

REGION 6 — ST. LAWRENCE

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Extremes in weather resulted in a winter of poor birding. It was the coldest December on record, with almost four weeks of temperatures below freezing and half the mornings below zero. Plants froze, pipes froze, lakes and rivers froze, and the birds left. January was one of the warmest on record, with temperatures more than 11° above normal; precipitation was considerably above normal as well. Significant winter storms passed through the Region on 13-14, 20-21, and 27-28 Jan. The first storm dumped two to three feet of snow on the Tug Hill. February was also on the warm side, though less so than January. Temperatures were 3-5° above normal and precipitation was just about normal. Thus, February snowfall was considerably less than in January. For the three-month period both temperature and precipitation averaged about normal, with little snow in northern St. Lawrence Co., but 260 inches

falling on the Tug Hill.

The small numbers of wintering waterfowl remaining after the December freeze dispersed over large expanses of open water created by the prolonged January thaw. There were no reports of loons or grebes. Mallard outnumbered Am. Black Duck about five to one at Moses-Saunders Dam. Moderate numbers of Common Goldeneye were seen, while Common Merganser counts were low. Small numbers of Gadwall and Red-breasted Merganser were reported, as well as one Greater Scaup. Wintering gull numbers also were down.

Winter raptor numbers were only fair. On the NYSDEC flight 23 Jan, Blanche Ritchie counted eight adult and one immature Bald Eagle on the St. Lawrence River, fewer than usual. P. O'Shea spotted a Bald Eagle at Cranberry Lake on 4 Feb, a very unusual location in winter. A few N. Harrier and American Kestrel lingered into Dec. There was a possible N. Goshawk in Massena and an immature at Cape Vincent 27 Feb. A total of three Sharp-shinned and ten Cooper's Hawk were reported. One Cooper's Hawk took a male Northern Cardinal at Dick Brouse's feeder in Watertown, and LBC found one dead, possibly from starvation, in Henderson. Red-tailed Hawk was outnumbered by Rough-legged Hawk, with many dark morph birds of the latter in southern Jefferson Co. Mary Wood reported 18-25 Rough-legged Hawk at Cape Vincent all winter. One adult **Golden Eagle** on the St. Lawrence River 23 Jan is most unusual. A Snowy Owl at Cape Vincent from late Dec to late Feb was the only report and a few Short-eared Owl were reported. There was a N. Shrike in Watertown in December and several singles in St. Lawrence Co. in Feb.

There were several reports of Gray Partridge. During the period of intense cold and snow accumulation in Dec, several large flocks of Wild Turkey were observed near Canton, where one flock of 33 ventured into yards in the village.

Among half-hardy species reported were Great Blue Heron, Belted Kingfisher, Northern Flicker, Golden-crowned Kinglet, **Northern Mockingbird**, and Rusty Blackbird. Somewhat hardier species reported included Red-bellied Woodpecker and Tufted Titmouse. **Bohemian Waxwing** numbers were strong. Horned Lark was present throughout the winter in greater numbers than usual, and large flocks of Snow Bunting were seen frequently. Reports of Lapland Longspur in St. Lawrence Co. are unusual. There was a probable one on the Massena CBC and "dozens" on Cape Vincent all winter, although perhaps the latter report may merely reflect the presence of an experienced birder in the

right place at the right time.

Finally, winter finch numbers were better than their dearth in recent years. There were several reports of small flocks of Pine Grosbeak. Both crossbills were reported. Two Com. Redpoll in Canton on 28 Dec was the only report. Pine Siskin was seen in small numbers through the period, increasing markedly in Feb. Purple Finch was scarce. Evening Grosbeak reports were spotty, common according to some, but generally down.

In spite of new reports from Cape Vincent, Ogdensburg and Gouverneur, number of species was down with the exception of raptors. There were eight waterfowl, 13 raptors, five gulls, eleven other non-passerines, and 32 passerines for a total of 69 species reported.

Contributors: Marilyn Badger, Carol Budd, Richard Brouse, Lee Chamberlaine, Ken Crowell, John Green, Paul Kelly, D. Larrabee, June LaVack, Jill Lee, Peter O'Shea, Michael Sheard, Glen Snell, Brian Watson, Mary Wood.

Abbreviations: MSD — Moses-Saunders Dam.

LOONS-DUCKS: Great Blue Heron: three in early Dec. Am. Black Duck: max 40 MSD 27 Jan. Mallard: max 210 MSD 27 Jan. Com. Goldeneye: max 110 MSD 27 Jan. Com. Merganser: max 55 MSD 21 Jan.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Bald Eagle: *intro*. Cooper's Hawk: *intro*. N. Goshawk: *intro*. Rough-legged Hawk: *intro*. Gray Partridge: three MSD, six at Limerick Cedars, 40 at Cape Vincent. Wild Turkey: *intro*. Iceland Gull: one MSD 19 Jan. Glaucous Gull: three MSD 19 Feb.

DOVES-WOODPECKERS: Great Horned Owl: several reports. Snowy Owl: *intro*. Barred Owl: one Louisville 25-31 Dec. Short-eared Owl: seven Pt. Peninsula 23 Jan. Belted Kingfisher: one Wellesley I 30 Dec. Red-bellied Woodpecker: three at feeder Henderson (LBC). Northern Flicker: two reports.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLING: Com. Raven: several vocalizing s STLA late Feb. Tufted Titmouse: one near Rodman on Tug Hill, the only report in recent years (DL). Red-breasted Nuthatch: good numbers. Golden-crowned Kinglet: three 23 Dec. **N. Mockingbird**: on both Massena and Watertown CBCs. **Bohemian Waxwing**: 34 Wellesley I on 30 Dec; 40 Louisville 14 Feb. N. Shrike: *intro*.

VIREOS-WARBLED: none.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: N. Cardinal: continued increase in numbers, max six males and two females at Watertown feeder. White-throated Sparrow: two reports. White-crowned Sparrow: two Louisville 26 Jan. Lapland Longspur: *intro*. **Rusty Blackbird**: eight Massena 29 Jan. Purple Finch: only report from Louisville. House Finch: now well-established, max 75 at Cape Vincent feeder all winter. Red Crossbill: single Louisville 21 Dec. White-winged Crossbill: max 38 Chaumont Barrens 17 Dec; also at Canton and Barnes Corners. Com. Redpoll: *intro*. Pine Siskin: *intro*. Evening Grosbeak: *intro*.

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