

REGION 7 — ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

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Canadian visitors, local dump-pickers, western strays, and the always dynamic winter finches added color to a winter slow in arriving, but brutal by the end. Early December saw temperatures in the 40s. After a light dusting of snow on 5 Dec, there was bare ground to perhaps a half-foot of snow in the woods for the Christmas Bird Counts. Monthly precipitation was an inch and a half below normal, and yearly precipitation ended up 2.86 inches below average. January began with bare ground below 1,000 ft elevation, temperatures reaching 50°F on 5 Jan, and a scanty half-inch snowfall on 11 Jan. The first major winter snowstorm left 6-7 inches at Plattsburgh and Westport on 13 Jan, and by the following day a foot of snow covered Elizabethtown and Plattsburgh AFB. Yet the ground was almost bare in Hami on 24 Jan. Late Jan-early Feb were bitter cold, with Elizabethtown -26°F on 7 Feb. Two storms left 15 inches of snow at Elizabethtown on 13 Feb and another 6 inches on 16-17 Feb. After another cold spell (-20°F at Plattsburgh on 19 Feb), a third monthly storm left another 52 inches at Elizabethtown on 22 Feb. It was the second snowiest February on record with a total of 33.8 inches at lower elevations (just 2 inches shy of the record), 36 inches in the woods of HAMI, and almost twice that at upper elevations of the High Peaks in ESSE. It was the fifth coldest February on record, as well, with an average temperature over 7°F below normal.

A total of 82 species, plus a hybrid, two color morphs, and a subspecies were recorded, short of the 90 species last winter and record of 96 species in 1983-84. The Elizabethtown CBC found a record 44 species on 26 Dec, however.

Some 4-5 thousand Snow Geese left Point au Roche SP on 4 Dec, leaving several thousand still there the next day. Numbers continued to decline thereafter, until the lake froze, with only 36 adults and 20 immatures remaining by 5 Jan, a much higher percentage of young than in early winter. Another six yellow neck collars were read 1-11 Dec and reported by Bill Krueger. Five were female Greater Snow Geese (*Chen caerulescens atlanticus*) banded by the Canadian Wildlife Service on Bylot Island, District of Franklin, Northwest Territories, during late summer roundups of molting geese in August 1990-92. The other goose was marked in the St Lawrence estuary by researchers from the University of Laval during the 1980s. Three of the neck-collared Greater Snow Geese at Point au Roche during Nov and Dec had been spotted in October at the famous Cap Tourmente, Quebec, a gathering place on their way south.

The **Ross's Goose** remained at Point au Roche SP until 3 Dec, according to Krueger. Over 1,000 Canada Geese were on fields west of Malone on 4 Dec. Two leg-banded Canada Goose at North West Bay, Westport, on 18 Dec had hatched in 1986 or earlier and been banded in StLA in July 1987 and 1988. Two other banded Canada Goose seen at Westport the following day had been banded at Dead Creek GMA, VT, in July 1988 when they were still too young to fly. Canada Goose stayed later than the Snow and Ross's Geese, with four over Limekiln Lake, HAMI, 14 Jan extremely late inland, and 1,187 still present for the mid January Waterfowl Count. A drake **Barrow's Goldeneye** also was spotted on the Waterfowl Count.

Northern raptors also made a good showing. Terry Hall first reported a tardy Merlin at Point au Roche SP on 6 Dec, with Bill Krueger spotting the small falcon as late as 8 Jan. A white morph **Gyr Falcon** first seen at Cumberland Head remained for the 20 Dec Plattsburgh CBC (when it was seen at Treadwell Bay) and was later reported by Krueger on 1 Jan and last on 6 Jan between Cumberland Head and Point au Roche. Tom Barber and Bob Hagar found a gray morph **Gyr Falcon** being harried by two male Northern Harrier outside Whallonsburg on 19 Dec during the Ferrisburg CBC. The **Northern Hawk Owl** tarried on the Heart Lake Road outside Lake Placid, with winter reports from Greenleaf Chase on 17 Dec and John and Pat Thaxton on 20 Feb. Northern Shrike were rather scarce.

In the days prior to the 26 Dec Elizabethtown CBC, as many as a thousand gulls had been observed rising out of the new ESSE landfill in Lewis, thermalling and kettling, and then heading down the Boquet River towards Lake Champlain. Most seemed to be Herring Gull, but Great Black-backed and Ring-billed Gulls also were noted. Access to the dump was denied on the count day, but the periphery provided not only a number of gulls, but most of the record 55 Common Raven recorded. The last group of 100+ gulls were headed down the river late on the afternoon of 11 Jan, shortly before the lake began to freeze over near Westport.

Terry Hall and Dean Spaulding were surprised to find a **Common Yellowthroat** skulking in Gray Dogwoods along the Canadian Pacific tracks just north of Westport on the 26 Dec Elizabethtown CBC, where bluebirds had been feeding the day before. Candy and John Hess had an apparent westerner arrive at their Peru feeder 31 Dec and remain for the winter: a **Chipping Sparrow** in Alternate plumage, or suspended prebasic molt, apparently typical of western populations (Pyle *et al.* 1987. *Identification Guide to N. American Passerines* p.204. Slate Creek Press, Bolinas, CA). Two western Dark-eyed Junco showed up at the

Peterson feeder near Elizabethtown: a typical "Oregon Junco" was seen with six Slate-colored Junco on 2 Dec, while a "Pink-sided Junco" was banded there with seven Slate-colored on 14 Jan. Yet another displaced westerner was the **Brewer's Blackbird** at the Delehanty feeder at Tupper Lake from 7 to 16 Jan.

Except for goldfinches, which were abundant, most winter finches were in below average numbers. The only Pine Grosbeak report was in Dec. Purple Finch were found on all five counts, with maximum of 84 on the Elizabethtown CBC, and Mike Peterson banded 87 near Elizabethtown between 29 Dec and 23 Feb. Plattsburgh took House Finch honors, as expected. Red Crossbill were scarce. White-winged Crossbill seemed to be somewhat more abundant, with maximum of 66 on the Saranac Lake CBC and a pair near Paradox 4 Feb. More surprising were the three at Gary McChesney's feeder in Raquette Lake during Jan and the single White-winged Crossbill at the Adirondack Park VIC feeder in Newcomb on 19 Feb, reported by Gary Lee; spruce cones must have been in short supply, even in the central Adirondacks. The only Common Redpoll were on the Plattsburgh CBC, and no Hoary Redpoll were reported. Pine Siskin were on four counts, with 51 on the Elizabethtown CBC and a maximum of 75 at Tupper Lake on 23 Jan; Peterson banded 87 near Elizabethtown between 29 Dec and 23 Feb, including two green morphs on 16 Feb. By far the most abundant winter finch was American Goldfinch, found on all five counts, with a maximum of 354 on the Elizabethtown CBC. Between 29 Dec and 23 Feb, a total of 1,084 were banded near Elizabethtown. An American Goldfinch color-banded at Chateaugay, Quebec, on 13 Sep 1992 was captured and released near Elizabethtown on 14 Jan; another goldfinch color-banded at Chateaugay 18 Oct 1992 was netted and released near Elizabethtown on 16 Feb. Project Feeder Watch reports that huge areas of eastern Canada were infested with spruce budworm during the 1970s and early 1980s, with an accompanying bloom in Evening Grosbeak. Now that the infestation is on the wane, Evening Grosbeak numbers have returned to lower, more usual numbers and are expected to remain fairly stable. (One wonders if concurrent declines in other spruce budworm specialists like Cape May, Bay-breasted, and Blackpoll Warblers might not be similarly explained, neotropical deforestation and temperate forest fragmentation notwithstanding. Sometimes the simplest answer is the best one.) Although recorded on four counts, Evening Grosbeak numbers were indeed down, with 156 on the Saranac Lake CBC and the maximum of 250 frequenting the Lake Clear feeder of Kip and Sharon Taylor the

highest numbers; just 17 were banded near Elizabethtown between 30 Dec and 28 Feb. Between 1975-85, the average number of Evening Grosbeak banded annually by Peterson was 243, but from 1986-92 that average dropped to just 30 per year.

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Abbreviations: ECBC - Elizabethtown CBC, 26 Dec; FCBC - Ferrisburg CBC, 19 Dec; OFCBC - Old Forge CBC; PCBC - Plattsburgh CBC, 20 Dec; SLCBC - Saranac Lake CBC; WFC - Waterfowl Count.

Winter reports: **Red-necked Grebe:** Westport 18 Dec. **Great Blue Heron:** Keeseville 11 Dec (B&IB); max three PCBC; Whallon's Bay 16 Jan (JP, RW) late. **Snow Goose:** *intro.* **Ross's Goose:** *intro.* **Canada Goose:** *intro.* **Canvasback:** 37 PCBC only report, scarce in recent years. **BARROW'S GOLDENEYE:** CLIN 17 Jan (C&JH). **Red-breasted Merganser:** max five Willsboro Pt (WFC); hen Peru dock 24 Jan (HK, WK), late CLIN record.

Bald Eagle: ad Tupper L 4 Dec-22 Jan (CD); ad Ausable Pt 8 Dec-17 Jan (WK, SM); imm Tupper L 12 Dec & 22 Jan (CD); PCBC count week (SM); two ad Willsboro-Westport 22 Dec (Amtrak crew); SLCBC count week (LM); ad Westport 16 Jan (JP, RW); subad Peru dock 24 Jan (WK); imm Ausable Pt 24 Jan (WK); two ad Port Douglas-Willsboro Bay 25 Jan (Amtrak crew, JP); at least seven individuals. **N. Harrier:** *intro.*; Crown Pt 8 Dec; max six FCBC; three ECBC; Monty Bay CLIN 5 Jan (WK); New Russia 13 Jan (TO); ad male Beekmantown 22 Jan (HK), extremely strong and late showing here. **Rough-legged Hawk:** max four ECBC. **Merlin:** *intro.* **GYRFALCON:** *intro.* **Ring-billed Gull:** *intro.* **Herring Gull:** *intro.* **Great Black-backed Gull:** *intro.*; max 157 FCBC an exceptionally high number.

N. Hawk Owl: *intro.* **Barred Owl:** two Raquette L feeder all winter, both killed by Am. Crow late Feb (*fide* GL). **Belted Kingfisher:** one FCBC, one SLCBC reflect mild early winter. **Black-backed Woodpecker:** one-five daily Beaver L trail HAMI 2-5 Dec (GL). **N. Flicker:** two PCBC; returned to Spaulding feeder in Wadhams for *third* straight winter, subsisting on sunflower seeds.

Gray Jay: two Beaver L trail HAMI 4 Dec (GL); max four SLBCBC; two Raquette L feeder all winter (GM). **Com. Raven:** *intro.* **Boreal**

Chickadee: Red R HAMI 14 Dec; two ECB C, max eight SLCBC; one Phelps Mt 11 Jan; three Onchiota 27 Feb. **Tufted Titmouse:** one FCBC, two ECBC; one Tupper L feeder 14 Dec-28 Feb, first wintering record there; calling near Elizabethtown 15 Jan. **Winter Wren:** Beekmantown 20 Jan-15 Feb (HK), late CLIN record. **E. Bluebird:** four FCBC; six PCBC; eight Route 22 Westport 25 Dec; eight ECBC Wadhams 26 Dec; eight Sam Spear Road, Westport, 27 Dec; five Crown Pt after 4 Jan; two Essex 16 Jan; Miner Institute, Chazy, Feb; a remarkable winter showing. **Am. Robin:** five FCBC; max ten PCBC; four ECBC; one SLCBC especially noteworthy; also Beekmantown; a good showing for this berry eater. **Cedar Waxwing:** max 358 FCBC, 54 PCBC; 20 ECBC; 50 Essex 16 Jan eating berries with the bluebirds and robins. **N. Shrike:** max three SLCBC; second-year bird banded near Elizabethtown 15 Jan.

COM. YELLOWTHROAT: *intro* (DS).

N. Cardinal: max 15 PCBC and total of 31 on CBC down markedly from 95 last year. **CHIPPING SPARROW:** *intro* (ph on file). **White-throated Sparrow:** max four ECBC a good number here. **Dark-eyed Junco:** *intro*. **Red-winged Blackbird:** one SLCBC only report. **BREWER'S BLACKBIRD:** *intro*. **Com. Grackle:** 42 PCBC unusual. **Pine Grosbeak:** six PCBC, only report. **Purple Finch:** *intro*. **House Finch:** max 268 PCBC. **Red Crossbill:** three ECBC; "a few that sing" near Paradox; male near Elizabethtown 17 and 24 Feb. **White-winged Crossbill:** *intro*. **Com. Redpoll:** 32 PCBC, only report. **Pine Siskin:** *intro*. **Am. Goldfinch:** *intro*. **Evening Grosbeak:** *intro*.

Addendum: eight LITTLE GULL with six Bonaparte's Gull Monty Bay CLIN Oct (NG).

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