

REGION 7 — ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

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Although widely regarded as a "birdless" winter, species variety was the best in five years, perhaps due to relatively mild conditions. The average temperature for the first 15 days of December was 35°, some twelve degrees above the long-term average of 23°. There was only 2.3 inches of snow to 15 Dec, when a storm added another 4-6 inches. January was much colder, but seasonal snowfall remained about 8° below normal. Thermometers dropped to -11° at Ellenburg Depot on 21 Jan, to -28° at Saranac Lake on 22 Jan, and to -18° at Malone on 26 Jan. February was the fifth warmest and sixth driest on record, with temperatures ranging from -12° at Ellenburg Depot on 2 Feb to 43° at Plattsburgh on 5 Feb. Much of Lake Champlain remained open throughout the winter.

A total of 86 species were reported, the best showing since the winter of 1985-86, but short of the 96 species found in 1983-84. Nevertheless, there were fewer birds to be found. In three days of intensive birding and cross-country skiing near Indian Lake, HAMI, Bob McKinney found only 88 individuals of six species, noting that although it was a poor winter in the Genesee Region, "I now see that it is even poorer in the Adirondacks." Much of this was due to the lack of wild foods, especially cones at higher elevations. Except for low elevation buckthorn, sumac, and a bumper crop of small mammals for raptors, there was little food available to draw birds here.

Due to the open lake and late closure of inland waters, however, water bird numbers and variety were good. A **Double-crested Cormorant** at the Plattsburgh harbor breakwater until 16 Dec provided

a first winter record for the Region, although not unexpected in light of recent increases. Bob Hagar and Ted Mack found over 12,000 Snow Geese rafted off Pointe au Roche 16 Dec, and over 2,000 Canada Geese remained through the 13-19 Jan NYS Waterfowl Count. Mallards outnumbered Am. Black Ducks almost 10:1 on the same survey. Candy and John Hess spotted a drake **Barrow's Goldeneye** at Ausable Point on 19 Jan.

Bald Eagles continue their resurgence, with numerous reports from Lakes Champlain and George, as well as the Adirondack interior where deer carcasses are a staple. Red-tailed Hawk numbers were high, while Rough-legged Hawk staged a major invasion. Beth Edmonds and Dan Nickerson tallied ten (5 light morph, 5 dark morph) between Essex and Whallonsburgh on 17 Feb. Curiously, there were no reports of harriers or of any falcons. Owl variety was dismal at just three species, but one of those was a **Great Gray Owl** that twice paid brief daylight visits to the Kurtenbach feeder outside Elizabethtown on 29 Jan and again on 12 Feb, apparently content to perch and watch the red squirrels run about. Northern Shrike appeared in outstanding numbers; Edmonds and Nickerson counted *six* between Ausable Point and Whallonsburgh on 17 Feb, and at least 15 others were reported.

Feeder birds were in short supply, although there were a few Carolinian highlights in addition to the boreal zone owl. Pairs of Tufted Titmouse were reported from feeders near Elizabethtown, Essex, and Mineville, while single **Carolina Wren** frequented feeders at Elizabethtown, Plattsburgh, and Saranac Lake. The only winter finches not reported were Pine Grosbeak and Hoary Redpoll, and all of the others generally were scarce, as the species accounts reflect.

This winter there was coverage of six Christmas Bird Count circles located partly or entirely within the Region: Ferrisburg, VT/NY (15 Dec), Plattsburgh, NY/VT (16 Dec), Champlain Islands-St. Albans, VT/NY (16 Dec), Old Forge (19 Dec), Elizabethtown (22 Dec), and Saranac Lake (29 Dec). The revitalized Plattsburgh CBC, now under the aegis of High Peaks Audubon Society, turned up a record 61 species, while Old Forge CBC in the Adirondack interior could take equal pride in managing to locate 22 species this year.

Contributors: James Barrow, Robert Budliger, Dean Cook, Janet Cooper, Charlie Delehanty, Beth Edmonds, Greg Furness, Dot French, William Grinwell, Robert Hagar, Terry Hall, Candy Hess, Hal Klein, William Kreuger, Henry & Sylvia Kurtenbach, Theodore Mack, Steve Mahoney, Larry Master, Robert McKinney, Ann Moisan, Mary Lou Morgan, Dan Nickerson, John Parke, John & Susan Peterson, Alan Pistorius, Mike Storey, Hollis White, and all the Christmas counters.

Abbreviations: CICBC - Champlain Islands Christmas Bird Count; ECBC - Elizabethtown CBC; FCBC - Ferrisburg CBC; WFC - Waterfowl Count; OFCBC - Old Forge CBC; PCBC - Plattsburgh CBC; SLCBC - Saranac Lake CBC.

LOONS-DUCKS: **Double-crested Cormorant**: *intro*. Great Blue Heron: last Ausable R delta 1 Dec. Snow Goose: *intro*, 1202 PCBC same day. Canada Goose: *intro*. Am. Black Duck: *intro*. Mallard: *intro*. **Barrow's Goldeneye**: *intro*.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Bald Eagle: ad Heart Bay, n L George 1 Dec; imm FCBC; 2 PCBC; two ad feeding on deer carcass Follensby Pd (hack site) 20 Dec; ad Tupper L 30 Dec & 25 Feb; ad Crown Pt Peninsula 8 Jan-28 Feb; ad T Santa Clara FRAN 11 Jan; three ad WFC; ad & subad Ausable Pt 19 Jan-17 Feb; Moose RRA all season, feeding on dead deer 24 Feb, suggest no fewer than ten individuals. Red-tailed Hawk: *intro*, max 7 ECBC. Rough-legged Hawk: *intro*. Wild Turkey: max 7 ECBC and 7 OFCBC, 2 Tupper L feeder and 2 Indian L feeder also show continued penetration. Bonaparte's Gull: 2 PCBC only report. **Iceland Gull**: one count week SLCBC highly unusual. **Glaucous Gull**: one Plattsburgh 11-16 Dec unusual. Great Black-backed Gull: max 49 WFC.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: **Great Gray Owl**: *intro*. Belted Kingfisher: one OFCBC quite unexpected. N. Flicker: Wadhams feeder Dec-Feb, apparently subsisting on sunflower seeds.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Horned Lark: two SLCBC noteworthy at higher elevation in winter; flock Crown Pt Peninsula late Jan more expected; two (Prairie race) arr Westport 18 Feb (BE,DN). Gray Jay: max three SLCBC; one OFCBC; Shingle Shanty Brook 11 Jan; Helldiver Pd 6 Feb, a good showing. Com. Raven: total of 21 reported on five CBCs; pair at cliff site NW side of Pitchoff Mt 23 Feb. Boreal Chickadee: max 5 ECBC; also 1 OFCBC. Tufted Titmouse: *intro*. **Carolina Wren**: *intro*. Bohemian Waxwing: 40-50 Westport 5-9 Jan (RB, TH, JP); 25 Ticonderoga 18 Feb (JC); has now appeared in all but two winters since the winter of 1979-80, or ten out of twelve years! N. Shrike: *intro*.

VIREOS-WARBLED: None.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: N. Cardinal: max 66 PCBC and a total of 97 on four CBCs demonstrates that this bird is now firmly established in settled areas. White-crowned Sparrow: one PCBC quite uncommon here in winter. E. Meadowlark: arr Westport 18 Feb (BE,C)N, record early. Brown-headed Cowbird: max six PCBC; four SLCBC only other report; has become quite scarce here in winter. Purple Finch: 15 PCBC only report. House Finch: max 136 PCBC; 44 FCBC, but absent on ECBC and SLCBC reflecting movement out of higher areas in spite of well stocked feeders. Red Crossbill: flock Adk VIC, Paul Smiths, for two weeks in Dec, bill-scraping on sandstone chimney, presumably for grit or salts in mortar (MS). White-winged Crossbill: one FCBC and two ECBC only reports. Com. Redpoll: two Lake Clear Airport feeder Jan only report. Pine Siskin: max five PCBC, one ECBC only reports. Am. Goldfinch: max 119 PCBC, scattered reports. Evening Grosbeak: max 598 ECBC; the most widespread winter finch, but nowhere really abundant.

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