

REGION 4 - SUSQUEHANNA

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The winter was without extreme cold even though the first 3 weeks of December were colder than usual. At Binghamton, December was 3.4°F below the mean, with 24 days when the temperature did not reach freezing. Precipitation was 33% lower than normal that month. There were no significant snowstorms and little snow pack all winter. The greatest amount of snow that fell during a 24 hour period was 4.6" on 2 December. Snow depth reached a period maximum of 6-12" on 23 December, the day the cold snap ended. Warming the last week of December was a prelude to what was to come. January's mean of 30.8°F was 9.1° above normal. It tied for the second warmest January on record. Precipitation was 27% higher than

normal in January. What fell as snow soon melted. February temperatures were slightly high, 1.3° above normal. Precipitation for February was about half of average. The coldest temperature of the 3-month period was -6°F, which occurred on 14 December. There were no Binghamton records below 0°F during January and February.

The rivers and many large lakes were open much of the winter. Small and shallower lakes froze in December. Some of those resisted the January warmth and remained closed through the period. A couple of strong cold fronts may have impacted birds and birders. One arrived just in time for the annual waterfowl count. A high of 53°F on Friday 15 January gave way to a low of 6°F on the 14th. Another front on 17 February brought winds in excess of 50 mph causing widespread power outages.

Cones were scarce except for red pine. Overall, the mast and fruit crop was poor. However, ground foraging birds that pick through manure had a relatively good winter.

There were no big surprises during the annual waterfowl count. A Ruddy Duck was found on the Cortland Christmas Bird Count. It is rare in the Region and even more so in winter. Other notable waterfowl seen that are rare for the area in winter were 4 Wood Ducks on the Waterfowl Count and additional birds seen on four out of five CBC's; 1 White-winged scoter at Hillcrest Pits; 3 Redheads at the south end of Skaneateles Lake; and 1 Green-winged Teal at Whitney Point Reservoir in December. Other good waterbird sightings were a very unusual occurrence of 4 **Red-throated Loons** at various locations following a cold front and subsequent fallout in early December, 2 Horned Grebes, and a single **Red-Necked Grebe** at the south end of Skaneateles Lake on the Cortland Christmas Bird count. Additionally, 5 late Double-crested Cormorants were seen flying by Franklin Mt. Hawk Watch in early December. An early Killdeer was seen on Mark Tannis' farm in Pitcher on 17 February.

The Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society turned up a very respectable 17 Bald Eagles on their annual eagle trip to Delaware County. Turkey Vulture continue the recent trend of staying later and returning earlier. In fact, a roost in Cooperstown turned up a wintering group of a few Turkey Vultures. Cooper's Hawk and Sharp-shinned Hawk numbers were very close to equal on the Christmas Counts. Cooper's Hawks appear to be increasing in the Region and are now our dominant accipiter. A very respectable 7 Northern Goshawks were reported. A very high number of four Red-shouldered Hawks were reported. Most winter's there are 1-2 Red-shouldered Hawks reported. After good numbers were seen in early winter, Rough-legged Hawks were seen in below average numbers as the season progressed. A few Golden Eagles were present, which continues to give credence that the Region holds the only somewhat reliable wintering population in the state. Wintering Merlin reports are increasing in towns and cities across the state. Merlins were seen in Binghamton throughout winter near where they nested. The Binghamton nesting pair of Peregrine Falcons was seen through the period. Lastly, American Kestrels continue to be scarce in winter.

Only four species of owl were seen. The Region's only Snowy Owl was seen in East Freetown in mid February. The other three more common owls were seen in low numbers.

There were some nice songbirds finds for Region 4 during the winter. A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was a very nice find on the Owego Christmas Bird Count. Northern Shrike numbers appeared to be slightly higher than usual across the Region, with 3-6 reported per month. A few Fish Crows continue in the Owego/Tioga areas. Common Ravens continue to increase in Region both as a nester and in winter.

Tufted Titmice continue to further establish themselves across this relatively high elevation Region. The Sherburne Christmas Bird Count set a count high for Tufted Titmouse. Carolina Wren numbers appear to be stable, with higher than usual numbers reported in Sherburne and Oneonta. A very high total of four scattered Winter Wrens were found. Scattered small flocks or individual American Robins wintered in the area as well. Eastern Bluebirds were seen in good numbers this year in comparison to last year's low number of sightings. Very unusual was the find of all three mimic thrushes in the Tioga County area. Additionally, one Hermit Thrush was also seen in Tioga County. A rare wintering American Pipit was found at Mark Tannis' farm in Pitcher.

There were reports of several rare-in-winter sparrows: White-crowned Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Field Sparrow and Swamp Sparrow. A late pair of Eastern Towhees was also reported in Chenango in mid December. Snow Buntings and Horned Larks were seen in decent to good numbers throughout the period. Another rare winterer was a Rusty Blackbird in Scott, Cortland County. There were only a few wintering Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Grackles, and Brown-headed Cowbirds in the Region. A few migrating flocks of blackbirds returned to the area during the last few days of February.

Winter finches were present but in low numbers overall. Most were seen in very small numbers. Purple Finches were nearly absent, which was to be expected after last year's irruption. Conifers, except red pine, had poor cone crops. A single Red Crossbill was seen, which provided evidence that nesting birds from the last two years had largely departed the area. One flock of 25 White-winged Crossbills was seen in Greene the last day of February. Transient but fairly widespread small flocks of 2-10 Pine Siskins were present as were smaller flocks of 1-5 Common Redpolls. However, there were a few larger flocks of 15-40 Pine Siskins present throughout winter, and at least one large flock of 50-100 Common Redpolls was present at Tom Salo's in W. Burlington from mid January through February. There were small and fairly widespread flocks of Evening Grosbeak scattered throughout. The largest flocks noted were 35 in Otselic and 50+ in McDonough Chenango County. This was probably their best irruption since 2001-02. Even during irruption years, this species continues to be much harder to find compared to the 1970-90 period.

All in all, there were 105 species reported for the winter period.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

BCBC - Binghamton Christmas Bird Count; BPd- Boland Pond ; BUNP – Binghamton U. Nature Preserve; CVSP – Chenango Valley State Park; CCBC - Cortland Christmas Bird Count; DOAS – Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society; FMHW - Franklin Mountain Hawk Watch; LHNC - Lime Hollow Nature Center; NCBCWW - Naturalists' Club of Broome County Weed Walker; OnCBC - Oneonta Christmas Bird Count; OtL – Otsego Lake, OTSE; OwCBC - Owego Christmas Bird Count; SCBC - Sherburne Christmas Bird Count; SkanL - Skaneateles Lake; TBC - Tioga Bird Club, WhP-Res – Whitney Pt. Reservoir.

WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

Snow Goose: max 500 FMHW 5 Dec; numerous "early" northbound flocks early Feb.

Canada Goose: 1807 NYSOA Waterfowl Count mid-Jan; max 2000 CCBC Dec 17.

Mute Swan: 2 NYSOA Waterfowl Count mid-Jan; 1 BPd & 1 Hillcrest Pits thru.

TUNDRA SWAN: 1 Miller Beach Tioga 10 Feb (SK); 1 Susq R Vestal 28 Feb (DW), rare in winter.

WOOD DUCK: 4 NYSOA Waterfowl Count 18 Jan; unusually found on 4 of 5 Reg CBC's

AMERICAN WIGEON: 1f BPd Dec-Feb joined by m Feb, rare in winter.

Am. Black Duck: 183 NYSOA Waterfowl Count mid-Jan; max 31 BCBC 1 Jan.

Mallard: 491 NYSOA Waterfowl Count mid-Jan; max 600 CCBC 26 Dec.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL: 1m WhP-Res TIOG 12 Dec, rare in winter.

REDHEAD: 3 SkanL 17 Dec (MY).

Ring-necked Duck: max 15 SkanL Jan-Feb.

Lesser Scaup: 1 SkanL 17 Dec, only report.

WHITE-WINGED SCOTER: 1 Hillcrest Pits 6 Jan (DW).

Bufflehead: few scattered reports SkanL & BPd Dec-Feb.

Com. Goldeneye: max 47 SkanL 17 Dec; few other scattered reports.

Hooded Merganser: max 41 OtL & tribs mid-Jan; 49 NYSOA Waterfowl Count mid-Jan.

Com. Merganser: max 213 NYSOA Waterfowl Count mid-Jan; good numbers on most sizable rivers.

RUDDY DUCK: CCBC 17 Dec (MY), rare.

AMERICAN COOT: max 28 OtL NYSOA Waterfowl Count mid-Jan; few BdP early Dec.

Ring-necked Pheasant: max 4 BCBC 1 Jan.

Ruffed Grouse: max 10 SCBC 17 Dec; scattered reports.

Wild Turkey: max 427 OnCBC 17 Dec.

KILLDEER: 1 Pitcher 17 Feb (MT), early.

RED-THROATED LOON: 1 Cortland Quarry 6-17 Dec (JM); 1 LHNC 6 Dec; 1 Endwell 6 Dec (DW); 1 WhP-Res 6 Dec (DW); rare, unusually high fallout.

Com. Loon: few scattered reports; 1 SkanL 17 Dec.

Pied-billed Grebe: 1 CCBC 17 Dec; 1 Endwell 1 Jan; 1 Bing Plaza 18 Feb.

HORNED GREBE: 1 WhP-Res 7 Dec (WW); 1 OtL 4 Dec; rare in winter.

RED-NECKED GREBE: 1 SkanL 17 Dec (MY&JS); rare.

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT: 5 FMHW 4 Dec; rare.

Great Blue Heron: max 13 BCBC 1 Jan.

Turkey Vulture: first migrant late Feb; birds at Cooperstown OTSE roost Dec-Feb; 1 Norwich CHEN 9 Jan.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: max 17 DELA DOAS trip Jan 28; concentrated in Delaware River basin; reported from all areas; regular in BROO and becoming more regular CHEN, DELA, CORT.

N. Harrier: Max 2 OwCBC 30 Dec; few scattered throughout.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: max 5 BCBC 1 Jan; average numbers throughout.

Cooper's Hawk: max 8 BCBC 1 Jan; regular and numbers increasing thru.

N. Goshawk: 7 reports scattered about; continues to be a bit under-reported.

RED-SHOULDERED HAWK: 1 TIOG; 1 OwCBC 30 Jan; 1 Barker 28 Jan; high.

Red-tailed Hawk: max 44 BCBC 1 Jan; average numbers.

Rough-legged Hawk: 12 OwCBC 30 Dec; slightly low to average numbers.

GOLDEN EAGLE: max 15 FMHW 4 Dec; 2 SCBC 17 Dec; 1 CORT Jan; Region continues to have state's only consistent wintering population.

Am. Kestrel: max 8 OwCBC 30 Dec; scarce after Dec.

Merlin: 1 occasional CORT Dec-Feb; 1 BROO; 1 Chenango; Binghamton thru.

Peregrine Falcon: Binghamton thru, 2 at times, expected.

Am. Coot: max 28 NYSOA Waterfowl Count mid-Jan; Otsego Lake all season.

Ring-billed Gull: max 196 CCBC 17 Dec, low.

Herring Gull: max 58 CCBC 17 Dec, low.

Great Black-backed Gull: max 58 CCBC 17 Dec, low.

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

Rock Pigeon: max 1991 BCBC 1 Jan.

Mourning Dove: max 909 BCBC 26 Dec.

E. Screech-Owl: max 3 OnCBC 17 Dec;

numbers from lowlands below 1200'.

Great Horned Owl: 5 BCBC 26 1 Jan; good number of reports.

SNOWY OWL: 1 E. Freetown CORT mid-Feb (RS), only report.

Barred Owl: scattered reports throughout from wet woods and swamps >1300'

Belted Kingfisher: 1 found on 4 of 5 Reg CBC's; a few other reported.

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER: 1 OwCBC 30 Dec.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: max 16 OwCBC 30 Dec; wintering numbers still largely confined to river valleys >1500.

Downy Woodpecker: max 147 BCBC 1 Jan; high numbers on all CBC's.

Hairy Woodpecker: max 45 BCBC 1 Jan; good numbers on all CBC's.

N. Flicker: 3-4 reported on local CBC's; scarce in Reg thru.

Pileated Woodpecker: max 4 BCBC & OwCBC.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: max 3 SCBC 17 Dec; scattered inds throughout Reg; reported numbers of 3-5 per month in Reg. were slightly above average.

Blue Jay: max 522 BCBC 1 Jan; high numbers on all CBC's.

Am. Crow: max 2859 CCBC 17 Dec, all birds counted on CCBC presumed to roost in City of Cortland.

Fish Crow: few Town of Tioga & Vestal, local.

Com. Raven: max 17 FMHW 6 Dec;

1-4 seen on all area CBC's; scattered birds throughout Reg thru; larger flocks of 5-10+ presumed to be immature birds occasionally seen in Reg in winter.

Horned Lark: max ~200 CCBC 26 Dec; many reports of good numbers thru.

Tufted Titmouse: max 193 BCBC 1 Jan; 29 SCBC, record high for count; continues to expand.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: max 19 BCBC 1 Jan.; low to average numbers; many birds at feeders and not woods which is indicative of poor cone crop.

Brown Creeper: max 12 BCBC 1 Jan.

Carolina Wren: max 18 BCBC 1 Jan; pr Scott CORT Dec-Feb (MY); stable to

increasing numbers reported throughout Reg; expanding slightly in villages of Sherburne & Oneonta.

Winter Wren: 1 BCBC 1 Jan; 1 CVSP Jan; 1 Reynolds Dec; 1 Norwich CHEN 26 Feb; rare in winter.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 7 BCBC 1 Jan; low numbers.

E. Bluebird: max 42 BCBC 1 Jan; good numbers compared with last year.

HERMIT THRUSH: 1 BCBC 1 Jan.

Am. Robin: max 50-100+ SkanL Jan-Feb; scattered small numbers wintered throughout

GRAY CATBIRD: 1 Vestal Jan; 1 OTSE Jan (KR), rare in winter

N. Mockingbird: max 6 BCBC 1 Jan; better numbers than last year.

BROWN THRASHER: 10 Dec BUNP (BK), only report, rare in winter

European Starling: max 1860 SCBC 17 Dec.

AMERICAN PIPIT: 1 Pitcher 12 Dec-thru (MT), only report, rare in winter.

Cedar Waxwing: max 241 OwCBC 30 Dec; 180 upper Lisle Feb (JW).

TANAGERS - WEAVERS

E. TOWHEE: pr Chen 11 Dec.

Am. Tree Sparrow: max 164 OwCBC 30 Dec.

FIELD SPARROW: 1 Triangle 12-28 Jan; 1 Middletown DELA 21 Jan (JD); rare in winter.

FOX SPARROW: 1 W. Burlington OSTE 3 Dec; 1 Union TIOG 7 Dec; rare in winter.

Song Sparrow: max 13 BCBC 1 Jan; good numbers on CBC's.

SWAMP SPARROW: 1 Cort early-Dec; 1 SCBC 17 Dec; rare in winter.

White-throated Sparrow: max 33 BCBC 1 Jan; good numbers on CBC's.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW: 3 reports TIOG & OTSE; 1 Norwich CHEN 11 Dec; rare in winter.

Dark-eyed Junco: max 393 OwCBC 30 Dec.

Snow Bunting: max 150 Plymouth Dec-Feb; 150 Preble CORT 8 Jan (MY).

N. Cardinal: max 185 BCBC 1 Jan; fairly well established even at higher elevations.

Red-winged Blackbird: max 14 W. Burlington OSTE 26 Feb; few northbound migrant flocks late Feb; 8 SCBC 17 Dec; few wintered in Region.

RUSTY BLACKBIRD: 1 Scott CORT 17 Dec; 1 BROO 6 Dec.

Com. Grackle: singles wintered in area; few returning migrants late Feb; 5 OwCBC 30 Dec.

Brown-headed Cowbird: few wintered in area; few returning migrants late Feb; few on 4 of 5 Reg CBC's.

Purple Finch: max 7 BCBC 1 Jan; only a few scattered here and there, typical of most years.

House Finch: max 386 BCBC 1 Jan.

Red Crossbill: 1 Pharsalia late Feb, only report; nesting birds from past 2 year's mostly departed (MY).

White-winged Crossbill: 25 Greene CHEN 28 Feb (MT), only report.

Com. Redpoll: max ~100 W. Burlington OTSE mid Jan-thru; 15 Bing 17 Jan; ~10 Virgil thru Feb; numbers of scattered reports of 1-5 throughout Region Jan-Feb.

Pine Siskin: max 83 OnCBC 17 Dec (LB); few larger flocks of 15-40 present; widespread small numbers of 2-10 throughout Region; more widespread than redpolls and slightly higher numbers than usual.

Evening Grosbeak: max 20-50 McDonough Dec-Feb; ~20 on both OnCBC & SCBC; small flock of 6-12 Truxton CORT Dec thru (MY); 10-30 Northwest Corners CHEN Dec-Feb; small flocks of 5-10 scattered DELA & TIOG Dec-Jan (AM); best showing since winter 2001-02, but nothing compared to 1970-1990.

Am. Goldfinch: max 300 CCBC 17 Dec; average numbers thru.

House Sparrow: max 582 BCBC 1 Jan.