

REGION 10 - MARINE

SEYMOUR SCHIFF

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In contrast to recent years this winter season was warm and mostly free of snow. February was exceptionally warm, almost six and a half degrees over normal and slightly drier. The end of the month saw three new daily highs. Generally the birding was lackluster if not down right dull. There were no northern finches and no Northern Shrike irruption. The few high spots were a scattering of lingering passerines and a few wintering uncommon birds. To quote Ken Feustel and Bob Kurtz, "Lackluster." We concur.

On 5 January a heavy pea soup fog covered Nassau County all day, completely blanketing the skies, and open water of lakes, wetlands and ocean. This made this current South Nassau Christmas Bird Count unique in the annals of our Region's Christmas counts. It surpassed in difficulty, previous blizzards, driving rains, freezing weather, frozen ponds and ice covered wetlands. Amazingly, a respectable 123 birds were seen in the fog, down from the 142 seen last year.

Increased numbers of Greater White-fronted Geese were found this season. A total of seven was seen in Mecox Bay 11 January by Doug Futuyma. Others, presumably the same ones, were seen on the East End from late December to late February.

While American Oystercatchers winter, this season a dozen birds had the company of a lone Willet. This group frequented the marsh island opposite the Jones Beach Fishing piers along with several dozen Harbor Seals.

Two Snowy Owls wintered to the West of the West End #2 parking lot at Jones Beach, clearly visible from the lot almost all winter. Later in the season the number increased to four, all of which could also be seen by scope from the

lot as small specks in the distance. A total of a dozen others was scattered through the Region.

One dark and one gray Gyrfalcon were found at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge late January to late February along with several Peregrine Falcons. Details were lacking.

Few Bonaparte's Gulls were found this winter. Significant numbers did not appear until late in the season and may have represented migrants rather than wintering birds. There were no reports of the usual rarities associated with this species.

Birders have been actively pursuing Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow this fall and during the CBCs. No members of this species were found in our Region this year during the counts.

John Askildsen saw a **SANDHILL CRANE** in Bridgehampton on 8 December, the best rarity of the season. But, the best bird of the season would seem to be a **WILSON'S WARBLER** found on the Southern Nassau County CBC on the unprecedented date of 5 January.

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Abbreviations: APP - Alley Pond Park; CB - Cedar Beach; CP - Central Park; CBC - Christmas Bird Count, CLP - Clove Lake Park, SI; CRSP - Connetquot River State Park; JBWR - Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, JBCH - Jones Beach; JBWE - Jones Beach West End; LI - Long Island; MSP - Massapequa Preserve; MEB - Mecox Bay; MP - Montauk Point; MOR - Moriches; NYRBA - New York Rare Bird Alert; PL - Pt. Lookout; PP - Prospect Park; SHIN - Shinnecock Inlet; SI - Staten Island; SN - Southern Nassau.

LOONS-DUCKS: **Red-necked Grebe:** widely scattered reports thru. **Eared Grebe:** PL mid Feb. **Great Egret:** four HLSP into Jan. **Tricolored Heron:** JBWR 13 Jan. **Cattle Egret:** Montauk Dude Ranch 1-31 Dec. **Tundra Swan:** five Hook Pond 3 Dec; others in surrounding areas to mid Feb. **Greater White-fronted Goose:** SN CBC 5 Jan; seven Mecox Bay 11 Jan (DF); two Short's Pond 12 Jan; five Watermill 26 Jan; four Bridgehampton 26 Jan, probably the same as prior birds; Short's Pond 9 Feb; two Shinnecock 16 Feb; two Southampton 15 Feb. **Snow Goose:** 200-600 JBWR in Winter. **Green-winged Teal, the nominate Eurasian form:** Floyd Bennett Field 4 Jan. SN CBC 5 Jan; MSP 7 Jan. **Blue-winged Teal:** two JBWE mid-Jan. **Gadwall:** 450 CPSP 26 Jan, a very large number, probably a winter high for one locality (KF).

Eurasian Wigeon: scattered birds throughout Region. **Redhead:** 40 Willet's Pond, Babylon 21 Feb, a large number. **Tufted Duck:** male Riverhead 13 Jan (JC), two female Southampton ponds 25-30 Jan (JA *et al.*). **Common Eider:** 10,000+ wintered MP. **King Eider:** three Orient Pt 4 Jan; one to two wintered at MP; but note difficulty of finding the few in the immense Common Eider flocks. **Harlequin Duck:** 4-7 wintered PL, 1-2 in MP area. **Barrow's Goldeneye:** female Northwest Harbor 21 Feb (JA).

HAWKS-ALCIDS: **Turkey Vulture:** MEB 15 Dec; Montauk 26 Dec, Huntington 20 Feb. **Osprey:** a bird wintered at Twin Lakes Preserve, Wantagh. **Bald Eagle:** Whitestone 11 Jan; JBWR 26 Jan; Mecox 11 Feb; MP 16 Feb. **BROAD-WINGED HAWK:** CP 8-15 Dec (NYRBA, mob). **Rough-legged Hawk:** scattered reports. **Gyr Falcon:** dark female JBWR 25 Jan to 24 Feb; gray male JBWR 6-10 Feb. **Virginia Rail:** Shu Swamp 28 Dec. **Com. Moorhen:** NCCBC 5 Jan; Prospect Park 9-28 Feb. **SANDHILL CRANE:** Bridgehampton 8 Dec (JPA). **Am. Golden-Plover:** MP and MEB 7 Dec, late dates. **American Oystercatcher:** 11 wintered opposite the JBCH fishing pier (field #10). **Greater Yellowlegs:** wintered MSP. **Lesser Yellowlegs:** two MSP 12 Jan. **WILLET:** one wintered with a flock of 12 Amer. Oystercatchers. **Marbled Godwit:** JBWR 8 Dec. **SEMIPALMATED SANDPIPER:** Great South Bay in East Patchogue 18 Jan (DT). **Long-billed Dowitcher:** four MSP late Dec, two through. **Common Snipe:** up to nine MSP during winter. **Black-headed Gull:** PP 15 Dec to 25 Feb. **Bonaparte's Gull:** few birds at both ends of the Jones strip, their usual haunt, and few at Shinnecock.; max noted was 650 at PL 29 Dec. **Iceland Gull:** widely scattered reports, more this year; max four on the SI dump 14 Feb. **Lesser Black-backed Gull:** a dozen widely scattered birds plus seven on the SI dump 21 Dec, with four on 14 Feb; a species increasing in our area in fall and wintering. **Glaucous Gull:** SI dump 21 Dec, Breezy Pt. 27 Feb. **Black-legged Kittiwake:** low numbers off MP. **Razorbill:** MP - 15 on 3 Dec, 25 on 10 Dec, 21 on 28 Dec, 12 on 1 Jan, 2 on 1 Feb. **BLACK GUILLEMOT:** MP 22 Feb (AnW).

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: **Snowy Owl:** a dozen birds wintered from JBWR to MEB inc. four at JBWE. **Short-eared Owl:** two MP CBC 21 Dec; JBWR 27 Dec; SN CBC 5 Jan; Southampton 1 Jan; Breezy PT. 4 Jan; CB 25 Jan; four CB 9 Feb (KF). **N. Saw-whet Owl:** two reports from NASS CBC's. **Red-headed Woodpecker:** MP 21 Dec; Orient Pt. CBC 4 Jan.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLING: **Western Kingbird:** Bayard Cutting Arboretum 3 Dec; Sagaponack CBC 22 Dec. **Carolina Wren:** numbers much reduced after the previous two years' harsh winters. **N. Shrike:** Gardiner's Is 21 Dec; Muttontown Preserve 28 Dec; Lake Success 12 Jan.

VIREOS-WARBLERS: **Orange-crowned Warbler:** Brooklyn CBC 21 Dec; six SN CBC 5 Jan. **Nashville Warbler:** CP 22-29 Dec. **Pine Warbler:** Heckscher State Park 3.26 Jan (JF). **Com. Yellowthroat:** Speonk 29 Dec (SB); SI 19 Jan (HF). **WILSON'S WARBLER:** SN CBC 5 Jan (Matt Bayer, Hugh Boyle, Larry Plotnick, AW). **Yellow-breasted Chat:** MSP 7-15 Jan; a few others.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: **Dickcissel:** APP 8-22 Dec; Haven's Beach early Jan. **Lark Sparrow:** Haven's Beach to 1 Feb. **Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow:** Captree CBC; two SN CBC 5 Jan. **White-crowned Sparrow:** 12 found at MEB 1 Jan; a few others. **Lapland Longspur:** 7-10 JBWE mid-Dec to early Feb; two MP CBC 21 Dec; Captree CBC 22 Dec; two MEB 9 Feb. **Rusty Blackbird:** up to 30 wintered in Shu Swamp, Oyster Bay. **Boat-tailed Grackle:** 262 Queens CBC 21 Dec; SHIN 12 Jan, becoming regular at this location; JBCH fishing pier late Feb.

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