

REGION 7 – ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

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The season began with a high of 40°F at Plattsburgh, but by 2 December a snowstorm had brought 16" to Inlet, where temperatures dropped to -16° by the 4th. Temperatures dropped from 34° at Plattsburgh on 8 December to -22° at Inlet the following day, separated by the coldest night in 22 months. Mid-month was generally warmer, reaching a high of 40° on the 19th. A 3.1 Richter scale aftershock of the April earthquake radiated from the Ausable Forks epicenter on Christmas Day. Monthly snowfall in the Champlain Valley was 8.3", with snow cover on the Christmas Bird Counts varying from bare ground on the Ferrisburg CBC to a foot on the Saranac Lake CBC. New Year's Day was a balmy 39°, but an Alberta Clipper dropped 1-2 feet of snow on the 4th. Alberta Clipper #2 on 7-8 January only added another 3", but light snows continued through mid-month. And it was cold: -21° at Saranac Lake on the 14th, -23° at Inlet on the 22nd. By 28 January, with Saranac Lake thermometers reading -35°, even the Champlain Valley had seen sub-zero temperatures for 11 of the past 15 days. February saw a return to the +30's, but turned frigid mid-month: -24° at Inlet on the 11th and Saranac Lake dropped to -28° on the 13th and -35° on 16 February. That same day Lake Champlain froze completely for the first time in two years (and only the second time in the last seven). Inlet was below zero for 33 days, below -20° on a dozen of those, and above freezing only seven days. Even in the Champlain Valley, Plattsburgh had 24 sub-zero nights and days. A warm front pushed Plattsburgh to a high of 42° on the 20th and, after 4" of snow at Malone 23 February, the season closed on a sunny, 31° day.

Prior to freezing over, Champlain had good numbers and excellent variety of

waterfowl, with a record 21 species located on the 11-12 January Federation Waterfowl Count. A drake **Tufted Duck** at Port Kent was a highlight of the count, and yet this appeared to be but one of several, beginning with a first Regional sighting at the Crown Point narrows in late December. There were also multiple encounters with Barrow's Goldeneyes, including three during the Waterfowl Count.

Bald Eagles are easier to find along Champlain with each passing winter. As the lake closed in February, one was standing on the ice beside – and jumping over – a swimming flock of ~20 Canada Geese, who suffered the interruption with aplomb. There were also reports from the central Adirondacks, where eagles fed on road-killed deer on the ice of Tupper Lake and nearby Long Lake. A gray-phase **Gyr Falcon** was at Monty Bay on the afternoon of 12 January, and there were later sightings from 30 January at the favored locale at the mouth of the Saranac River in Plattsburgh, where large numbers of ducks congregate to be fed.

In spite of stretches of extreme cold, good numbers of half-hardies were reported, including Northern Flickers, a **Tree Swallow** at Ausable Point WMA on **16 February**, record numbers of Tufted Titmice, four widely-distributed Carolina Wrens (Essex, Hogansburg, Rouses Point, Ticonderoga), a Winter Wren at Essex, a Ruby-crowned Kinglet at a Westport feeder, Northern Mockingbirds and three Chipping Sparrows. Rusty Blackbirds at Ausable Point and West Chazy feeders were good finds. Eastern Bluebirds lingered in the lowlands, while American Robins were more widely reported and present in larger numbers: 180 on the Elizabethtown CBC, for example. In the interior Adirondacks, robins were reported from as high as Ampersand Mt., Hanging Spear Falls and Marcy Dam, with 30 wintering at Limekiln Lake. Mountain ash was often mentioned as a favored food of these stalwarts. In the Champlain Valley, a fairly good crop of buckthorn, red cedar and staghorn sumac helped support some of these half-hardy species.

At higher elevations within the Adirondacks, only a fair conifer mast crop developed, mostly Eastern hemlock and some spruce/balsam fir. Purple Finch was present in modest numbers, but over a widely scattered area. There were no reports of Red Crossbill and only two of their White-winged congener. Both redpolls were absent, following last winter's invasion. Pine Siskin was present, but even more scarce than Purple Finch. The most abundant winter finch by far was American Goldfinch, with a record 1115 tallied on the Saranac Lake CBC, and present in numbers at feeders, especially those offering niger seed (or "nyjer," as politically-correct feed stores now spell it). Evening Grosbeak was extremely scarce, with the largest flocks 18 at Long Lake on 15 February and 25 feeding on mountain ash at Saranac Inn on 20 February.

A total of 95 species was reported, well short of the record 109 found during the previous winter of 2001-02. Atlas observers are again 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.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

AP – Ausable Pt WMA; BB – Bloomingdale Bog; CH – Cumberland Head; CP – Crown Pt; CR – Chazy Rivers; ECBC – Elizabethtown CBC 21 Dec; FB – Ferd's Bog; FCBC – Ferrisburg CBC 14 Dec; IL – Indian L; LL – Long L; PCBC – Plattsburgh CBC 15 Dec; SB – Sabattis Bog; SLCBC – Saranac L CBC; TL – Tupper L; WB – Whallon's Bay; WC – Federation Waterfowl Count 11-12 Jan; WM – Wickham Marsh WMA.

LOONS – DUCKS

Com. Loon: max 20 PCBC, high.

Red-necked Grebe: grounded North Hudson Feb (AF), rehab released Schroon Ri WARR; grounded TL sewer plant Feb (NS), rehab released Saranac Ri ESSE..

Great Blue Heron: 2 PCBC; ECBC, late.

Snow Goose: 4 PCBC; WC, late.

Canada Goose: 30 flying s Limekiln L 8 Jan (GL); lg flock over TL 14 Jan (PL), late.

Mute Swan: pr WM 4 Dec (JP) -14 Feb (DR), with 2 Bald Eagles; 2 pr there 10 Feb (JP); pr Westport 10 Dec (SS) -11 Jan (JP, RW).

Gadwall: 2 Pt Kent 10 Feb (DR), rare in winter.

Mallard: max 2957 WC, record number.

N. Pintail: 2 WC; Boquet Ri Willsboro Feb (RL); CH 22-26 Feb (NO, UW); good showing.

Redhead: WC, only report.

Ring-necked Duck: max 47 WC; Pt Kent to 10 Feb (DR); a strong showing.

TUFTED DUCK: drake CP 30 Dec; probable hen CP 3 Jan (DH), where there were multiple sightings in VT waters; drake in raft of 1000 Greater Scaup Pt Kent 11 Jan (JP, DR, RW) to 13 Jan (DR); possible hen Pt Kent 13 Jan (DR); 1st ESSE & Reg records.

Greater Scaup: max 1001 WC, record number; 400 Pt Kent 10 Feb (JP, DR); zebra mussels?

Surf Scoter: Valcour I 2 Dec (J&RH), only report.

Black Scoter: drake Valcour I 2 Dec (J&RH); Essex 1 Jan (J&RH); WB 12 Jan (DP, DR); good showing.

Barrow's Goldeneye: hen Essex 8 Dec (DR); 2 hens WB 10-11 Jan (JP, DS, RW); drake Essex 11 Jan (TM, SO); drake WB 12 Jan (DP, DR); drake Pt Kent 5 Feb (DR); drake Essex 23 Feb (J&PT); outstanding.

Hooded Merganser: max 99 WC, record number.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: 13 Bald Eagle Survey 11-12 Jan (7 ad, 2 imm, 4 age?); numerous other sightings.

GYRFALCON: gray-phase Monty Bay 3:30 pm 12 Jan (GW); Plattsburgh 11 am 30 Jan (DM); always exciting.
Am. Coot: Westport where now almost annual in winter 11 Jan.

DOVES – WOODPECKERS

E. Screech-Owl: Chateaugay feeder 12 Feb (MH); Whiteface Inn Rd Feb (NS), emaciated, rehab released.
Snowy Owl: Goodnow-Hudson R confluence 16 Feb (AF), in unusual location; only report.
Barred Owl: TL feeder 25 Jan (CD), diving on Dark-eyed Juncos; 8 others reported.
Short-eared Owl: Essex 2 Dec (DR); PCBC, encouraging finds.
Belted Kingfisher: FCBC; ECBC; Westport 10 Jan (JP, DS), late.
Black-backed Woodpecker: max 4 SLCBC; other reports BB, Chubb Ri, Marcy Dam, Paul Smiths.
N. Flicker: ECBC; AP Feb (JL); Essex 28 Feb (MG); scarce in winter here.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: 9 reported, somewhat low.
Gray Jay: max 17 SLCBC, record number NYS & Reg; Jackrabbit Trail, Keene 27 Dec (J&PT), new location within High Peaks region; other more expected reports BB, FB, SB.
Horned Lark: 12 Essex 8 Dec (DR); 5 FCBC; 6 PCBC; max 20 CR 29 Jan (DR); 2 Essex 21 Feb (MG); somewhat low.
TREE SWALLOW: 1 AP 16 Feb (DR) “following -20°F night and no open water!” Official high at Plattsburgh that day was -2°. Unprecedented.
Black-capped Chickadee: max 1011 SLCBC, record high.
Boreal Chickadee: max 8 SLCBC; many Hanging Spear Falls 1 Feb (JC); reports from Avalanche L, BB, ECBC, LL, N-P Trail, SB.
Tufted Titmouse: max 14 FCBC,

2 PCBC, 7 ECBC, Pt Kent; strong numbers.

Carolina Wren: Essex, Hogansburg, Rouses Pt, Ticonderoga feeders; a good showing.

Winter Wren: Essex feeder late Jan (SC), rare here in winter despite name.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 54 SLCBC, record high.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: Westport feeder 14 Dec (JT), scarce in winter.

E. Bluebird: 12 FCBC; 15 PCBC; max 18 ECBC; confined to lowlands.

Am. Robin: max 180 ECBC and widespread at lower elevations; 12 inside culvert AP 16 Feb (DR), “only open water inside for miles”; interior sightings at Ampersand Mt, Hanging Spear Falls, IL, Limekiln L, Marcy Dam, Marcy Field, SLCBC, many feeding on mountain ash.

N. Mockingbird: 2 PCBC; Plattsburgh 3 Feb (NO); good finds.

Cedar Waxwing: max 111 FCBC; only waxwing reported.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

Am. Tree Sparrow: 2 Little TL 3 Dec (JC); wintered Inlet feeder (GL); both noteworthy.

Chipping Sparrow: 2 PCBC; TL 24 Dec thru (CD); great winter finds.

Song Sparrow: SLCBC; wintered IL, unusual in Adirondacks during winter.

White-throated Sparrow: SLCBC, unusual in Adirondacks in winter.

Dark-eyed Junco: max 106 SLCBC; widespread elsewhere.

Lapland Longspur: Stetson Rd CLIN 24 Jan (J&RH), only report and always a good find.

Snow Bunting: 3 PCBC; max 200 CR 27 Jan (DR); Altona 19 Feb (JH, NO, MS); 35 Keene 24 Feb (J&PT); relatively scarce.

Red-winged Blackbird: flock Limekiln L 16 Dec (GL); SLCBC, late.

E. Meadowlark: Whallonsburg early Jan (SS); Essex 12 Jan (DP, DR); 1st Jan records ESSE.

Rusty Blackbird: West Chazy feeder

24 Jan (J&RH) -22 Feb (NO); AP feeder 28 Feb (WE, SUNY Plattsburgh).

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 26 SLCBC; wintered IL, unusual in highlands.

Purple Finch: max 49 SLCBC.

House Finch: max 63 PCBC.

White-winged Crossbill: 1 heard ECBC; 1 heard Bigelow Rd FRAN 3 Feb (DR); only reports.

Pine Siskin: max 8 separate small flocks Newcomb 4 Dec (CD); 12 SLCBC.

Am. Goldfinch: max 1115 SLCBC, record high; by far the most abundant winter finch.

Evening Grosbeak: Inlet, LL, L Placid, SB, SLCBC; max 25 Saranac Inn 20 Feb (BS), feeding on mountain ash; only reports.