Christmas Bird Count; SLCBC - Saranac Lake Christmas Bird Count.

LOONS-DUCKS: Com. Loon: three FCBC only report. Horned Grebe: max 22 FCBC. Snow (Blue) Goose: *intro*. Canada Goose: *intro*. Wood Duck: two drakes Ausable R seen from canoe on SLCBC. Mallard: record 355 ECBC. N. Pintail: two drakes New York State Waterfowl Count unusual. Ruddy Shelduck: *intro*.

HAWK-ALCIDS: Bald Eagle: n L George 5 Dec (BC); imm Rock Harbor ESSE 17 Dec (SL); ad Westport 6 Jan (MK); ad Essex 4 Feb (BS), suggests 3-4 birds. N. Harrier: new to ECBC. Wild Turkey: continued HAMI records include Moose R Dec-Jan, Inlet feeder Feb, seven at Wells deer feeder (GL). Am. Coot: Westport 14 Jan and 14 Feb, extremely late. Iceland Gull: *intro*. **Glaucous Gull**: *intro*.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Mourning Dove: 104 ECBC a new record. Belted Kingfisher: one ECBC, three SLCBC notably late. Three-toed Woodpecker: s of Sagamore L at head of Benedict and Sumner Creeks (GM), always a good find. Black-backed Woodpecker: max three Chubb R ESSE 27 Dec (SD); also in HAMI at Helldiver Pd, Moose R, and s of Sagamore L (GL). N. Flicker: one FCBC, two ECBC notably late.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Horned Lark: Inlet dump 7 Dec (GL) a most unexpected locale; 140 CICBC CLIN more expected, but good numbers. Gray Jay: one wintered Lawrence feeder, McMaster Rd FRAN (SD), two SLCBC, seven FRAN 14 Jan (JM), several

Moose R and s Sagamore L, a good showing. Com. Raven: regular in Port Henry rockcuts bordering L Champlain Dec, one FCBC, max four each ECBC and SLCBC, pairs at nest sites Eagle Nest Pd and Mt Tom HAMI by end of period. Black-capped Chickadee: *intro*. Tufted Titmouse: Inlet feeder (GL) since 7 Jan a surprise. Carolina Wren: Moriah 31 Jan (GC) the only report, but not unexpected in light of at least seven in Quebec during the winter. Townsend's Solitaire: *intro*. **Wood Thrush**: one in a spring area near Inlet 7 Dec, extremely late, if correct (GL). Am. Robin: widespread, with reports of 18 FCBC, six ECBC, Moose R 12 Dec, Adk Loj 28 Jan. N. Mockingbird: new to ECBC. Brown Thrasher: new to ECBC. Cedar Waxwing: 47 FCBC, *intro*.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: White-throated Sparrow: two FCBC, one ECBC, one SLCBC a solid showing. Lapland Longspur: five CICBC a good number. Snow Bunting: max 300 Christian Rd ESSE 12 Feb. Red-winged Blackbird: two CICBC unusual in winter. **Rusty Blackbird**: new to SLCBC. Com. Grackle: two SLCBC, most unusual in Adirondacks in winter. Pine Grosbeak: max five SLCBC. Purple Finch: max nine SLCBC. House Finch: max 253 ECBC. Red Crossbill: max two Elizabethtown 16 Feb. White-winged Crossbill: max 20 FRAN 14 Jan. Com. Redpoll: max one FCBC. Pine Siskin: max 83 SLCBC. Am. Goldfinch: max 341 ECBC. Evening Grosbeak: *intro*.

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[There is no Region 8 report because we have no Editor for Region 8.]

REGION 9 - DELAWARE-HUDSON

HELEN MANSON

Those of us who anticipated good winter birding were in most cases disappointed. December temperatures were normal and the only measurable snows came in mid month, resulting in only 1/2 inch of precipitation. January arrived with three inches of snow which only lasted about two days. There was no more precipitation to speak of for the rest of the month. February was a bit warmer than normal with an average temperature of 28°. Heavy rains did little to dispel the drought conditions. Some of the inland ponds and lakes had open leads kept free of ice by the many wintering Canada Geese, thus providing areas for a variety of ducks.

An invasion of winter finches did not materialize. The lack of snow made it very difficult to find longspurs and Horned Larks. The open winter provided good food sources and kept the birds well dispersed. Multiflora rose and other wild fruits were abundant this open winter. However, feeders were well populated with common visitors. There were a few exceptions that saved the winter. Bald Eagles wintered along the Hudson River and offered good views for all who took the time to look for them. Some also wintered at Rio, Neversink, and Rondout Reservoirs. Waterfowl continued to use the river, dodging the many ice floes and sometimes resting on them. It was possible to see good numbers of Canvasback and Common Merganser. The **Say's Phoebe** found on the afternoon of the Eastern Orange County Christmas Bird Count on