

REGION 8—HUDSON-MOHAWK

Will Yandik

269 Schneider Road, Hudson NY 12534
wyandik@hotmail.com

Winter weather in 2005 was strange, variable, and stormy. A quick look at monthly averages for precipitation and temperatures at Albany International Airport reveal nothing unusual, but a more careful study of day-to-day weather data uncovers seesawing temperatures, freak rainstorms, snow and ice squalls, and strong winds. December's temperatures ranged from —5... F to 57... F, with no single significant warm or cold spell. January's average temperature was 2.7... below average, but this masks the fact that four days topped 40... F, and the month experienced half a dozen warm drizzly rain showers. February began uncharacteristically warm, with a (high of 52... F on 1 February) and with little snow cover. The season ended colder than average, with several small storms of mixed precipitation. This winter's weather presented a thermoregulatory challenge to anything unlucky enough to live outside.

The lack of an early consistent freeze kept many large bodies of water only partially frozen, and early Christmas Bird Counts showed higher than average waterfowl species diversity. Fall migrants such as Ring-necked Duck, Blue-winged Teal, Ruddy Duck, Northern Pintail, and Gadwall showed up on multiple counts. Common Loons, (4 in Albany and 3 in Chatham,) are unusual on Hudson Valley CBCs. A Red-necked Grebe on the Albany count was also unexpected. Despite open water, late winter waterfowl surveys, especially to the north, found low numbers of ducks.

American Crows are in the news again. The cities of Albany and Troy for the third year paid federal wildlife agents \$6,000 to send out five two-man crews to disband large roosts in the Capital District. Using hand-held lasers, recorded distress calls, and fireworks, the Feds chased two roosts, (each estimated at 20,000 birds,) around the cities. Despite this, Capital District CBCs still tallied record numbers of the crows, and the roosts appeared firmly in place at winter's end. One newspaper headline in Columbia County worried that roosts might spread across the landscape like a plague: Is [our] county the next stop on the roost belt? Large roosts (>1000) have also been recorded in Montgomery, Schoharie, and Washington counties. While sympathetic to inconvenienced property owners, birders can find prime opportunities for fascinating study in the roosts. The hour of socialization that occurs before crows settle down for the evening is an unpredictable and thought-provoking phenomenon. It's obvious why so many crows congregate around the refuse dumps and sewage treatment facilities in the Capital District, but why would large roosts form in rural areas that seem to offer unspecialized feeding areas and roosting habitats? How exactly do roosts form and what advantages do they confer? Another anecdote of interest involves observers on the Southern Rensselaer CBC, who watched two Red-tailed Hawks opportunistically harass and feed on crows from the large roost near the Port of Albany.

Bob Yunick's late fall banding data showed an increase in Tufted Titmouse numbers, and December CBCs likewise recorded high counts for this species. Chatham recorded more than 200, and many other Region 8 CBCs tallied nearly as many. Both Winter Wren and Carolina Wren numbers were up, despite the season's weather challenges. Area CBCs recorded 8 Winter Wrens compared to with only 2 in 2003 and a single bird in 2002. Carolina Wrens appeared 37 times on Region 8 CBCs this year, an increase over last year's tally of 20, but below the count of 60 in 2002.

Each winter brings at least a few half-hardy surprises, but Hudson Falls **Blue-headed Vireo** was a December first for Washington County. The Johnstown-Gloversville CBC uncovered a **House Wren**, and many counties tallied American Pipits in modestly high numbers throughout early winter. A **Grey Catbird** on the Chatham CBC was an interesting find, trumped only by the fact that Schenectady CBC birders found **three** on the same day to the north. Another catbird surfaced in Clifton Park, Saratoga County, on 9 January. Warblers were scarce for the third winter in a row. According to the records at my disposal, this winter's report of a single Yellow-rumped Warbler is the lowest winter total in a decade. Finally, A CBC party at Delmar's Five Rivers Educational Center in Albany County searched through House Sparrows to discover a very cooperative **Dickcissel** that lingered for more than a week at feeders much to the pleasure of other Albany birders.

Contributors

Alan Devoe Bird Club monthly sighting reports, Bill Cook, Mark Fitzsimmons, Jane Graves, Richard Guthrie, Denise Hackert-Stoner, Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club's Birdline of Eastern New York, Geoff LeBaron, Bill Lee, Tina Markopoulos, Andrew Mason, Roger Miller, Gail & Rich Nord, Jeff Novick, Patti Packer, Tom Palmer, Barb Putnam, Will Raup, Scott Stoner, Alison Van Keuren, Carol & Owen Whitby, Phil Whitney, Will Yandik, Robert Yunick.

Abbreviations

ALB—T Albany ALBA; CAT—T Catskill GREE; CBC—Christmas Bird Count; CHA—T Chatham COLU; COH—City of Cohoes ALBA; COX—T Cossackie GREE; FtE—T Fort Edwards WASH; GLO—T Gloversville FULT; HR—Hudson R; JOH—T Johnstown FULT; NBA—T New Baltimore GREE; SAR—T Saratoga SARA; SCH—T Schenectady SCHE.

WHISTLING-DUCKS—VULTURES

Snow Goose: max 6402 SAR CBC 18 Dec; 3 HR 3 Feb.

Canada Goose: max 8881 SAR CBC 18 Dec.

Wood Duck: 8 ALB CBC 19 Dec.

Gadwall: 2 SAR CBC 18 Dec; SCH CBC 18 Dec.

Blue-winged Teal: CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec.

N. Pintail: 3 CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec.

Green-winged Teal: SAR CBC 18 Dec.

Canvasback: Cox 16-17 Jan.

Ring-necked Duck: 32 CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; SAR CBC 18 Dec; 32 ALB CBC 19 Dec.

Lesser Scaup: 3 Nassau L. RENS 14 Dec; Troy CBC 1 Jan.

Long-tailed Duck: Bolton Landing CBC 18 Dec; ALB CBC 19 Dec.

Bufflehead: max 8 Bolton Landing CBC 18 Dec.

Com. Goldeneye: max 153 SAR CBC 18 Dec.
Hooded Merganser: max 28 Hudson Falls CBC 19 Dec.
Red-breasted Merganser: SAR CBC 18 Dec; 7 Salem CBC 28 Dec.
Ruddy Duck: 30 COX 8-14 Dec; 11 ALB CBC 19 Dec.
Ring-necked Pheasant: Bolton Landing CBC 18 Dec; Northumberland SARA 30 Jan; CHA 1-27 Feb.
Com. Loon: Alcove Res ALBA 17 Dec; Bolton Landing CBC 18 Dec; 3 CHA CBC 18 Dec; 4 ALB CBC 19 Dec.
Red-necked Grebe: ALB CBC 19 Dec.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: reports of 3-6 on most CBCs.
N. Harrier: max 8 COX 2 Jan.
Cooper's Hawk: observed hunting Am. Crows 13 Dec (WR).
N. Goshawk: Northumberland SARA 22 Dec; Troy RENS 4 Jan; SARA 30 Jan; Gilbert Rd SARA 2 Feb.
Red-shouldered Hawk: 2 SCH 18 Dec; ALB CBC 19 Dec; CHA 3 Feb.
Rough-legged Hawk: max 8 N SARA 30 Dec.
Golden Eagle: Germantown COLU 3 Jan (BC).
Merlin: Slingerlands SARA 4 Dec; Hudson Falls CBC 19 Dec; S RENS CBC 27 Dec; FtE 17 Jan; Clifton Park SARA 2 Feb; Vischer Ferry SARA 3 Feb.
Peregrine Falcon: max 3 S RENS CBC 27 Dec.
Killdeer: CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec.
Iceland Gull: CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; 2 SCH CBC 18 Dec; 4 Troy CBC 1 Jan; Crescent SCHE 16 Jan; Coeymans ALBA 7 Feb; 2 COX 12-26 Feb.
Lesser Black-backed Gull: 2 Troy CBC 1 Jan; COX 12 Feb.
Glaucous Gull: CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; Troy CBC 1 Jan; COX 18 Feb.
Great Black-backed Gull: max 626 Troy CBC 1 Jan.

DOVESPIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

E. Screech-Owl: total 12 CBC reports 14 Dec-1 Jan.
Great Horned Owl: total 15 CBC reports 14 Dec-1 Jan.
Barred Owl: total 5 CBC reports

14 Dec-1 Jan.

Short-eared Owl: Ft Plain MONT 4 Jan; FtE 17 Jan-13 Feb; 2 COX 21 Feb.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: total 7 CBC reports 14 Dec- 1 Jan, 8 other reports.

Pileated Woodpecker: 16 ALB CBC 19 Dec, high count; 14 CHA CBC 18 Dec, high count.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

E. Phoebe: New Salem ALBA 16 Dec.
N. Shrike: FtE 16 Dec; CHA CBC 18 Dec; SAR CBC 18 Dec; SCH CBC 18 Dec; Black Creek Marsh 19 Dec; Hudson Falls CBC 19 Dec; max 4 JOH-GLO CBC 26 Dec; Vischer Ferry SARA 16 Jan; MONT 20 Jan; COX 17 Feb, modest winter invasion.

BLUE-HEADED VIREO: Hudson Falls CBC 19 Dec.

Am. Crow: max 3178 Troy CBC 3178 1 Jan.

Fish Crow: 4 SCH CBC 18 Dec; 2 Troy CBC 1 Jan; max 35 Colonie ALBA 3 Jan; NBA 10 Jan-17 Feb.

Com. Raven: scattered reports consistent with winter averages.

Horned Lark: 42 CHA CBC 18 Dec; 170 SAR CBC 18 Dec; 100 Hudson Falls CBC 19 Dec; 60 S RENS CBC 27 Dec; max 588 Salem CBC 28 Dec; 100 WASH 18 Jan.

Tufted Titmouse: max 203 CHA CBC 18 Dec.

Carolina Wren: total 37 CBC reports 14 Dec-1 Jan.

HOUSE WREN: JOH-GLO CBC 26 Dec.

Winter Wren: total 8 CBC report 14 Dec-1 Jan.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: CHA CBC 18 Dec.

Hermit Thrush: Vischer Ferry SARA 4 Feb.

GRAY CATBIRD: CHA CBC 18 Dec; 3 SCH CBC 18 Dec, high count; Clifton Park SARA 9 Jan.

Am. Pipit: CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; COH 30 Dec; max 100 Route 10 Livingston COLU 16 Jan.

WARBLERS

Yellow-rumped Warbler: Troy CBC 1 Jan, only report.

WILSON'S WARBLER: NBA 1 Dec (RG), somewhat late.

TANAGERS - WEAVERS

Chipping Sparrow: 3 S RENS CBC 27 Dec.

Savannah Sparrow: Florida MONT 13 Jan; max 7 COX 17 Jan; 3 COX 26 Feb.

Fox Sparrow: CHA 1 Dec, only report.

Swamp Sparrow: SAR CBC 18 Dec; SCH CBC 18 Dec; ALB CBC 19 Dec; Troy CBC 1 Jan.

White-crowned Sparrow: CHA CBC 18 Dec.

Lapland Longspur: Lusso Rd MONT 20 Jan; max 5 E River Rd WASH 20 Jan.

Snow Bunting: 30-40 Broadalbin FULT 13 Dec; 31 SAR CBC 18 Dec; max 228 JOH-GLO CBC 26 Dec; 40 S RENS CBC 27 Dec; 45 Salem CBC 28 Dec.

DICKCISSEL: Five Rivers ALBA 19 Dec-2 Jan (DH, TM, PP, SS).

Red-winged Blackbird: arr COX 17 Feb.

E. Meadowlark: 2 FtE 12 Feb.

Com. Grackle: arr COX 16 Feb.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 187 Salem CBC 28 Dec; 5 Troy CBC 1 Jan; COX 17 Jan.

Purple Finch: total 42 CBC reports 14 Dec-1 Jan; 29 Glen MONT 3 Jan.

Red Crossbill: 3 JOH-GLO CBC 26 Dec, only report.

Common Redpoll: Galway SARA 17 Dec; CHA CBC 18 Dec; 2 Gansevort SARA 1 Jan.

Pine Siskin: NBA 4-10 Dec; 6 SCH CBC 18 Dec; 3 Hudson Falls CBC 19 Dec; Porter Corners SARA 23 Jan.

Evening Grosbeak: CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; 11 JOH-GLO CBC 26 Dec; max 30 Northville FULT 23 Jan.