

REGION 6 – ST. LAWRENCE

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It was a winter of contrast in the North Country, with generally mild December temperatures giving way to brutal cold in January. The average December temperature at the Watertown airport of 28.6° F was 3.3° warmer than normal, and similar weather persisted through the first week of January. Temperatures plummeted on 7 and 8 January, with nighttime lows well below zero on 15 of the next 18 nights and averaging 10.2° below normal. Precipitation was generally low away from the traditional snowbelt in the southern portion of the Region, but a series of mostly light snowfalls in late January and February accumulated to a depth of two feet or more over most of the area.

Many observers noted the virtual lack of waterfowl after the mid-January freeze. This freeze up came at the worst possible time, at least from the perspective of participants in the NYSDEC waterfowl count, who counted only 6765 individuals in Region 6, compared with totals of 10,000-12,000 in recent years. Several observers complained that areas that had hosted large flocks of ducks and geese a few days earlier were completely frozen over and bird-free on the day of the count. Other birds that seemed to disappear after the cold snap included half-hardies such as American Robin and several sparrow species, which were generally scarce throughout the winter despite the early mild weather.

Red-tailed and Rough-legged hawks and Short-eared Owls were reported in high numbers in northern Jefferson County and were common throughout the

agricultural portions of Lewis and St. Lawrence counties as well. Numbers declined in January, but both buteos remained common throughout the period. Perhaps the highlight of the season was a Gyrfalcon at Point Peninsula on 1 December, but this bird was only observed for a few hours. Fortunately, Gerry Smith and Tom Carrolan took excellent pictures. Snowy Owl and accipiters were exceptions to the good raptor year: there was only one report for Snowy Owl and few for Cooper's or Sharp-shinned hawks.

Another highlight of the season was the irruption of redpolls, including at least three Hoary Redpolls among the flocks of Commons. Common Redpolls were widespread, with most feeder-watchers reporting flocks of 20-40, but numbers were lower than in many irruption years. Small numbers of Pine Siskins and one White-winged Crossbill were reported, but the finch irruption was generally restricted to redpolls. Other northern birds that were present in average to above-average numbers included Northern Shrike, Bohemian Waxwing, Snow Bunting, Horned Lark and Lapland Longspur.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

BRB – Black River Bay JEFF; Can – T Canton STLA; CI – Collins Landing SLR at Thousand Islands Bridge T Orleans JEFF; CV – T Cape Vincent JEFF; FL – Fishers Landing, T Orleans JEFF; GPSP – Grass Pt SP, T Orleans JEFF; KC – Kelsey Creek, T Watertown JEFF; KPSP – Kring Pt SP, T Alexandria JEFF; Lou – T Louisville STLA; MCBC – Massena CBC; Mor – T Morristown STLA; NBCBC – New Boston CBC; Phil – T Philadelphia JEFF; PilPt – Pillar Pt; PRGC – Partridge Run golf course, T Canton STLA; PtSa – Pt Salubrious JEFF; PtPen – Pt Peninsula, T Lyme JEFF; RMPD – Robert Moses Power Dam; SH – Sacketts Harbor, T Hounsfield JEFF; SLR – St. Lawrence Ri; WATN – T Watertown JEFF; WBSP – Westcott Beach SP, T Henderson JEFF; WCBC – Watertown CBC; WFC – NYSDC waterfowl count; WI – Wellesley I, T Orleans JEFF.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Canada Goose: 5000 Mor 27 Dec; 3224 WFC; numbers declined rapidly after mid-Jan freeze.

Tundra Swan: 32 SH 24 Dec; 50-100/day PtPen to early Jan freeze, none afterward.

Am. Black Duck: 50-120/ day N JEFF and SLR until mid-Jan freeze, scarce afterwards; 131 WFC, most (78) below RMPD.

Mallard: 100-250/day until mid-Jan

freeze N JEFF and SLR, fewer than 100/day thereafter; 557 WFC was about 25% of 2003 total.

N. Pintail: m PtPen thru early Jan.

Ring-necked Duck: 1 WFC.

Greater Scaup: 2500-3000 BRB until freeze-up in mid-Jan; 10 WFC.

Long-tailed Duck: 86 WFC.

Bufflehead: 150-200/day PtPen until mid-Jan; 36 WFC, less than 10% of 2003 total.

Com. Goldeneye: 400-700/day PtPen;

150-350/day in open water S of WI to mid-Jan; 1265 WFC.

Barrow's Goldeneye: 1 each m & f FL, where this species has been found annually since at least 2000.

Common x Barrow's Goldeneye: 1 m at FL, same place as hybrid observed previous two winters (NL).

Hooded Merganser: 4 WFC; 6 FL Feb.

Com. Merganser: 50-200/day S of WI thru; 1448 WFC.

Red-breasted Merganser: 3 WFC.

Gray Partridge: max 6 Hardscabble Rd PtPen 12 Dec; none CV despite substantial survey effort.

Ring-necked Pheasant: 2 f PtPen thru; 3 T Limerick Jan; f Sandy Creek Valley Rd 26 Feb; 4 MCBC.

Ruffed Grouse: max 12 NBCBC.

Wild Turkey: widespread reports of 20-40 early, numbers significantly reduced by Feb; max 100+ in evening roost Phil thru; 102 MCBC.

Com. Loon: 2 singles Dec.

Horned Grebe: 3 PtPen 12 Dec.

Red-necked Grebe: TICBC.

Double-crested Cormorant: CI 3 Jan, only report.

Great Blue Heron: PtPen 1 Dec; WBSF 28 Dec.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: widespread at 1-4/day along L Ontario and SLR; scattered inland reports; max 10-11 (5-6 each ad and imm) T Clare STLA.

N. Harrier: 10-25/day PtPen and CV thru mid-Dec; 1-4 /day mid-Dec to mid-Jan; scarce afterward until 1 on 21 Feb.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: 3 total N JEFF; 2 MCBC.

Cooper's Hawk: near feeder Can, 10-11 Jan; 2 T Evans Mills JEFF 26 Feb; 2 total for season PtPen and CV (low); 1 occasionally taking birds at WATN feeder thru.

N. Goshawk: 3 total for season N JEFF; 2 MCBC; Can 24 Jan.

Red-tailed Hawk: 20-25/day PtPen and CV Dec; declined to 10-12/day by late Feb.

Rough-legged Hawk: good numbers throughout Reg; 25-45/day PtPen and CV Dec; increased to 45-65/day through late Feb.

Golden Eagle: ad T Hammond STLA 20 Jan (NL).

Am. Kestrel: 4-7 m/day PtPen and CV until early Jan; declined to 1-2/day by late Jan; f 26 Feb, possibly a migrant.

Merlin: ad WATN 24 Dec, feeding on a starling.

Gyr Falcon: gray morph ad Hardscabble Rd PtPen 1 Dec(GS, TC, ph).

Peregrine Falcon: MCBC.

Herring Gull: 2 MCBC.

Glaucous Gull: MCBC.

Great Black-backed Gull: 2 MCBC.

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Rock Pigeon: max 958 WCBC; 235 MCBC.

Mourning Dove: av 39/day at KC feeder; 287 WCBC.

E. Screech-Owl: MCBC.

Great Horned Owl: max 4 T Limerick JEFF.

Snowy Owl: T Depauville 20 Dec, only report; first time with no reports from CV, PtPen 2 consecutive years since at least 1970s.

Barred Owl: 2 MCBC; Can 27-28 Feb.

Short-eared Owl: 20-25 at roost Mason Rd CV Dec, declined to a few that wintered thru; roost of 10 PtSa thru; PRGC 24 Feb.

N. Saw-whet Owl: wintered T Lyme JEFF.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: 2 at CV feeder thru; Snowshoe Pt JEFF 29 Feb.

Downy Woodpecker: max 41 MCBC; 35 WCBC.

Hairy Woodpecker: max 35 MCBC; 9 WCBC.

N. Flicker: PIPt 28 Dec, only report.

Pileated Woodpecker: 1-3/day throughout Reg; max 6 MCBC.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: 1-3/day throughout Reg; numbers considerably higher than previous winter.

Blue Jay: max 134 MCBC; 75 WCBC.

Am. Crow: max 5000+ at roost Watertown thru.

Com. Raven: range expansion continues, 1-4/day along L Ontario thru; 4 MCBC.

Horned Lark: 100-200/day CV thru mid-Feb; small number of breeders (prairie race) back by 20 Feb, with decline in northern numbers; numerous flocks 25-100 elsewhere JEFF, STLA; 2 singing males Can 28 Feb.

Black-capped Chickadee: max 318 MCBC.

Tufted Titmouse: 2 at CV feeder thru; 2 WI 27 Dec; MCBC.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: 1-3/day scattered locations; max 9 WCBC.

White-breasted Nuthatch: max 73 MCBC; 15 WCBC.

Brown Creeper: max 2 MCBC.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: 2 GPSP 18 Feb.

Am. Robin: 1-5/day PtPen; 16 CV 2 Feb; fewer than normal wintered, with increase throughout area 3rd week Feb.

European Starling: max 1545 WCBC; migrants returned by 15 Feb.

Bohemian Waxwing: 156 WCBC; ~200 PRGC 28 Feb, probably same flock reported as Cedar Waxwings by inexperienced birders 20 Feb.

Cedar Waxwing: scarce thru; 14 WCBC, outnumbered by Bohemians 10-1.

WARBLERS

None.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

Am. Tree Sparrow: max 144 WCBC; widespread reports of 10-20 at feeders throughout Reg.

Savannah Sparrow: 7 WCBC (high); 2 Hounsfield JEFF 10 Jan.

Song Sparrow: 2 WCBC.

White-throated Sparrow: 12 MCBC; few reported elsewhere.

Dark-eyed Junco: max 55 MCBC; 29 WCBC; few after early Jan.

Lapland Longspur: 6-20/day CV thru; max 31 WCBC.

Snow Bunting: 250-800/day N JEFF thru; max 1500 CV probably included migrants.

N. Cardinal: max 57 MCBC.

Red-winged Blackbird: KC 3 Dec.

Brown-headed Cowbird: 17 NBCBC, high; max 35 PtPen 19 Jan.

Purple Finch: max 35 MCBC.

House Finch: max 99 WCBC.

White-winged Crossbill: f at feeder for 5 minutes and not seen again Can 1 Feb (JB).

Com. Redpoll: av 30-80/day with a few flocks of 200+ PtPen and CV; widespread reports of 20-40 at feeders throughout Reg.

HOARY REDPOLL: ad m feeder T Can 3 Jan (JB), not seen again; KC feeder (DB); ad m GPSP 7 Jan (NL).

Pine Siskin: 2-7 feeder Can late-Jan-mid-Feb; 2 feeder KC 20 Feb; 25-30 feeder Lou 23 Jan.

Am. Goldfinch: max 86 MCBC.

Evening Grosbeak: 12 NBCBC; 24 MCBC; 30 feeder T Brasher Falls STLA 10 Jan thru.

