

REGION 10-MARINE

SEYMOUR SCHIFF

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December was the second warmest and the seventh driest on record, with new record highs of 74° on 4 December and 79° on 7 December. January's weather was also warm, almost 2.5° more than normal. It was also very wet; 6.99 inches precipitation fell against a norm of 3.42. February was over 5 degrees warmer than normal with about normal precipitation. These were all measured at the center for weather records at New York City. The warm winter gave us rain and little snow that rapidly melted.

To illustrate the variation through the Region, on 25 February two low pressure systems converged off the coast blanketing New England with snow, but merely brushing the Region. However, although New York City received no snow, the storm left 12 inches on the ground at Montauk, with lesser amounts as one moved west. At the Nassau/Suffolk County border and to the west it was all rain.

The Southern Nassau Christmas Bird Count, on the last day of the count period, experienced torrential rains and wind. The count total was the lowest in 50 years and the day was a birding experience worse than the "big fog" day of two year's ago. However, most Christmas counts in the Region occurred early in the period when the weather was relatively

mild. A long list of very late migrants and/or unusual wintering birds resulted. Some of these birds remained into the Winter. They included **Cattle Egret**, **Western Kingbird**, Eastern Phoebe, **Blue-Gray Gnatcatcher**, **Nashville Warbler**, Pine Warbler, **Northern Waterthrush** and Common Yellowthroat.

A **SANDHILL CRANE** was discovered 29 December and spent the winter in the fields surrounding Orient Village. Previous wintering cranes in the Region occurred on the South Fork during 1994-1995 and 1996-1997.

Parking field No. 6 at Jones Beach attracts numerous gulls on the beach in front of the concession building, probably because of feeding by visitors. Both Lesser Black-backed and Iceland gulls were seen there throughout the winter. On Sunday 31 January a **BLACK-TAILED GULL** was found late in the afternoon on the beach by Andy Guthrie and Angus Wilson. The bird remained all day Monday, 1 February. This rarity from the western Pacific has also been seen this winter in New Jersey, Maryland, and Texas. **This is a first record for New York State.** The bird was seen by numerous observers, from as close as 10 feet when it joined the dozens of Ring-billed Gulls waiting for a handout on the parking lot. It was photographed both days and pictures appeared on the internet as early as Wednesday.

On 31 January, Tom Burke discovered an odd small, immature gull at the Shinnecock Inlet. It was identified by Tony Lauro as a 1st winter "**COMMON**" GULL. This is the popular English name for *Larus c. canus*, shown on the official NYS checklist as Mew Gull. This subspecies breeds in northwestern Europe. The subspecies *L. c. brachyrhynchus* breeds in Alaska and northwestern Canada and winters on our west coast. For a more complete discussion, refer to DiCostanzo in *Bull's Birds of New York State* (1998, p.280).

A male **Brewer's Blackbird** was found by John Stonick at his feeder on Staten Island on 31 Jan (confirmed by Henry J. Flamm and Cliff Hagen). It had been traveling with a small group of Brown-headed Cowbirds and Red-winged Blackbirds and remained though the season. The bird was singing as spring approached.

A "**Black**" **Brant** was spotted in a Brant flock gathering off the Jones Beach West End Coast Guard Station on 10 December and then 22 January. Another "**Black**" **Brant** was on the Riis Park golf course 25 January to 2 February.

A **Red Phalarope** appeared at Shinnecock 16 to 17 January .

Alcids this season consisted of Black Guillemot seen on Christmas counts in Brooklyn and Montauk; Razorbill mostly from Montauk and in

occasional small numbers as far west as eastern Nassau Co; Common Murre and Dovekie only from Montauk.

The only Snowy Owl for the season was one reported from Staten Island, at Arden Heights, on Friday 18 December, the day before the Christmas count. As for other owls, Pelham Bay Park continues to be the place with Great Horned Owl, Northern Saw-whet Owl, Long-eared Owl and Barn Owl, reported starting in early December. By mid February Great Horned Owls were on the nest in most breeding locations. Eastern Screech-Owls also occur in these same heavily wooded areas.

Ten Red-headed Woodpeckers remained in Central Park for most of the winter, an extraordinary number for this locally uncommon bird, with nine remaining at season's end. Four more wintered on the east end of Long Island.

Other unusual winter birds included Eared Grebe, Greater White-fronted Goose, Tufted Duck, Barrow's Goldeneye, Western Kingbird and Northern Shrike.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

B-Brooklyn; BX-Bronx; C-Captree; CBC-Christmas Bird Count; CP-Central Park; CLP-Clove Lake Park, SI; CRSP-Connetquot River State Park; CS-Central Suffolk; FI-Fire Island; GI-Gardiner's Island; GKP-Great Kills Park, SI; JBWR-Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge; JBCH-Jones Beach; JBWE-Jones Beach West End; LI-Long Island; M-Montauk; MOB-Many Observers; MASS-Massapequa Preserve; MP-Montauk Point; NN-Northern Nassau; O-Orient, PBP- Pelham Bay Park; PL-Point Lookout side Jones Inlet; PP-Prospect Park; Q-Queens, QW-Quogue /Water Mill, S-Smithtown; SG-Sagaponack; SHIN-Shinnecock Inlet; SI-Staten Island; VCP-Van Cortlandt Park, Bronx.

LOONS-DUCKS

Red-necked Grebe: half dozen from PL to MP.
Eared Grebe: Star Island 5 Dec (JA).
Great Egret: 7 JBCH 20 Dec, others.
Snowy Egret: no reports.
Tricolored Heron: a few from CBC, some located later at same locations.
Cattle Egret: Riverhead early to 13 Dec.
Glossy Ibis: no reports.
Turkey Vulture: Muttontown 3 Dec; West Bronx, BX CBC 27 Dec; CP 1 Feb; Calverton 5 Feb, others.
Greater White-fronted Goose: 2 and possibly 3 individuals on ponds Patchogue to Hook Pond early Jan thru; there was a "pink-billed (western NA?) and an orange-billed (Greenland?) bird on Hook Pond.
Snow Goose: one or more "blue morph" found in many wintering flocks, considerable increase over recent years.
Brant: Black morph JBWE 10 Dec, 22 Jan; Riis Park 25 Jan - 2 Feb.
Tundra Swan: up to 8 Hook Pond, East Hampton mid Dec thru; 14 in field with Canada geese Cutchogue 15 Feb.
Wood Duck: wintering birds more numerous and more widely scattered, NY parks to eastern LI.
Eurasian Wigeon: wintering birds numerous and widely scattered.
Blue-winged Teal: mostly on various CBC.
Green-winged Teal: Eurasian form JBWR 22 Jan.
Tufted Duck: Patchogue early Jan - mid Feb; Southampton/Halsey Neck Pond 6 Feb thru.
King Eider: 4 off Crooks Pt SI CBC 19 Dec; small numbers at MP; a few others on east end.
Com. Eider: a few hundred wintered at MP rather than the thousands of recent years.
Harlequin Duck: wintered MP; Ditch Plains; PL; Atlantic Beach.
Surf Scoter: 2500 MP 3 Jan.
White-winged Scoter: 8000+ M CBC 19 Dec; 10,000 MP 3 Jan.
Black Scoter: 800 MP 3 Jan.

Barrow's Goldeneye: S CBC 27 Dec; Bayville, LI 21 Dec - mid Feb.

HAWKS-ALCIDS

Osprey: CRSP 20 Dec; Mill Neck NN CBC 27 Dec.
Bald Eagle: 2 imm GI, M CBC 19 Dec; PL 31 Jan; SHIN 27 Feb.
Rough-legged Hawk: 5 B CBC 19 Dec; 5 GI M CBC 19 Dec.
Wild Turkey: 57 GI, M CBC 19 Dec; 2 VCP 27 Dec-mid Jan.
Clapper Rail: B CBC 19 Dec; PBP 27 Dec.
Virginia Rail: B CBC 19 Dec; Su Swamp 26 Dec; others in marshes on east end.
SANDHILL CRANE: Orient Point fields 29 Dec on (MOB).
Semipalmated Plover: 4 JBCH 6 Feb (RK).
Piping Plover: SHIN 12 Feb.
Am.Oystercatcher: 25 wintered in Jones Inlet, others at JBWR.
Lesser Yellowlegs: FI, C CBC 20 Dec, 4 MASS 3 Jan.
Whimbrel: West Marina, PL seen and calling 5 Feb! (RG).
Marbled Godwit: 8 along Wantagh Pkwy N. of JBCH 5 Dec.
Least Sandpiper: Hog Creek 19 Dec (JA); details to CBC compiler.
Pectoral Sandpiper: Aquebogue 7 Dec (AB).
Purple Sandpiper: jetties Atlantic Beach, PL/JBCH, SHIN and MP.
Long-billed Dowitcher: 4 JBWR thru early Dec; 6 JBWR B CBC 19 Dec; 2 MASS till Feb; SG 8-10 Feb.
RED PHALAROPE: SHIN 16-17 Jan
Laughing Gull: JBWR B CBC 19 Dec.
Little Gull: none until mid Mar.
Black-headed Gull: SI; PL; SHIN; a few others.
BLACK-TAILED GULL: JBCH 31 Jan-1 Feb (AG, AnW), first NY State record.
MEW GULL: nominate subspecies SHIN 31 Jan on! (TB, AL).
THAYER'S GULL: possible ad MP 9 Jan (AG, AnW); 2nd year Fort Pond 9 Jan! (HM).
Iceland Gull: 12+ on CBC; wintered on ocean shores SI to MP.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: 16 at landfill SI CBC 19 Dec; others.

Glaucous Gull: SI CBC 19 Dec; others during season at PL, SHIN, Hook Pond and MP.

Glaucous Gull X Herring Gull hybrid: MP 12 Dec (HM,AB,DF),

Black-legged Kittiwake: FI 20 Dec; 40 MP 3 Jan.

Caspian Tern: GKP 17 Jan.

Forster's Tern: PL 16 Feb thru.

Dovekie: 4 MP 3 Jan (AB); 2 MP 17 Jan.

Com. Murre: MP 17 Jan

Razorbill: FI 20 Dec; MP from mid Dec; 600+ MP 3 Jan, a high count for the state.

Black Guillemot: B CBC 19 Dec, MP M CBC 20 Dec.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS

Great Horned Owl: nesting was reported from most localities where they are resident by mid Feb.

Snowy Owl: Arden Heights, SI 18 Dec, only report for Region.

Long-eared Owl: wintered CP, PBP.

Short-eared Owl: only a few.

N. Saw-whet Owl: wintered PBP, M CBC 19 Dec.

Red-headed Woodpecker: 10 wintered CP, 4 wintered Eastern LI.

FLYCATCHERS-WAXWINGS

E. Phoebe: CRSP 20 Dec; others; Bridgehampton 19 Feb, probably a migrant.

Western Kingbird: Riverhead 10 Dec - mid Feb.

N. Shrike: GI M CBC 19 Dec; Riverhead 10 Dec - 8 Feb.

White-eyed Vireo: Big Reed Pond, Montauk 12 Dec (DF).

Tree Swallow: a few wintering birds at PL, JBCH etc.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: very few wintered in the region.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: 79 NN CBC 27 Dec; 55 SG CBC 20 Dec; larger numbers than usual in other areas.

Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: Babylon, C CBC 20 Dec.

Cedar Waxwing: 218 M CBC 19 Dec; 332 SG CBC 20 Dec; both are very high winter numbers for the coastal areas.

WARBLERS

Orange-crowned Warbler: 7 on CBC; others.

Nashville Warbler: Riverdale, BX CBC 27 Dec.

Pine Warbler: 2 PP 12 Dec; 4 SI CBC 19 Dec; 2 B CBC 19 Dec; GI M CBC 19 Dec; feeder Roslyn Heights, 2 Jan; PP 2 Jan..

N. Waterthrush: Oakland Lake, Q CBC 19 Dec.

Com. Yellowthroat: Oakland Lake, Q CBC 19 Dec; 2 B CBC 19 Dec; O CBC 2 Jan.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS

Chipping Sparrow: 8 Amagansett 18 Dec, 3 remained into season's end.

Vesper Sparrow: 2 Breezy Pt B CBC 19 Dec.

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow: no confirmed reports, birds were either Saltmarsh or unidentified sharp-tailed sparrow.

Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow: all reports in winter were either of this species or unidentified sharp-tailed sparrow species.

Seaside Sparrow: SI CBC 19 Dec.

Lapland Longspur: St. Charles Cemetery in Horned Lark flock 21 Feb on.

Dickcissel: B CBC 19 Dec.

BREWER'S BLACKBIRD: feeder on Staten Island Jan 31 on (JS,HE,CH).

Boat-tailed Grackle: wintering in two locations, JBWR and Dune Rd SHIN.

Baltimore Oriole: Q CBC 19 Dec; O CBC 2 Jan.

EXOTICS

Whooper Swan: 7 ad on the main pond in CRSP certainly of escaped origin.

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