

REGION 7 - ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

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[Note: due to an editorial error, the winter season report for Region 7 was omitted from Volume 56, Number 2. It is presented here with apologies to John M. C. Peterson.]

Winter 2005-06 was the tenth warmest on record, with temperatures +4.4° F above average, but still saw several weather extremes, and Lake Champlain neared the 100-ft. flood stage several times. Early December was cold and clear, with Saranac Lake -10° F on the 8th, -17° F on the 13th, and -25° F by the 14th, followed by a snowstorm on 16 December that left a foot at Dannemora and 9" at Malone. Snow cover was a variable 6" to 15" during the Plattsburgh CBC on the 18th, and the Saranac Lake CBC had up to a foot on New Year's Day. January began cold but turned almost balmy. Even Saranac Lake reached 41 by the 11th, and a temperature inversion on 14 January pushed the thermometer to 50 at the summit of Spruce Hill, between Elizabethtown and Keene, on the morning of the 14th. Temperatures plunged the next day, and Saranac Lake was back to a more expected -9 on the 16th. Freezing rain, then rain with high winds, struck on 18-19 January, with flood warnings on the East Branch Ausable and Great Chazy rivers and gusts hitting 72 mph at Peru. Champlain quickly rose a foot to 98.06', and parts of Crown Point, Moriah, and Ticonderoga were evacuated. This was followed by more rain and snow, with a 7" snowfall at Malone on the 26th. Champlain stood at 99.48' the next day, compared with the record of 101.86' set at Burlington 27 April 1993, with the spring runoff and rains still to come. A snowstorm on 6 February dumped 9" at Tupper Lake but left only a dusting at Elizabethtown and lower elevations. Plattsburgh temperatures see-sawed between 0° on 11 February and a record 52 on the 15th then back down to near zero as the next storm hit on the 17th. With winds reaching 70+ mph, that storm left National Grid customers at Crown Point, Moriah, Ticonderoga, Westport, and Willsboro without power for days, downing trees and tearing off roofs. Chateaugay had 8" of snow on 24 February, but the ground remained bare elsewhere as high up as Elizabethtown. A more widespread storm the next day saw 9" of fluffy snow fall on Port Henry, 8" at Bloomingdale, and 7" at Elizabethtown, followed by a drop in temperature to -4 at Plattsburgh on 26 February. In the central Adirondacks, Inlet had snow on 44 days, but no more than 8" in any storm, and 12 days with rain. Cone and berry crops were judged poor. By season's end even lower elevations were finally covered with snow, and although Champlain had dropped back to 98', the lake was still a foot above December levels.

With much of Lake Champlain open throughout the winter, there were some large concentrations of waterfowl and numerous late reports of geese, ducks, mergansers, loons, grebes, and herons, with some species overwintering. Bald Eagle was virtually ubiquitous, especially in the lakeshore corridor, and the mostly snow free and bare Champlain Valley hosted lingering harriers and kestrels. The number of Belted Kingfishers that lingered into mid-January was exceptional.

The list of other species that normally winter farther south was almost unbelievable: **Turkey Vulture** in December and February; Red-bellied Woodpecker, **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**, and Northern Flicker on three Christmas Counts; an *Empidonax* flycatcher and a **Fish Crow** in mid-December; a total of 89 Tufted Titmice on three CBCs; 9 reports of Carolina Wren; **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** and **Wood Thrush** in December; Northern Mockingbird, Brown Thrasher, Fox Sparrow, **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** and **Baltimore Oriole** at feeders into January; plus other half-hardy sparrow and blackbird species. Such a winter assemblage is without precedent here.

There were still enough northern birds to provide at least a flavor of winter: about eight Barrow's Goldeneye, a Gyrfalcon, Iceland Gull, and a Snowy Owl. Perhaps the most dramatic, Bohemian Waxwing staged a major invasion into Clinton and Essex counties, with numerous reports of flocks numbering into the hundreds. Somewhat surprisingly, there was also a lighter invasion of Cedar Waxwing; usually these species are exclusive in winter here. A few Lapland Longspur were found, while Snow Buntings were relatively abundant. Winter finches were pretty much a bust, with only a smattering of Pine Grosbeak and the crossbills. Common Redpoll was found mostly at higher elevations, while siskins and goldfinches lingered lower. Evening Grosbeak remained scarce, with numbers now only a shadow of past winters.

Birds of Franklin County, New York (1st Ed., 2006, 44 pp.), and accompanying *Birding Trail Map* by John M.C. Peterson, are now available **free** upon request from Franklin County Tourism [**1-800-709-4895**]. Call for your copies of the book & map today! The book lists 280 species, while the detailed county map provides written directions on "Where to Find Birds" for a dozen noted birding sites. Copies of *Birds of Hamilton County, New York* (2004) and birding map by Peterson & Lee are still available **free** from Hamilton County Tourism [**1-800-648-5239**]. Also, a new *Adirondack North Country Region Road Map* with a Birding Guide for the region is available **free** by visiting: **FreeBirdingMap.com** (use caps as shown to find the website). Copies of this map are also available at local county tourism offices and Beekmantown Gateway Information Center, between southbound Exits 41 & 40 of the Adirondack Northway (I-87).

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ABBREVIATIONS

AP - Ausable Pt; CH - Cumberland Head; CP - Crown Pt SHS; CR - Chazy Rivers; ECBC - Elizabethtown CBC 31 Dec; FCBC - Ferrisburgh CBC 17 Dec; LL - Long L; MB - Monty Bay; NP - Noblewood Pk; PARC - former Plattsburgh AFB; PCBC - Plattsburgh CBC 18 Dec; PtR - Pt au Roche SP; SLCBC - Saranac L CBC 1 Jan; TL - Tupper L; WC - NYS Waterfowl Count 14-15 Jan; WD - Wilcox Dock; WM - Wickham Marsh.

WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

Snow Goose: max 1,427 PCBC; imm WD 25 Dec-6 Feb (BK,NO), overwintered.

Cackling Goose: 2 WD 11 Dec; CH 31 Dec (BK), late CLIN.

Canada Goose: 65 Raquette R 6 Dec (CD); Lower Ausable L 13 Dec (TDM), late inland; max 2,600 PtR 18 Dec (TM,SO); 12 CH 23 Feb (NO), migrating north.

Gadwall: pr Willsboro Pt 14 Jan (GL,JP,RW); 2 m Willsboro Bay 24 Jan (TDM,SO), late.

wigeon (sp.): Westport 27 Jan (RG), quite reddish brown head, neck, breast.

N. Pintail: m Westport 27 Jan (RG), late.

Canvasback: 2 m CP 21 Jan (TGM,AS), now rare ESSE.

Redhead: 5 m NP 19 Dec (L&PO); 4 m Essex 14 Jan (GL,JP,RW); 28 CP 22 Jan (TDM,AS); f Essex 1 Feb (TDM), also rare ESSE.

Ring-necked Duck: max 16 WC; 4 Westport 6 Feb (JP,ET); Essex 20 Feb (JN), quite late.

Surf Scoter: CH 2 Jan (BK,CM), late CLIN.

White-winged Scoter: 5 Pt Kent 8 Jan

(DR); 2 CP 21 Jan (TGM,AS); f NP & 4 Pt Kent 6 Feb (L&PO), a good showing.

Long-tailed Duck: CP 21 Jan (TGM,AS), late.

Bufflehead: max 88 WC.

Com. Goldeneye: max 5,787 WC.

Barrow's Goldeneye: ad m Westport 17 Dec (JH,MDM), possible hybrid there same day; m NP 7 Jan (MDM); f CP 22 Jan (TGM,SO); f Willsboro Bay 24 Jan (TM,SO); 3 m WM 14 Feb (L&PO,NW), excellent finds.

Red-breasted Merganser: f Whallon's Bay 14 Jan (GL,JP,RW); f Westport

6 Feb (JP,ET), good finds.

Wild Turkey: max 60 Westport 6 Dec (ET).

Com. Loon: 2 AP 4 Feb (BK,CM), late CLIN.

Pied-billed Grebe: Westport 17 Dec-14 Feb, overwintered; Heart Bay, L George 14 Jan (DC).

Great Blue Heron: max 4 FCBC, three other Dec reports.

TURKEY VULTURE: PARC 18 Dec (JC,NO), late; L Flower 26 Feb (CM,TDM), headed south in 3° F temp, early ESSE & FRAN.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: widely reported.

N. Harrier: pr CLIN 3 Dec; CR 5 Dec; CH 6 Dec; ECBC; Essex 22-24 Jan, rare in winter.

Am. Kestrel: Reber 26 Dec-8 Jan; ECBC; L Shore Rd, CLIN 22 Feb, similarly rare.

Peregrine Falcon: PCBC; Plattsburgh mall 17 Jan (DR); Moffit Rd 5 Feb; Exit 38 I-87 23 Feb (BK), late CLIN.

Gyr Falcon: gray-phase Keese Corners, Peru 15 Dec (CH), always an exciting find.

Am. Coot: WD 1-7 Dec (BK); Westport 17 Dec (JH,MDM); 3 CR 31 Dec (BK); 2 WC; CH 8-9 Jan & 8 Feb (BK), late CLIN and an exceptional showing.

Iceland Gull: 1st winter AP 6 Feb (L&PO), only white-winged gull reported.

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

Snowy Owl: CR 4 Dec (DL), only report.

Short-eared Owl: 2 CR 31 Dec (BK,CM), only report.

Belted Kingfisher: 11 reports from AP, FCBC, MB, PCBC, Pt Kent, Ticonderoga, WD, & Westport 1 Dec-14 Jan, unprecedented numbers.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: Ticonderoga ferry dock 17 Dec (C&JM), still a good find here.

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER: m Westport 4 Jan (J&PT), late ESSE by almost 4 mos.

Black-backed Woodpecker: 3 SLCBC; 2 Bigelow Rd 13 Jan (LM); m with *orange crown* Vermontville Jan (CD, photo); m LL 20 Feb (JC), usual sites.

N. Flicker: FCBC; PCBC; ECBC, a good showing.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

EMPIDONAX (sp.): Westport 17 Dec (J&PT), details to FCBC compiler.

N. Shrike: over 2 dozen reports, an exceptional showing.

Gray Jay: max record 12 SLCBC, also BB, Bigelow Rd, LL, & Sevey's Corner.

Blue Jay: max record 387 ECBC, numerous elsewhere.

FISH CROW: CH 18 Dec

(WF,BK,DK,DP,DR,RW), flew in search of recorded call.

Com. Raven: max 36 SLCBC; 12 in paired display flights TL 4 Feb (MY).

Horned Lark: max 335 FCBC, widespread CLIN & ESSE.

Black-capped Chickadee: max 1,062 SLCBC, numerous elsewhere.

Boreal Chickadee: max 23 SLCBC; 17 Inlet sump trail 18 Feb (GL), HAMI max; 2 Vermontville feeder late Dec (JK); usual sites Bigelow Rd, LL, & Marcy Dam.

Tufted Titmouse: max 38 ECBC; 27 FCBC; 24 PCBC, unprecedented numbers; also Elizabethtown, Essex, Keene, Lewis, Peru, Pt Kent, Westport, an explosive showing.

Carolina Wren: max 4 FCBC; 2 ECBC; PCBC; Ticonderoga 23 Dec (NC); banded wren returned Elizabethtown 5 Jan thru (JP).

Winter Wren: PtR 18 Dec (TDM,SO), rare here in winter, despite name.

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET: Hurricane Mt 31 Dec (J&PT), even more rare.

E. Bluebird: max 17 FCBC.

WOOD THRUSH: Plattsburgh 21 Dec (CM), well seen in bird bath.

Am. Robin: max 22 PCBC; six other sightings, relatively scarce.

N. Mockingbird: 2 PCBC; Plattsburgh 24 Feb (CM), nice finds.

Brown Thrasher: ECBC, a remarkable find.

Bohemian Waxwing: max ~700 in flocks of 20-200 Wadhams, Whallonsburg, & Willsboro 16 Feb (RG); at least 2 dozen other reports of flocks up to 400 in CLIN & ESSE.

Cedar Waxwing: max 160 FCBC; 64 PCBC; nine other sightings, all ESSE.

TANAGERS - WEAVERS

Fox Sparrow: Jay 7 Dec (PO), a rare winter bird.

Song Sparrow: 4 PCBC; 2 FCBC, only reports.

White-throated Sparrow: Chateaugay Dec (MH); 2 PCBC; PtR 18 Dec

(TM,SO); SLCBC; arr Saranac L feeder 22 Feb (TM), a good showing.

Dark-eyed Junco: max 219 PCBC; 7 wintered TL feeder (CD).

Lapland Longspur: max 4 PCBC; PtR 18 Dec (TDM,SO); Peru 1 Jan (BK,CM), good finds.

Snow Bunting: max 400+ Whallosnburg 14 Dec (JP,ET), widespread.

N. Cardinal: max 91 PCBC, reports from all 4 counties.

ROSE-BREADED GROSBEAK: f Vermontville feeder 13 Jan (JK), late FRAN.

Red-winged Blackbird: max 9 SLCBC; also Chateaugay, Jay, Inlet, & Plattsburgh 18 Dec-10 Feb; arr TL 17 Feb (CD); later arr 20-22 Feb Franklin Falls, Mooers, & Newcomb.

Rusty Blackbird: Saranac L, FRAN 22 Dec-3 Jan (TD), rare in winter.

Com. Grackle: 10 SLCBC, only report.

Brown-headed Cowbird: 60 wintered Peru feeder (E&HF).

BALTIMORE ORIOLE: L Placid 30 Dec-13 Jan (LM), another great feeder bird.

Pine Grosbeak: max 20 Plattsburgh 7 Feb (J&RH); others L Placid & Newcomb Dec-Feb.

Purple Finch: 14 PCBC, only report, if correct.

House Finch: max 147 PCBC; also 13 FCBC.

Red Crossbill: Newcomb 20 Dec (WR,MS); 1-3 Jay mid-Feb (PO); 2 Oregon Plains Rd 20 Feb (JN), scarce.

White-winged Crossbill: count wk SLCBC, only report.

Com. Redpoll: max 280 SLCBC, with 250 at a single feeder; only 43 ECBC; 32 PCBC; 6 FCBC, with most remaining at higher elevations.

Pine Siskin: max 50 FCBC; 38 PCBC; only 3 SCBC; ECBC, with most at lower elevations.

Am. Goldfinch: max 307 PCBC; 76 ECBC; 47 FCBC; 23 SLCBC, also found lower.

Evening Grosbeak: max 122 ECBC; 44 PCBC; 3 SLCBC, typical of recent years; 4 TL feeder 4 Jan (CD), chased away by Wild Turkeys; conjunctivitis Saranac L Jan (NS), to DEC Wildlife Pathology Lab for necropsy.

ADDENDUM:

WESTERN GREBE: Pt Kent 27 Nov 2005 (DR), believed the same 1st winter juv at nearby CH, CLIN 28 Nov, details to NYSARC; 1st ESSE record, if accepted.