

REGION 10 – MARINE

SEYMOUR SCHIFF

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The first storm of the season came with torrential rain, high winds and a record high temperature of 62°F. It flooded streets, downed trees and caused major power disruptions. It occurred on 16 December, the first day of CBCs, the day the majority of the counts in our Region are held. The intrepid birders who participated were drenched. The following weekend wasn't too wonderful either. But, all this was nothing compared to what *Newsday* called "The Last Storm of the Century" on the 30th, which ended, in hindsight, not so badly. Still, it dumped 12-15" of snow in the west of our Region and lesser amounts in the east, canceling the Southern Nassau County CBC. The count was postponed to 5 January.

In January the rain was a little less than normal, with temperatures 2.6° higher than normal. In February little rain fell, only 1.96" against a norm of 3.27". Temperatures were 2.3° higher than the norm of 33.6°. So, the winter was warm, the precipitation low and we experienced the greatest amount of snow in years. While the snow cover did not last long or stick to roads in many cases, fields were covered for extended periods. This tended to concentrate birds in small open patches at the beaches.

Hardly taking time to rest from last fall's remarkable Cassin's Sparrow record, we immediately had a close second. In a snow-free area alongside the roadway at Jones Beach West End, Tom Burke and Gail Benson, with K. and S. Feustel, G. and J. Fritz *et al* found a paler, "different" longspur in a group of Horned Larks on the Southern Nassau CBC 5 January. A positive identification of **Chestnut-collared Longspur** was announced after examination of skins at the American Museum of Natural History. This species of the prairies is a vagrant along the Atlantic Coast. There are five NYS accepted records, none in mid-winter. The nearest occurrences for this species during this year's CBC period were in Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas. Other searchers during the winter reported a "pale longspur" and some conjectured that the bird wintered.

The balance of interesting reports in the early part of the season were of western flycatchers and some late warblers. They were followed by a host of wintering sea birds. The latter included grebes, unusual gulls and alcids.

This season saw more than usual numbers of wintering Red-necked Grebes. Up to seven were seen in Jones Inlet and 12 on the Montauk CBC 16 December. Others were on the ocean on the East End. Single **Eared Grebes** also occurred in the same areas from mid January on.

A **Ross's Goose** at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge remained until 20 December. Summarizing reports of other waterfowl: a **Barrow's Goldeneye** wintered in a Common Goldeneye flock off Ransom Beach in Bayville, a **Tufted Duck** was in

Patchogue and vicinity, there were several Eurasian Wigeon throughout, a Blue-winged Teal in Jones Inlet in early January, an unusual place, and numerous Wood Ducks.

On 15 December, the day before the Montauk CBC, an immature Golden Eagle was seen on Gardiners Island. Then, on 26 December, a second-year Golden Eagle was reported in Bridgehampton. In all, 14 species of gulls were seen in the Region this season: Laughing, Little, Black-headed, Bonaparte's, **Black-tailed**, Mew, Ring-billed, **California**, Herring, Iceland, Lesser Black-backed, Glaucous, Great Black-backed and Black-legged Kittiwake.

Little Gulls were reported from Montauk 10 December, Shinnecock 29 January, Wainscott 11 February and Jones Inlet 25-26 February. Black-headed Gulls were seen in Jones Inlet, Shinnecock and Montauk Point. An adult **Mew Gull** was observed by Andy Baldelli on 14 December on the east side of Shinnecock Inlet and then again by Tony Lauro on 24 February. It was also seen there on 26 February and sporadically into the next season. On 1 January, Tom Burke, Gail Benson, J. and G. Fritz and S. Mitra saw an adult **Black-tailed Gull** at Jones Beach from Parking Field 10 (fishing piers). It was observed at length as it flew about feeding about a quarter mile to the west and was later observed more closely from a vantage point along the roadway west of Field 10. Meanwhile, later in the day, a Rockland County Audubon Society field trip, including Carol Weiss, Dawn Hannay, Gene Herskovics, Vince Plogar and others went to Point Lookout where the highlight was presumably the same Black-tailed Gull seen feeding and resting on the algae among a large flock of Bonaparte's Gulls. On 24 December an adult **California Gull** was found by Tony Lauro at Southold Town Beach among the many Ring-Billed and Herring gulls. The bird was not relocated. If accepted by NYSARC, this will be the first such record of this species for Long Island.

This season included an extraordinary invasion of alcids. Although most of the individuals were Razorbills seen at Montauk Point, five other species were also found. On 6 January, two **Dovekies** were seen at Montauk Point and a single bird was in Jones Inlet on the 23rd. On 13 January, a **Common Murre** was discovered along the ocean just west of the Ponquogue Bridge at Shinnecock. This bird was covered with oil on its left flank and belly. Later that day it was captured by a wildlife rehabilitator and taken to the Wildlife Center of the Hamptons where it was de-oiled and medicated to prevent poisoning by the oil. It was released at sea. On 3 February, two **Thick-billed Murres** were discovered by Bob Kurtz at Montauk Point. A single bird was seen on 4, 7 and 8 February and sporadically into the next season. **Razorbills** were seen at Montauk Point throughout the winter, starting in early December. Numbers in excess of 50 were not uncommon and numbers in the hundreds were reported. Other reports came from Jones Inlet, where they are very rare, and from East Hampton during mid January and February. On 17 February, Tony Lauro discovered a **Black Guillemot** at Montauk Point late in the afternoon. It was not found again. Matt Victoria reported that on a 9 December pelagic trip from Brielle, NJ, an **Atlantic Puffin** was seen. Other birds seen in NY waters were

two **Pomarine Jaegers**, two jaeger sp., one Laughing Gull, one second-year Lesser Black-backed Gull, one or two probable Dovekies and a murre species.

Two **Ash-throated Flycatchers** lingered into the season in New York City parks: one at Prospect Park to 1 December, another at Alley Pond Park 3-24 December.

A very rare and extremely late **Yellow-throated Warbler** visited a set of feeders at Vinnie Schiappa's residence in Northport. It was last seen 27 December. Other late warblers included numerous Palm Warblers to 9 January, a Blackpoll Warbler at Bridgehampton 2 December, Ovenbirds in Prospect Park 2 December and Alley Pond Park 10 December, Pine Warblers on four CBCs and one seen by Tom Fiore in Prospect Park 31 January, a Northern Waterthrush on the Central Suffolk CBC 27 December, Common Yellowthroats on two CBCs and a Wilson's Warbler in Bridgehampton on 10 and 14 December.

Both sharp-tailed sparrows wintered in small numbers and for the most part in the same marshes. There were no northern finches reported this year. This has been attributed to abundant food sources to the north.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

APP – Alley Pd P; BNL – Brookhaven National Laboratory; BR – Bridgehampton; CP – Central Park; FBF – Floyd Bennett Field; FI – Fire I; In – Inlet; JB – Jones Beach; JBWE – Jones Beach West End; JBWR – Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge; LI – Long Island; MP – Montauk Pt; PBP – Pelham Bay P; Pkwy – Parkway; PL – Pt Lookout side Jones Inlet; PP – Prospect P; PT – pelagic trip; SHIN – Shinnecock Inlet; SI – Staten I; VCP – Van Cortlandt P BRON; ZB – Zachs Bay.

Christmas Bird Count Designations: NYBR – Brooklyn 16 Dec; NYBW – Bronx-Westchester 23 Dec; NYCA – Captree 17 Dec; NYCS – Central Suffolk Co 27 Dec; NYMK – Montauk 16 Dec; NYNN – Northern Nassau Co 23 Dec; NYOR – Orient 30 Dec; NYQU – Queens 16 Dec; NYQW – Quogue-Watermill

16 Dec; NYSG – Sagaponack 17 Dec; NYSI – Staten Island 16 Dec; NYSM – Smithtown 27 Dec; NYSN – Southern Nassau Co 5 Jan.

LOONS – DUCKS

Red-necked Grebe: 4 MP 10 Dec; NYBR; 12 NYMK; 2 PL 7 Jan increasing to 7 by period end; Breezy Pt 13 Jan.

EARED GREBE: PL 14 Jan thru; T Montauk sporadically 26 Jan thru; Gilgo 4 Feb.

Great Egret: NYSM; SHIN 27-30 Jan.

Snowy Egret: 2 NYSM.

Tricolored Heron: NYBR; 2 Gilgo 23 Dec.

Cattle Egret: flying over Meadowbrook Pkwy, between JB and Loop Pkwy 3 Dec (DF), very late.

Turkey Vulture: numerous reports of singles from BNL to the east, mid Jan on; flying over Manhattan 21 Feb.

ROSS'S GOOSE: with Snow Geese JBWR to 20 Dec.

"Black" Brant: FBF 13 Feb.

Tundra Swan: 7 Hook Pd 2 Dec-7 Jan, fewer thereafter; MP 9-10 Dec; 3 Greenport 29 Dec.

Wood Duck: many widely scattered.

Eurasian Wigeon: wintered FBF, PP, Patchogue; others.

Blue-winged Teal: PL 3 Dec, unusual in salt water.

Green-winged Teal: 35+ wintered off the island in front of the marina JBWE, an unlikely place.

Tufted Duck: Smithtown Bay late Dec; Halsey Neck Pd mid Jan; South Haven Co P early to mid Feb; possibly only one bird, no observer reported more than one at a time.

King Eider: several in the Com. Eider flock at MP.

Com. Eider: 1604 max MP 4 Feb.

Harlequin Duck: 2 wintered off jetties PL; others MP, Bayville, Horton Pt.

Surf Scoter/White-winged Scoter/Black Scoter: large numbers MP, most white-winged, followed by black, then surf.

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE: Ransom

Beach, Bayville late Dec thru.

Com. Merganser: several in Jones In and along jetties at PL in Jan, an unusual place.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Osprey: NYMK; arr East Setauket 26 Feb.

Bald Eagle: Calverton 30 Jan; Riverhead 6 Feb; MP 18 Feb; Wading River 21 Feb.

Rough-legged Hawk: large numbers this year; 11 NYSN, previous high 9 in 1964; perhaps an additional dozen elsewhere.

Golden Eagle: Gardiners I 15 Dec (Lisa D'Andrea *fide* HM); BR 26 Dec (JA).

Wild Turkey: 2 Inwood P 17 Dec; 33 NYMK; 63 NYCS at BNL; 6 VCP 21 Jan; 12 Wertheim SP mid Feb.

Semipalmated Plover: 3 JBWE 14 Dec (AW).

Piping Plover: 2 Westhampton Dunes 9 Dec (JF).

Whimbrel: SHIN to mid Dec.

Red Knot: 10-20 wintered in Dunlin flock JB.

Purple Sandpiper: Breezy Pt 3 Dec.

Long-billed Dowitcher: wintered Massapequa Preserve.

Pomarine Jaeger: 2 PT 9 Dec.

jaeger species: 2 PT 9 Dec.

Laughing Gull: PT 9 Dec; Southold 25 Dec.

Little Gull: Fort Pd, Montauk 10 Dec; SHIN 29 Jan; PL 25-26 Feb.

Black-headed Gull: 1-3 wintered PL; SHIN; MP; NYBW at Spuyten Duyvil.

BLACK-TAILED GULL: JB Field 10, then PL 1 Jan (TB *et al*), *intro*.

MEW GULL: "Common" race, for 3rd year, SHIN 14 Dec (AB), 24, 26 Feb (AL).

CALIFORNIA GULL: ad Southold T Beach 24 Dec (AL).

Iceland Gull: widely scattered CP to MP.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: SI to MP; regular and probably increasing.
Glaucous Gull: 1 or more south fork LI.
Great Black-backed Gull: "leucistic" SHIN mid Jan-25 Feb, this bird presented an identification challenge.
Black-legged Kittiwake: wintering at MP, seen mostly in onshore winds.
DOVEKIE: 2 MP 6 Jan; PL 23 Jan.
COMMON MURRE: oiled bird SHIN 13 Jan (JC *et al*), captured, cleaned and released at sea 17 Jan.
THICK-BILLED MURRE: 2 MP 3 Feb (RK), then 4-11 Feb and sporadically thru.
RAZORBILL: Easthampton and Jones In mid Jan and Feb; MP early Feb on; usual numbers at MP 20-50; many days 100-200; estimated high alcids, all presumed this species, 500; these numbers are unprecedented.
BLACK GUILLEMOT: MP 17 Feb (AL).
ATLANTIC PUFFIN: PT 9 Dec (MV).

DOVES – WOODPECKERS

Monk Parakeet: NYQU; 12+ PBP 21 Jan; 8 Greenwood Cemetery KING 9 Feb.
Barn Owl: 2 NYBR; 6 NYSN.
Snowy Owl: SHIN 1 Dec on, 3 on 13 Jan; Breezy Pt 14 Dec; 2 NYMK; 2 JBWE 1-15 Dec; NYBR; JBWR 1 Jan; JBWE 13 Jan on; Port Jefferson 28 Jan; Gilgo 26 Jan.
Long-eared Owl: JBWR 1 Jan; 3 CP 7 Jan; 2 PBP 7 Jan; 3 JBWE 8 Jan; 4 FBF 20 Feb; others.
Short-eared Owl: few reports widely scattered, Rockaways to SHIN.
N. Saw-whet Owl: PBP 2 Dec; 2 NYCS; BR 31 Dec.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

E. Phoebe: APP 3-4 Dec; Manhattan 17 Dec; NYCS.
ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER: PP 1 Dec (PD *et al*); APP 3-24 Dec (AO

et al).

N. Shrike: Amagansett 10 Dec; NYSG at Watermill1; ZB 6-25 Jan.

BLUE-HEADED VIREO: APP 3-4 Dec, very late.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: very scarce.

Am. Robin: 200+ MP and a similar number in Springs both early Jan.

WARBLERS

Orange-crowned Warbler: 6 on 4 CBCs; others.

Nashville Warbler: NYSI.

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER: Northport feeder to 27 Dec (VS *et al*).

Pine Warbler: CP 14 Dec; NYBR; NYNN; NYSG; NYBW at VCP; PP 1, 31 Jan.

Palm Warbler: 2 MP 2 Dec; 2 Hither Hills SP 3 Dec; FBF 3 Dec; APP 10 Dec; NYSI; NYQW; NYBK; 2 PL 1 Jan; Robert Moses SP 9 Jan.

BLACKPOLL WARBLER: BR 2 Dec (PB, PL, SM), very late and rare at this season.

Ovenbird: PP 2 Dec (RJ, SN); APP 10 Dec (RG).

Northern Waterthrush: NYCS.

Com. Yellowthroat: NYQU; NYOR.

Wilson's Warbler: MP 3 Dec; BR 1-10, 14 Dec (SB); very rare in this season.

Yellow-breasted Chat: several singles SI to MP.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

Chipping Sparrow: JBWE 3 Dec; 19 NYMK; NYSI; NYSG; 21 NYBW at VCP; 2 NYSN; BNL 11 Jan.

Vesper Sparrow: NYMK; NYBR; Dune Rd 27 Jan.

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow: 2 each NYQW, NYCS, NYBR; 2 SHIN 16 Jan.

Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow: 2 each NYBR, NYQW; 3 NYSN; SHIN 16 Jan.

Seaside Sparrow: NYQW; SHIN 13-16 Jan.

Lincoln's Sparrow: NYSI; APP late

Dec-2 Jan; NYBR; NYBW at VCP.

White-crowned Sparrow: 25 NYSI; 63 NYSG; 60 Watermill 1 Jan; others in small numbers.

Lapland Longspur: PBP; Breezy Pt; Riverhead; 25 JBWE 20 Feb; others.

CHESTNUT-COLLARED

LONGSPUR: NYSN at JBWE 5 Jan (TB *et al*), 18-19 Feb (SS); NYSARC reports submitted; there are five prior NY

records accepted, none in mid-winter.

Dickcissel: NYMK; Springs to 3 Feb; Gilgo 22 Feb thru.

Boat-tailed Grackle: resident; 488 NYQU; 20 SHIN.

Baltimore Oriole: 2 NYMK.

Pine Siskin: 2 NYMK; 12 NYSI; NYCS.

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