

REGION 7 – ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

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The season began with snow on the higher elevations and frigid temperatures: -2°F at Saranac Lake on 2 December, 0° there on the 6th and -1° at Owls Head the following day. Wind gusts reached 60 mph on 12 December, bringing 2500 power outages across the Region. The Ferrisburg CBC on 16 December had snow cover of 3–4", and the Plattsburgh CBC the following day had less than 2", but constant rain showers. Snow depth was 2–10" during the 23 December Elizabethtown CBC and measured up to a foot a week later on the Minerva and Saranac Lake CBCs. Mooers had 20" of snow on New Year's Eve. Lake Champlain still had large expanses of open water for the 13–14 January Federation Waterfowl Count, although the north and south ends were mostly frozen. Plattsburgh dropped to -10° on 18 January, and a Nor'easter on 6 February dumped 8" of fresh snow on Ellenburg Depot. Altogether, this was an uneventful season, although meteorologists were tracking another storm moving up from the Gulf of Mexico at the end of February and warning of a huge snowfall, if it collided with a Canadian cold front.

While skiing through Bloomingdale Bog, Franklin County, on the 30 December Saranac Lake CBC, Ed Grant found a Three-toed Woodpecker and a **Northern Hawk Owl**. Over the next two months the latter rarity brought dozens, if not hundreds, of observers to the abandoned railroad grade, many bearing gifts of mice. Just two weeks later, on 13 January, Nancy Olsen spotted a second **Northern Hawk Owl** at Exit 39 of the Adirondack Northway, Clinton County, near

Cumberland Head. Both remained present at season's end, with the Franklin County bird receiving the greater number of visitors, most of whom were able to see other boreal birds. These two owls were but a suggestion of some 200 Northern Hawk Owls reported just to the north in the Province of Quebec during the winter. We urge all observers of these owls and other rarities that require documentation to submit reports to NYSARC.

Red cedars were blue with berries at lower elevations along Lake Champlain, where frugivorous birds were especially abundant. The NYS side of the Ferrisburg (VT) CBC tallied 36 Eastern Bluebirds, a **Hermit Thrush**, 46 American Robins, 339 Cedar Waxwings and five White-throated Sparrows.... not to mention the European Starlings. This was a "cedar bird" winter; except for an earlier Bohemian Waxwing at Westport 11 November, the only seasonal report of this visitant was a single bird along the Chubb River on 30 December.

Meanwhile, the bumper crop of spruce cones at higher elevations in the Adirondacks led to continued Atlas records of breeding crossbills, the vast majority being White-winged Crossbills, with just a smattering of Reds. White-wingeds were both copulating and feeding young at Chubb River Swamp 14 January. Fledglings just starting to fly and being fed were at Oseetah Lake by 8 February, although at about the same time adults were still carrying nesting material at Bloomingdale Bog. Reports came from all four counties, with Clinton receiving its first Atlas record near Dannemora on 24 February. Pine Siskins were passing nesting material and food at Chubb River by late January and engaging in song flights and territorial chases throughout the Adirondacks by early February. The Saranac Lake CBC had high counts of 326 Purple Finches, 269 White-winged Crossbills, 105 Pine Siskins, 705 American Goldfinches and 160 Evening Grosbeaks. Somewhat lower down, the Elizabethtown CBC had the high of 13 Red Crossbills. The only reports of Pine Grosbeaks were singles at Elizabethtown and Minerva and there were no reports of redpolls. As expected, Plattsburgh claimed the high of 46 House Finches.

Other noteworthy sightings included a white morph **Gyr Falcon** at Tupper Lake Marsh 26 December, chased from the snow by American Crows near a deer carcass hung in pines. **Six** Glaucous Gulls near Plattsburgh on 17 December provided a Regional high. At least 20 Northern Shrikes were reported, a strong showing, but the eight on CBCs was still far short of the 21 found on counts during the remarkable Canadian invasion winter of 1995–1996. An unexpected **House Wren** was spotted near Westport on 16 December; details were provided to the Ferrisburg CBC compiler. This was a good winter for Dark-eyed Junco, with a record **272** on the Elizabethtown CBC and **204** on the NYS side of the Ferrisburg CBC. Perhaps not surprisingly, a female "Oregon" (or "Canadian Rocky Mountain" form) visited a Keene feeder 4–31 December. Thanks to generally mild conditions, open water and the heavy crop of wild foods, a respectable total of 96 species was reported, but this was somewhat surprisingly lower than last winter's 102, when the food crop failed, and well short of the record 104 species found in the winter of 1998–1999.

Finally, we wish to express our thanks to the hundred Atlas 2000 observers who

submitted data for about half of the 690 blocks in Adirondack-Champlain Region 7 during the first year of coverage. You're an outstanding team and a joy to serve as coordinator. [RREd: Hear! Hear!]

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

Adks – Adirondacks; AP – Ausable Point WMA; BB – Bloomingdale Bog; CH – Cumberland Head; CRS – Chubb River Swamp; ECBC – Elizabethtown CBC 23 Dec; FCBC – Ferrisburg CBC 16 Dec; FWC – Federation Waterfowl Count 13-14 Jan; MCBC – Minerva CBC 30 Dec; PCBC – Plattsburgh CBC 17 Dec; PtR – Point au Roche SP; SLCBC – Saranac Lake CBC 30 Dec; TL – Tupper Lake; WB – Whallon Bay.

LOONS — DUCKS

Red-necked Grebe: 15 WB 3 Dec (JP, J&PT); grounded L Placid 27 Dec, released L Champlain after rehabilitation.

Double-crested Cormorant: few Ticonderoga 5 Dec (DR), fairly late.

Great Blue Heron: 4 Dec reports.

Snow Goose: max 80 CH 15 Dec (NO).

Canada Goose: max 326 FCBC.

Mute Swan: 2 AP Dec-Jan moved s to Wickham Marsh during Jan-Feb.

Gadwall: 2 drakes FWC, only report.

Green-winged Teal: drake Westport 3 Dec (JP, J&PT), rare in winter.

Canvasback: count week PCBC, only report.

Ring-necked Duck: max 20+ Westport 18 Jan (TF, KW).

Bufflehead: max 141 FWC, a healthy number.

Com. Goldeneye: 3105 FWC, a strong showing.

Barrow's Goldeneye: ad drake Essex harbor 24 Feb (RH, SO).

Hooded Merganser: 45 FWC, including 37 LaChute R 14 Jan (DC), new ESSE max.

Red-breasted Merganser: hen FWC on Willsboro Bay, only report.

HAWKS — ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: numerous reports of up to 10 per day, with birds seen feeding on a deer carcass TL, beaver carcass L Simond, and freshly-killed drake Com. Merganser at Essex.

Merlin: count week PCBC, a good find.

Peregrine Falcon: count week PCBC, another good find.

GYRFALCON: white morph TL marsh

26 Dec (CD), chased by Am. Crows from deer carcass.

Wild Turkey: max 52 PCBC; flocks of 6-30 reported from central Adks.

Am. Coot: 2 Westport 16 Dec-13 Jan.

Glaucous Gull: max 6 PCBC (JC), new Regional & CLIN max.

DOVES – WOODPECKERS

NORTHERN HAWK OWL: BB 30

Dec (EG) thru, 4th FRAN record; Northway Exit 39 13 Jan (NO) thru, 1st CLIN record; there now appear to be 8 Regional records since Eaton's day.

Three-toed Woodpecker: BB 30 Dec (EG); Mt Jo 31 Dec (RM); male CRS 13 Jan (MM, MY); an excellent showing for this elusive bird.

Black-backed Woodpecker: SLCBC; Whiteface Mt 1 Jan; pr BB Jan; FB 19 Feb; only indicative of numbers present.

N. Flicker: max 3 Westport 3 Dec (JP, J&PT); 2 FCBC; 2 Valcour Conf. Ctr. 26 Feb (CM); all good finds here in winter.

Pileated Woodpecker: max 11 FCBC; 20 on all CBCs.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: 20 reports, a strong showing.

Gray Jay: BB & nearby feeder; Brown's Tract; FB; expected FRAN & HAMI locations; Adirondak Loj Rd 13 Jan; Jackrabbit Trail, Keene, 28 Jan (J&PT), excellent ESSE finds.

Com. Raven: max 20 ECBC, but numbers have declined from the high of 55 in '92 when the Essex Co landfill was open, and gulls have disappeared from the same count.

Horned Lark: max 100 PtR 17 Jan; 10 other reports of flocks of 8-75, an excellent showing.

Black-capped Chickadee: leucistic bird Westport since 3 Nov 1999 still present this 16 Dec.

Boreal Chickadee: max 6 SLCBC.

Tufted Titmouse: max 7 ECBC; 19 on all CBCs.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: max 138 SLCBC where cones were most abundant.

HOUSE WREN: FCBC near Westport (JT), details to compiler.

Winter Wren: Northville-Placid trailhead, L Placid, 7 Feb (BM), a good winter find.

E. Bluebird: max 36 FCBC; 50 on all CBCs.

HERMIT THRUSH: FCBC (GW), perhaps only 5th ESSE winter record.

Am. Robin: 46 FCBC; 31 PCBC; 17 ECBC, but 100+ along ESSE lakeshore 9 Feb (JP, J&PT), with darker-backed individuals noted there and at the tip of Willsboro Pt later in the month.

European Starling: thousands trapped by south wind Ticonderoga 5 Dec (DR), whitewashed the village; thousands reported roosting tip of Crown Pt later in month; est. 1000 Keese Corners CLIN 16 Feb (RM); 918 PCBC, high counts here, but they were lured to red cedar groves with bluebirds, robins and waxwings.

Bohemian Waxwing: SLCBC at CRS, only report since 1 Westport 11 Nov.

Cedar Waxwing: max 339 FCBC, seemingly absent higher up.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

Am. Tree Sparrow: max 129 ECBC; 2 wintered Inlet feeder (GL) where scarce.

Fox Sparrow: TL feeder 23-24 Jan (CD), apparently 2nd FRAN winter record.

Song Sparrow: max 4 ECBC; count week PCBC, excellent here.

White-throated Sparrow: max 5 FCBC; 6 others, another "half-hardy" success.

White-crowned Sparrow: FCBC, exceptional here, with perhaps 5 ESSE midwinter records.

Dark-eyed Junco: max 272 ECBC; 204 FCBC; 117 SLCBC; extremely high winter numbers.

Dark-eyed "Oregon"-type Junco: ad female Keene 4 Dec, 30-31 Dec (J&PT);

light gray head distinct from tannish-rose sides and *chest*, with brownish back. [Cf "Canadian Rocky Mountains" illustration in *The Sibley Guide to Birds* (2000), p. 501.]

Lapland Longspur: 3 PtR 17 Jan (DH), always a good find.

Snow Bunting: max 250 PtR 17 Jan (DH); 11 other reports of up to 65 birds suggest a good, but not great, winter for these Canadian visitants.

Red-winged Blackbird: max 13 FCBC, record high; only report.

Rusty Blackbird: Bloomingdale feeder 10 Feb (D&EK), only about 5th ESSE winter record.

Com. Grackle: FCBC; count week PCBC; few Keese Corners CLIN 16 Feb (RM), good here.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 100 PCBC; 50 Keese Corners; 32 FCBC; 16 ECBC, good here.

Pine Grosbeak: singles ECBC & MCBC, only reports.

Purple Finch: max 500+ Speculator HAMI 19 Feb (PK), record high; 326 SLCBC; increasing at lower elevations by season's end.

House Finch: max 46 PCBC, expected.

Red Crossbill: max 13 ECBC; 4 MCBC;

10 Oseetah L 8 Feb (LL); otherwise scarce.

White-winged Crossbill: max 269 SLCBC; 80 MCBC; 29 ECBC; pr copulating & female feeding young CRS 14 Jan (MM, MY); fledglings just starting to fly & parents feeding Oseetah L FRAN 8 Feb (LL); carrying nesting material BB Feb; 1st CLIN Atlas record Dannemora 24 Feb (JH, NO); singing and prs reported from virtually all boreal habitat visited.

Pine Siskin: max 105 SLCBC; 43 ECBC; 16 PCBC; illustrates the greater numbers at higher elevations; pr passing nesting material and food CRS Jan; territorial chases Oseetah L from 8 Feb (LL); increased singing and flight displays by Adks flocks thereafter.

Am. Goldfinch: max 705 SLCBC; 350 ECBC; 198 PCBC; 75 FCBC; also serves to illustrate the greater numbers found in the highlands.

Evening Grosbeak: max 160 SLCBC; other reports from Bloomingdale, Elizabethtown, Indian L, Long L, Newcomb, Plattsburgh, Speculator, but nowhere abundant.

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