

REGION 7 - ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

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Although the season started with -6°F at Saranac Lake, a warming trend soon sent thermometers to 57°F at Plattsburgh on 6 Dec and brought a rainy 56°F on Pearl Harbor Day. Regional snowfall was well below normal, and even 6" at Tupper Lake 15 Dec melted as temperatures rebounded to 43°F the next day. All Christmas Bird Counts saw bare ground, with no more than 2 in. to 6 in. encountered at higher elevations. Average December temperature was 29°F, a full 6° above normal.

In spite of occasional dustings and flurries, mostly above 700 ft., the snow drought continued into January 2000. Lake Champlain was open from Port Henry to Rouses Point for the start of the Federation Waterfowl Count on 15 Jan. Temperatures plunged and a 2.3 Richter scale earthquake rumbled under Altona on 17 Jan, with Tupper Lake -29°F and Whiteface Mt. reporting -33°F (with a -100°F windchill). Saranac Lake saw -31°F the next day. After a brief respite around the lunar eclipse on the 20th, extreme windchills followed. Saranac Lake dropped to -28°F on 22 Jan and was still -23°F the next morning. A nor'easter brought the first major snowfall of the winter on 25 Jan, leaving a foot at Ticonderoga and 8 in. atop Spruce Hill, the height of land between Elizabethtown and Keene, by the next day.

Early February was clear and cold, with Inlet dropping to -15°F on the 3rd and Saranac Lake to -28°F by the 8th, with -20°F at Inlet and Ray Brook the same day. The biggest snowstorm of the season began the evening of 13 Feb, and by Valentine's Day there were 18 fresh inches covering Plattsburgh and South Bombay. Given the huge slides left by Hurricane Floyd in September and the frozen crust topped by fresh powder, the unprecedented became reality. At 1 p.m. on 19 Feb, a 100-yd. wide avalanche broke loose from the northeast slide on 4,580' Wright Peak, rumbled 500 yds. down the mountainside, and killed a 27-year-old Lake Placid skier, injuring 5 companions. By that weekend there had been 41 in. of winter snowfall at lower elevations, but most had fallen in the previous two weeks. Temperatures took an abrupt turn upward on Washington's Birthday, with both Plattsburgh and Saranac Lake topping out at 46° F on 23 Feb. By the 24th, a strong southerly flow pushed thermometers to almost 60°F, a near record for the month. Leap Day closed

the season with a sunny 37°F , with bare ground as high as Lake Placid, and flood warnings along the ice-jammed Great Chazy River.

With so much open water on Lake Champlain, geese (Snows, Canadas, and even Brant) lingered late and in record numbers. American Black Ducks, Mallards, and Hooded Mergansers also broke Regional records during the Federation Waterfowl Count. Easily two dozen Bald Eagles wintered here, many along Champlain, but others in the central Adirondacks, including 2 on a hunting camp offal dump and 5 on a deer carcass on the ice at Tupper Lake. The Golden Eagle perched in forest bordering the Lincoln Pond Road, Moriah, on 13 Dec was being shadowed by ravens, according to Mark Gretch. A Peregrine Falcon at the Willsboro eyrie was doing display flights as early as 26 Jan and drove off 2 Bald Eagles 17 Feb, according to Amtrak crewmen. Paul Kelly's flock of 57 Wild Turkeys in Speculator suggests the extent of the continuing Adirondack gobbler explosion.

Some 15 Northern Shrikes were sighted, with one at the Lee feeder at Inlet feeding on a deer ribcage when not dining on mouse and shrew. Even more remarkable were reports of no less than 40 Tufted Titmice, with a record 13 on the Elizabethtown CBC alone. Carolina Wrens were found at Rouses Point and Westport, while Plattsburgh hosted 2 Northern Mockingbirds. Bohemian Waxwings were relatively abundant, with the largest flock of 150 at Peru on 25 Feb. Three Song and 10 White-throated sparrows reflect the generally mild winter. Locally high numbers of the elusive Lapland Longspurs were located in the Champlain Valley, with 22 at Peru on 28 Jan and 12 at Westport 5 Feb. Snow Bunting numbers were high: 600 at Peru, 800 at Beekmantown, and 1,000 at Westport. Several visited feeders, and 5 buntings even penetrated to Wells in Hamilton County.

Among the winter finches, there was a scattering of Pine Grosbeaks, with 25 on the Saranac Lake CBC noteworthy. The only Purple Finches of the entire winter were 20 reported on the Plattsburgh CBC, where 153 unquestionable House Finches were also tallied. In a season of no cones, the only crossbills were 17 White-winged on the Saranac Lake Count. Clearly the most abundant finch was Common Redpoll, with a record 527 on the Elizabethtown CBC. Two "Greater" redpolls (*Carduelis flammea rostrata*) were seen and banded near Elizabethtown 15-17 Dec and another seen there 26 Dec. As expected with so many redpolls, there were 8 Hoary Redpolls reported, including one at the Peterson feeder near Elizabethtown believed to be the nominate *C.h. hornemanni* by Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club visitors. American Goldfinches were scarce to absent,

with 128 on the Plattsburgh CBC notable. Evening Grosbeak numbers improved, with a high of 98 on the E-town Count.

Rarities included an orange-billed Greater White-fronted Goose sighted by David Hoag at Point au Roche 1 Dec and by Candy Hess at Monty Bay 12 Jan: both sightings possibly the same goose seen at Cumberland Head on 28 Nov, although another reported in November at Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Québec, was last seen there on 10 Dec. Two Mute Swans frequented Ausable Point 1-17 Jan, until moving down into Essex County waters off Wickham Marsh 3-27 Feb. An American Woodcock on the Plattsburgh CBC was a surprise. A Gray Catbird at Tupper Lake 2-7 Jan fed on highbush cranberries until the fruit was depleted; a 5th Regional winter record. Even more unexpected was the Pine Warbler in a flock of 8 Willsboro Point bluebirds on 15 Jan, only the 3rd winter record. Finally, a Chipping Sparrow was added to the Saranac Lake Count during count week for what appears to be a 5th winter record in this Region. With open water and mild conditions helping to compensate for the lack of wild foods, a total of 102 species was reported, just short of last winter's record of 104.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

AP - Ausable Point WMA; CH - Cumberland Head; ECBC - Elizabethtown CBC, 26 Dec; FCBC - Ferrisburg CBC, 18 Dec; FWC - Federation Waterfowl Count, 15-18 Jan; MB - Monty Bay; PARC - former Plattsburgh AFB; PCBC - Plattsburgh CBC, 19 Dec; PtR - Point au Roche S.P.; SLCBC - Saranac Lake CBC, 2 Jan; TL - Tupper Lake; WB - Whallon's Bay.

LOONS-DUCKS

Horned Grebe: max 36 FCBC.

Great Blue Heron: singles FCBC, ECBC, count wk SLCBC, all late.

Turkey Vulture: arr Pok-o-Moonshine 28 Feb (MD), record early.

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE:

PtR 1 Dec (DH); MB 12 Jan (CH), 1 or 2 individuals?

Snow Goose: max 8,000 CLIN 10 Dec (DH); 12 Keene 12 Dec (J&PT), where uncommon; 1,000s in waves passing over CH and down the bay 18 Dec (NO); record 4,380 (plus 2 "Blue") in south-bound waves FCBC the same day (TB,JP); 606 still present CLIN during FWC, abundant and late.

Canada Goose: "Richardson's" race PtR 2 Dec (BK,CM); record max 3,708 FWC, abundant and late.

Brant: 100 WB 20 Dec (JPa), late.

MUTE SWAN: 2 AP 1 Jan (E&HF)-17 Jan (GW), then off Wickham Marsh 3 Feb (JP)-27 Feb (NO); a dusky swan (sp.?) at Essex harbor 26 Jan-5 Feb was not satisfactorily identified.

Gadwall: Westport 27 Dec (DS); AP 9 Jan (CM); 5 WB 29 Jan (WL), all late.

Am. Wigeon: Westport 18 Dec (J&PT); Whiteface Inn, L. Placid 2-18 Jan (SLCBC & FWC), returned for 3rd winter at bubblers; PtR 8 Jan (GW), an excellent winter showing.

Am. Black Duck: record max 478 FWC.

Mallard: record max 2,774 FWC

N. Pintail: 2 drakes Westport 18 Dec (J&PT); 1 Napper Rd, Westport 12 Feb (WL).

Canvasback: 5 drakes, 2 hens AP 3 Jan (E&HF), only report.

Ring-necked Duck: max 8 AP 10 Jan (NO) and on FWC.

White-winged Scoter: 5 PtR 2 Dec (BK,CM), only scoter report.

Oldsquaw: pr Westport (FCBC), a good find.

Bufflehead: max 106 FWC, a healthy showing.

Com. Goldeneye: max 1,311 FWC, ditto.

Barrow's Goldeneye: hen AP 3 Dec (J&RH); drake WB 27 Feb (JP, J&PT),

always fun to find.

Hooded Merganser: Lincoln Pd 2-14 Dec (MG); all 4 CBCs, including 1st ECBC on Boquet R (DN); record max 47 FWC, including 24 L George (DC); 4 Essex 29 Jan (WL); AP 31 Jan (GW)-29 Feb (E&HF); arr pr Lincoln Pd 26 Feb (MG), an exceptional season.

Com. Merganser: max 1,553 FWC, virtually ties '88 record of 1,556.

Red-breasted Merganser: hen Westport 18 Dec (JP); 3 FWC; drake Port Kent 23 Feb (NO,MS), all good finds.

HAWKS-ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: 8 FCBC, 6 FWC, 2-4 Port Kent (JCC, JP), 3 Essex (TB, JP), and 3 WB (TT), only suggest numbers along Champlain, while 5 TL (CD), plus sightings from Lake Pleasant, Raquette L, and 7th L show that numbers now winter in all 4 counties.

Golden Eagle: Lincoln Pond Rd, Moriah 13 Dec (MG), with shadowing ravens.

Merlin: 1 PCBC, an excellent find.

Peregrine Falcon: display flights Willboro eyrie 26 Jan (RL); Northway Exit 41, CLIN 29 Jan (GW); attacking 2 Bald Eagle Willsboro eyrie 17 Feb (JCC), clearly PR-T in Atlas Block 6291A, thanks to observant Amtrak "Adirondack" crew.

Wild Turkey: max 57 Speculator 18 Jan (PK); 11 TL feeder (CD); 4 Inlet deer feeder (GL), all good for central Adks.; 50 Essex Jan (TT) and other lowland reports more expected.

Am. Coot: max 8 Westport 8 Jan (MG), where 2-4 could be found 29 Dec-16 Jan.

AM. WOODCOCK: 1 PCBC, rare in Dec.

Iceland Gull: 1st winter Plattsburgh 20 Feb (GW), always welcome.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS

E. Screech-Owl: Stafford Rd, CLIN 30 Jan (JW); 2 AP 13 Feb (GW), welcome reports.

Great Horned Owl: count week ECBC; Keene 1 Jan (J&PT), only reports.

Barred Owl: 3 ECBC; 5 SLCBC; 3 Inlet feeders; Elizabethtown 26 Jan (JP);

Wadhams-Whallonsburg 26 Feb (J&PT);

struck by vehicle TL, taken to Ray Brook for rehab by DEC (NS), many daytime birds.

Short-eared Owl: Clinton Co. Airport wk 17 Jan (AA), Press-Republican photo.

N. Saw-whet Owl: Inlet Dec (GL), only report.

Belted Kingfisher: Westport 5 Dec (J&PT); 1 PCBC; 2 SLCBC, good Dec sightings.

Black-backed Woodpecker: count week SLCBC, only report.

N. Flicker: 1 FCBC; 1 Essex 5 Feb (TB,JP); max 2 Essex 26 Feb (J&PT), good find in winter.

FLYCATCHERS-WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: max 6 ECBC, with at least 15 reports from all 4 counties, an excellent winter.

Gray Jay: 4 SLCBC; 4 Bloomingdale feeder 12 Feb (WL); 2 Callaghan feeder, Upper Saranac Lake (JC), killed and ate chickadee stunned by window-strike.

Com. Raven: max 30 ECBC.

Horned Lark: 1 Heart Lake Rd 16 Jan (J&PT); 6-8 Essex 29 Jan (WL); 1 Westport 5 Feb (TB,JP); max 40 Westport 12 Feb (WL); 11 Westport 26 Feb (J&PT), fairly typical.

Black-capped Chickadee: total of 2,049 on the 4 CBCs, including the strikingly leucistic bird present at Westport since 13 Nov that turned up on the FCBC, having eluded the sharpies & shrikes.

Boreal Chickadee: 12 Shallow L 1 Dec (GL); 2 SLCBC; 1 Bigelow Rd 12 Feb (WL), typical.

Tufted Titmouse: max 13 ECBC; 8 FCBC; 8 PCBC; 2 SLCBC; 2 Jay; 2 Speculator; others Cadyville, Lake Placid, Mooers, Saranac, and TL, for a total of at least 40 titmice reported and many more undoubtedly present.

Singing Elizabethtown 27-29 Feb (JP).

Brown Creeper: max 11 SLCBC; visiting suet feeders Elizabethtown & Keene.

Carolina Wren: wintered Rouses Point feeder (DP); Westport 18 Dec (J&PT).

E. Bluebird: max 12 Willsboro 15 Jan (JP,RW), at Willsboro Point and

Noblewood Park.

Am. Robin: max 40 Peru 18 Feb (E&HF); 30 Ausable R 23 Feb feeding on insect larvae on snow-covered ice (NO,MS); several other reports, including 4 Lake Pleasant 8 Feb (PK).

GRAY CATBIRD: TL 2-7 Jan (IS), feeding on highbush cranberry until fruit was depleted, 5th Regional winter record.

N. Mockingbird: PARC 14 Dec (NO, MS); CH 25 Dec (NO).

European Starling: Inlet feeder 23 Feb (GL). What's the world coming to?

Bohemian Waxwing: 12 Paul Smiths 2 Dec (TM); 119 FCBC; record 95 ECBC; 12 PCBC; 11 SLCBC; 80+ Plattsburgh 25-28 Jan (CM); 16 Essex, 25 Westport 5 Feb (TB,JP); 37 Dannemora 6 Feb (NO); 30 eating wild grapes Carpenter's Flats 23 Feb (NO,MS); max 150 Peru 25 Feb (E&HF), another good winter for this striking northerner.

Cedar Waxwing: 22 FCBC; max 88 PCBC; 1 Westport 5 Feb (TB,JP), only reports.

WARBLERS

Yellow-rumped Warbler: 1 FCBC, occasional in winter along L Champlain.

PINE WARBLER: Willsboro Point 15 Jan (JP, RW), with flock of 8 bluebirds for 3rd Regional (2nd ESSE) winter record.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS

CHIPPING SPARROW: count week SLCBC, apparently 5th Regional winter record.

Song Sparrow: 2 FCBC; 1 PCBC, an expected half-hardy.

White-throated Sparrow: 9 PCBC; Speculator 3 Dec, 18 Jan, Feb (PK), expected in CLIN, but a good winter visit ant in HAMI.

Lapland Longspur: max 22 Peru 28 Jan (GW); 12 Westport 5 Feb (TB,JP), a new ESSE maxima; 3 Westport 12 Feb (WL), a strong showing here.

Snow Bunting: 5 Wells 4 Dec (PK), with at least 10 other reports, including highs of 600 Peru 28 Jan and 800 Beekmantown

31 Jan (GW), max 1,000 Westport 5 Feb (TB, JP) to 12 Feb (WL), an excellent winter.

Red-winged Blackbird: SLCBC; Plattsburgh feeder 23 Jan (GW); arr 6 Inlet 29 Feb (GL), early.

Com. Grackle: Speculator 4 Dec (PK); 1 ECBC; count wk SLCBC, respectable.

Pine Grosbeak: 12 ECBC; max 25 SLCBC; 6 Peru 28 Jan (GW); subad male St. Armand and 6 FRAN 12 Feb (WL), at least provides records from 3 counties.

Purple Finch: 20 PCBC, only report.

House Finch: max 153 PCBC.

White-winged Crossbill: 17 SLCBC, only report.

Com. Redpoll: max 527 ECBC; 2

"Greater" Redpolls (*C.f. rostrata*)

Elizabethtown 16-17 Dec (JP), banded; another "Greater" seen there 26 Dec (J&SP,

WP); the most abundant winter finch, with a total of 1,290 tallied on the 4 CBCs.

HOARY REDPOLL: arr 2 Elizabethtown 10 Dec (J&SP); record 2 ECBC same feeder (*C.h. exilipes*); 2 SLCBC; Keene feeder 18 & 28 Jan (J&PT); sight record nominate male (*C.h. hornemanni*) Elizabethtown feeder 29 Jan (HMBC, WL); Willsboro Point 4 Feb (GL); North Elba 5 Feb (SC); last Elizabethtown 8 Feb (JP), for a total of at least 8 individuals, all believed correct.

Am. Goldfinch: max 128 PCBC, but relatively scarce to absent in many areas.

Evening Grosbeak: max 98 ECBC, smaller flocks scattered over all 4 counties.

ADDENDUM

RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER:

Speculator 24-26 Oct 99 (PK), 1st HAMI and 8th Regional record.