

REGION 4 - SUSQUEHANNA

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It was a mild, open winter for the second year in a row. At Cooperstown where temperature records date back to 1854, it was listed as one of the ten warmest winters of record. December's average daily temperature of 27.7°F was only two degrees above normal. The January average of 30.6°F, however, was 10 degrees over normal, and in February the daily mean exceeded the average by 8 degrees. Precipitation totals for the period varied in different areas of the Region, but they were generally near normal for December and February and much higher in January. However, because of the warm temperatures, much of the precipitation fell as rain and sleet rather than as snow. There were only two heavy snow storms, one 30 and 31 December and the other on 24 February. Subsequent sun and rain quickly melted most of the snow accumulation from both storms. Consequently there was little snow cover all season. However, after months of very low water levels in the rivers and streams, the early January thaw, abetted by heavy rains, quickly swelled river and creek depths to flood stage. Unfortunately, this coincided with the annual Federation Waterfowl Count, causing lower tallies of most ducks. Bob Saunders, covering the Binghamton to Bainbridge section of the Susquehanna River, explained, "Most years the river has been mostly frozen and we found birds in open places. This year the river was all open, very high and flowing very fast. We found nothing in the river itself. Most of our birds were seen in fields which had standing water."

Scant snow cover was evidently a boon for hawks. Many observers commented on high numbers of Red-tailed Hawks all winter, including an early breeding pair on a telephone pole at CORT 20 February. Good counts were also noted for Northern Harrier and both Bald and Golden eagles. Owls also found good hunting. In addition to the good numbers of the more common species, a N. Saw-whet Owl spent February near a CHEN birder's home and two Regionally rare Short-eared Owls drew many area birders to BROO 9 to 11 February.

The poor supply of wild foods noted in the fall had already caused the exodus of most half-hardies. However, determined survivors found food. The total of 1101 Wild Turkeys tallied on the four Christmas Bird Counts was second only to the record count of 1995. Three Yellow-rumped Warblers were still around for the Binghamton Christmas Bird Count on 28 December, and Cedar Waxwings were reported in sizable flocks all season despite the scarcity of wild fruits.

The most rare winter visitors were two record-late American Pipits spotted at Upper Lisle BROO 2 January by Harriet Marsi and Gail Kirch. A Regionally rare Tundra Swan was at Cooperstown 11 January on the Federation Waterfowl Count. Very exciting were the record numbers of Lapland Longspur: 300 on the

Binghamton Christmas Bird Count and 150 on the Sherburne Count; two a season is the usual report, if seen at all. A big invasion of Common Redpoll and good numbers of White-winged Crossbill and Pine Grosbeak highlighted the winter finch season.

January and February's unusually high temperatures evidently triggered some record early arrivals in advance of spring. They included two Green-winged Teal and Northern Pintail at Boland Pond 10 February, N. Shoveler there 28 February, and four Turkey Vultures at Goodyear Lake 28 February. Early landbirds included American Woodcock at Binghamton 20 February, a tie for record early. Scarce this winter were Northern Shrike, Golden-crowned Kinglet, American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, Purple Finch, Pine Siskin, and American Goldfinch.

Observers: Derek Alcott, Cutler & Jeannette Baldwin, Les Bemont, Bruce Bozdos, Eleanor Carson, John Davis, Mary Dobinsky, Sadie Dorber, Dolores Elliott, Bob Grosek, Steve Hall, Elva Hawken, Sara Kinch, Gail Kirch, Art & Ruth Levy, Harriet Marsi, Andy Mason, Evelyn Mead, Bruce Milavec, Bob Miller, Bob and Ruth Pantle, Marie Petuh, Tom Salo, Bob Saunders, Joe Sedlacek, Julie Smith, Eric Sullivan, Gary & Louise Sweet, Bill Toner, Chris Vredenburg, Fred von Mechow, Don Weber, Nancy Weissflog, Don Windsor, Irene Wright, Jane Young,

Abbreviations: ATP - Aqua Terra Park, Binghamton; BCBC - Binghamton Christmas Bird Count, 28 Dec; BPd - Boland Pd, BROO; BFlats - Burlington Flats; CCBC - Sherburne Christmas Bird Count, 20 Dec; CFk - Chenango Forks; CVSP - Chenango Valley state Park; DOCBC - Oneonta Christmas Bird Count, 20 Dec; FWC - Federation Waterfowl Count; FHNC - Finch Hollow Nature Center; FMHW - Franklin Mt. Hawkwatch; JCy - Johnson City; OtsL - Otsego Lake; SUNYNP - State University Nature Preserve; TCBC - TIOG Christmas Count, 4 Jan; WB - West Burlington; WPR - Whitney Pt. Reservoir.

LOONS - WATERFOWL

Pied-billed Grebe: River Rd Endwell 17 Jan (SK), often missed.

Horned Grebe: TCBC, only seventh report in last 20 winters.

Great Blue Heron: max 19 on 3 CBC's, excellent counts each month.

Turkey Vulture: arr 4 Gyl 28 Feb, early.

Snow Goose: flock TIOG Feb (DWB), missed some winters.

Canada Goose: 1600 on CBC's; 1900 on FWC's; good counts late Feb.

Mute Swan: max 3 BCBC.

Tundra Swan: FWC at Cooperstown 11 Jan, first winter report since 1985.

Am. Wigeon: 3 Endwell 12 Dec (ES), only report.

Am. Black Duck: max 84 FWC; 35 on CBC's; BPd Feb max 48, low counts but better than last year.

Mallard: max 737 on CBC's, low count but averages totals of last 3 years.

N. Shoveler: BPd 28 Feb (ES), record early arrival.

N. Pintail: BPd 10 Feb thru, max 3, missed some winters.

Green-winged Teal: CCBC; 2 females 10 Feb thru, often missed.

Oldsquaw: WPR 2 Dec (ES), first winter since Dec 1984.

Com. Goldeneye: 15 on FWC; TIOG Dec, scarce.

Hooded Merganser: 8 Chenango River 11 and 21 Dec, max 8; 3 TCBC; 7 FWC; 4 Binghamton 28 Feb, scarce.

Com. Merganser: max 400 WPR 2 Dec; 196 CBC's; 104 FWC; 200 WPR 28 Feb, good numbers.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Osprey: TIOG early Jan, often missed.

Bald Eagle: imm ChF 12 Dec (T&NT); CVSP 14 Jan; max 12 DELA 25 Jan (TBC eagle trip); 5 DELA 31 Jan (DOAS eagle trip).

N. Harrier: BFlats 28 Dec(NW); TIOG thru; Jefferson 6 Jan (AM); Lisle 12 Jan (MP), "on ground eating"; 2 Lisle 10, 11 Feb; 2 CinL 19 Feb, good numbers.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: six BROO reports Dec max 3; two reports each Jan, Feb, average.

Cooper's Hawk: 8 on 3 CBC's; 2 - 4 per month, near average.

N. Goshawk: imm TIOG Dec, Jan; Triangle 8, 17 Feb, missed last winter.

Red-shouldered Hawk: BCBC; 4 reports Binghamton area Jan, possibly same bird, rarely seen before 1995.

Red-tailed Hawk: 86 on 4 CBC's; 5 Riley Road CORT 20 Feb including pair copulating on telephone pole (BI); flight of 6 BRQO flying north within 10 minutes 23 Feb (MP).

Rough-legged Hawk: 15 on 2 CBC's; 12 other reports Dec, max 2; 10 reports Jan, max 4, average; scarce Feb.

Golden Eagle: imm OTSE 10 Dec (SH), "hunting at junction Routes 205 and 80"; imm CHEN south of Oxford 27 Jan (A&RL fide Dw), "being harassed by Red-tailed Hawk"; distance between sites raises possibility same eagle was seen.

Am. Kestrel: 3 on CBC's; five singles Jan, Feb; average.

Ring-necked Pheasant: max 5 Castle Creek 1 Jan (BG); 4 on CBC's; 3 others, average.

Ruffed Grouse: 25 on 4 CBC's, high count.

Wild Turkey: max 1101 on 4 CBC's, 2d only to record high of 1995.

Am. Coot: OtsL thru; max 75 FWC 11 Jan.

Killdeer: arr BPD 27 Feb.

Am. Woodcock: 2 males ATP 20 Feb (T&NT), ties record early arrival date of 1979.

Ring-billed Gull: max 95 FWC; 30 WPR 11 Jan; 15 imm GyL 29 Jan.

Herring Gull: max 28 BCBC.

Great Black-backed Gull: Rockbottom Dam Binghamton 27, 31 Dec; 1, 12 Jan, uncommon.

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

Mourning Dove: 1508 on CBC's, high counts widespread thru.

E. Screech-Owl: WB 16 Dec; 3 on CBC's; CVSP 22 Feb; TIOG, good numbers.

Great Horned Owl: 2 McGraw 17 Jan; 12 on 3 CBC's; Jefferson 6 Jan; Triangle 1, 9 Feb; 2 ATP 6, 20 Feb; T Preston 22 Feb; TIOG, very good numbers.

Barred Owl: 2 CCBC; CHEN 7, 19 Feb; BROO 22 Feb, missed some winters.

Short-eared Owl: 2 T Lisle BROO 9, 10, 11 Feb (mob), first winter in at least 20 years.

N. Saw-whet Owl: T Preston thru Feb (and beyond), (EH); third consecutive winter, previously rare.

Belted Kingfisher: max 11 BCBC; 2 CVSP; 3 TIOG sites 21 Jan (SK).

Red-bellied Woodpecker: 2 CVSP 6 Dec; 11 on 2 CBC's; TIOG thru, not as widespread.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: 3 on DOCBC, not every winter.

Downy Woodpecker: 180 on CBC's, average.

Hairy Woodpecker: 63 on CBC's.

N. Flicker: max 5 BCBC; 3 TIOG 21 Jan; 1 BROO and 2 TIOG reports Feb, good count.

Pileated Woodpecker: 10 on 4 CBC's plus many widespread reports thru Dec.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: CCBC; Willet 10 Jan (ES); Cooperstown 20 Jan (JD), scarce.

Blue Jay: fewer than usual.

Am. Crow: 3430 on CBC's, near average.

Fish Crow: single thru Dec Chenango R Binghamton; two there 11 Feb (ES), "area of previous sightings".

Com. Raven: 3 (one bird missing a primary feather) FMHW 1 Sep to 24 Dec (CV); TIOG Dec (DWB); 2 Jefferson 6 Feb (AM), steady presence.

Horned Lark: 35 CCBC, only report, scarce.

Black-capped Chickadee: 2059 on 4 CBC's, above average.

Tufted Titmouse: excellent numbers, widespread thru.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: 33 on CBC's, an off year.

Brown Creeper: 26 on CBC's, average.

Carolina Wren: 11 on BCBC; TIOG Jan, still scarce.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 8 CVSP 4 Dec; 12 on CBC's; only 3 Jan reports, max 2, scarce.

E. Bluebird: max 8 on 3 CBC's; 8 TIOG 21 Jan, below average.

Am. Robin: 3 FHNC 27 Jan; only one on CBC's; 3 to 4 singles Jan., Feb; lowest count since 1987.

N. Mockingbird: Bainbridge 15 Dec; 5 on CBC's; singles BROO/ TIOG Jan, scarce.

Am. Pipit: 2 Upper Lisle 2 Jan (HM, GK), first winter in 20 years of reports.

Cedar Waxwing: 132 on 2 CBC; 80 SUNYNP 3 Jan; 73 Rogers Environmental Recreation Center 1 Feb, high counts.

WARBLERS

Yellow-rumped Warbler: 3 on BCBC, only 4th winter report since 1982.

TANAGERS - WEAVERS

Am. Tree Sparrow: 332 on 4 CBC's, average.

Chipping Sparrow: Oneonta 2,3 Dec (IW).

Field Sparrow: 3 CCBC.

Fox Sparrow: TIOG Dec (DWb); DOCBC, only 4th winter since 1983

White-throated Sparrow: 20 CBC's; 10 JCy yard 24 Feb; 8 there 10 Dec "heavy snow days" (MP), good counts.

White-crowned Sparrow: TCBC, first since 1992.

Song Sparrow: 14 on CBC's, scarce.

Dark-eyed Junco: 592 on CBC's, average.

Lapland Longspur: 300 on BCBC 28 Dec; 150 on CCBC 20 Dec and again 21 Dec when rechecked by count co-compilers; record numbers; only five other winter reports since 1981, previous record 79 on 1989 CCBC.

Snow Bunting: max 187 on CCBC; high counts widespread; last 5 OTSE 28 Feb.

N. Cardinal: 221 on CBC's; many feeders thru; max 8 JCy 24 Feb; singing from 1 Feb.

Red-winged Blackbird: Norwich 13, 14 Dec; arr 2 each BROO, OTSE 11 Feb; 65 OTSE 13 Feb (BM), very early arrivals.

Com. Grackle: max 12 Oneonta 12 Jan (IW); singles on two CBC's; arr 3 OTSE 12 Feb, early.

Brown-headed Cowbird: four on CBC's; TIOG Jan, Feb; 7 Norwich 28 Feb.

Pine Grosbeak: 20 on CCBC; 2 OTSE 29 Jan (BMv), near average but none last year.

Purple Finch: 13 on CBC's; only 3 other singles thru, scarce.

White-winged Crossbill: BROO 24, 25 Jan; 3 Jefferson 17 Feb.

Com. Redpoll: 573 on CBC's; good counts Jan, increasing Feb, best year since 1994.

Pine Siskin: a few singles, very scarce.

Am. Goldfinch: 488 on CBC's; scarce at feeders after early Dec.

Evening Grosbeak: good counts DOCBC; regular at one feeder area each CHEN and DELA, very limited areas.

The next report will be Mary Dobinsky's last. She has done an excellent job as Region 4 editor since the fall issue of 1990. We will miss her and thank her for such diligent service.

Unfortunately, we do not have a replacement. If you are interested, please contact Bob Spahn (716 671-5690) or me (607 336-4628). This situation is urgent. Without an editor, Region 4 reports will not get published. Sure, it is a lot of work, but it is an opportunity to make an important contribution to New York State birding. DA Windsor.

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