

REGION 7 - ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

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Drought conditions extended throughout the winter, and temperatures were unseasonably mild. December saw only isolated, minor snowfalls, with 3" at Plattsburgh on the 18th typical. The gradual accumulation is illustrated by depths on the Christmas Bird Counts: 0-4" on Ferrisburg 15 December, "some" at Plattsburgh and 2" at Minerva 16 December, 2-10" at Elizabethtown 22 December and 10-12" at Saranac Lake by 30 December. Lake Champlain was still low (93.88") on the 20th. Saranac Lake dropped to -10°F on 8 January, but a thaw followed, with Plattsburgh 42° by 10 January and 39° the following day. By mid-month, temperatures were 8.4° above normal. On 21 January, Champlain reached the lowest lake level (93.5") in 30 years. Another thaw saw Plattsburgh thermometers soar to 45° on 23 January and 41° on the 28th, and by month's end there had only been about 27" of snow and no days below zero at lower elevations. Even the -8° at Saranac Lake on 6 February was not especially cold by Adirondack standards, and by the next day it was back up to 38° in balmy Plattsburgh. There were some strange temperature extremes: Plattsburgh was a sunny 39° on 11 February, but finally saw a sub-zero -2° by midnight. The same city was 33° at midnight of the 13th, but by dawn Saranac Lake was a nippy -2°. Morrisonville residents enjoyed a high of 46° on the 15th, just before a minor storm dropped 6" of snow on Lake Placid 17 February. On the 24th, thermometer readings ranged from -6° at Saranac Lake to a balmy 40° at Plattsburgh. The season ended with a sunny 30° day on 28 February. The average winter temperature was an extraordinary 28.5°, an incredible 8° above normal, and annual precipitation (23.28") ran more than a foot below the normal of 36.05".

A total of 109 species was reported, breaking the old record of 104 set in winter 1998-1999. Although waterfowl were widely scattered, the 28 species reported certainly helped the record total, as did 18 raptors, including six owls and shrike. As might be expected in a mild winter, half-hardies did well, including Turkey Vultures in February, Belted Kingfisher, Northern Flicker and Chipping and Savannah sparrows. Two species that promised to extend their breeding ranges here were Tufted Titmouse, found in unprecedented numbers, and four Carolina Wrens. Rarities were mostly one-day wonders: **Eared Grebe** at Essex 26 January, **Red Phalarope** spinning along the shoreline of Whallon's Bay 24 December, **Say's Phoebe** on the Camp Dudley Road, Westport, 24 February and two **Fish Crows** in Plattsburgh the same day. However, a **Brant** at Westport remained for over a month. An apparent Trumpeter x "Bewick's" Swan hybrid at Ausable Point WMA in February escaped from North Hero, VT, last spring, summered on Arrowhead Lake, Milton, and wintered mostly on the Vermont side at Grand Isle, mouth of Otter Creek and St. Albans. Several Mute and Tundra swans also wintered on

largely ice-free Champlain.

Following the fall report of a Red Bat flying in daylight at Bloomingdale on 3 November, there was an even more exceptional report from Joan Collins of 6 Red Bats flying in daytime at Long Lake, Hamilton County, 4-5 December. Meanwhile, the number of mice in one farmhouse climbed to 67 trapped since mid-July. WPTZ Ch. 5 Plattsburgh featured the Waterfowl Count on the 12 January nightly news.

Bald Eagle pairs were already working on two Franklin County nests by season's end, and the number of wintering birds – especially along Champlain – has become so great that we can no longer report individual sightings. The same is true of Wild Turkey and Tufted Titmouse and will probably be true for a growing list of breeding birds as Atlas 2000 continues.

Among the always-popular winter finches, Pine Grosbeaks put in an appearance, but mostly in small, scattered flocks. Purple Finches were virtually absent. There were only a half-dozen sightings of Red Crossbills and a maximum count of just five. A few were at the Newcomb VIC feeder in December. White-winged Crossbills, with eight reports, were slightly more abundant with a maximum of 50. Six remained at an Elizabethtown feeder into December. Most numerous were Common Redpolls, with flocks of up to 500 reported. As expected in a "redpoll winter," there were about seven Hoary Redpolls reported and probably many others unidentified. Most Pine Siskins and many American Goldfinches moved out. Evening Grosbeaks were widely reported, but a flock of 62 at Inlet. 75 on the Elizabethtown CBC and 140 on the Saranac Lake CBC were the largest numbers.

Atlas observers are asked to keep in contact with their regional coordinator throughout the breeding season. A periodic short note or e-mail providing the number of species per Block, plus details of any unusual finds, would be greatly appreciated. Volunteers can also now reach the DEC Atlas website to view the map of assigned/unassigned Blocks, as well as the 1980-1985 and 2000-2001 species maps and lists, through a link on the new High Peaks Audubon website: www.hpas.org.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

AP – Ausable Pt WMA; BB – Bloomingdale Bog; CH – Cumberland Head; CP – Crown Pt; CR – Chazy Ri; ECBC – Elizabethtown CBC 22 Dec; FCBC – Ferrisburg CBC 15 Dec; PCBC – Plattsburgh CBC 16 Dec; PtR – Point au Roche SP; SLCBC – Saranac Lake CBC 29 Dec; TL – Tupper L; WB – Whallon's Bay; WC – NYS Waterfowl Count 12-16 Jan; WM – Wickham Marsh WMA.

LOONS – DUCKS

Red-throated Loon: 2 CH to 5 Jan (MD), first seen 26 Oct; juv Westport 12 Jan (EN,JP,RW).

Com. Loon: max 5 WC.

Horned Grebe: max 44 WC; 30 Westport 26 Jan (SO,GP,CT), also high.

EARED GREBE: basic plum Essex 26 Jan (SO,GP,CT), 2nd ESSE & Reg record.

Great Blue Heron: AP 9 Dec (JL,DCR); FCBC; SLCBC; AP 5 Jan (J&RH); Plattsburgh 27 Jan, extremely late.

Turkey Vulture: several Mineville 14 Feb (GF), only 2nd winter record.

Snow Goose: max 2050 (+ 1 "Blue") FCBC; last 20 Monty Bay 28 Jan (HK).

Canada Goose: max 1712 WC.

BRANT: Westport 12 Jan-25 Feb (EN,JP,RW,DCR), 2nd ESSE & Reg record.

Mute Swan: 1-3 AP 2 Dec-24 Feb (DCR,GW); same 2 WM 12-24 Feb (JP,DCR); 2 Westport 9 Feb (MG,RH,WL,SO), origin unknown.

Tundra Swan: 2 PCBC; 2 imm CH 3 Jan (NO); Westport 9 Feb (MG,RH,SO); 5 (2 ad, 3 imm) AP 18-28 Feb (DCR,JL), rare here.

Gadwall: Westport 9-25 Jan (MG,DCR).

N. Pintail: PtR 14 Jan (HK); 2 Westport 9 Feb (MG); rare winter visitant.

Green-winged Teal: Monty Bay 23 Dec (NO); drake Westport 27 Dec-1 Jan (MG); Ticonderoga 2 Feb (DMR); rare in winter.

Canvasback: AP 1 Jan (J&RH); only report.

Ring-necked Duck: max 68 WC, record winter number.

scaup (sp.): max 1100 WC.

Surf Scoter: CP Bridge narrows 19 Jan (VT RBA), rare.

Long-tailed Duck: WC; AP 19-27 Jan (SO,DCR), same duck?

Barrow's Goldeneye: ad drake Westport 29 Jan-9 Feb (RB,WL,RH,SO), a good find.

Hooded Merganser: max 44 WC; 1 ECBC & 19 SLCBC noteworthy; other inland sightings Barnum Pd, L Placid, Lower Chateaugay L, Saranac Ri Dec-Feb, exceptional in winter.

Red-breasted Merganser: AP; Lower Chateaugay L; PtR; Saranac Ri; Trombley Bay, Westport; also a fine winter showing.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: 2 prs nest-building FRAN late Feb (SC,LL); used 2001 nest found Westport 5 Jan (MW), down & guano below, 1st post-DDT era ESSE nest; 2 ad, 1 imm Raquette Pd 13 Dec took loon off ice shelf & consumed same (BF); max 12 Bald Eagle Survey 12-16 Jan, only suggests increased winter regularity along Champlain and some inland waters.

Red-shouldered Hawk: I-87 between Exits 37 & 38 CLIN 28 Jan (SJ,BK), late.

Golden Eagle: imm Wilmington 10 Dec (DCR), another good find.

Peregrine Falcon: PCBC; Ticonderoga 13 Jan, eating Rock Dove on cross of St. Mary's Church steeple; CP Bridge 15 Jan

in snow squall (DMR); Peru 10 Feb; Plattsburgh 19 Feb (GW); Wilmington eyrie 27 Feb (MW); good winter showing. **Gyr Falcon:** gray-phase Westport 15 Dec (R&SS,J&PT), during FCBC.

Wild Turkey: max 64 Willsboro Pt 12 Jan (EN,JP RW); now extremely widespread.

Am. Coot: Westport 15 Dec-27 Feb (E&JP); 3 CH 13 Jan (J&RH); 2 Port Henry 18 Feb (DCR); exceptional winter numbers.

RED PHALAROPE: WB 24 Dec (JS). 3rd ESSE record; Eaton provides a 1906 HAMI record.

DOVES – WOODPECKERS

Rock Dove: 8 Ticonderoga 8 Feb (DMR), still perched in tree near charred remains of their abandoned farmhouse, burned down 26 Jan in fire department exercise.

E. Screech-Owl: gray-phase n. trail to Giant Mt 22 Dec (J&PT), near higher elevation 1994 red-phase locale.

Snowy Owl: Bangor-Brushton FRAN Jan.

Barred Owl: Keene & TL feeders; max 5 ECBC; plus other reports.

Short-eared Owl: N. Moffat Rd Plattsburgh Jan (NO).

N. Saw-whet Owl: ECBC; only report.

Belted Kingfisher: New Russia 2 Dec (J&PT); 2 ECBC; Lake Placid 25 Jan (RJ), late.

Black-backed Woodpecker: 2 SLCBC; 1-2 BB; fem Paul Smiths.

N. Flicker: FCBC; PCBC; Ticonderoga Jan (SS); Essex 15 Jan (JS); Westport 20 Feb (J&PT), uncommon so late.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

SAY'S PHOEBE: Camp Dudley Rd Westport 24 Feb (C&JW!), 1st verified ESSE & Reg record.

N. Shrike: max 5 ECBC; ~6 others.

Gray Jay: 1-4 BB, Bear & Slim Pd trail, Bigelow-Oregon Plains Rds, Paul Smiths, Sabattis Bog, all usual areas.

FISH CROW: 2 Plattsburgh 24 Feb with 3 Am. Crows (DCR); with previous reports from Plattsburgh, Saranac L and VT. Atlas observers should take note, but use caution with ID by call alone, esp. after yg Am. Crows fledge.

Com. Raven: chased by Wild Turkeys TL yard 18 Dec (CD); max 18 SLCBC; 12 Minerva deer carcass 27 Jan (RJ); 8 Inlet carcass 28 Feb (GL).

Horned Lark: max 120 PCBC; 118 FCBC; others CP, Essex, Ticonderoga, Westport.

Boreal Chickadee: max 13 Mt Marcy 8-11 Feb (DW); others from a dozen usual locales.

Tufted Titmouse: max 16 ECBC; 11 FCBC; 6 PCBC; 3 SLCBC; 12 Essex-Westport 12 Jan (RH.SO); AP; 4 Ticonderoga; TL feeder; 2 Wadhams; = 56 titmice, only hints at numbers.

Carolina Wren: 1-2 Hogansburg feeder 27 Dec thru, m singing by Feb (HW); CH 1 Jan (MD); WB 26 Jan (SO.GP.CT); CH feeder 4-6 Feb (JW); a great showing.

wren (sp.): Malone feeder 17 & 31 Jan (CH), undoubtedly Carolina.

E. Bluebird: max 48 FCBC.

Am. Robin: max 101 FCBC.

N. Mockingbird: 3 PCBC; Rouses Pt 15 Feb (WF); good finds.

European Starling: small flock overwintered TL village.

Am. Pipit: Elizabethtown 22 Jan (J&PT); Westport 9 Feb (RH.SO); 1st ESSE winter records.

Bohemian Waxwing: max 235 FCBC; 70 PCBC; 1 SLCBC; flocks of 15-60 AP, Keeseville, Essex-Westport, in spite of sparse buckthorn crop.

Cedar Waxwing: max 60 Keeseville 28 Feb (WL), the less numerous waxwing this winter.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

Chipping Sparrow: 2 PCBC, no details.

Savannah Sparrow: Camp Dudley Rd Westport 15 Dec (J&PT), details to FCBC

compiler.

Fox Sparrow: Peru 25 Feb (GW), uncommon in winter.

White-throated Sparrow: 3 SLCBC; 1 wintered TL; unusual interior numbers.

Lapland Longspur: CR 28 Jan (J&RH); 2 Essex 4 Feb (BM); always a good find.

Snow Bunting: max 1000+ CR 28 Jan (J&RH); 600+ Essex 9 Feb (RB,WL); widespread.

Red-winged Blackbird: FCBC; PCBC; at feeder Heart L Rd 20 Jan (J&PT); arr Elizabethtown 20 Feb; 4 other Feb arrivals included max 25 Keene Valley 26 Feb (CD).

Com. Grackle: 3 PCBC; 2 FCBC; count wk SLCBC; unusual.

Brown-headed Cowbird: Inlet feeder "lost in the Adirondacks" 10 Jan (GL); max 12 Camp Dudley Rd Westport 20 Feb (J&PT), more expected location.

Pine Grosbeak: max 41 PCBC; 15 other reports of flocks of 1-15, including Inlet & TL feeders and interior at L Colden & Panther Mt.

Purple Finch: 4 PCBC; small flock Ft. Ticonderoga 28 Jan; only reports.

Red Crossbill: 2 ECBC; CLIN; "a few" Newcomb VIC feeder; 2 Peru; 5 Paul Smiths; 2 Round Pd; only reports.

White-winged Crossbill: 6 Elizabethtown feeder [27 Nov]-2 Dec (J&SP); max 50

Paul Smiths 27 Jan (RJ); others PCBC, SLCBC, Barnum Pd, Chubb R, Keene; major decline from the 2000-2001 Atlas nesting season.

Com. Redpoll: max 400-500

Whallonsburg 9 Feb (RB,WL); most abundant finch this winter; carefully observed *snow-burrowing* Long L (JC).

Hoary Redpoll: ECBC; SLCBC; CLIN Dec-Feb (J&RH); *C. h. exilipes* at feeder Elizabethtown 8 Jan (JP); 2 Whallonsburg in lg redpoll flock 9 Feb (RB,WL); "couple" Inlet feeder.

Pine Siskin: max 7 ECBC; 5 PCBC; 3 SLCBC; only reports.

Am. Goldfinch: max 91 PCBC; 14 ECBC; 6 FCBC; 4 SLCBC; 50 Rouses Pt 26 Jan (WF); only reports.

Evening Grosbeak: max 140 SLCBC; 8 other reports of flocks of 15-62.

ADDENDA

Parasitic Jaeger: juv Essex, ESSE, NY waters viewed from Charlotte VT 16 Sep 2001 (Theodore Murin).

jaeger (sp.): imm/ad same ESSE waters 13 Sep 2001 (Murin, Frederick Pratt).

SABINE'S GULL: 2 juv same ESSE waters 13 Sep 2001 (Hank Kaestner, Murin, Pratt); 3rd ESSE & Reg record.

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