

REGION 7 — ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

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Winter 1994-95 was an exceptionally easy one for both birds and birders, ranking as the 17th least snowy winter on record in the Champlain Valley. All of the Christmas Bird Counts were conducted on mostly bare ground, with no more than 6 inches of snow in higher elevation forests. Lake Champlain stood at 95.04 ft and 42°F on 19 Dec, remaining partly open throughout the season and providing a steady stream of Bald Eagle reports. A warming trend 18 Dec led to a thaw that lasted until 28 Dec. Thermometers dropped to -17°F at Malone on 10 Jan, but soared to 56°F at Plattsburgh 14 Jan, 66°F the next day, and 50°F at Saranac Lake on 16 Jan; even Inlet had bare ground 15-20 Jan. A stretch of clear weather and temperatures in the 30°s marked the end of the month, which finished as the fourth warmest January since 1884. February opened with a warm front, before a 4 Feb storm dumped 18 inches of snow on Elizabethtown, where temperatures then dropped to -12°F on 6 Feb. Winds reached 62 mph at Malone 15 Feb. The season closed with cold and snow, although an Eastern Chipmunk made an early appearance at an Elizabethtown feeder on 27 Feb.

The wild food crop was superb. Higher elevations had so many mountain ash berries and spruce cones that Gary Lee witnessed

American Robin and Red Crossbill singing in the same tree in HAMI. The lower valleys offered a cornucopia of buckthorn, dogwood, hemlock, red cedar, sumac, and wild grape. Needless to say, feeder watchers complained of a shortage of birds, while field observers were ecstatic. The Elizabethtown CBC tied the 1992 record of 44 species. Nevertheless, the total of 90 seasonal species was down from the 96 species reported in winter 1993-94, a year when there was a severe shortage of wild food.

As mentioned, Bald Eagle was numerous along open stretches of Champlain throughout the winter, perhaps most easily seen from the Amtrak "Adirondack" between Ticonderoga and Wickham Marsh. The train crew counted *ten* between Ticonderoga and Westport 25 Jan, certainly a modern record for the lake. A few even wintered in the central Adirondacks.

Birds that are frugivorous in winter were unusually abundant. Northern Flicker was numerous in December. Eastern Bluebird was widely reported at lower elevations. American Robin was abundant not only in the Champlain Valley but also in the Adirondacks, thanks to the bumper crop of mountain ash, even deep within the High Peaks Wilderness. Cedar Waxwing was similarly abundant. Bohemian Waxwing, seen just once in the fall, was absent this winter.

The cone crop attracted winter finches, which in turn pulled in numbers of visiting birders looking for crossbills. Least abundant finch this winter was Pine Grosbeak. Purple Finch could be found all over, but were most abundant around Saranac Lake. Red Crossbill (or crossbills, if, as suggested, several species are involved) could be found everywhere there are evergreens or tamaracks in the Adirondacks. White-winged Crossbill were similarly abundant, and Pine Siskin was plentiful. Certainly the most common feeder bird was American Goldfinch. Although scarce at lower elevations, Evening Grosbeak could be found in respectable numbers in the central Adirondacks. Other noteworthy feeder birds included Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, Northern Goshawk, *Golden Eagle*, Ruffed Grouse, Wild Turkey, Gray Jay, Common Raven, Northern Shrike, and Red Crossbill.

Seasonal highlights included Barrow's Goldeneye, Golden Eagle, and a Gyrfalcon suspected to be the same individual present in the winters of 1992-93 and 1993-94. Helping to close out a season of mild weather and memorable birds was the congregation of *Short-eared Owl*, first reported by one of Judy Heintz's ornithology students and subsequently enjoyed by many observers.

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Abbreviations: APt - Ausable Point WMA; ECBC - Elizabethtown CBC, 24 Dec; FCBC - Ferrisburg CBC, 17 Dec; FWC - Federation Waterfowl Count; PCBC - Plattsburgh CBC, 18 Dec; SLCBC - Saranac Lake CBC, 31 Dec.

Winter reports: **Com. Loon:** open water L Simond FRAN 7 Dec (CD); Seventh L HAMI 14 Dec (GL), unusually late inland. **Horned Grebe:** max 20 APt 10 Dec (CH). **Red-necked Grebe:** Essex 22 Feb, only sighting. **Great Blue Heron:** last SLCBC. **Snow Goose:** nine Beekmantown 17 Jan (J&RH, BK), late CLIN. **Canada Goose:** pair wintered Tupper L (CD); 200-500 Plattsburgh Feb, when previously unreported in CLIN. **Wood Duck:** APt 10 Dec (CH), late. **Am. Black Duck:** max 206 FWC. **Mallard:** max 1,550 FWC. **N. Pintail:** Monty Bay and Saranac L, unusual in winter. **Canvasback:** hen APt 13-21 Feb, only report. **Redhead:** two APt Jan, only report. **Oldsquaw:** one Westport 14 Jan; two Essex 29 Jan (DS), scarce here in winter. **Surf Scoter:** one APt 17 Dec (BK), a good find. **White-winged Scoter:** PCBC; three Port Kent 3 & 13 Dec (CH), also unusual. **Barrow's Goldeneye:** drake Westport 13 Dec (J&PT); pair off Wickham Marsh n of Port Kent 29 Jan (MP, DS). **Red-breasted Merganser:** seven PCBC; one FWC; two Essex 22 Feb (RM), a good showing.

Bald Eagle: one chased by crows between Blue Mountain L and Indian L HAMI 18 Dec; two ad Tupper L FRAN 16 Dec-20 Feb joined by imm 21 Dec; ad L Placid ESSE 1 Feb; *intro*. **N. Harrier:** two PCBC, late; male Chazy Landing 13-28 Feb, early or late? **Sharp-shinned Hawk:** at feeder Mineville. **Cooper's Hawk:** at feeders Plattsburgh and Wadhams. **N. Goshawk:** at feeders Elizabethtown and Wadhams. **Golden Eagle:** immature circled for ten minutes over Wadhams RR bridge spanning the Boquet R 24 Dec (Beth Edmunds and Dan Nickerson); perhaps the same bird at nearby Westport on 25 Jan (DS); at feeder Onchiota 7 Jan (RF). **Merlin:** 1-87 Exit 29 15 Dec (BK); taken in for rehab CLIN 17 Dec (DF). **Gyr Falcon:** gray morph at mouth of Saranac R Plattsburgh 7-23 Feb. **Gray Partridge:** Chazy Landing and Point au Roche Feb. **Ruffed Grouse:** at feeder Tupper L. **Wild Turkey:** at feeders Gabriels, L Placid,

and Tupper L. **Am. Coot**: one APt FWC, late. **Great Black-backed Gull**: max 235 PCBC.

Barred Owl: rehab bird CLIN underwent eye operation prior to release. **Short-eared Owl**: up to eight in fields near Chazy Landing Boat Launch 8-28 Feb. **N. Saw-whet Owl**: tooting Keene 13 Jan (J&PT); two-three tooting Clintonville ESSE 18 Feb (C&JH), early. **Belted Kingfisher**: three reports in Dec reflect mild winter. **Black-backed Woodpecker**: ECBC; SLCBC; Brown's Tract stream 15 Feb. **N. Flicker**: five near Essex 7 Dec (DS); six Ferrisburg CBC 17 Dec; others reported Hogansburg and Plattsburgh.

Gray Jay: at feeders L Clear, L Placid, and Raquette L; transient Paradox 9 Feb (*fide* MB). **Com. Raven**: 29 ECPC and 34 SLCBC suggest current numbers; at feeder Onchiota. **Boreal Chickadee**: reports from Cascade Ski Center, Eighth L, ECBC, Inlet, and SLCBC. **Tufted Titmouse**: four FCBC, five ECBC, high numbers here; transient outside Elizabethtown 23-24 Feb. **Red-breasted Nuthatch**: max 163 SLCBC indicative of high numbers where cones plentiful. **Golden-crowned Kinglet**: max 56 ECBC, high, for reasons less clear. **E. Bluebird**: max up to 50 frequenting Wadhams-Westport area in Jan; 14 FCBC, 22 ECBC, six PCBC, but none on higher elevation SLCBC. **Am. Robin**: max 77 PCBC; eight Cascade Ski Center 3 Jan, 40 St Huberts 15 Feb, ten Terry Mt 18 Feb; flock of 20 feeding with Cedar Waxwing on mountain ash in 3,000 ft Avalanche Pass ESSE 9 Feb (RB, MD). **Cedar Waxwing**: max 384 FCBC; 118 SLCBC, first ever. **N. Shrike**: six reports, more than last winter; at feeders Cadyville and Wadhams.

N. Cardinal: max 29 PCBC, total 58 on four CBCs, about average. **Song Sparrow**: five on three CBCs, good total. **White-throated Sparrow**: three on three CBCs, good total. **Dark-eyed Junco**: max 295 SLCBC, extraordinary number; widely reported. **Snow Bunting**: seven reports of small numbers; max 10 Raquette L 28 Feb (GL). **Com. Grackle**: Whallonsburg 18 Dec (DS); two SLCBC, unusual here in winter. **Pine Grosbeak**: reported Jones Pd, Plattsburgh, and Raquette L only. **Purple Finch**: 98 SLCBC; first singing male at Keene 18 Feb (J&PT). **House Finch**: max 461 PCBC. **Red Crossbill**: max 66 SLCBC. **White-winged Crossbill**: max 120 SLCBC, males singing after 29 Jan suggestive of nesting; ad male at feeder Elizabethtown 16 Feb. **Pine Siskin**: max 480 SLCBC; 225 L Shore Road ESSE 26 Dec (DS); singing at S Meadow by 17 Feb (J&PT). **Am. Goldfinch**: max 558 SLCBC; 250 at an Elizabethtown feeder 1 Feb. **Evening Grosbeak**: max 201 SLCBC; 75 at a Saranac Inn feeder.

Exotic: Mute Swan: two escapes near the Canadian border of CLIN.

Corrigendum: *Kingbird* 44(4):326: **Peregrine Falcon:** change "Keene (failed)" to "Keene (two fledged)." Although this brings the total of young fledged in 1994 to five, production was still down from ten young in 1993.

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