

REGION 8—HUDSON-MOHAWK

Will Yandik

269 Schneider Road, Hudson, NY 12534

wyandik@hotmail.com

The winter of 05-06 was mild overall with little snow cover. December was the coldest month of the season, with an average daily temperature of 26.7°F at Albany International Airport. Total precipitation was average, however frequent. Some form of rain or snow fell on 20 days in December. January was uncharacteristically mild, 9.3 degrees warmer than average. Twenty-five days rose above freezing. The highest temperature reached 61° F on 21 January. Precipitation was 2.04 inches greater than average, and most occurred as rain. February continued mild, with six days exhibiting temperatures greater than 50° F.

Warm weather equals open water in our part of the state, and Christmas Bird Counts across the Region tallied above average number of ducks. Most Regional CBCs recorded high species diversity on the Hudson and Mohawk rivers, except for Southern Rensselaer CBC, which was shrouded in dense fog on 26 December. Numerous Great Blue Herons and a single **American Bittern** on the Schenectady CBC were products of suitable foraging conditions for waders.

White-winged gulls have increased in frequency and abundance over the last decade in Region 8, and multiple individuals of Iceland, Lesser Black-backed, and Glaucous Gulls now appear as regular and annual visitors regardless of prevailing weather conditions. Strong gathering areas include the Mohawk in Schenectady County, the Federal Dam at Troy, and especially the shallows near Cossackie and Coeymans on the Hudson's estuary. Causes for this influx are poorly known, but it is interesting to see a broad range of age classes this season.

Most years pass without any sightings of Golden Eagle, so it's notable that observers found four this winter. The birds each appear to be different individuals, 3 adults and 1 immature, and are apparently not associated with the population at Stissing Mountain in Dutchess County. Three Long-eared Owls were discovered on 30 December roosting near Five Rivers Environmental Education Center in Delmar, Albany County. Unfortunately, it is believed that all three were killed by a resident Northern Goshawk. When Bob Yunick visited the grove on 6 January he found two piles of feathers near the owls' roosting spot. A month later, he found a third pile of feathers. Flight feathers were collected and brought to the NYS Museum in Albany to confirm that they were from separate owls, apparently one adult long-eared and two immatures. On 3 January one of the owls was observed being harassed by a large raptor, likely one of the resident goshawks.

Short-eared Owls appeared in typical numbers (1-6) at local well-known wintering grounds in Greene, Montgomery, and Washington counties. Thomas Salo reported an interesting anecdote, however, of an adult emerging at dusk from a farm shed on 28 February. The owner of the property claimed that the

birds were present on the land in summer, but he may have been erroneously referring to Northern Harriers that are known to nest there. I have found no other reports of Short-eared Owls roosting in man-made structures in Region 8.

Larry Federman photographed a **Boreal Chickadee** which visited his feeder in Palenville, Greene County on 16 January. This bird represents the second record for Greene County. The last appeared in 1975 during a particularly heavy invasion year. In 1975, Boreal Chickadees appeared in Columbia, Rensselaer, and Saratoga counties. Outside of the scarce reports from the Adirondacks in Warren County, Boreal Chickadees have not been reported in the southern portion of the Region since the mid-1980s.

The mild winter also delivered some half-hardies, particularly on Regional CBCs. **Gray Catbirds** were well-represented this year, with four sightings in December. The Bolton Landing CBC reported a **House Wren**, although I have not reviewed details and I can't rule out the possibility that it was a Winter Wren. Birders from the Alan Devoe Bird Club provided good details for an **Eastern Towhee**, which is particularly uncommon in Region 8 in December, despite many winter reports of this species downstate. Sparrows were numerous and diverse this winter, with higher than expected numbers of Chipping, Field, Savannah, Fox, and Song Sparrows. Although many of these species pop up annually on CBCs, it is uncommon to see them tarry into January and February.

CONTRIBUTORS

Alan Devoe Bird Club monthly sighting reports, Larry Alden, Bill Cook, Jane Graves, Rich Guthrie, Hudson Mohawk Bird Club's Birdline of Eastern New York, Geoff LeBaron, Bill Lee, Andrew Mason, Joyce Miller, Roger Miller, Gail & Rich Nord, Barbara Putnam, Will Raup, Thomas Salo, Alison Van Keuren, Carol & Owen Whitby, Phil Whitney, Will Yandik, Robert Yunick.

ABBREVIATIONS

ALB – T Albany ALBA; AUS – T Austerlitz COLU; CAT – T Catskill GREE; CHA – T Chatham COLU; COX – T Coxsackie GREE; FtE – T Fort Edward WASH; HR – Hudson Ri; JL – Jenny Lake SARA; MR – Mohawk Ri; NBA – T New Baltimore GREE; NOR – T Northumberland WASH; TR – Tomhannock Res. RENS; SCH – T Schenectady SCHE; TRO – T Troy RENS; VF – Vischer's Ferry NHP SARA.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Snow Goose: max 3000 TR 4-8 Dec;
2790 CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec.

Wood Duck: 2 ALB CBC 18 Dec;
Collins L SCHE 15 Jan.

Gadwall: 6 VF 3 Dec; 4 ALB CBC
18 Dec.

Am. Wigeon: 12 ALB CBC 18 Dec.

N. Shoveler: 2 VF 3 Dec, only report.

N. Pintail: CHA CBC 17 Dec, only report.

Green-winged Teal: SCH CBC 17 Dec;
Salem CBC 19 Dec.

Canvasback: 70 CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec;
TRO CBC 31 Dec; max 200 HR at West
Camp 21 Jan.

Redhead: 5 Saratoga L 1 Dec; 6 ALB
CBC 18 Dec; Salem CBC 19 Dec; TRO
CBC 31 Dec.

Ring-necked Duck: max 40 Saratoga L 1 Dec; arr AUS 28 Feb.

Greater Scaup: TRO CBC 31 Dec, only report.

White-winged Scoter: MR at Fultonville 15 Jan (RM), uncommon mid-winter.

Long-tailed Duck: ALB CBC 18 Dec.

Com. Goldeneye: max 350 TR 8 Dec.

Red-breasted Merganser: TR 4 Dec;

Ruddy Duck: 10 TR 4 Dec; CAT-COX

CBC 14 Dec; 10 ALB CBC 18 Dec.

Com. Loon: Saratoga L 1 Dec; Bolton Landing CBC 17 Dec; ALB CBC 18 Dec; HR at Ft. Miller WASH 18 Dec; HR at Germantown COLU 8 Jan.

Pied-billed Grebe: Hudson Falls CBC 18 Dec; HR at Troy Federal Dam 20 Feb.

Red-necked Grebe: ALB CBC 18 Dec.

Double-crested Cormorant: 1 TR 8 Dec.

AM. BITTERN: SCH CBC 17 Dec.

Turkey Vulture: Gansevoort SARA 5 Feb; Ravena ALBA 22 Feb.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

N. Harrier: max 9 COX area 6 Jan.

N. Goshawk: harassing long-eared owl Five Rivers ALBA 5 Jan, remains of owls found the next week.

Red-shouldered Hawk: 2 CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; 2 SCH CBC 17 Dec; ALB CBC 18 Dec.

Rough-legged Hawk: 3 Rensselaerville RENS 11 Dec; FtE 15 Dec; 4 NOR 18 Dec; Cox 20 Dec; max 10 NOR 20 Jan.

Golden Eagle: AUS 9 Dec; CHA CBC 17 Dec; 1 Salem RENS 17-19 Dec; imm Fiver Rivers ALBA 4 Feb.

Merlin: 2 SCH CBC 17 Dec; S RENS CBC 26 Dec; TRO CBC 31 Dec; Slingerlands ALBA 6 Jan; Easton WASH 12 Jan.

Peregrine Falcon: dozens of single reports Dec thru.

Am. Coot: Chatham COLU 11 Dec-1 Jan; 2 Salem CBC 19 Dec.

Iceland Gull: 3 imm COX boat launch 4 Dec; ad COX 13 Dec; 3 CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; ALB CBC 18 Dec; S RENS CBC 26 Dec; 2 yr MR 29 Dec; 2 TRO CBC 31 Dec; imm Coeyman's Landing ALBA 9 Jan.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: imm COX boat launch 4 Dec; CHA CBC 17 Dec; ad MR 29 DEC; 2 TRO CBC 31 Dec; ad Coeymans ALBA 22 Jan.

Glaucous Gull: 2 CHA CBC 17 Dec; ad MR 29 Dec; 2 TRO CBC 31 Dec; imm COX boat launch 6 Jan; 2yr MR SARA 15 Jan; 2 Crescent SCHE 21 Jan.

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

Long-eared Owl: 3 Five Rivers ALBA 30 Dec-3 Jan, *intro*; 2 Black Creek Marsh ALBA 29 Jan.

Short-eared Owl: 2 FtE 4 Dec thru; 2 Plank Rd COX 13-14 Dec; 3 NOR 18 Dec, max 6 Ripple Corners Minden MONT 28 Feb; 6 other reports of singles.

N. Saw-whet Owl: Berne ALBA 22 Feb.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: 8 CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; CHA CBC 17 Dec; Saratoga Springs CBC 17 Dec; 1 SCH CBC 17 Dec; 3 ALB CBC 18 Dec; 2 TRO CBC 31 Dec; 4 mile pt. GREE 8 Jan; NBA 19 Jan.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: Rensselaerville RENS 13 Dec-27 Jan; Saratoga Springs CBC 17 Dec; SCH CBC 17 Dec; Polo Club SARA 24 Dec; 2 FtE 2 Jan; Duanesburg SCHE 10 Jan.

Fish Crow: 2 SCH CBC 17 Dec; 2 Coeymans ALBA 21 Jan; 6 Peebles I SARA 22 Jan.

Horned Lark : max 500 FtE 18 Dec.

BOREAL CHICKADEE: Palenville GREE 16 Jan, 1st Greene County record, photographed, NYSARC report encouraged, LF.

Carolina Wren: max 14 CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec.

HOUSE WREN: Bolton Landing CBC WARR 17 Dec.

Winter Wren: 1 New Salem ALBA 12 Dec; 2 CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; 3 SCH CBC 17 Dec; ALB CBC 18 Dec;

Golden-crowned Kinglet: 11 CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; ALB CBC 18 Dec, several reports of singles.

Hermit Thrush: Ramshorn GREE 4 Dec; 4 CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; 2 ALB CBC 18 Dec; S RENS CBC 26 Dec; TRO

CBC 31 Dec; VF 20 Feb.

GRAY CATBIRD: 1 NBA 13 Dec;
CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; CHA CBC 17
Dec; TRO CBC 31 Dec; high number of
reports for winter.
Am. Pipit: CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec;
TRO CBC 31 Dec.

WARBLERS

Yellow-rumped Warbler: 2 Athens
GREE 8 Jan, only report, scarce for the
second consecutive winter.

TANAGERS - WEAVERS

E. TOWHEE: AUS 12-20 Dec.
Chipping Sparrow: 4 CAT-COX
CBC 14 Dec.
Field Sparrow: CHA CBC 17 Dec;
SCH CBC 17 Dec; ALB CBC 18 Dec;
Livingston COLU 23 Dec.
Savannah Sparrow: 2 COX 13 Dec;
3 CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; 4 Saratoga
Springs CBC 17 Dec; FtE 18 Dec; TRO
CBC 31 Dec; Livingston COLU 4-10 Jan.
Fox Sparrow: Claverack COLU 4-10
Dec; CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; Hillsdale
COLU 19 Feb, unusual in Feb.

White-crowned Sparrow: Port of RENS
18 Jan.

Lapland Longspur: Easton WASH 18
Dec; 2 NOR 26 Jan.

Snow Bunting: 13 COX 13-14 Dec; max
150 FtE 20 Dec; 75 NOR 25 Jan.

E. Meadowlark: max 7 FtE 15 Dec.

Rusty Blackbird: Copake COLU 4-5
Dec; Gansevoort SARA 16-20 Dec.

Purple Finch: 21 ALB CBC 18 Dec; E.
Greenbush RENS 19 Dec.

White-winged Crossbill: 8 Corinth
SARA 4 Jan.

Com. Redpoll: E. Greenbush RENS 19
Dec; 72 TRO CBC 31 Dec; 100 Burnt
Hills SARA 1 Jan. 35 Livingston COLU
2 Jan; several other reports of flocks <10
birds Dec thru.

Pine Siskin: 8 Partridge Run WMA
ALBA 4 Dec; 12 CAT-COX CBC 14
Dec; scattered reports of flocks
<6 birds thru.

Evening Grosbeak: 8 Partridge Run
WMA ALBA 12 Dec; max 50 Berne
ALBA 20 Dec.