

REGION 8 - HUDSON-MOHAWK

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Long, bleak, and brutal are words that accurately describe the winter just past. As reported from the Albany County Airport, December's mean temperature was 23.9°F, 2.6 ° below normal. Only two days rose over 40°F, and every daily minimum was below freezing. Sunshine averaged 34%, 5% below normal. There were 25.1 inches of snowfall, 10 inches above normal, with the first snowstorm on 14 December. January averaged a normal 20.6 degrees. The first half of the month was very cold and the second half mild. Both record low (-19°F on the 6th) and record high (60°F on the 19th) temperature records were set. It was a cloudy month, with only 39% sunshine, 7% below normal. It was the ninth snowiest January on record, with 28.4 inches of snowfall, 12.3 inches above normal. Most of this fell in the first 13 days of the month, with virtually all of it melting after the 14th. In addition, there were 1.67 inches of rain on the 19th which caused severe flooding in many areas. February averaged 25.2 °F, 1.7° above normal, with 47% sunshine, 5% less than normal. Snowfall totalled 5.8 inches, 8.5 inches below normal.

Robert Budliger reported that it was the worst birding winter in his 23 years in the area. Heavy snows followed by unprecedented cold followed by more snow followed by a thaw, heavy rain and record floods, and a series of February weekends featuring high winds meant that bird-er activities were curtailed and that birds reported were scarce. The early snow cover and freeze-up of large bodies of water after 14 December led to the lowest number of individuals counted in years for the twelve reporting CBCs although species numbers were high. The Federation Waterfowl Count on 14 Jan produced only 14 species compared with last year's 17 and 2610 individuals compared with 10,002.

The lack of natural food crops due to last summer's drought combined with the early winter heavy snow cover meant a hard winter for resident birds. Karl Parker reported seeing Wild Turkey feeding with difficulty in snow-covered corn fields. Robert Yunick observed turkeys feeding on frozen crabapple fruit in close proximity to humans in Schenectady. Many were found starved and frozen as the winter progressed. Wintering Bald Eagle were concentrated in those few areas where open water remained, but were present in good numbers. Gulls were to be found mainly in the Colonie/Cohoes area at the confluence of the Mohawk and Hudson Rivers. Iceland, Glaucous, and Lesser Black-

backed gulls were all reported throughout the season.

The big bird news of the season was the presence of **Great Gray Owl** for the first time since the great invasion of 1979. Between December 23 and February 29 four birds were reported. Only one of these individuals was actually seen by area birders, but property owners on whose land the other three birds stayed were cooperative about filing NYSARC reports with identifiable photographs.

Robert Yunick's reports from Jenny Lake indicate that the fall irruption of Black-Capped Chickadee fizzled in December with only 27 individuals banded, another 15 in January, and 10 in February. Noteworthy was the high percentage of adult birds (79% in December and 80% in January and February). There were low numbers of Red-Breasted Nuthatch banded as well.

The 125 species reported was down from last year's 129 species and included 26 waterfowl, 12 hawks, 8 gulls, 7 owls, and 8 fringillids. Rarities not already mentioned included **Tundra Swan**, **Ross' Goose**, **Barrow's Goldeneye**, **Laughing Gull**, **Thayer's Gull**, **Say's Phoebe**, **Varied Thrush**, **Bohemian Waxwing**, and **Hoary Redpoll**.

Contributors: Ken Able; Alan Devoe Bird Club monthly sighting reports (ADBC); Hudson Mohawk Bird Club's Birdline of Eastern New York (BEN); Robert Budliger; Paul Connor; Bill Cook; Walter Ellison; Laurie Freeman; Jane Graves; Rich Guthrie; Ron Harrower; Cliff Lamere; William Lee; Andy Mason (AM); Nancy Martin; Laura Meade; Frank Murphy; Karl Parker; Barbara Putnam; Jim Sotis; Douglas Steele; Robert Yunick.

Abbreviations: ACCBC - Albany County CBC, 17 Dec; CCCBC - Catskill-Coxsackie CBC, 19 Dec; ChCBC - Chatham CBC, 16 Dec; Coll - Collins Lake, SCHE; FiveR - Five Rivers Environmental Education Center, Delmar, ALBA; FtE - Fort Edward area, WASH; FtPCBC - Fort Plain CBC, 20 Dec; GCBC - Galway CBC, 30 Dec; GI - Green Island, ALBA; HFCBC - Hudson Falls CBC, 30 Dec; HR - Hudson River; JGCBC - Johnstown-Gloversville CBC, 26 Dec; MR - Mohawk River; NASTP - North Albany Sewage Treatment Plant, Menands, ALBA; FWC - Federation Waterfowl Count, 14 Jan; SaCBC - Salem CBC, 30 Dec; SaraL - Saratoga Lake, SARA; ScCBC - Schenectady CBC, 16 Dec; SI - Simmons Island, Cohoes, SARA; SSCBC - Saratoga Spa CBC, 16 Dec; SRCBC - Southern Rensselaer CBC, 23 Dec; TCBC - Troy CBC, 30 Dec; TomRes - Tomhannock Reservoir, RENS; VFPS/L7 - Vischer Ferry Power Station/Lock 7, SCHE.

LOONS-WATERFOWL: **Red-throated Loon:** no reports. **Com. Loon:** one SaCBC, only report. **Pied-billed Grebe:** no reports. **Horned Grebe:** one TCBC, only report. **Red-necked Grebe:** one HR Troy Dam 25 Dec (RPG to BEN); two FWC. **Double-crested Cormorant:** no reports. **Great Blue Heron:** 21 on nine CBCs; high count 12 CCCBC; three wintering over ColL (RP). **Tundra Swan:** one SSCBC, first since 1993. **Mute Swan:** 130 HR on four CBCs; six Cohoes ALBA Jan (RB, WE, WL, NM); one VFPS/L7 FWC, first time observed at this location; four Stillwater NYSWC. **Snow Goose:** high count 500-600 TomRes 2 Dec (WL), down to 27 by 10 Dec (WE); 70+ Muitzeskill RENS 3 Dec (PC); 11 on three CBCs. **Brant:** one MR Lock 9 SCHE through 3 Dec (RP). **Canada Goose:** high count 3000 TomRes 10 Dec; 2952 ChCBC; only 303 FWC. **ROSS' GOOSE:** one TomRes 2 Dec (WL!), second regional record. **Wood Duck:** one ChCBC; pair NASTP 24-28 Dec (WE, CF, NM); one MR SCHE thru (RP). **Green-winged Teal:** three FtPCBC; one MR Binnekill SCHE thru (RP). **Am. Black Duck:** 1894 on 12 CBCs; 688 FWC. **Mallard:** 6023 on 12 CBCs; 1146 FWC, low numbers. **N. Pintail:** one TomRes 10 Dec (WE); one CCCBC; four TCBC; one SRCBC; one GI 16 Jan (DS). **Gadwall:** one SRCBC; one HR Catskill GREE 26 Dec (RG to BEN); one MR Binnekill SCHE 15 Jan (RP to BEN); arr four VFPS/L7 28 Feb (RP). **Am. Wigeon:** no reports. **Canvasback:** seven SaraL 2 Dec (LF, JG); one GI 3-19 Jan (RB, WL, DS). **Redhead:** one CCCBC, only report. **Ring-necked Duck:** one ACCBC; one Cohoes Falls ALBA 7 Jan (CB); arr Stockport COLU 23 Feb (ADBC). **Greater Scaup:** one TomRes 10 Dec (WE); 30 SaCBC. **Lesser Scaup:** one TomRes 10 Dec (WE); four SaCBC; one TCBC; one GI 1-18 Jan (RB, WE). **Oldsquaw:** one 5 Dec Copake COLU (ADBC); one ACCBC. **Black Scoter:** one HR Catskill GREE 26 Dec (RG to BEN). **White-winged Scoter:** one TCBC; one GI 1 Jan (RB). **Com. Goldeneye:** 115 on six CBCs; 167 FWC; 50 HR Stillwater SARA 20 Feb (RB), low numbers. **BARROW'S GOLDENEYE:** one CCCBC. **Bufflehead:** four Dec; two Jan reports. **Hooded Merganser:** max 150 SaraL 2 Dec (LF, JG); ten FWC. **Com. Merganser:** high counts 154 TCBC and 273 FWC. **Red-breasted Merganser:** one TCBC; one GI 7-18 Jan (RB, WE, DS). **Ruddy Duck:** one SaraL 2 Dec (LF, JG), only report.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: **Turkey Vulture:** arr T Root MONT 26 Feb (KP). **Bald Eagle:** 16 on four CBCs; at least 16 ad, nine imm Conklinville Dam, HR, MR, L George, Hoosic R all season; max five ad, seven imm Conklinville Dam 20 Dec. **N. Harrier:** one Poestenskill RENS 3 Dec, 1 Jan (J. Marx to BEN); eight on six CBCs; one Coxsackie GREE 1 Jan (RG to BEN); one 27 Feb Schodack Ctr RENS (PC), numbers dramatically lower than last year.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: 36 on 12 CBCs; 13 reports of singles, high numbers. **Cooper's Hawk:** 28 on 11 CBCs; 16 reports of singles, high numbers. **N. Goshawk:** 11 reports. **Red-shouldered Hawk:** two Dec. reports; one overwintered Galway SARA. **Red-tailed Hawk:** max 107 TCBC; 71 CCCBC; 64 SRCBC. **Rough-legged Hawk:** 24 on eight CBCs; max ten FtPCBC; eight FtE thru; three Stone Bridge Rd SARA 10 Jan (CF); eight reports of singles. **Am. Kestrel:** 25 on ten CBCs; ten other reports. **Merlin:** no definite reports. **Peregrine Falcon:** two downtown Albany 14 Dec thru; one FtE 7 Jan (B. Bidwell to BEN); one Kiskatom GREE 21 Jan (P. Rappleyea to BEN), taking a Mallard; one Amsterdam MONT 29 Jan (T. Palmer to BEN); one Stanton Pd ALBA 18 Feb (K. Budliger *fide* RB); one FtE 30 Jan (CB). **Ring-necked Pheasant:** nine on five CBCs; seven other reports. **Wild Turkey:** high counts 486 ACBC; 330 ChCBC; 441 FtPCBC; also *intro*. **Am. Coot:** only two reports. **Am. Woodcock:** one Jefferson SCHO 7 Jan (AM), very rare in winter. **LAUGHING GULL:** one imm TCBC, first since 1991. **Ring-billed Gull:** max 125 Crescent ALBA 2 Dec (WE). **Herring Gull:** max 6000 Crescent ALBA 2 Dec (WE); down to 200-300 Jan-Feb (RB), 90% adults. **Thayer's Gull:** two HR Cocksackie GREE 26 Dec (RPG to BEN); two TCBC. **Iceland Gull:** five MR Crescent ALBA 2 Dec (KA, WE, et al.); three HR Cocksackie GREE 26 Dec (RG to BEN); two imm Crescent ALBA 26 Jan (B. Brooks to BEN); one New Baltimore GREE 12 Feb (RG to BEN). **Lesser Black-backed Gull:** one ad, one first w Crescent ALBA 2 Dec (KA, WE, et al.); one TCBC; one HR Troy Dam 25 Dec (RG to BEN). **Glaucous Gull:** one 1st yr, one 3rd yr Crescent ALBA 2 Dec (KA, WE, et al.); one GI 7 Jan (WE); one imm FWC. **Great Black-backed Gull:** max 600 Crescent ALBA 2 Dec (WE); only 200 or so Jan-Feb (RB); 90% adults.

DOVES-WOODPECKERS: **Mourning Dove:** high counts 1094 ChCBC and 818 SCCBC. **E. Screech-Owl:** 44 on nine CBCs; seven other reports. **Great Horned Owl:** 40 on 11 CBCs; twelve other reports. **Snowy Owl:** one Hillsdale COLU 20 Jan (ADBC); one FtE 27 Jan (S. O'Brian to BEN). **Barred Owl:** five on four CBCs; widely reported as diurnal feeders thru. **GREAT GRAY OWL:** one Eagle Mills RENS 23 Dec (G. Goodness/FM!), seen before this date by local farmers; one T Salem WASH 16-18 Jan (P. Sauer! to BEN); one Saratoga Springs c. 12-29 Feb (L. Clark! to FM); one T Fort Ann WASH 27 Feb-23 Mar (M.B. Butler! *fide* BP); first reports since 1980. **Long-eared Owl:** two SSCBC. **Short-eared Owl:** no reports for the first time in several years. **N. Saw-whet Owl:** one Hague WARR 24 Jan (LM); one found dead FtE Jan (B. Bidwell *fide* BP). **Belted Kingfisher:** 15 on 11 CBCs; scarce after Dec. **Red-bellied Woodpecker:** 45 on nine CBCs,

high count 15 CCCBC; 15 reports of singles, many coming to feeders; one T Kingsbury/Argyle WASH 2 Dec (BP), fourth winter in a row. **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**: one Schodack Ctr RENS 9, 14, 20 Dec (PC); one Glenville SCHE 22 Dec (RP), both at feeders. **Downy Woodpecker**: max 105 ChCBC. **Hairy Woodpecker**: max 44 CCCBC. **N. Flicker**: 63 on nine CBCs; three Jan, one Feb reports. **Pileated Woodpecker**: max ten SCCBC; nine CCCBC; ten reports of singles.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLING: **E. Phoebe**: one FiveR 17 Dec-30 Jan (ACCBC, RB, DS); two CCCBC. **SAY'S PHOEBE**: one NASTP 23-30 Dec (CF, JG, RG!), probably present after this date when plant was closed to birders, second regional record. **Horned Lark**: max 884 ChCBC; 608 FtPCBC; seen widely in good numbers. **Fish Crow**: 21 TCBC; four Jan, five Feb reports. **Com. Raven**: max 11 SRCBC; 35 other reports, incl eight JL (RY). **Black-capped Chickadee**: max 779 CCCBC; 728 SRCBC; 695 SCCBC. **Tufted Titmouse**: max 155 CCCBC; 154 SCCBC; 113 GCBC. **Red-breasted Nuthatch**: 86 on ten CBCs; max 24 JGCBC. **White-breasted Nuthatch**: max 110 SCCBC. **Brown Creeper**: 41 on 11 CBCs; max 12 AcCBC. **Carolina Wren**: 14 reports; many reports of successful overwintering at suet feeders, incl two Mecos FULT (LF). **Winter Wren**: max five CCCBC; four other Dec reports; one Jefferson SCHO 28 Jan (AM). **Marsh Wren**: one CCCBC. **Golden-crowned Kinglet**: 30 on eight CBCs; five other reports. **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**: one SCCBC, only report. **E. Bluebird**: max 94 ChCBC; 73 TCBC; 68 ACCBC; present in moderate numbers thru. **Hermit Thrush**: one CCCBC; one Chatham COLU 6 Jan (ADBC); one Coxsackie GREE 11 Jan (P. Rappleyea to BEN). **Am. Robin**: 205 CCCBC; 145 ACCBC; 111 ChCBC; wintered in small numbers, began to reappear after 9 Feb. **VARIED THRUSH**: one ad m Clothier Rd T Corinth SARA 1-8 Dec (RB, CF, JG mob), not reported since 1984. **Gray Catbird**: one SRCBC; one CCCBC. **N. Mockingbird**: max 23 SCCBC; scarce after Dec. **Bohemian Waxwing**: 122 FtPCBC; 75 GCBC; 32 JGCBC; 6-8 T Saratoga 5 Dec (CF), irruption year. **Cedar Waxwing**: high counts 123 SCCBC; 117 CCCBC; 47 ChCBC; c.40 Castleton RENS 12 Jan (PC); 40+ VFPS 1 Jan (RY); 20 Warrensburg WARR 25 Feb (M. Di Pietro to BEN). **N. Shrike**: 31 on 10 CBCs; 55 reports of singles, exceptionally high numbers. **European Starling**: high counts, 6273 TCBC; 7972 SRCBC.

VIREOS-WARBLED: **Yellow-rumped Warbler**: one ACCBC; one CCCBC; one TCBC.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: **N. Cardinal:** high counts, 210 CCCBC; 185 SCCBC; 113 TCBC; 94 TCBC; first singing noted Broadalbin FULT 24 Feb (LF). **Am. Tree Sparrow:** max 568 HFCBC; 467 SaCBC; 437 ChCBC; 334 SCBC, good numbers generally. **Chipping Sparrow:** one New Baltimore GREE 7 Dec (J. Coe to BEN), very late. **Field Sparrow:** eight on five CBCs. **Savannah Sparrow:** one CCCBC; one SSCBC. **Song Sparrow:** 59 CCCBC; 31 ACCBC; few reports after Dec. **Swamp Sparrow:** singles on FtPCBC, SCCBC, SRCBC; two Cohoes Falls 28 Dec (CF). **White-throated Sparrow:** max 76 CCCBC; few reports after Dec. **Dark-eyed Junco:** 293 SCCBC; 291 ChCBC; 267 ACCBC; reported in good numbers thru. **Lapland Longspur:** two ACCBC; eight FtPCBC; two HFCBC; five SSCBC. **Snow Bunting:** max 877 FtPCBC; 425 SaCBC; 500+ T Saratoga 11 Jan (RB, JG); 500+ T Argyle WASH 30 Jan (BP). **Red-winged Blackbird:** 12 ChCBC; 18 TCBC; arr FiveR 22 Feb (DS); generally present throughout Region after 27 Feb. **E. Meadowlark:** five FtPCBC; one FtE 16 Dec (BP); one FtE 26 Dec (WE, NM). **Rusty Blackbird:** two ChCBC; three FtPCBC; one Ghent COLU 27 Feb (ADBC). **Com. Grackle:** one TCBC; arr FiveR 26 Feb (DS). **Brown-headed Cowbird:** 33 on five CBCs; 26 Stone Bridge Rd SARA 28 Feb (JG). **Pine Grosbeak:** six ChCBC; 38 FtPCBC; 13 JGCBC; six SaCBC; seven Corinth SARA 23 Dec (RY); 20 E. Berne ALBA 31 Dec (KA); heard Schodack Ctr. RENS 30 Jan, 1 Feb (PC); 30 Galway SARA 20 Jan (G. Recer to BEN). **Purple Finch:** eight ACCBC; eight ChCBC; three HFCBC; five SCCBC; absent after Dec. **Red Crossbill:** one JGCBC, only report, left over from last year? **White-winged Crossbill:** no reports. **Com. Redpoll:** high counts, 428 ACCBC; 215 CCCBC; 102 ChCBC; widely reported throughout period, especially N. SARA. **Hoary Redpoll:** one m Berne ALBA 29-30 Jan (KA); one f Berne 4-5 Feb (KA); one FtE 31 Jan (D. Beeler to BEN). **Pine Siskin:** 40 GCBC; present in small numbers thru. **Am. Goldfinch:** high counts, 196 CCCBC; 168 SCCBC; 147 FtPCBC, low numbers generally. **Evening Grosbeak:** max 544 JGCBC; reported widely in moderate numbers.

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