

REGION 7 — ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

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"I survived the Winter of '93-'94" might be the motto of the few hardy birds and birders who braved the season in the North Country. Although the early Christmas Bird Counters enjoyed bare ground, snow depths on the later, higher-elevation counts ranged up to 20 inches. Seven of the last eight days of Dec were below 0°F at Inlet, with Ray Brook at -31°F on 27 Dec and Piseco -22°F on 29 Dec. January was quite wintry, with above average snowfall (third snowiest on record at 56+ inches) and much below average temperatures (third coldest, with an

average 9°F, or less). There were at least 21 days below zero, and Lake Champlain froze over completely, reportedly for the first time since 1981. Inlet was -40°F on 16 Jan, while a National Weather Service station at Crown Point saw the mercury drop to a nippy -48°F on 27 Jan, and only six days saw clear skies. February wasn't much better, with 16 to 34 inches of snowfall depending upon elevation, and again just six clear days. Coldest day was 10 Feb, when thermometers read -26°F at Saranac Lake and -30°F at Inlet. By way of summary, Inlet observer Gary Lee reported 41 days below zero between late Dec and the end of Feb, with 37 snowfalls during the entire season.

The perennial winter complaint of "Where are all the birds?" was widely heard, yet observers managed to find 96 species, an apparent exotic, two color morphs, and a subspecies, which either ties or breaks the old record of 96 species set a decade ago in the winter of 1983-84, depending upon how one chooses to count. Certainly, the lack of wild foods meant there were far fewer birds in the woods and much less variety at feeders. But the rare northern visitors and flocks of redpolls of various persuasion more than made up for the paucity of the usual winter finches.

Arctic and subarctic birds continued to arrive, verifying fall suspicions of a Canadian invasion. A first year drake *Harlequin Duck* was observed on Plattsburgh Bay, CLIN, 19 Dec by Bill Krueger and Pat Taber, remaining until 24 Dec and seen by many observers. Although there are six records from the Vermont side of Lake Champlain between 1929-85, this is a first county and second Regional record, the other also a first year male in 1986. Rich MacDonald, Mike Peterson, and Bob Wei spotted a hen *Barrow's Goldeneye* swimming and diving just off the tip of Willsboro Point, ESSE, on 15 Jan. Although only up to three Rough-legged Hawk per day could be found by all the Christmas Counters, Hollis White tallied a dozen while driving across the little birded expanses of northern FRAN during early Jan.

There were four reports of *Gyr Falcon*. A gray Gyr Falcon between Whallonsburg and Whallon's Bay, ESSE, on the 18 Dec Ferrisburg CBC was still present the next day. A white Gyr Falcon was seen in an orchard northwest of Peru, CLIN, 23 and 31 Dec by Holland Fitts, and possibly the same white morph was seen two months later by Elizabeth Fltts some three miles away near Schuyler Falls 26 Feb. Another gray Gyr Falcon was reported by many observers including Bob Budliger, Krueger, and Taber

from open water areas with various waterfowl at the mouth of the Saranac, the Cumberland Head ferry landing, and even across the lake at the Grand Isle landing from 3 Jan through the period; this might be the same Plattsburgh Gyrfalcon spotted 3 Nov, and could conceivably be a returning bird from the same locale last year. Anne LaBastille spotted another striking white Gyrfalcon flying over fields near Wadhams, ESSE, 20 Jan.

There were five Snowy Owl scattered across four counties from late Dec to Feb, a good showing here. A *Great Gray Owl* paid daytime visits to the Runyan feeder in Keene Valley 9-10 Feb, to watch the Red Squirrels. There were reports of just two Northern Shrike to add to a single Nov bird.

Bohemian Waxwing persisted in spite of dwindling food supplies, with a max of 110 near Westport 18 Dec and 45 still near Wadhams 26 Dec, remaining there through Feb. The Shermans located an impressive 50 Lapland Longspur, seemingly a Regional record, mixed in a large flock of Horned Lark near Peru for about two weeks in mid February. Although they must have experienced much the same food shortage as did Bohemian Waxwing, Pine Grosbeak remained widespread, with a dozen or more sightings from all four counties. The most dependable spot was among ornamental crabapples on the SUNY Plattsburgh campus, where they remained through Feb, in spite of a Peregrine Falcon who moved into the neighborhood in mid January.

The redpoll invasion that began in late Oct continued to intensify as the winter wore on. The Saranac Lake CBC on 2 Jan set a new count record with 1,594 Common Redpoll, plus a carefully identified and photographed *Hoary Redpoll*, as well as two other possibles. Most feeding stations, especially those offering niger seed, hosted greedy flocks of 100-150 Common Redpoll. A total of 236 were banded near Elizabethtown between 29 Dec-8 Feb. Five of at least six *Hoary Redpoll* at the Peterson feeder near Elizabethtown were banded and photographed: the first on 29 Dec, another 16 Jan, and three on 8 Feb. In fact, on 8 Feb there were at least five *Hoary Redpoll* at this feeder simultaneously (the 3 newly banded, the one banded 16 Jan, and at least one unbanded bird), almost certainly a NYS maximum. There were other reliable reports of Hoary Redpoll from Hogansburg, Plattsburgh, and Wadhams. Between 1-3 *Hoary Redpoll* were seen daily at the Peterson feeder through the end of Feb and picked out by a number of

visiting birders. A much larger and darker redpoll seen by the editor at the same feeder on 17 Jan appeared to be a "Greater" Redpoll (*C. f. rostrata*). A leucisitic redpoll at a Tupper Lake feeder (Delehanty) on 11 Dec had a pure white head, hot pink partial cap, white nape, partially white breast, and black eyes.

In spite of the northern flavor to the winter, there were interesting half-hardy species to lend spice to the season. The two Carolina Wren that arrived at the Hagar feeder in Saranac Lake on 25 Oct survived until a mid Jan freeze. A Pine Warbler visited a Saranac Inn seed and suet feeder 10-17 Dec, according to Bob Hagar, for a first FRAN and second Regional wintering record. The subadult, male *Indigo Bunting* which arrived at the Lee feeder in Inlet 25 Oct lingered to 6 Dec. Given the conditions, it's a wonder we didn't lose any half-hardy birders.

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Abbreviations: ECBC - Elizabethtown CBC, 26 Dec; FCBC - Ferrisburg CBC, 18 Dec; PCBC - Plattsburgh CBC, 19 Dec; SLCBC - Saranac Lake CBC, 2 Jan; FWC - Federation Waterfowl Count.

Winter reports: **Red-necked Grebe:** max three PCBC; grounded Camp Kilcare, Raquette L, HAMI, 22 Jan, died at rehabilitator's. **Great Blue Heron:** three on CBCs continued trend of lingering. **Snow Goose:** last 13 Point au Roche 2 Jan. **Canvasback:** three PCBC slightly encouraging. **Redhead:** two FWC ditto. **Harlequin Duck:** intro. **Com. Goldeneye:** one SLCBC a surprise. **Barrow's Goldeneye:** intro. **Red-breasted Merganser:** eight FWC were a 20-year record.

Bald Eagle: imm Tupper L 9-10 Dec (CD); ad literally eating crow on ice of L. Flower 15 Dec (RH); count week PCBC; Port Douglas 22 Dec (Amtrak crew); one-two Westport 3-15 Jan; ad Schuyler & Valcour Islands 12 Jan; 2 ad Essex harbor & Willsboro Pt 15 Jan (JP); ad feeding on deer carcass Big Tupper L week of 20 Feb (RK); chased by Raven Seventh L 25 Feb (GL). **N. Harrier:** four on CBCs, a good showing. **Sharp-shinned Hawk:** two at feeders. **Cooper's Hawk:** feeding on

Mourning Doves at Wadhams feeder 22 Dec to Feb; female banded FRAN barn Jan; two other reports from CLIN. **N. Goshawk**: 1 FCBC; Peru feeder 13 Feb. **Red-tailed Hawk**: 23 on four CBCs. **Rough-legged Hawk**: *intro*. **Am. Kestrel**: max three PCBC. **Peregrine Falcon**: *intro*.; feeding on Rock Doves SUNY Plattsburgh 14 Jan-5 Feb. **Gyr Falcon**: *intro*. **Gray Partridge**: 15 Ingraham 9 Dec (CH). **Wild Turkey**: 12 Wadhams thru (JR); at deer feeding station HAMI all winter (GL); three PCBC; tom at deer feeding station Mt Home Road HAMI 29 Dec; six Hoffmeister HAMI 5 Feb (D&DT), good numbers. **Iceland Gull**: mouth Saranac R 31 Dec; Plattsburgh ferry 16 Jan (BK, CM), second and third CLIN records.

Snowy Owl: *intro*.; Jay late Dec (LS); Reynolds Road CLIN 26 Jan (BK); 1-87 Peru 3 Feb (DF); Seventh L HAMI most of Feb (GL). **Great Gray Owl**: *intro*. **N. Saw-whet Owl**: Elizabethtown 19 Dec, only report. **Belted Kingfisher**: one PCBC; one SLCBC were hardy birds. **Black-backed Woodpecker**: male Chubb R Swamp 20 Feb (DC), only report. **N. Flicker**: Spaulding barn near Wadhams, not the same bird that fed on sunflower seeds at feeder there for past three winters.

Horned Lark: 20 ECBC; 50 Hogansburg 6 Jan and regular between there and Malone all winter (HW); max 200 Peru for two weeks mid Feb (A&LS). **Gray Jay**: two Saranac Inn feeder all winter, only report. **Com. Raven**: max 17 ECBC. **Boreal Chickadee**: L Placid Dec (CL); max four SLCBC; Moose R Recreation Area 13 Dec (GL). **Tufted Titmouse**: max nine French feeder, Elizabethtown Dec, an exceptional number here; two others on FCBC and PCBC. **Carolina Wren**: *intro*. **Am. Robin**: max seven ECBC, scarce. **N. Mockingbird**: one PCBC count week only report. **Bohemian Waxwing**: *intro*. **Cedar Waxwing**: max 20 FCBC; 11 PCBC, only reports. **N. Shrike**: singles ECBC and SLCBC, only reports.

Pine Warbler: *intro*.

N. Cardinal: max 24 PCBC and total of 67 on five CBCs, an improvement over last winter. **Indigo Bunting**: *intro*. **Fox Sparrow**: French Road feeder, Hoffmeister, HAMI, 2930 Dec (D&DT), quite uncommon here in winter. **White-throated Sparrow**: max five ECBC, an exceptional showing. **Dark-eyed Junco**: max 31 PCBC and found on four Counts, but scarce after Dec. **Lapland Longspur**: *intro*; Ingraham (CH); Little Chazy R CLIN 11 Jan (BK, CM). **Snow Bunting**: max 137 SLCBC, with scattered reports of smaller numbers, including a few at feeders. **Red-winged Blackbird**: max six PCBC; feeder reports from Keene Valley, Raquette L, and SLCBC, but one at a Peru feeder 18 Feb

may have been an early arrival. **Com Grackle**: max five SLCBC most unexpected. **Brown-headed Cowbird**: two wintered Raquette L feeder, where extremely rare in winter. **Pine Grosbeak**: *intro*; max 17 PCBC. **Purple Finch**: max 41 PCBC; four FCBC, only reports. **House Finch**: max 137 PCBC; recorded on five CBCs. **Red Crossbill**: three PCBC, only report. **White-winged Crossbill**: 17 Sugar Bush FRAN 12 Jan (DF), only report. **Com. Redpoll**: *intro*. **Hoary Redpoll**: *intro*. **Pine Siskin**: max 10 SLCBC; grand total of just 26 reported, none after 2 Jan. **Am. Goldfinch**: max 64 PCBC; total of just 91 reported, none after 2 Jan. **Evening Grosbeak**: max 289 ECBC; increasingly scarce after 2 Jan, with 25 Tupper L 3 Feb considered exceptional numbers.

Exotic: A **Ruddy Shelduck** sheltering in a Chazy CLIN barn 16 Jan was taken in for rehabilitation 19 Jan (DS); a duck of the same Eurasian species was seen at Monty Bay CLIN 20 Dec 1987 and Point au Roche CLIN 18 Dec 1988. There is an earlier record from Hardwick L in the "Northeast Kingdom" of Vermont 30 Aug-11 Sep 1974 (which the editor watched attack an Osprey in flight). More recently, one was shot by a hunter on Lac Saint-Louis in nearby southern Quebec 7 Oct 1989. Are these all escape artists?

Addendum: Two neck-collared (Greater) **Snow Goose** at Point au Roche CLIN 28 Oct 1993 had been banded and collared 10 Aug 1993 southwest Bylot Island, District of Franklin, Northwest Territories; both were females, hatched in 1991 or earlier.

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