

REGION 4 – SUSQUEHANNA

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Heavy snow in December, combined with more snow and extreme cold in January, made the winter colder and snowier than normal. December's temperature at Binghamton was 1.2°F higher than average. The 32.9" of snow was almost double the normal amount. January's average temperature of 13.4° at Binghamton was the second coldest ever. The record at Walton was tied. Across the Region, many local records for cold were broken on 10 January. The extreme cold was often accompanied by strong winds. The month's 36.3" of snow at Binghamton was 80% more than average. February was very cold at times, but snowfall of 15.9" and the monthly average temperature of 23.7° were normal.

Five major snow events brought at least 10" to some part of the Region on 5-6 December, 14-15 December, 11-13 January, 27-28 January and 3 February. Lake effect snow was a regular occurrence in some areas. Deep powder conditions prevailed until late February when crust formed. Only fast moving water remained open after early January.

The frequent snow and the depth of the powder may have been difficult for some birds. Little manure was visible until late February. Few reports were received of Horned Larks, Snow Buntings and Wild Turkeys, all of which exploit manured fields. Rough-legged Hawks were mostly absent from the northern counties. The snow didn't adversely affect an influx of irruptive finches, which found a good cone crop in spruces, larches and hemlocks.

Good numbers of half-hardies were found on Christmas Bird Counts. Binghamton CBC compiler Gail Kirch noted low numbers overall but "good

numbers of Southern species.” Red-bellied Woodpecker, Carolina Wren and Northern Mockingbird were again found away from their regular winter haunts.

After the CBC period, most half-hardy birds were found in the low elevations of Broome and Tioga counties. During the depth of winter, some other species were quite scarce elsewhere. This pattern was noticeable with Sharp-shinned and Cooper’s hawks. Did these birds withdraw or could the finches in high elevation conifers have drawn some accipiters away from bird feeders and observers?

Waterfowl numbers were low – Federation Waterfowl Count gross numbers were slightly above half of the 10 year average – but variety was good. The Cortland CBC’s coverage of Skaneateles Lake contributed some interesting ducks.

In December, a pair of Bald Eagles started rebuilding a nest that had blown out of a large sycamore in Delaware County in the summer of 2003. Fortunately, the storm came shortly after the season’s eaglets had left the nest.

While Andy Mason was counting raptors at the Franklin Mountain Hawk Watch on 1 December, he tallied a very good count of more than 50 loons flying south. On 7 December at Franklin, counter Fred Fries observed a Golden Eagle “kiting.” A query of the Franklin Mountain counters did not find any who had seen the behavior by this species. (Results from the full Franklin Mountain season that ended 1 January 2004 were included in the fall 2003 report.)

Peregrine Falcons are now found regularly near their Binghamton nest site in winter. This may be something we can expect from Merlins as they move into areas with a reliable winter food supply. During this first winter since they were confirmed nesting in Binghamton, 14 reports of single Merlins, both male and female, were received from Broome County. Twelve reports came from near the Merlin nest site. The small falcon is a rarity, even more so in winter. The presence of these birds suggests strong nest site fidelity. It is interesting that the only confirmed breeding of both Peregrine Falcon and Merlin in Region 4 occurs in the same Atlas survey block.

The **Yellow-throated Warbler** spotted by Jan Petersen and Dave Sterling at Niko’s Diner in Binghamton on 2 January drew a lot of attention. The warbler was feeding on bread put out by the diner’s staff. Petersen and Sterling returned with binoculars several days later to positively identify the bird. During the two weeks it lingered at the site, many people visited Niko’s to enjoy the cuisine and the bird. One of Victor Lamoureux’s fine photographs was submitted along with a very complete report by Marie Petuh. The warbler was last seen on 15 January, a day on which a Sharp-shinned Hawk was also observed.

A **Dickcissel** in Don Weber’s yard in Candor was videotaped during the five days it was seen. Bob Pantle identified it as an immature female.

Finches made the season interesting. Purple Finch, Red Crossbill, Common Redpoll, Hoary Redpoll, Pine Siskin and Evening Grosbeak were all present. Good numbers of Common Redpoll and Pine Siskin were widespread after mid-December. Five credible reports of Hoary Redpoll were received. All were carefully observed. Four reports came from skilled birders with considerable experience. Two reports were submitted to NYSARC.

In late February, Matt Young found Red Crossbills and Pine Siskins singing and behaving territorially in mixed conifers near Bowman Lake State Park. These

birds persisted into spring and were found with fledglings in early April. The behavior of these species during and after the reporting period, along with White-winged Crossbills, which were first found singing at several locations after the reporting period ended, lead Matt Young to speculate about the possibility of a significant crossbill and siskin breeding event.

Other seasonal rarities included Ruddy Duck, Osprey, a very late Turkey Vulture, Winter Wren, Brown Thrasher, Gray Catbird, Bohemian Waxwing and White-crowned Sparrow.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BCBC – Binghamton CBC; CCBC – Cortland CBC; FMHW – Franklin Mountain Hawk Watch; FWC – Federation Waterfowl Count; OnCBC – Oneonta CBC; OwCBC – Owego CBC; SCBC – Sherburne CBC; SkanL – Skaneateles L; TBC – Tioga Bird Club.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Snow Goose: regular thru Dec; last 25 TIOG 15 Jan.

Canada Goose: max 1350 OwCBC 2 Jan; numbers dropped with temperature.

Mute Swan: max 3 BCBC 28 Dec; several other reports.

Wood Duck: 2 OwCBC 2 Jan, only report.

Gadwall: TIOG Feb, no details.

Am. Wigeon: DELA 1 Feb (TBC); Boland Pd BROO Feb.

Am. Black Duck: max 51 FWC 11

Jan. Mallard: max 532 FWC 11 Jan.

Green-winged Teal: Chenango SP Jan (PK).

Redhead: max 5 FWC 11 Jan; 2 other reports.

Ringed-neck Duck: 129 SkanL CCBC 20 Dec, only report.

Lesser Scaup: SkanL CCBC 20 December; only report.

Bufflehead: max 18 SkanL CCBC 20 Dec; several reports of small groups and singles.

Com. Goldeneye: max 82 SkanL CCBC 20 Dec; 3 other reports.

Hooded Merganser: max 16 SkanL CCBC 20 Dec; 8 of 10 reports from BROO.

Com. Merganser: max 295 FWC 11 Jan; common.

Red-breasted Merganser: 18 Jan Owego (SK); Endwell 21 Feb (DWA); never common.

Ruddy Duck: 3 Dec Hillcrest Pits BROO (JWe); uncommon.

Ring-necked Pheasant: 8 OwCBC 2 Jan, high count; found on 4 CBCs.

Ruffed Grouse: max 9 Berkshire 21 Feb.

Wild Turkey: max 178 BCBC 28 Dec; most flocks small; low numbers.

Com. Loon: 50+ FMHW 1 Dec (AM), good flight.

Great Blue Heron: max 10 BCBC 28 Dec; most reports BROO.

Turkey Vulture: SCBC 20 Dec, very late; 2 arr DELA 27 Feb.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Osprey: Vestal 29 Jan (CW), exceptional date.

Bald Eagle: 26 FMHW Dec; reported from all counties, very widespread; nest building DELA 21 Dec; 10 DELA TBC trip 1 Feb; *intro*.

N. Harrier: 8 OwCBC 2 Jan; few reported.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: max 6 BCBC 28 Dec; regular BROO; few elsewhere.

Cooper's Hawk: max 6 BCBC 28 Dec; 2 Harford 17 Jan; regular BROO.

N. Goshawk: 5 FMHW Dec; 6 other reports.

Red-shouldered Hawk: 3 reports away from FMHW; uncommon but regular in winter.

Red-tailed Hawk: 126 FMHW 1 Dec-1 Jan; 73 OwCBC 2 Jan; breeding activity TIOG 29 Feb.

Rough-legged Hawk: 11 FMHW Dec; max 13 OwCBC 2 Jan; missed in many areas mid-season.

Golden Eagle: 35 FMHW Dec, 10 on 7 Dec; observed "kiting" FMHW 7 Dec FF;

2 West Burlington Dec; imm chased by Red-tailed Hawks Springfield 27 Feb (LG); missed 27 Dec-27 Feb.

Am. Kestrel: max 6 OwCBC 2 Jan; TIOG thru; generally scarce.

Merlin: BROO thru; Nanticoke 24 Feb (JW); Port Crane 11 Jan (JW); 12 other reports from Binghamton; *intro*.

Peregrine Falcon: 2 Binghamton thru, now expected.

Am. Coot: 30 FWC 11 Jan; regular at Otsego L.

Ring-billed Gull: max 47 OnCBC 20 Dec.

Herring Gull: max 10 BCBC 28 Dec.

Great Black-backed Gull: max 12 Tioughnioga Ri 8 Feb.

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Rock Pigeon: max 1586 BCBC 28 Dec.

Mourning Dove: max 354 BCBC 28 Dec.

E. Screech-Owl: max 6 OnCBC 20 Dec.

Great Horned Owl: max 3 OnCBC 20 Dec.

Barred Owl: 2 OnCBC 20 Dec; only one other report; scarce.

Short-eared Owl: Springfield 15 Feb, only report.

N. Saw-whet Owl: West Burlington OTSE 28 Feb.

Belted Kingfisher: missed after 2 Jan except Port Crane BROO.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: max 19 OwCBC 2 Jan; West Exeter 13 Feb, unusual location.

Downy Woodpecker: max 103 BCBC 28 Dec.

Hairy Woodpecker: max 33 BCBC 28 Dec.

N. Flicker: max 3 OwCBC 2 Jan.

Pileated Woodpecker: max 5 BCBC 28 Dec & OwCBC 2 Jan; regular, widespread.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: 2 BCBC 28 Dec; reports from 12 locations; average.

Blue Jay: max 190 OnCBC 20 Dec.

Am. Crow: max 1900 West Hill, Norwich 9 Feb, going to the roost (DWi).

Fish Crow: Owego 29 Dec (D&JW), only report.

Com. Raven: max 6 OwCBC 2 Jan, fewer than recent years.

Horned Lark: max 300 CORT 17 Jan; few, and small, flocks.

Black-capped Chickadee: max 759 BCBC 28 Dec.

Tufted Titmouse: max 166 BCBC 28 Dec.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: max 22 OnCBC 20 Dec; 20+ Truxton thru (MY); regular some locations.

White-breasted Nuthatch: max 97 BCBC 28 Dec.

Brown Creeper: max 15 BCBC 28 Dec.

Carolina Wren: OnCBC 20 Dec; max 17 BCBC 28 Dec; Springfield to late Jan; Margaretville 12 Jan; Norwich 26 Jan & 4 Feb; unexpected locations.

Winter Wren: Chenango Valley SP 10 Jan (BK); T Maine 30 Jan (JH); very unusual.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 11 BCBC 28 Dec.

E. Bluebird: max 38 BCBC 28 Dec; missed outside BROO, TIOG after Dec.

Am. Robin: max 80 Cherry Valley 8 Feb BD; widespread thru.

Gray Catbird: T Otsego 25-30 Dec (BD), very late.

N. Mockingbird: max 5 OwCBC 2 Jan.

Brown Thrasher: Vestal 24 Jan-27 Feb (GK), very unusual.

European Starling: max 2017 OwCBC 2 Jan.

Bohemian Waxwing: 5 Middlefield 22 Jan (JD).

Cedar Waxwing: max 108 OwCBC 2 Jan; widespread, unpredictable.

WARBLERS

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER: Court St Binghamton 1-15 Jan (mob!); *intro*.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

Am. Tree Sparrow: max 130 OwCBC 2 Jan.

Song Sparrow: max 12 BCBC 28 Dec.

White-throated Sparrow: max 32 BCBC 28 Dec; Margaretville 1 Jan; Norwich Feb; BROO, TIOG thru; well represented.

White-crowned Sparrow: OwCBC 2 Jan, unusual.

Dark-eyed Junco: max 313 BCBC 28 Dec.

Lapland Longspur: CCBC 20 Dec; CORT 17 Jan (JM & KM).

Snow Bunting: max 300 CCBC 20 Dec; mostly small flocks, generally scarce.

N. Cardinal: max 118 BCBC 28 Dec.

DICKCISSEL: imm f Candor 15-19 Dec (DWe, BP), unusual.

Red-winged Blackbird: max 75 BCBC 28 Dec, unexpected in such numbers; on 2 other CBCs; missed after Dec.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 30 BCBC 28 Dec; 10 Harford 17 Jan; more than expected.

Purple Finch: max 10 BCBC 28 Dec; 8 Morris 29 Jan; small numbers but more widespread than expected.

House Finch: max 321 BCBC 28 Dec; few reports from higher counties; “scarce” Norwich (DWi).

Red Crossbill: pair, territorial males T McDonough 26 Feb into March (MY); *intro*.

Com. Redpoll: widespread, high numbers after 12 Dec; max 200 T Otsego 22 Feb.

HOARY REDPOLL: Chenango Forks 7 Jan (mob); West Burlington 12-30 Jan (J&TS, NYSARC); Milford 6 Feb (GC); Morris Feb (A&JR, NYSARC); South Otselic 26 Feb (MY, JSi).

Pine Siskin: widespread but patchy after 12 Dec; 75 T Otsego 22 Feb; territorial T McDonough 26 Feb (MY); *intro*.

Am. Goldfinch: max 237 BCBC 28 Dec.

Evening Grosbeak: 4 reports of small groups.

House Sparrow: max 562 OwCBC 2 Jan.