

REGION 8—HUDSON-MOHAWK

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Region 8 residents may have wondered if winter would arrive at all this year. December 2006 ended unseasonably warm, 7.2° F warmer than average, with 20 days reaching 40° or higher. Nine days exhibited temperatures entirely above freezing, and the month passed with nothing more than a few brief flurries. The new year continued warm, with January's mean temperature 5.2° above average. Six January days remained above freezing, with a notable high of 71° on the 6th. Even the shallowest bodies of water remained ice-free, and January's 3.9" of snow quickly melted to expose bare earth. Winter did in fact come in mid-February when strong polar air masses arrived to drag nighttime temperatures down into the single digits. The season's only significant snow storm occurred on Valentine's Day, dumping 16" at Albany International Airport. The cool nights and cloudy days preserved much of this snow cover until late March.

Waterfowl remained in the area but not necessarily in large concentrated flocks. Notable exceptions are the hundreds of Snow Geese observers tallied throughout the period and the 14,000 Canada Geese counted in one day in Rensselaer County on the Salem Christmas Bird Count. The largest numbers of waterfowl occurred in December, when observers also recorded a few straggling scoters, loons, and Red-necked and Horned grebes.

Many birders kept a close eye on the Fort Edward area grasslands this winter, tallying some impressive maxima including 27 Rough-legged Hawks. Volunteers largely from the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club informally monitored wintering Short-eared Owls, which showed up in higher-than-normal numbers at Fort Edward, reaching a max of 17 on 15 February. In Columbia County, Bill Cook received a fresh road-killed Short-eared Owl, now at the Columbia-Greene Community College in one of the most extensive study skin collections in upstate NY. Although hanging on by a talon in the Coxsackie flats of Greene County, Short-eared Owls are all but gone in Region 8 south of Albany, as much victims to natural forest succession as to anthropogenic habitat loss.

One **Snowy Owl** would be news in our Region, and this year we have reports of two, each in Columbia County. Southern Region 8 birders Larry Federman and Nancy Kern were each quick to report separate **Golden Eagles**, also uncommon winter visitors. Merlins wintered in good numbers, picking off starlings and other songbirds from the Mohawk River farmlands, urban greater Albany, and several small river towns in the south.

Warm temperatures make Christmas Bird Counts interesting, and this year's list of half-hardies is more extensive than normal. This was the year in which a Wood Duck, Swamp Sparrow, or Red-winged Blackbird was the norm rather

than the exception. Some unusual lingerers included Troy's **Green Heron**, Catskill-Coxsackie's Wilson's Snipe, Killdeer, and **Common Yellowthroat** (count week), Chatham's Eastern Towhee, and several circles' Gray Catbird and Eastern Phoebe. Catskill-Coxsackie took advantage of an early count date and an active troupe of birders to record 80 species, an impressive CBC tally for any Region 8 circle.

Some common species recorded in uncommonly high numbers include Fort Plain's 60 Northern Harriers, Johnston-Gloversville's 938 Black-capped Chickadees, and Catskill-Coxsackie's 41 Carolina Wrens and 152 Eastern Bluebirds.

Good birders, like good scientists, are wary of anecdotal evidence. This year's warmer-than-average temperatures generated more "I've never seen X before in January" stories in our Region's diners, grocery stores, and offices than I can recount here. True, it's unusual to see garter snakes, green frogs, honey bees, skunk cabbage, and bare-legged joggers in January, but we must be careful not to misinterpret normal variance; this is not upstate New York's first warm winter. Nevertheless, I'll indulge in an anecdote. A brief search of decades of records failed to uncover anything like the thousands of icterids that wintered this January in the Region. You all know the spectacle, the black mass of bodies that pass in gregarious lines over the yellowed landscape. Ah, the sight and sound of blackbirds, the signal that spring has truly arrived. Well, this year they never left. An anecdote, I admit it, but how many individual observations does it take to suggest a trend? I'm not sure many can answer that yet, but I'm confident that this publication will do its duty to take note, one blackbird at a time, until at some future point perhaps, spring will not necessarily mean blackbirds or woodcocks or even phoebes, but some new and unexpected herald.

CONTRIBUTORS

Alan Devoe Bird Club monthly sighting reports, Larry Alden, Dave Baim, Hope Batcheller, Mona Bearor, Mimi Brauch, Bill Cook, Marilyn Fancher, Larry Federman, Corey Finger, Barbara Gage, Elizabeth Grace, Jane Graves, Bernie Grosman, Richard Guthrie, Ron Harrower, John Hershey, Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club's Birdline of Eastern New York, Pam Hunt, Nancy Kern, Cori Kling, Bill Lee, David Martin, Andrew Mason, Roger Miller, Jeff Nadler, Gail & Rich Nord, Tom Palmer, Barb Putnam, Gregg Racer, Will Raup, Steph Restuccia, Larry Rowland, Tom Salo, Alice Schrade, Sue Stewart, Scott Stoner, Alison Van Keuren, Carol & Owen Whitby, Phil Whitney, Tom Williams, Will Yandik, Robert Yunnick.

ABBREVIATIONS

CAT – T Catskill GREE; CHA – T Chatham COLU; COX – T Coxsackie GREE; FtE – T Fort Edwards WASH; FtP – Ft Plain MONT; GLO – T

Gloversville FULT; HR – Hudson River; JOH – T Johnstown FULT; LIV – T Livingston COLU; SCH – T Schenectady SCHE; VF – Vischer's Ferry SARA.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Snow Goose: 638 CHA CBC 16 Dec; max 5001 Salem CBC 16 Dec; 250 Glen MONT 21 Dec; 500 Saratoga L SARA 4 Jan; 6 Hudson COLU 5 Jan; 10 Northumberland SARA 1 Feb.

Canada Goose: max 14,278 Salem CBC 16 Dec.

Wood Duck: 2 CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; 2 CHA CBC 16 Dec; 2 SCHE CBC 16 Dec; 2 ALBA CBC 17 Dec; 3 LIV 28 Dec.

Gadwall: 11 CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; 12 ALBA CBC 17 Dec.

Am. Wigeon: max 100 Stanton Pd 1 Dec.

Am. Black Duck: max 61 VF 2 Dec.

N. Shoveler: 4 VF 2 Dec; Salem CBC 16 Dec.

N. Pintail: max 16 Stanton Pd 1 Dec.

Green-winged Teal: 2 VF 2 Dec-1 Jan; max 8 CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; FtP CBC 30 Dec.

Canvasback: max 200 Cheviot Landing HR 16 Jan.

Redhead: 5 VF 12 Feb.

Ring-necked Duck: 5 Collins Pk Scotia SCHE 14 Dec.

Greater Scaup: S RENS CBC 23 Dec.

Lesser Scaup: VF 2 Dec; JOH-GLO CBC 23 Dec; max 8 Nassau L RENS 28 Dec.

Surf Scoter: Troy CBC 30 Dec.

White-winged Scoter: 2 Bolton Landing CBC 16 Dec; Cheviot Landing HR 23 Jan.

Long-tailed Duck: 2 CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; Saratoga L SARA 21 Jan.

Bufflehead: max 29 ALBA CBC 17 Dec.

Com. Goldeneye: max 135 Bolton Landing CBC 16 Dec.

Hooded Merganser: max 30 Alcove res 10 Dec.

Red-breasted Merganser: CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; Stillwater SARA 25 Jan.

Ruddy Duck: max 25 COX res 10 Dec.

Ruffed Grouse: max 4 JOH-GLO 23 Dec.

Ring-necked Pheasant: CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; FtE 25 Jan.

Com. Loon: 2 Salem CBC 16 Dec; 3 ALBA CBC 17 Dec; 2 Troy CBC 30 Dec; FtP CBC 30 Dec.

Horned Grebe: 3 Bolton Landing CBC 16 Dec; ALBA CBC 17 Dec.

Red-necked Grebe: Troy CBC 30 Dec, count week.

Double-crested Cormorant: CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; Troy CBC 30 Dec.

GREEN HERON: Troy CBC 30 Dec.

Turkey Vulture: Germantown COLU 3 Dec.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: max 10 CHA CBC 16 Dec.

N. Harrier: max 60 FtP CBC 30 Dec.

Cooper's Hawk: max 6 S RENS CBC 23 Dec.

N. Goshawk: JOH-GLO CBC 23 Dec; Burnt Hills ALBA 29 Dec; FtP CBC 30 Dec.

Rough-legged Hawk: SCHE CBC 16 Dec; Rensselaerville RENS 17 Dec; JOH-GLO 23 Dec; 6 FtP CBC 30 Dec; max 27 FtE 30 Jan; 14 COX flats 25 Feb.

Golden Eagle: juv Craryville COLU 20 Dec (LF); Austerlitz COLU 3 Feb (NK).

Merlin: Germantown COLU 10 Dec; Florida MONT 21 Dec; LIV 26 Dec; FtP CBC 30 Dec; Peebles I SARA 28 Dec; FtE Jan 7; Glen MONT 20 Jan; Schenectady SCHE 20 Feb; Mechanicville SARA 22 Feb; Florida MONT 23 Feb.

Peregrine Falcon: 2 CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; 2 S RENS CBC 23 Dec; JOH-GLO CBC 23 Dec, count first.

Am. Coot: 2 VF 2 Dec; 2 ALBA CBC 17 Dec; HR COLU 2 Jan; 5 Saratoga L SARA 4 Jan.

Killdeer: CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; arr Taghkanic COLU 18 Feb.

Wilson's Snipe: CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; ALBA CBC 17 Dec.

Herring Gull: max 650 COX boat launch 6 Dec.

Iceland Gull: 4 COX boat launch 6-14 Dec.

Glaucous Gull: SCHE CBC 16 Dec.

Great Black-backed Gull: max 6 COX boat launch 6 Dec, somewhat scarce on CBCs.

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

E. Screech-Owl: max 5 Troy CBC 30 Dec.

SNOWY OWL: CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; Canaan COLU 28 Jan.

Barred Owl: 2 Salem CBC 16 Dec; 2 JOH-GLO CBC 23 Dec; Patridge Run ALBA 12 Feb.

Short-eared Owl: Cox flats 13-14 Dec; Knox ALBA 17 Dec; 4 FtP CBC 30 Dec; max 17 FtE 15 Feb; road-kill Claverack COLU 21 Feb, now at the Columbia-Greene Community College as a study skin.

N. Saw-whet Owl: Partridge Run ALBA 12 Feb; Galway SARA 21 Feb.

RED-HEADED WOODPECKER:

Delmar ALBA 3 Jan (AS).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: ALBA CBC 17 Dec; Troy RENS 4 Jan; Brunswick RENS 9 Feb; Clermont COLU 12 Feb.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

E. Phoebe: Glenville SCHE 2 Dec; CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; ALBA CBC 17 Dec.

N. Shrike: Latham 14 Dec; CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; Florida MONT 29 Dec; FtP CBC 30 Dec; Gansevoort SARA 7 Jan thru; Selkirk ALBA 7 Feb; Root MONT 17 Feb.

Am. Crow: max 3367 Troy CBC 30 Dec.

Fish Crow: max 4 Peebles I SARA 28 Dec.

Com. Raven: max 5 COX flats 27 Jan.

Horned Lark: max 400 FtE 21 Jan.

Black-capped Chickadee: max 938 JOH-GLO CBC 23 Dec.

Tufted Titmouse: max 161 S RENS CBC 23 Dec.

Carolina Wren: max 41 CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec.

Winter Wren: 5 CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec.

Marsh Wren: CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: 2 CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; 2 S RENS CBC 23 Dec; Troy CBC 30 Dec.

E. Bluebird: max 13 Germantown COLU 4 Dec; 152 CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec.

Hermit Thrush: JOH-GLO 23 Dec; E Greenbush RENS 1 Feb; VF 17 Feb.

Gray Catbird: Hillsdale COLU 2 Dec; CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; ALBA CBC 17 Dec; Hudson Falls WASH 17 Dec; Troy CBC 30 Dec.

Am. Pipit: CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec.

WARBLERS

Yellow-rumped Warbler: CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec, only report.

Com. Yellowthroat: CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec, count week.

TANAGERS - WEAVERS

E. Towhee: CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; CHA CBC 16 Dec.

Chipping Sparrow: last Chatham COLU 13-16 Dec.

Field Sparrow: last COX flats 10 Dec.

Savannah Sparrow: 6 CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; 2 S RENS CBC 23 Dec; Root MONT 17 Feb.

Fox Sparrow: Ames MONT 1 Feb; New Salem ALBA 4 Feb.

Swamp Sparrow: 7 CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; SCHE CBC 16 Dec; Troy CBC 30 Dec.

Lapland Longspur: 2 Northumberland SARA 25 Jan-2 Feb; 3 COX flats 22 Feb.

Snow Bunting: 73 JOH-GLO CBC 23 Dec; 100 FtE 20 Jan; 200 sod farm SARA 25 Jan; 350 Northumberland SARA 25 Jan; 200 COX flats 22 Feb.

Red-winged Blackbird: 500 CHA CBC 16 Dec; 8 S RENS CBC 23 Dec; max 3000 LIV 24 Dec; 2 S Glens Falls WARR 25 Dec; dozens of reports, many of 1-10 individuals thru.

E. Meadowlark: 3 COX flats 21 Jan; FtE 6Feb; max 11 COX flats 21 Feb.

Rusty Blackbird: Guilderland ALBA 7 Feb.

Com. Grackle: max 4000 LIV 24 Dec; scattered other reports of 1-100 individuals thru.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 3000 LIV 24 Dec.

Purple Finch: 4 CHA CBC 16 Dec; max 31 Salem CBC 16 Dec; 23 JOH-GLO 23 Dec; E Greenbush RENS 19 Feb.

Red Crossbill: Burnt-Rossman Hills SF SCHO 29 Dec (TW).

White-winged Crossbill: JOH-GLO CBC 23 Dec; 3 Jenny L SARA 21 Feb (RY).

Com. Redpoll: 20 Troy CBC 30 Dec.

Pine Siskin: Berne ALBA 28 Dec.

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