

REGION 10 — MARINE

SEYMOUR SCHIFF AND ALVIN WOLLIN

The pleasant fall quickly gave way to winter, frigid winter. The month of December was one of the coldest on record with Brookhaven Lab recording the lowest average temperature in its 40 years of keeping records. In New York city it was the third coldest December since record keeping started in 1869. This time the meteorologists blamed the "Polar Vortex" for pushing the jet stream south. In contrast January was considerably warmer than normal with an actual mean temperature of 41.4° F. against a normal of 31.8°. In addition, new highs were recorded during the period 16-18 Jan when the temperatures were above 60°. February also was warmer than normal with an actual mean temperature of 39.8° against a normal of 33.4°. Thus, after a numbing December, the balance of the Winter was "warm" with January warmer than February. The consequences of all this for birding are unknown. However, it is to be noted that despite the cold December, the minimum temperature never dropped below 5° F. and we are still not in jeopardy of loosing our climatic designation of Zone 7. Precipitation was slight in December and more normal during the rest of the period, with January above normal and February below balancing one another. A late February snow exhibited what we are finding is the usual pattern for precipitation, 1.8 inches in Central Park and a foot at Montauk with intermediate amounts between.

The frigid weather came prior to and during the Christmas count period. However, most reports which came to us indicated that birding and the counts were better than the compilers had expected. Unofficial count totals for the Region ranged from 99 to 129 and were somewhat less than recent species totals. Still, compared to normal highs elsewhere these are impressive numbers. It appeared the one factor throughout was the lack of strong winds. Even the count on December 30 fared "reasonably well" amidst the sleet which formed ice sheets on the jackets of those of us who were unfortunate to be out that day. It was miserable, but not too windy. Birds and birders alike can take the cold, but the wind chill is another matter.

Alcids were seen in greater numbers than in recent years with reports of **Common Murre**, **Thick-billed Murre**, **Razorbill**, and **Black Guillemot** (details under species accounts). On the other hand, this was another non-finch Winter in our Region except for the few occurrences

also noted below. Snowy Owls were reported widely, but did not stay for any length of time at any one place. The fall's **Gyr Falcon**, however, did stay long enough to be counted on the Southern Nassau CBC of 30 Dec, but became more wide ranging and departed shortly thereafter. Other notable winter birds were a **Ross' Goose**, which stayed through the season, found at Calverton on 1 Jan by James Clinton, **Greater White-fronted Goose**, and a **Pine Warbler** wintering at a feeder.

The winter beaches and adjacent ocean in Region 10 constitute a major birding area for the rarer birds. Such rarities, when seen, are regularly reported. Many birds "uncommon" in other parts of the state are a normal part of the winter beach avifauna. These tend to be glossed over by us since this Region is where they winter. We therefore include a list here of the species (all seen this and almost all seasons) to be expected at Jones Beach for Upstate birders. Not otherwise mentioned in our report are: Common and Red-throated Loon, Northern Gannet, Great and Double-crested Cormorants, Great and Snowy Egret, Northern Harrier, Black-bellied Plover, Ruddy Turnstone, Red Knot, Sanderling, Purple Sandpiper, Dunlin, Short-eared Owl, Horned Lark, Yellow-rumped Warbler and Snow Bunting.

For the first time in some years Horned Grebe was reasonably abundant on the ocean this winter with reports both from the eastern and western south shore. In contrast, several correspondents indicated that the opposite was true in western sections of Long Island Sound, where they appeared to be down in numbers. Results of the Duck Census for this and past years ought to throw some light on what may be happening. (This would be a good topic for a short paper for *The Kingbird*).

On 31 Dec Henry Flamm counted 22 Red-tailed Hawks in view at New Springfield, Staten Island, overlooking the Fresh Kills Dump. Hawk watchers please note.

There were many reports of Eastern Bluebird, mostly from mid Long Island. The Bluebird project is probably a cause and is beginning to bear fruit.

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Abbreviations: BCBC - Brooklyn Christmas Count 16 Dec; CCBC - Captree Christmas Count 17 Dec; FI - Fire Island; JBWR - Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge;

JFKWS - John F. Kennedy Wildlife Sanctuary (Tobay); JBCh - Jones Beach; LI - Long Island; MNSA - Marine Nature Study Area, Oceanside; MPt - Montauk Point; NYRBA - New York Rare Bird Alert; Pwy - Parkway; PtL - Point Lookout; ShIn - Shinnecock Inlet; SI - Staten Island; SNCBC - South Nassau Christmas Count 30 Dec.

LOONS-DUCKS: Horned Grebe: *intro*. Red-necked Grebe: a half dozen records Bronx to MPt mostly on CBCs. Tundra Swan: one with Canada Geese sod farms Calverton 1 Jan-7 Feb (mob). **Greater White-fronted Goose:** one Hook Pd 7-24 Jan (TB, A Rich), in a flock of Canada Geese containing a few of both morphs of Snow Geese. Snow Goose: blue morph Southaven P 27 Dec (BA,SD), three blue morph nw Riverhead 24 Jan (PG). **Ross' Goose:** *intro*. Wood Duck: pair Moravian Cemetery SI 14 and 16 Jan (HF); various other records. Blue-winged Teal: one each on BCBC and Montauk CBC. Eurasian Wigeon: approximate eight birds widely scattered across the island. Tufted Duck: one Central Park Res. Com. Eider: winter reports from Jones Inlet and Montauk as late as 3 Feb, max 34 Montauk CBC. King Eider: same comments as preceding, max 12. Harlequin Duck: one Glen Cove early Dec, ten ShIn 26 Dec, two w end JBCh 19 Dec, then ten by month end, finally building to a max of 25 in a closely knit flock which frequented the jetties on both sides of JBCh Inlet. Com. Merganser: 50 in Bannister Creek, Lawrence, a large number to be seen in salt water.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Black Vulture: one Northern State Pwy near the NASS-SUFF line 6 Jan (DM). Turkey Vulture: two near Moors' Lane in early Feb, feeding on a dead deer (Paul Stoutenburgh in the *Suffolk Times*, *fide* PG), at least one was seen as late as 24 Feb (SW). Bald Eagle: one JBCh 2-3 Dec, imm Brookhaven 27 Dec (BA), w end JBCh 3 Feb, plus sightings on three different CBCs. Sharp-shinned Hawk: fewer than usual wintered. Cooper's Hawk: a few wintering birds reported from SI to e LI. N. Goshawk: several wintering. Red-shouldered Hawk: Queens CBC 16 Dec. Red-tailed Hawk: all dumps in the western parts of the Region reported this species, *intro*. Rough-legged Hawk: several, all from early winter. Am. Kestrel: fewer than usual. Merlin: noted on three CBCs. Peregrine Falcon: noted on four CBCs, arr mid Manhattan mid Feb. **Gyrfalcon:** one Meadowbrook Pwy till 3 Jan, then more wide ranging, PtL 14 Jan, w end JBCh 18 Jan and 3 Feb. Clapper Rail: MNSA 24 Jan (PM). Sora: found N. Nassau CBC. Com. Moorhen: Smithtown CBC. Semipalmated Plover: Brooklyn, Bronx and Queens CBCs, Mill River 14 Jan. Am. Oystercatcher: 20 SNCBC. Greater Yellowlegs: scattered numbers wintered. Least Sandpiper: one Montauk 16 Dec. Little Gull: imm SNCBC 30 Dec (SD). Com. Black-headed Gull: West 12th St, Manhattan after 12 Dec, imm PtL 1 Jan, 14 Jan, ShIn 24 Feb. Iceland Gull: several wintered, reported by most south shore CBCs, one at Baldwin at Silver L Pd away from the ocean (William Belfind). Lesser Black-backed Gull: Halesite, Huntington Harbor 18 Dec (HB). Glaucous Gull: less numerous than Iceland Gull, a few from Queens to MPt. Roseate Tern: sickly bird ShIn to early Dec (AB). Forster's Tern: two CCBC 17 Dec. Com. Murre: one ShIn 6 Dec (Mr. & Mrs. PG), 6 Jan (JC), 7 Jan (JR, mob), three live and several dead from e LI

(NYRBA). Thick-billed Murre: one in bay off of Foot Pd, Montauk 11 Feb (NYRBA). Razorbill: two MPt 16 Dec (Andy Farnsworth,TB). **Black Guillemot**: one ShIn 7 Jan (MC, mob).

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Rose-ringed Parakeet: one (provenance unknown) at feeder in Baiting Hollow 5 Dec. Snowy Owl: one Midland Beach, SI 9 Dec (HF), others at PtL, w end JBch, ShIn, Westhampton, MPt, Orient Beach SP. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: numerous singles from SI to e LI.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLING: E. Phoebe: one MP 16 Dec. W. Kingbird: CCBC. House Wren: one MPt 16 Dec, two CCBC. E. Bluebird: *intro*. Am. Pipit: 35 SNCBC, three ShIn 7 Jan (JR).

VIREOS-WARBLES: Orange-crowned Warbler: one MPt 5 Dec, w end JBch 10 and 14 Dec, BCBC, SNCBC. Com. Yellowthroat: BCBC. Yellow-breasted Chat: one Quogue-Watermill CBC. **Pine Warbler**: one wintered at a feeder in Sunken Meadow (HB), also noted on two CBCs.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: Dickcissel: at feeder Northport 27 Dec-14 Jan (SV), one Central Suffolk CBC. Chipping Sparrow: five BCBC. Vesper Sparrow: noted on three CBCs. Grasshopper Sparrow: MPt 16 Dec. Sharp-tailed Sparrow: one MNSA 9 Jan (PM). Lincoln's Sparrow: noted on two CBCs. Lapland Longspur: 47 St. Charles Cemetery, Farmingdale (SW). Rusty Blackbird: two Bellmore 9 Jan (PM), six Yaphank-Carman's R 17 Jan (JC), 10 Glen Cove 3 Feb and 15 Feb (Ralph Cioffi). Boat-tailed Grackle: 12 Queens CBC, 2 BCBC. Com. Redpoll: one at feeder Oyster Bay 20 Feb-2 Mar, three SNCBC. Pine Siskin: five W.T. Davis Refuge SI 6 Dec (HF). Evening Grosbeak: two Old Brookville 8 Dec.

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