

REGION 8 — HUDSON-MOHAWK

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Atypical seasons have the potential to tell us things about the factors controlling distribution and abundance of birds. This winter was unusual in particularly interesting ways. December was the coldest since records began in 1795, and the third coldest for any month on record. At Albany, temperatures averaged almost 13°F below normal and the mercury never reached the freezing mark from 12 to 30 Dec. Sustained cold of this magnitude is very unusual for December and resulted in the freezing of most water, including the large rivers. Lake George froze over completely on the night of 23 Dec, the earliest on record. There was little precipitation in Dec. January, usually our coldest month, was the fifth warmest on record. In a complete reversal of the situation in Dec, temperatures averaged about 12°F above normal. In Albany, the temperature never reached as low as 10°F, and soared to the 50's on 16-18 Jan. Precipitation was greater than normal and snowfall of nearly 10 inches on 29-30 Jan was the first fall of over 6 inches in nearly two years. The warmth continued through most of February, with a strong southerly flow and temperatures topping 60°F around 23 Feb. At the end of the month, however, winter returned. Precipitation in February, including snowfall, was above normal, bringing seasonal totals near long-term averages. These unusual conditions, especially the abnormal, sustained cold in the beginning of winter provided an opportunity to look for effects on the birdlife. One might predict, for example, that half hardy species might be forced southward or killed. The records, especially CBCs taken during and immediately following the coldest period, showed conclusively that this was not the case. The presence of

Marsh Wren, Hermit Thrush, Gray Catbird, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Rufous-sided Towhee and Fox Sparrow attested to better than average abundance of these species. Some of these were even more numerous in higher elevation regions than in the river valleys. The important factor was apparently that food (especially berries) was abundant in these areas, providing an illustration that given sufficient available food, these species are little affected by cold temperatures, per se.

The finch flight that was evident during the fall continued. White-winged Crossbill built to large numbers, especially in the higher elevation state forests. They were accompanied by small numbers of Pine Grosbeak and moderate numbers of Evening Grosbeak. These two species were largely confined to higher elevation areas. Pine Siskin built in numbers through the period and were very abundant by season's end. Purple Finch and Common Redpoll were scarce. Short-eared Owl was exceptionally numerous. In RENS, a nice group was slowly decimated over the season by Great Horned Owl predation. They used the Short-eared Owl feathers to line their nest! Perhaps related to the numbers of Short-eared Owl was more than the usual number of reports of Long-eared Owl. Rough-legged Hawk was present in good, but not exceptional, numbers. Bald Eagle continues to increase.

Mild weather in the last half of February induced substantial migration of icterids and the early arrival of Killdeer. With the return of cold and snow toward the end of the month, many of them disappeared.

Rarities during the period included **Greater White-fronted Goose, Thayer's Gull, Black-backed Woodpecker, Bohemian Waxwing and Dickcissel.**

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Abbreviations: ACBC - Albany CBC 17 Dec; BCRes - Basic Creek Res, ALBA; CCCBC - Catskill-Coxsackie CBC 19 Dec; JGCBC - Johnstown- Gloversville CBC; SCBC - Salem CBC 17 Dec; SSSP - Saratoga Spa SP; TCBC - Troy CBC 30 Dec.

LOONS-DUCKS: Com. Loon: one Stockport Sta 16 Dec (WC), three Hague 21 Dec (ER), both quite late. Horned Grebe: one Hague 12 Dec (MS), late. Great Blue Heron: 15 reports including overwintering at Cambridge WASH (JS). Mute Swan: max 13 Cheviot COLU 24 Jan (AL); one TCBC. **Greater White-fronted Goose:** two Tomhanock Res RENS 13 Dec (fide WS). Snow Goose: 19 SCBC, unusual in winter. Canada Goose: overwintering in increasingly large numbers;

conditions, 500-1000 Schuylerville all season, 2000 Cambridge 19 Feb, 9021 TCBC. N. Pintail: arr Hudson R COLU 23 Feb (AL). Canvasback: max 224 Catskill 22 Feb (PFC). Ring-necked Duck: one CCCBC; one TCBC. Lesser Scaup: six Stockport Sta 16 Dec (WC); one TCBC. Oldsquaw: one Hudson Falls CBC 17 Dec; three CCCBC. Hooded Merganser: six reports including 13 SSSP CBC 16 Dec. Red-breasted Merganser: 10 Schoharie Creek at Central Bridge SCHO 1 Jan (BB,KB); male Conklingville Dam 27 Jan (RPY).

HAWK-ALCIDS: Turkey Vulture: one Rensselaer 24 Jan (TJ); one Nassau 14 Feb (FC); early migrants COLU 19-23 Feb. Bald Eagle: 38 reports. N. Harrier: 40 reported, max 12 CCCBC. Sharp-shinned Hawk: 24 reports. Cooper's Hawk: 28 reports. N. Goshawk: 10 reports, low. Red-tailed Hawk: 118 CCCBC, high. Rough-legged Hawk: good numbers throughout, max 21 TCBC. Am. Kestrel: scarce. Ring-necked Pheasant: two reports. Wild Turkey: good numbers, max 50 near Berlin (AR). Killdeer: arr Stockport Sta, Hudson 22 Feb (PFC,WC). Com. Snipe: one Burnt Hills 21 Jan (DB). Am. Woodcock: one SSSP 21 Jan through period (RH,TC). **Thayer's Gull**: one first winter TCBC (SBT,KPA,RLH). Iceland Gull: 15 reports, max 9 TCBC. Glaucous Gull: five reports.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Mourning Dove: good numbers including Jenny L in Dec. Snowy Owl: two reports, CCCBC (KPA,SBT), Coxsackie Flats 21 Jan (JP, *fide* RPG), perhaps same bird. Long-eared Owl: one Linlithgo COLU 19,20 Dec (SBT,KPA,CP); one JGCBC; one Silver Bay WARR (EA). Short-eared Owl: 29 reported, max eight Johnsonville RENS Nov (NW). N. Saw-whet Owl: three CCCBC; one Berne 23 Dec, 5 Jan (KPA); two Loudonville 8 Jan. Belted Kingfisher: nine reports including Hague 7 Feb (ER). Red-bellied Woodpecker: 27 reported, max 16 CCCBC. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: five reports including one through period Berne (KPA). **Black-backed Woodpecker**: one Fultonville 4 Jan (WG).

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Fish Crow: singles Schenectady 10 Dec (RPY), New Baltimore 17 Feb (RPY), Niskayuna 19 Feb (WL). Com. Raven: six reports, max five Spencertown COLU (NK). Black-capped Chickadee: large numbers arriving Jenny L Dec-Jan; high proportion ad not typical for invasion year. Red-breasted Nuthatch: widely scattered, good numbers most areas. Carolina Wren: 10 reports, max 21 CCCBC. Marsh Wren: singles Poolsburg COLU 10 Dec (PFC), CCCBC. Ruby-crowned Kinglet: one CCCBC. E. Bluebird: good numbers, max 15 Auriesville 24 Jan. Hermit Thrush: 10 reported, max six ACBC. Am. Robin: arr large numbers 22 Feb. Gray Catbird: singles Clarksville early winter (LA), SCBC, CCCBC, BCRes 28 Dec, 2 Jan (BB,KB). Am. Pipit: one near Jenny L 10 Dec (RPY), odd date and locality. Cedar Waxwing: widespread in good numbers. **Bohemian Waxwing**: five Westerlo 15 Dec (KPA), three SCBC, one CCCBC, one Greenville 22 Dec (JC). N. Shrike: scarce, six reported.

VIREOS-WARBLEDERS: Yellow-rumped Warbler: unusual numbers; 46 CCCBC, record count. Pine Warbler: one at feeder Glens Falls early Dec (MA).

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: **Dickcissel**: imm female Ghent COLU 2 Dec through period (OW,WC,BC,mob). Rufous-sided Towhee: one CCCBC. Field Sparrow: one ACBC. Savannah Sparrow: one TCBC. Fox Sparrow: one ACBC, seven

CCCBC, one Hague 25 Dec (BJ), one L Taghkanic SP 4 Jan (AL). Song Sparrow: 20 BCRes 28 Dec (BB,KB), large number. Swamp Sparrow: 16 CCCBC, good count; one Shushan WASH 2 Jan (JS). White-throated Sparrow: numerous even at higher elevation. White-crowned Sparrow: three reported. Lapland Longspur: good numbers, max 16 Bacon Hill SARA 16 Dec (BP). Red-winged Blackbird: arr large numbers 17-23 Feb. E. Meadowlark: more numerous than usual, 41 CCCBC. Rusty Blackbird: six reported. Com. Grackle: one Albany 8,9 Dec (LT); arr large numbers 16-23 Feb. N. Oriole: imm female at feeder Glenco Mills COLU to 17 Dec (WC). Pine Grosbeak: reported seven localities, 9 Dec through period; max 25 Partridge Run GMA ALBA (BC). Purple Finch: few reports; max 47 CCCBC. Red Crossbill: five reports, all singles except 10 Partridge Run GMA 28 Feb (AL). White-winged Crossbill: widespread in moderate numbers, max 100 Cole Hill SF ALBA 28 Jan (KPA). Com. Redpoll: five reports, max 22 TCBC. Pine Siskin: very large numbers, increasing late winter; max 900 JGCBC. Evening Grosbeak: moderate numbers at higher elevations, max 54 Jefferson SCHO 27 Feb (AM).

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