

REGION 7 ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

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The mild "La nina" winter season of 1998-99 began with a 50 mph gust and 50°F thermometer readings on 1 December, the start of a balmy, if blustery, week. Plattsburgh enjoyed 55° on 2 December, 60° on the 4th, and remembered Pearl Harbor Day with a 65 mph gust and the warmest December day on record: 67°! Ground was bare until 13 inches of snow fell on the 17th. On 22 December, the mercury fell 38 degrees, from 51° to a low of 13°. Depending upon date and elevation, Christmas Bird Counts were done on anything from bare ground to two feet of snow, but typically the former.

January saw snow, sleet, and freezing rain by the 3rd, with 10" of snow in the Champlain Valley. Another 11 inches fell on the 8th. Malone was -5° on 11 Jan, and added 6" of snow the next day. January 14 was bitter cold, with -43°F recorded at Harkness in Clinton County, at the start of another bout of snow, freezing rain, and sleet just prior to the Federation Waterfowl Count. Martin Luther King Day saw more icy rain that closed the Adirondack Northway and the road to Lake Placid. A thaw then set in, with a record high 52° at Plattsburgh 24 January, yet Saranac Lake was back down to -27° by Super Bowl Sunday.

The series of ice storms with freezing rain resumed 2 February, but the next day was 45° and sunny. Newcomb felt 7° on 8 February, but Lincoln's Birthday saw another record high of 56° at Plattsburgh. The rest of the month was mild, and the season ended at 44°, with 4" of wet snow falling at Westport. Are winters with temperature extremes of one hundred degrees (43° to 67°) to become the norm?

With American Goldfinches the only major invasive species, feeder watchers again took up their familiar lament of, "Where are all the birds?" (This seems to mean the now almost mythical flocks of Evening Grosbeaks of recent decades.) Yet avian variety was superb, with a record 104 species reported, far better than the 95 in last year's Great Ice Storm winter, and even eclipsing the old mark of 99 in Winter 1996-97. The 27 December Saranac Lake Christmas Bird Count came up with a record 45 species, plus seven more in the count week. For the second consecutive year, Larry Master found an American Wigeon at the Whiteface Inn bubblers on Lake Placid.

Hardy Federation Waterfowl Count observers tied the record 19 species plus a hybrid found in 1997, while adding five Bald Eagles to the midwinter survey. But the best bird found was neither the big fish eater nor fowl, but an immature dark morph **PARASITIC JAEGER** flying just off the Westport Yacht Club 16 January, seen by Peterson, Spaulding, and Wei.

Four half-hardy birds deserve special mention. A **Varied Thrush** in the Coakley yard in Saranac from 21 January through 28 February was identified as a textbook male and photographed by Bill Krueger and the Mitchells during early February. Although Chamberlaine reports 73 NYS records in the "New Bull," this thrush was a first for both Clinton Co. and the Region. The happiest **Gray Catbird** upstate was found in a brushy edge of Bulwagga Bay south of Port Henry by Mack, O'Brien, and Peterson on 6 Dec, where wild grapevines were still heavy-laden. Although Freer (in the "New Bull") notes catbirds "irregularly brave the winter in sheltered thickets near the coast," this was only the fourth winter record for the Region, the third in Essex County. Somewhat less fortunate was a **Pine Warbler** at the Delehanty feeder outside Tupper Lake from 8 December until 13 January, when the mercury plummeted to -25° there. The warbler fed on suet and niger seed. Salzman (in the "New Bull") observes, "it is rare but increasing in winter" upstate, yet this was only the second winter record here and first for Franklin County, following a bird at a Ticonderoga feeder over 20 years ago. A **White-crowned Sparrow** overwintered at the White feeder on the St. Regis Mohawk Reservation in Hogsburg, a second for Franklin Co. and seventh in the Region. Statewide, "numbers linger into Dec, with some remaining through the winter," according to Salzman (also in Bull 98), but rarely this far north.

A few permanent residents - Gray Partridge, Spruce Grouse, Eastern Screech-Owl - were missed, only three gull species were reported, and we had no Brown-headed Cowbirds, alas. And "all goldfinch, all the time" can lose its charm. Still, this wasn't a bad winter -- relatively warm, fine variety, and a few interesting finds. Read, and enjoy . . .

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

AP - Ausable Point WMA; CH - Cumberland Head; CR - Chazy Rivers; ECBC - Elizabethtown CBC, 26 Dec; FB - Ferd's Bog; FCBC - Ferrisburg CBC, 19 Dec; FWC - Federation Waterfowl Count, 1624 Jan; PCBC - Plattsburgh CBC, 20 Dec; SLCBC - Saranac Lake CBC, 27 Dec; TL - Tupper Lake; WB - Whallon's Bay.

LOONS-DUCKS

Red-throated Loon: Westport 19 Dec (J&PT), a good find.
Horned Grebe: max 25 PCBC.
Red-necked Grebe: Westport 5 Dec (J&PT), another good find.
Great Blue Heron: count week SLCBC, only report.
Snow Goose: max 4,000 Essex fields 5 Dec (JPJ&PT); Blue Mountain L 16 Dec (GL) and 115 SLCBC, both late inland; last 18 CH 11 Jan (BK).
Canada Goose: Richardson's small morph WB 5 Dec (SO, TM, JP, J&PT); max 1,279 PCBC; 30 TL 20 Dec (CD); 130 ECBC; 7th L 29 Dec (GL); count week SLCBC, all late inland.
Tundra Swan: the two arr CH 20 Oct stayed until 30 Dec (NO).
Wood Duck: drake CH 25 Jan (BK), late.
Gadwall: 3 Westport 16 Jan (JP, DS, RW); max 9 there 17 Jan (JP, DS).
Am. Wigeon: 1 SLCBC at Whiteface Inn for 2nd yr.
N. Pintail: 2 drakes AP 25 Jan (EF), late; arr 20 Westport 20 Feb (MG).
Green-winged Teal: 1 FCBC at Westport, late.
Canvasback: only 2 FWC, typically low.
Redhead: max 6 Westport 17 Jan (JP, DS) to 4 there 20 Feb (MG).
Greater Scaup: max 228 FWC, near Plattsburgh.
Lesser Scaup: max 225 PCBC 3 wks earlier, coincidental?
Surf Scoter: WB 6 Dec (SO, TM, JP), a good find.

Black Scoter: subad drake Westport 1617 Jan (JP, DS, RW), a good find.
Oldsquaw: max 3 AP 3 Dec; Port Kent 16 Jan (JP, DS, RW); hen CH 20 Jan; drake CH 5 Feb (BK), a tough duck to find here.
Bufflehead: max 92 FWC.
Com. Goldeneye: max 1,309 FWC.
Barrow's Goldeneye: hen CH 20 Jan (BK, RH); drake AP 23 Jan (BK, CM) to 24 Jan (BK, GW), both good finds.
Hooded Merganser: still on 5th L 10 Dec (GL); 2 SLCBC, late inland; max 17 FWC; AP 20 Feb.
Com. Merganser: max 497 FWC.
Red-breasted Merganser: 1 Port Kent, 4 Westport 16 Jan (JP, DS, RW), uncommon here.

HAWKS-ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: at least 30, but perhaps some duplication, with reports from all 4 counties.
N. Harrier: 7 reported, a good winter.
Merlin: 3 Plattsburgh reports late Dec 27 Feb, excellent.
Peregrine Falcon: Peru 15 Dec (GC); pr overwintered Willsboro eyrie (Amtrak "Adirondack" engineer).
Wild Turkey: max 30 ECBC; count week SLCBC, unusual; 20 Speculator feeder 28 Feb (PK); also Westport, Willboro, & CLIN.
Am. Coot: from 22 Nov Westport arr, increased to max 8 there 20 Feb (MG); also AP 26 Jan (CM), unusual here in winter.
Spotted Sandpiper: 1 Essex plowed field

19 Dec (RM,BM).

PARASITIC JAEGER: dark morph imm Westport 16 Jan (JP,DS,RW).

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS

Rock Dove: Speculator thru (PK), rare in HAMI.

Mourning Dove: max 244 NYS side of FCBC, mostly in Essex plowed fields, extremely high numbers here.

Long-eared Owl: 1 SLCBC on Mirror L Dr, Lake Placid, ESSE; another Saranac Lake, ESSE, yard 5 Jan (RH), excellent finds.

Belted Kingfisher: singles on 4 CBCs, reflects mild winter.

Three-toed Woodpecker: Halfway Bk on SLCBC, a good find.

Black-backed Woodpecker: FB 5 Dec (GL); L Durant 16 Dec (GL); also Halfway Bk on SLCBC.

N. Flicker: 3 FCBC; Pt au R 31 Jan (NO,MS), a good winter bird here.

FLYCATCHERS-WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: 13 reported, after relatively low 8 last winter.

Gray Jay: BB; FB; max 9 SLCBC.

Com. Raven: max 18 ECBC; CH 5 Dec (BK), low, but not unprecedented.

Boreal Chickadee: FB 5 Dec (GL); 1 ECBC; 4 SLCBC, only reports.

Tufted Titmouse: pr overwintered Elizabethtown feeder (JP); 12 FCBC; 12 ECBC; 1 PCBC, a good winter.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: max 166 SLCBC.

Winter Wren: 1 ECBC at New Russia, 1st for count day.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 43 ECBC; 2 eating donuts & suet crumbs TL feeder daily from 7 Feb (CD), quite unusual.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: 2 individuals FCBC found near Westport by 2 parties (TM,J&PT,RW), both excellent finds.

E. Bluebird: 11 FCBC & 11 ECBC, relatively low numbers.

Am. Robin: max 54 FCBC; 46 SLCBC & 50 Lake Placid 3 Feb (CC); 1 Avalanche Camp 16 Jan (J&PT); 2 Inlet 15 Feb (GL), strong numbers for higher elevations,

along with reports from lower areas.

VARIED THRUSH: Saranac, CLIN, 21 Jan thru 28 Feb (BC,BK, C&JM, photo!), 1st Regional record.

GRAY CATBIRD: Moriah 6 Dec (TM,S0,JP), late but content, intro.

N. Mockingbird: 2 PCBC; eating crabapples former PAFB 20 Dec (NO,MS).

Bohemian Waxwing: mixed flock South Inlet 3 Dec (GL), uncommon in HAMI; 1 with 36 Cedar Waxwing SUNY Plattsburgh 16 Jan (BK); Plattsburgh 30 Jan (BK,CM), relatively low.

Cedar Waxwing: 18 ECBC; count week SLCBC, where scarce; feeding on winterberries TL 6 Jan (CD); feeding on cluster flies Elizabethtown farmhouse 12 Feb (JP); max 28 Westport 12 Feb (J&PT), the more common waxwing this winter, but hardly abundant.

WARBLERS

PINE WARBLER: TL feeder 8 Dec 13 Jan, when temp fell to 25, fed on suet & niger seed (CD), 2nd Regional record, intro.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS

Song Sparrow: 1 PCBC, only report.

White-throated Sparrow: 1 PCBC; Speculator 26 Dec (PK); Peru feeder JanFeb (EF), only reports, but about normal.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW: overwintered Hogsburg feeder (HW), intro.

Lapland Longspur: North Farm Rd, CLIN, 10 Jan (BK,CM), always good.

Snow Bunting: 43 two Westport feeders 16 Jan (JP,DS,RW); Wadhams feeder 17 Jan (DS); hundreds Westport same day (JP,DS), count week SLCBC; 3 CLIN locations, unusual at feeders, but many fields were covered with an icy crust in mid-Jan.

Red-winged Blackbird: 1 PCBC, only report.

Rusty Blackbird: Redford 1 Dec (DF), a good winter find.

Com. Grackle: 2 SLCBC, only birds.

Purple Finch: max 29 SLCBC, smaller numbers thinly distributed across the 4

counties.

House Finch: recorded on 4 CBCs; max 83 PCBC; bird at Wadhams feeder 17 Jan (DS) had scarred eyes.

Red Crossbill: max 12 SLCBC; breeding several HAMI sites (GL).

White-winged Crossbill: max 13 SLCBC; 2 North Elba 16 Jan (J&PT); also breeding several HAMI sites (GL).

Com. Redpoll: max 70 FCBC; count week SLCBC; 15 TL roadside 9 Feb (CD), only reports.

Pine Siskin: 2 PCB; max 15 STCBC, only reports until birds appeared TL 7 Feb;

8th Lake 18 Feb; Speculator 21 Feb; Keene 27 Feb.

Am. Goldfinch: max 723 SLCBC, most abundant winter finch.

Evening Grosbeak: absent ECBC 1st time since 73; only 5 SLCBC; Inlet all winter (GL); max 50 TL 15 Feb (RB); 12 TL feeder 16 Feb (CD), the only documented reports, plus a few rumors.

ADDENDUM

BOREAL CHICKADEE: Saranac, CLIN, feeder 9 Jan 98 at end of the Great Ice Storm of 98 (BC).