

REGION 10—MARINE

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Average temperatures were near normal in December and January and somewhat warmer than usual in February. Whereas December's weather was generally unremarkable, January featured two very different periods, two weeks of very warm weather followed by frigid conditions through the end of the month. A severe coastal blizzard 23-25 January dumped over a foot of snow throughout the Region, and portions of eastern LI received two feet of snow. Gale winds continued for a day after this storm causing 'white-out' conditions, and frigid weather continued for about a week thereafter. This period undoubtedly had real impacts on many kinds of birds (and birders), but the oft-repeated comparisons between this season and some of the really severe winters of the past were probably not warranted. Uniform weather is the exception and not the rule in Region 10, and when our average temperatures and precipitation totals approach long-term norms, it is most often via disparate short-term patterns, such as those experienced this season.

A number of trends were discernible in our winter bird reports. Unusually large numbers of Black and Surf scoters continued off of eastern LI. On 28 January, Peter Scully found two Thick-billed Murres at Shinnecock Inlet, presaging the first major incursion of this species to our area in many years, perhaps since the great flight of 1976-77. In the following days additional individuals, some moribund, were found at several localities from Queens to Montauk. A number of winter residents that are vulnerable to deep snow and prolonged freezes were well reported through early January but withdrew or perished after the weather deteriorated. Examples include Clapper Rail, Tree Swallow, Hermit Thrush, Fox Sparrow, and many others. "Yellow-shafted" Northern Flickers illustrated this pattern particularly well. They were present in ordinary numbers through the CBC period, staged a noticeable influx to the coast on 15 January, and withdrew almost completely after the snowstorm of 23-25 January. An immature Yellow-crowned Night-Heron that appeared at Central Park on 18 January, on the heels of the cold snap, was likely another hard weather refugee. Whereas many half-hardy birds undoubtedly suffered from late January's severe weather, so did the effort expended by birders seeking them—a perennial bias that constrains analysis of trends such as those described above. Consider Northern Cardinal, a southern species rare in our Region prior to the 1940's. Not only did totals for this species approach or exceed all-time maxima on many/most Regional CBCs this season (a trend also evident elsewhere in the state and in southern New England), but a systematic count on Block Island, RI (just to the east of our area) revealed that exceptional numbers of cardinals persisted there at least through late February, despite the cold and snow. Similarly, American Robins and various blackbirds were present throughout the period and reported in large numbers both during and after the cold weather of late January, making it impossible to distinguish hard weather dispersal from northbound migration. Winter finches were almost absent. The only reported Common Redpolls were two on the Montauk CBC on 18 December, a

single bird at Breezy Pt. on various dates in January and February, and a bird at a feeder in Ridge 14 Feb.

As usual, field work associated with the CBCs produced a number of noteworthy dates. For example, the long-staying Broad-winged Hawk at Central Park was tallied on 19 December's CBC, and the Southern Nassau County CBC on 2 January featured two Willets for the second consecutive year. The latter appeared to belong to the western race *inornatus* and were present through February at Pt. Lookout. The CBC data presented elsewhere in this issue feature many, many additional examples of this kind, but two astonishing seasonal vagrants deserve special mention: a Yellow Warbler photographed on the Brooklyn CBC on 18 December and a Canada Warbler described well on the Captree CBC the next day. Despite its ubiquity through the summer and early fall, the former species is completely unexpected in our area after early October, and the latter is essentially unknown anywhere in North America after October!

In addition to seasonal novelties, this winter yielded a number of outstanding rarities. The "Richardson's" Cackling Goose found by Dick and Leslie Gershon near Pt. Lookout on the Southern Nassau County CBC on 2 January was well documented and seen by many observers over the following days. Although identification criteria for the various races of Cackling and Canada geese are still evolving, this bird showed the grayish-brown dorsal color, pale breast, and distinctive size and structure characteristic of the race *hutchinsii*—the only taxon of Cackling Goose with an established pattern of occurrence in our area. The immature Golden Eagle continued at Scallop Pond Preserve, Southampton at least through 4 December. The Central Park Boreal Owl, already legendary, is featured in this issue's lead article. An Ash-throated Flycatcher continued from November at Prospect Park and was joined by a second on 4 December (Rob Jett, *et al.*). Bryan Pfeiffer's discovery of a Townsend's Solitaire at Maidstone Park, Easthampton on 19 December fit into an emerging pattern of vagrancy this season, of thrushes of the Interior West to the Northeast. This bird was present through at least 9 January. The Mountain Bluebird present at Robert Moses State Park 22-30 November was not reported in December, but requires mention here to correct an error: the last Mountain Bluebird documented on Long Island prior to this individual was one seen by Joel Horman at Rocky Pt., Suffolk County in 1999, not the record from 1990 as stated in the Fall report. Hugh McGuinness and companions found a Western Tanager at Setauket Mill Pond on the Smithtown CBC on 27 December. Several more lucky observers saw and photographed this bird later that day, but efforts to relocate it on later days were not successful. Immature Harris's and Gambel's White-crowned sparrows at Baldwin Harbor Park on the Southern Nassau County CBC on 2 January were seen by many of the participants on that count and remained with a large flock of White-throated Sparrows at least through the morning of 23 January, when the snow began to fall in earnest.

Once again I offer my thanks to everyone who contributed information regarding this season's bird records, particularly those observers who made an extra effort to document unusual observations and those who provided some analysis of how their observations fit into expected patterns of occurrence within their local areas. In the records summary below, I am continuing the policy of capitalizing the names of all species presently requiring NYSARC review. I would

also like to continue to draw attention to other kinds of records that I consider worthy of documentation, but on the advice of Regional Reports Editor Robert Spahn, I am abandoning the system of italicized text introduced in the Fall 2004 report. Instead, the names of species worthy of documentation in Region 10 (but not on the NYSARC review list) will also be capitalized, followed by "(R10)" and really unusual dates and localities will be bold-faced.

Contributors

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Abbreviations

BLSP—Belmont Lake State P; BP—Breezy Pt; CB—Cedar Beach; CP—Central P; GI—Gardiner's I; HP—Hook Pond; JBSP—Jones Beach SP; JI—Jones Inlet; MI—Moriches Inlet; MP—Montauk Pt; PBP—Pelham Bay P; PL—Point Lookout; SC—Seatuck Creek; Shin—Shinnecock Inlet.

WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

GR. WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE (R10): HP 19 Dec (PMP, RPr) thru at least 9 Jan (JQ).

BLACK BRANT: PL 5 Feb (SA, KO L).

RICHARDSON'S CACKLING

GOOSE (R10): PL 2 Jan (D&LG, mob).

Tundra Swan: two GI 18 Dec (fide HM); 2 HP 12 Feb (SM, PL).

EURASIAN GREEN-WINGED

TEAL (R10): 24 Dec Robinson s Pond, Bellport (JSt); Meadowbrook X Southern State Pways 15 Jan (TB, GB).

Redhead: 32 Capri Pond 1 Jan.

King Eider: sev MP thru.

Harlequin Duck: 2-3 PL thru; 2 Horton s Pt 5 Dec; f. Shinn 29 Jan; m Ditch Plains 12 Feb.

Surf Scoter: >75,000 MI-MP late Dec (fide HM).

Black Scoter: >40,000 MI-MP late Dec (fide HM).

Barrow s Goldeneye: Bayville 15 Jan.

PACIFIC LOON: MP Dec 17 (HM, PMP, BK, BP).

Red-necked Grebe: widely reported.

N. Fulmar: pelagic, near NY-NJ boundary 31 Dec.

Yellow-crowned Night-Heron: CP

18 Jan (PP, LS, ph. SH), very unusual date and site.

Glossy Ibis: Carmen s R **27 Feb** (JMcN), very unusual date.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: widely reported.

N. Goshawk: Bronx Zoo 26 Dec (DKr); Tobay 2 Jan.

Broad-winged Hawk: continued CP thru at least **19 Dec**.

Rough-legged Hawk: widely reported.

GOLDEN EAGLE (R10): Scallop Ponds Preserve, Southampton thru at least 4 Dec.

Merlin: widely reported.

Peregrine Falcon: resident birds widely reported.

Am. Kestrel: very few reports.

Sora: Smithtown CBC **27 Dec** (BMcG).

Semipalmated Plover: JI 2 Jan (BR, SO).
Willet: 2 PL 2 Dec (D&LG, mob).
Red Phalarope: Shinn 27 Feb (RKe).
Little Gull: MP Dec 17-18.
Black-headed Gull: JI 2 Jan; imm Shinn 29 Jan; imm. PL 6 Feb.
Iceland Gull: widely reported.
Lesser Black-backed Gull: widely reported.
Glaucous Gull: widely reported; 2 HLSP 2 Jan, unusual location.
Dovekie: 9 offshore waters near NY-NJ boundary 31 Dec.
COMMON MURRE: JI 2 Jan (K&SF).
THICK-BILLED MURRE: 2 Shinn 28 Jan (PS), 1-2 there for at least several days thereafter; other reports from Montauk area, JI, Rockaway Inlet, and BP; *intro*.
Razorbill: widely reported; hundreds from eastern LI vantages.
Black Guillemot: MP several dates, e.g., 22 Dec (VB) & 9 Jan (TB, GB); FT 30 Jan (AnW), unusual w South Shore of LI.

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

Snowy Owl: JBSP 11-12 Dec; Shin 9-29 Jan.
Long-eared Owl: several reports from traditional sites.
Short-eared Owl: widely reported.
BARRED OWL (R10): BPB several dates (MB, KJ, ph. SMa).
BOREAL OWL: 19 Dec -13 Jan CP (JD, PP, mob).
N. Saw-whet Owl: several reports from traditional sites.
RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD: CP continuing thru at least 6 Dec.
RUFIOUS/ALLEN'S HUMMINGBIRD: Orient thru 5 Dec.
Red-headed Woodpecker: continued from fall at several sites, e.g, 8 Barcelona Neck 19 Dec (BK).
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: Widely reported on CBCs; late records include one Springs 19 Feb (BR, KR).

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER: 1-2 PP thru at least 18 Dec (R. Jett, mob).
N. Shrike: CB 3-4 Dec.
Tree Swallow: many reports thru early Jan.
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: Baiting Hollow 8 Dec (AB); MP 18 Dec (WB).

TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE:

Maidstone Park, Easthampton 19 Dec-9 Jan (BP, mob).
Brown Thrasher: Late records include singles Southampton 29 Jan (AB, SM, PL) and Calverton 18 Feb (DH).

WARBLERS

Orange-crowned Warbler: Blydenburgh Park, Hauppauge 9 Feb (JH), late.
Yellow Warbler: Brooklyn CBC 18 Dec (ph.).
Pine Warbler: 6 Bronx Botanical Garden 26 Dec (SN), a very large number for the date; widely reported on CBCs.
Ovenbird: Bronx Zoo 26 Dec (DKr).
Canada Warbler: Sayville 19 Dec (RG, SD'A), unexpected at this date anywhere in North America.
Yellow-breasted Chat: Widely reported on CBCs; late records include one Southampton 9 Jan (SM, PL).

TANAGERS-WEAVERS

WESTERN TANAGER: Setauket Mill Pond 27 Dec (HM, BK, PS, mob).
Clay-colored Sparrow: Sagaponack CBC 19 Dec (DF).
Vesper Sparrow: 6 Sagaponack CBC 19 Dec (DF).
NELSON'S SHARP-TAILED SPARROW: 2 Central Suffolk CBC 26 Dec (fide HM).
Seaside Sparrow: Tobay 2 Jan (DT).
White-throated Sparrow x Dark-eyed Junco hybrid: Northville 21 & 25 Feb (MLL).
HARRIS'S SPARROW: Baldwin Harbor Park 2-23 Jan (SM, PL, mob).
"GAMBEL'S" WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW (R10): Baldwin Harbor Park 2-23 Jan (AG, mob).
N. Cardinal: sev CBC totals approaching or exceeding all-time maxima.
Rusty Blackbird: 33 Van Cortland Park, large number.
Boat-tailed Grackle: 7 m singing Dune Rd. 5 Mar.
Com. Redpoll: 2 MP 18 Dec (PL); BP several dates Jan-Feb (fide NYC Area RBA); Ridge 14 Feb (JH)..

EXOTICS

Chiloe Wigeon: 18 Dec Montauk.