

REGION 4-SUSQUEHANNA (WINTER 1998-1999)

Peg Burnett

2 Ayers St.

Binghamton, NY 13905

Eric Sullivan

42 Patricia St.

Binghamton, NY 13905

Like last year, the warmest winter on record, this was an extraordinarily mild winter. It ranked 92 in mildness out of 104 winters, with an average temperature of about 27.9 degrees according to the National Weather Service at Binghamton Regional Airport. The daily average high temperatures in December, 40.6°F, and February, 35.7°F, rose above the freezing point. In fact, the average daily temperatures for these months, 33.1°F and 27.9°F, respectively, were well above normal. January temperatures, averaging 30.9°F, were normal, but even January had its balmy days, a high of 53 °F being recorded on January 23 and 24. There was also quite a warming trend in the last half of January, with the average daily high being about 39°F.

This winter was also a particularly dry one. We received only 1.59 inches of precipitation in December, 1.41 inches less than normal, and 1.55 inches in February, 0.71 inches less than normal. Snowfall during these two months was also below average. A total of 6.2 inches of snow hit the ground in December, and the total snowfall recorded for February was 8.4 inches. Once again, January was our most winter-like month. Our area received a total of 4.75 inches of precipitation in January making it our wettest winter month and a total of 24.8 inches of snow making it our whitest winter month. In fact, the only major storm of our reporting season fell on January 14 when 9.8 inches of snow blanketed our Region. Overall, snowfall remained well below the average of 83.6 inches.

Waterfowl numbers were not too impressive, reflecting the mild weather and low water levels. Common species such as Canada Goose, Mallard, and Common Merganser had high counts, although American Black Duck continued scarce. The Federation Waterfowl Count produced a few species not seen on any other day through the season. They were Tundra Swan, Canvasback, Lesser Scaup, and Oldsquaw. The 9.8 inches of snow on 13, 14 January, and the daily high average of 39°F for the remainder of the month, with a maximum of 53°F on 23, 24 January, set the stage for quickly rising river levels dispersing most waterfowl seen during the count. Missed species were Red-Throated Loon, and scoters,

Sparse snow cover made for good counts of hawks. Good numbers of Bald Eagle, Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, and Rough-legged Hawk were reported. Northern Harrier was scarce, not seen after Christmas Bird Counts. Regionally uncommon was a Red-shouldered Hawk in Johnson City in January, and most unusual was a **Broad-winged Hawk** seen on the Binghamton Christmas Bird Count. Missed were Golden Eagle and Merlin.

Good numbers of Eastern Screech-Owl, Great Horned Owl, and Short-eared Owl were reported. Barred Owl was scarce, with only a single report from the Sherburne Christmas Bird Count. A regionally rare **Long-eared Owl** was found 16 January in Vestal. Barb Cole reported the incident through Marie Petuh. The owl was being mobbed by crows and struck a window at a car dealership across from SUNY Binghamton. It is expected to be rehabilitated and released back into the wild. The last previous Regional report was in 1995.

Another **Lesser Black-backed Gull** was found in the Region, on the Binghamton Christmas Bird Count. This is the second winter report and the fourth report since January 1997. The species was not known to have occurred in Region prior to 1997. The **Anna's Hummingbird** continued to be seen in the Binghamton backyard until 11 December when it was

legally caught by a licensed rehabilitator and transported to Saugerties to be overwintered. See article in *The Kingbird* 48: 280.

The combination of warmer than normal temperatures and lower than normal snow covering probably accounts for the noticeable lack of sightings of common migrants or wanderers from the north. While good numbers of American Tree Sparrows were recorded throughout the season, the presence of common winter feeder visitors such as Common Redpolls, Pine Siskins and Evening Grosbeaks were reported only by Christmas Bird Counts in Binghamton and Owego. No reports of Red or White-winged crossbills were submitted and only one Pine Grosbeak was located. No irruptive species such as Snowy Owl or Northern Hawk Owl were recorded in the Region. On the other hand, Eastern Bluebird, Song Sparrow and Red-winged Blackbird, which normally head south in the fall, were reported in good numbers throughout the season.

The four-star bird of the season was the male **Western Tanager** reported by Bill Toner of McGraw, Cortland County. Bill must have been an extra good boy this year because the bird, in winter plumage, first appeared at his feeder on Christmas Eve and was subsequently reported on 25, 31 December and 2-4, 10 January. Photographs were taken and corroboration was obtained from other observers. This is a Regional first.

CONTRIBUTORS

Jeanette & Cutler Baldwin, Chris Barnes, Sue & Les Bemont, Peg Burnett, Barb Cole, Mary Ann & Marty Cuff, Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society, D. Daniels, John Davis, Erica Dennis, Sadie Dorber, Finch Hollow Nature Center Staff, Robert Grosek, Bill Harmon, Elva Hawkin, Barbara Hemedinger, Erin Hewitt (EHw), Sally & Merwin Howard, T. & D. Kibbe, Sara Kinch, Eugene Kirch, Gail Kirch, Nancy Kirch, Diane & Tim Krein, Margaret Layton, Andy Mason, Harriet Marsi, Naturalists' Club of Broome County, John Norris, Marie Petuh, Eric Sullivan, Noreen, Tom and Kaylee Tasber, Bill Toner, Tioga Bird Club, Dan Watkins (DWa), Don Weber (DWe), Mary Webster, Don Windsor, Irene Wright.

ABBREVIATIONS

BCBC-Binghamton Christmas Bird Count, 27 Dec; ChBr-Chenango Bridge, BROO; FWC-Federation Waterfowl Count, 17 Jan; FHNC-Finch Hollow Nature Center, Johnson City; OCBC-Oneonta Christmas Bird Count, 19 Dec.; OwCBC-Owego Christmas Bird Count, 1 Jan; RRHW-Riley Road Hawk Watch, CORT; SCBC-Sherburne Christmas Bird Count,

19 Dec; TBC-Tioga Bird Club; WPR-Whitney Point Reservoir and adjacent areas.

LOONS-DUCKS

Com. Loon: 1 FWC CHEN; 1 Hillcrest BROO 11-12 Feb (RG, MP)
Pied-billed Grebe: 1 OwCBC; 4 FWC; 1 Hillcrest 11, 16 Feb.
Horned Grebe: 11 FWC; 1 Endwell 21 Jan. (ES), only 8th report in last 20 winters.
Great Blue Heron: 16 on three CBC's; few reports Jan, Feb, max 6 Susquehanna River from Johnson City to Endicott 17 Jan.
Turkey Vulture: 3 on SCBC; 1 George F. Highway BROO 26 Feb (GK).
Tundra Swan: 2 FWC CHEN?
Mute Swan: 2 BCBC; Bpd 3, 16 Feb.
Snow Goose: 1 TIOG Feb (TBC), no date given.
Canada Goose: 4064 CBC's; 2369 FWC; large numbers TIOG Feb, no dates.
Wood Duck: 10 SCBC, only report.
Am. Black Duck: 61 CBC's; 400 FWC; 5 N. Norwich 22 Jan, scarce.
Mallard: 1423 CBC's; 2953 FWC.
N. Pintail: 1 BCBC; 3 FWC; 4 Center Village BROO 17 Jan. (RG).
Canvasback: 2 FWC, not seen every year.
Redhead: 37 FWC; 36 Endwell 21 Jan (ES), high concentration.
Ring-necked Duck: 2 FWC; 1 Vestal 28 Feb (GK, HM).
Greater Scaup: 3 FWC at Endwell; 2 Endwell 21 Feb (ES).
Lesser Scaup: 9 FWC, often missed. scaup sp: 1 Vestal 28 Feb (GK, HM)
Oldsquaw: 3 FWC at Endwell.
Com. Goldeneye: 19 FWC; TIOG Jan, Feb (TBC), no numbers or dates given.
Bufflehead: 2 WPR 6 Dec (MP); 7 FWC; Feb TIOG (TBC), no date.
Hooded Merganser: max 8 WPR 6 Dec; 2 Bing 16 Dec; 1 SCBC; 17 FWC; 1 Vestal 28 Feb.
Com. Merganser: 249 CBC's; 4 reports max 26 WPR 6 Dec; 261 on FWC.
Red-breasted Merganser: 1 OwCBC, scarce.

HAWKS-ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: 3 birds on 2 reports BROO Jan; 4 reports DELA Jan, regular sites plus Delancey 17 Jan, max 7 on 24 Jan (TBC), no specific locations mentioned; 1 Schenevus OTSE 21 Jan (D&TK); 3 ad Otsego L. 25 Feb (BH); 1 Conklin BROO 24 Feb (NK).
N. Harrier: 16 CBC's, scarce after Dec.
Sharp-shinned Hawk: 9 CBC's; 5 reports Jan and 2 in Feb, average.
Cooper's Hawk: 6 on three CBC's; 4 reports each Dec, Jan, Feb, average; no DELA reports.
N. Goshawk: 3 on three CBC's; 1 Binghamton 24 Feb; 1 TIOG Feb, no date.
Red-shouldered Hawk: 1 FHNC 12, 18 Jan, very uncommon in winter.
BROAD-WINGED HAWK: 1 BCBC, extremely unusual.
Red-tailed Hawk: 120 CBC's; good numbers.
Rough-legged Hawk: 1 RRHW 1 Dec; 38 CBC's; 9 reports Jan, max 2; 5 reports Feb, max 2; "less common in WB" (TS).
Am. Kestrel: 13 on three CBC's; 2 reports BROO Jan; 2 reports OTSE Jan, one thru; TIOG Feb, no date.
Ring-necked Pheasant: 4 on two CBC's; 1 TIOG Dec and 2 there Feb; 1 Binghamton 19 Feb.
Ruffed Grouse: 9 on two CBC's, low; 2 reports each Dec, Jan; 4 reports Feb.
Wild Turkey: 964 CBC's; 5-6 reports Jan, Feb.
Am. Coot: 100 FWC; 1 Endwell 21 Jan (ES), scarce after mid-winter floods.
Ring-billed Gull: 100 WPR 6 Dec (MP); 78 on two CBC's; Norwich thru.
Herring Gull: 42 on three CBC's; a other scattered reports.
LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL: 1 BCBC 27 Dec, 4th Regional report,
Great Black-backed Gull: 5 BCBC; 1 Endicott 2 Jan (RG).

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS

Rock Dove: 5584 CBC's.

Mourning Dove: 1429 CBC's, average.

E. Screech-Owl: 2 CBC's; 1 ChBr. 10 Jan (RG); T. Binghamton 17 Feb; Morgan Rd BROO 19 Feb; Chenango Forks 21 Feb (T&NT); good counts

Great Horned Owl: 11 BCBC; Maryland OTSE 1 Jan; ChBr 10 Jan; 2 reports BROO Feb; TIOG Dec, Feb, good numbers

Barred Owl: 1 SCBC, scarce.

Long-eared Owl: 1 Vestal 16 Jan (BC), injured, rehabbed, and released, 1st since 1995, intro.

Short-eared Owl: 2 Arnold Rd BROO 18 Dec (RG); Conklin 10 Jan (EHw); WB 9, 10 Jan (TS); REEC 15 Jan; T. Plainfield 22 Jan (TS), great numbers.

ANNA'S HUMMINGBIRD: 1 male Binghamton thru 1-11 Dec, intro.

Belted Kingfisher: 17 on three CBC's; three Dec, one Jan report, scarce after mid-Jan.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: 18 OwCBC, very high count; two other TIOG reports; not reported elsewhere.

Downy Woodpecker: 165 CBC's.

Hairy Woodpecker: 36 CBC's, low.

N. Flicker: 4 on three CBC's; 4 BROO reports.

Pileated Woodpecker: 7 on three CBC's; 3 reports BROO, max 2 Endwell 21 Jan, 11 Feb (ML); TIOG Dec, Feb.

FLYCATCHERS-WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: 1 OwCBC 1 Jan (J&CB); Conklin 26 Jan (EHw); OTSE 16 Feb (JD); scarce.

Blue Jay: 678 total from all Regional CBC.

Am. Crow: 4807 total from all Regional CBC; 1 partial albino BROO Jan (RG, MP).

Fish Crow: 4 total (BCBC, OwCBC); 1 BROO 3 Feb (ES), average.

Com. Raven: 1 Endwell 26 Jan (FHNCS); 1 Vestal 10 Feb (EK); uncommon.

Horned Lark: 390 total (OwCBC, SCBC); 366 highest ever SCBC; good numbers.

Black-capped Chickadee: 1,721 total from all Regional CBC.

Tufted Titmouse: 26 total from BCBC, OwCBC, SCBC.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: 21 total from all Regional CBC.

White-breasted Nuthatch: 186 total from all Regional CBC.

Brown Creeper: 21 total from all Regional CBC.

Carolina Wren: 5 total (BCBC, OwCBC); 4 BROO Jan.

Winter Wren: 1 27 Dec BCBC; 1 Westover 17 Jan (ES); not found every year.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: 55 total all Regional CBC.

E. Bluebird: 12 total (BCBC, OwCBC); 1 FHNC 12 Feb (MP), singing male.

Am. Robin: 30 total (BCBC, OwCBC, SCBC); 1 partial albino BROO Jan (RG,MP).

Gray Catbird: TIOG Feb (DWe).

N. Mockingbird: 2 total (BCBC, OwCBC); several BROO Feb.

European Starling: 5675 total from all Regional CBC.

Am. Pipit: 2 BROO 17 Jan (ES), unusually late.

Cedar Waxwing: 33 total (BCBC, OwCBC); 24 TIOG 26 Jan (MP,SK,CB).

TANAGERS-WEAVERS

WESTERN TANAGER: 1 male McGraw, CORT 25, 31 Dec, 2-4, 10 Jan (BT, et al), Regional 1st, photos.

Am. Tree Sparrow: 679 total from all Regional CBC.

Fox Sparrow: 1 BROO 2 JAN (SD).

White-throated Sparrow: 4 total (BCBC, OwCBC), low.

Dark-eyed Junco: 927 total from all Regional CBC; 179 SCBC, highest ever.

Lapland Longspur: 1 CHEN 14 Feb (PB).

Snow Bunting: 730 total (OwCBC, SCBC); 713 SCBC, highest ever; 200+ CHEN

1 Feb (EH), 14 Feb (PB,BH).

N. Cardinal: 242 total from all Regional CBC.

Red-winged Blackbird: 221 total (OwCBC, SCBC); 200 SCBC, highest ever; 200

TIOG 19 Feb (MP).

Com. Grackle: 1 BROO 15 Feb (MP).
Brown-headed Cowbird: 7 OwCBC 1
Jan; 1 OTSE 26 Feb (JD).
Pine Grosbeak: 1 WPR 14 Feb (GK,HM).
Purple Finch: 22 total (BCBC, OCBC,
OwCBC).
House Finch: 295 total (BCBC, OCBC,
OwCBC).
Com. Redpoll: 29 OCBC 19 Dec.
Pine Siskin: 1 OCBC 19 Dec.

Am. Goldfinch: 282 total from all
Regional CBC.
Evening Grosbeak: 4 BCBC.
House Sparrow: 1378 total from all
Regional CBC.

EXOTICS

Chukar: 1 Binghamton 30 Dec (MW); 22
Jan (PB).