

REGION 4—SUSQUEHANNA

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At Binghamton, December's normal mean temperature of 27.3° F froze many shallow water bodies. Precipitation that month was slightly above average and fell mostly as snow. January was 5.5° warmer than normal. Precipitation was 65% of normal and only 7" fell as snow. This was the third lowest January snow total ever recorded. Because of the warmth, many water bodies which froze in December thawed in time for the January waterfowl count, including Canadarago Lake. Temperatures returned to normal in February. However, record precipitation of 4.57" that month approached double normal amounts. Much of this fell as snow, but several warm periods prevented snow depth from accumulating. Snow depth at Binghamton never exceeded 8" through the period. More accumulated in areas affected by lake effect snow, especially in December, but it was never really deep. Strong fronts and following winds were somewhat regular. Wind speeds approaching or in excess of 50 mph were experienced on 16 December, 9 January, and 10 February. The single greatest snowfall was 6.8" on 13 December.

Diverse waterfowl, a variety of sparrows, and the finch irruption contributed to the 106 species reported. Gail Kirch reported that the Binghamton CBC had a record 70 species, found three falcon species, and recorded a high number of other predatory birds. Matt Young and Julie Siler covered Cortland County for the waterfowl count this year. Their inclusion of the southern end of Skaneateles Lake, a regional hot spot, added good numbers of birds and much variety to the count. Broome County also had good waterfowl diversity this season.

In early February, a 25-year-old Great Blue Heron rookery containing 20 nests in the Town of Hartwick was discovered to have been cut down with a chainsaw. One of the property owners whose trees were cut allowed the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society to construct steel structures with nesting platforms on their property. DEC law enforcement personnel investigated but no charges were brought.

In spite of excellent coverage at the Franklin Mountain Hawk Watch, raptor numbers dropped significantly after November. It was slow even for December. Through the season Bald Eagles were everywhere and numbers were high along the West Branch of the Delaware River. Cooper's Hawk reports continued to significantly outnumber Sharp-shinned Hawk numbers. A hatch-year Golden Eagle fitted with a GPS telemetry device in the summer of 2007 at the Matane Wildlife Reserve in Quebec spent the winter on the R4/R8 border. Eagle #67's map can be seen on the web site of the National Aviary in Pittsburgh.

Good numbers of Northern Shrike were found throughout the Region. Blue Jay numbers were normal for the CBCs. They dropped significantly in January and rebounded by late February. Crow numbers were low on the Oneonta CBC but high in the southern counts, notably Binghamton and Owego. Don Windsor reported large numbers of crows roosting in Norwich. 1250 passed his house in 10 minutes on 18 February from 5:45-5:55 pm.

An astonishing report came from Sue Whitney who found Tree Swallows in Roxbury on 12 February and in Delhi along the Delaware River two days later. No other winter reports are known for the species in the Region. However hardy these swallows are, six weeks of Catskill Mountain winter followed their mid-February appearance.

Sparrow variety was very good, with reports of several species that are often missed. A Rusty Blackbird photographed by Terri Wetzell in Morris on 13 February was unusual.

Last year's (2006-07) once-in-twenty-year cone and tree seed crop across Eastern Canada and the Northeastern states set the stage for this year's irruptive bird invasion. When trees produce excellent cone and tree seed crops on such a widespread scale, redpolls, siskins, crossbills, grosbeaks, and Purple Finches are able to reproduce at an increased rate. This in turn leads to higher than normal population levels. To be able to support these higher than average populations of finches in Canada, the Canadian forest would have had to produce an even better food crop this year. It takes a lot of energy for trees to produce large cone crops, and the chances of this taking place two years in a row are quite low unless

absolutely perfect conditions exist. Hence, the table was set for the best finch invasion since 2001-02. Finches and other irruptives showed up early and often.

Across the Region and the State, Common Redpolls were common and widespread. Many flocks numbered over 100. Hoary Redpoll was reported but only in the three northern counties. Several flocks of Common Redpoll contained individual Hoary Redpolls and even a few Common "Greater" Redpolls (*Carduelis flammea rostrata*). This larger subspecies from Greenland is even less common than our typical Hoary Redpoll subspecies (*C. exilipes* ssp). In Scott, Cortland County on a few days this winter, Matt Young observed a flock of ~150 Common Redpolls with one Hoary Redpoll and two Common "Greater" Redpolls. Evening Grosbeaks, seen in higher numbers at their usual higher elevation haunts (>1400 ft.), were reported from all counties except Broome. Pine Siskins started moving through in widespread numbers in October but only a few lingered into the reporting period. Like the Pine Siskins, Purple Finches moved through with very few lingering into the winter months. American Goldfinch also left the Region in significant numbers. Red Crossbills were reported from the Pharsalia WMA, where they have nested on a fairly regular basis since winter 2004. Numbers were at their lowest since Jan 2006. Crossbills are forced to emigrate from areas during poor cone crops even in areas such as Pharsalia. White-winged Crossbills were nearly non-existent, with only one bird reported. The real show of the winter was the invasion of the frugivores. Bohemian Waxwings, found across the northern half of the state, didn't make it into the Region. Pine Grosbeak reports were common across the northern 2/3rds of the state. They were found here in all counties except Broome and Tioga. Matt Young reported at least 30 on North Rd, Pharsalia in late February.

The 2007-08 winter invasion was the best since 2001-02 for the Evening Grosbeak, Pine Grosbeak, and Common Redpoll. It certainly made for a fun winter.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

BCBC – Binghamton Christmas Bird Count; CCBC – Cortland Christmas Bird Count; FMHW – Franklin Mountain Hawk Watch; NClub – Naturalists' Club of Broome County; NWC – NYSOA Waterfowl Count; OnCBC – Oneonta Christmas Bird Count; OwCBC – Owego Christmas Bird Count; SkanL – Skaneateles Lake; TBC – Tioga Bird Club; WBDR – West Branch Delaware River; WBurl – West Burlington.

WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

Snow Goose: max 350 Cortlandville 7 Feb; 200 McGraw 8 Jan.

Canada Goose: max 2915 NWC Jan; 2479 OwCBC 30 Dec; "huge flock" BROO 5 Dec MP.

Mute Swan: 2 NWC Jan, both singles.

Wood Duck: Sherburne 15 Dec; 2 NWC Jan, unusual.

Am. Black Duck: max 192 NWC Jan; 26 BCBC 15 Dec; scattered other reports.

Mallard: max 1143 NWC Jan.

N. Pintail: 3 BCBC 15 Dec; Endwell 22 Dec; 2 reports NClub Jan, unusual.

Green-winged Teal: 2 BCBC 15 Dec; 2 Boland Pond NClub Jan, unusual.

Canvasback: 2 SkanL 19 Feb; 1 NWC Jan; Endwell 10 Dec, unusual.

Redhead: max 675 SkanL 2 Jan; "too many to count" SkanL 13 Feb BM; 19 NWC Jan.

Ringed-neck Duck: max 8 SkanL 26 Jan; 3 NWC Jan; 2 NClub Jan & Feb.

Greater Scaup: 10 SkanL 26 Jan.

Lesser Scaup: max 12 SkanL 9 Dec; 4 NWC Jan; 6 NClub 6 Feb.

Long-tailed Duck: 2 Hillcrest Pits 24 Dec JW, unusual.

Bufflehead: max 10 SkanL 9 Dec; 5 NWC Jan; 4 NClub 15 Dec; 6 reported Feb NClub.

Com. Goldeneye: max 160 SkanL 26 Dec; 50 NWC Jan.

Hooded Merganser: max 51 NWC Jan; 10 BCBC 15 Dec; 14 Hillcrest Pits 7 Jan JW.

Com. Merganser: max 539 NWC Jan; 160 BCBC 15 Dec.

Red-breasted Merganser: SkanL 26 Jan, 21 Feb; Susquehanna R NWC Jan.

Ring-necked Pheasant: max 4 CCBC 15 Dec; 2 BCBC 15 Dec.

Ruffed Grouse: max 17 OnCBC 15 Dec; 8 WBurl Jan, good numbers.

Wild Turkey: max 305 BCBC 15 Dec; 225 Harpersfield 13 Jan; 225 OnCBC 15 Dec; large numbers Treadwell and Delhi.

Pied-billed Grebe: Vestal 19 Dec, unusual.
Horned Grebe: SkanL Cort CBC 15 Dec - 20 Jan.

Double-crested Cormorant: Vestal 3 Dec, only report.

Great Blue Heron: max 4 BCBC 15 Dec; scattered individuals regular; 20 nests cut down by vandal T of Hartwick, *intro*.

Turkey Vulture: 3 reports to 13 Jan.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: max 33 WBDR 7 Feb (TS); widespread singles and pairs; sizable congregation on WBDR Jan into Feb, especially at Deposit.

N. Harrier: max 5 BCBC Dec, uncommon in winter.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: 28 reports; max 12 BCBC 15 Dec; only 1 report TIOG Jan & Feb TBC.

Cooper's Hawk: 46 reports; max 12 NClub Dec; none TIOG Jan & Feb TBC.

N. Goshawk: 5 reports; regular Milford DK.

Red-shouldered Hawk: BCBC 15 Dec; 2 reported NClub Feb; 4 Dec FMHW, always uncommon in winter.

Red-tailed Hawk: max 61 Dec FMHW; 54 BCBC 15 Dec; 54 OwCBC 30 Dec; leucistic individual Lisle late Feb.

Rough-legged Hawk: many reports; 28 from NClub Dec; fewer in OTSE and CHEN.

Golden Eagle: 49 Dec FMHW, lowest seasonal total in 7 years; 6 other reports from OTSE and DELA; none elsewhere, *intro*.

Am. Kestrel: 29 reports; 5 OwCBC 30 Dec; 3 BCBC 15 Dec.

Merlin: Little York Lake 13 Jan (MY); 2 CCBC 15 Dec; regular Binghamton thru.

Peregrine Falcon: 1 - 2 regular Binghamton thru.

Am. Coot: 52 Otsego Lake thru; 1 other reported.
Ring-billed Gull: max 39 BCBC 15 Dec.
Herring Gull: max 84 BCBC 15 Dec.
LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL:
 Cooperstown 18 Dec KZ, rare.
Great Black-backed Gull: Chenango 6 Feb JW, only report.

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

Rock Dove: max 2243 BCBC 15 Dec.
Mourning Dove: max 558 BCBC 15 Dec; 344 OwCBC 30 Dec; 343 OnCBC 15 Dec.
E. Screech Owl: max 4 OnCBC 15 Dec; 6 other reports.
Great Horned Owl: 5 BCBC 15 Dec; 5 OnCBC 15 Dec; 3 OwCBC 30 Dec, good numbers.
Barred Owl: 6 reports; regular at some locations.
Short-eared Owl: 1-4 early Dec Lisle; max 5 same location 2 Jan NClub; Cherry Valley 16 Dec.
N. Saw-whet Owl: 2 OnCBC 15 Dec; 1 Dec Scott.
Belted Kingfisher: max 2 BCBC 15 Dec; 9 other reports.
Red-bellied Woodpecker: max 17 OwCBC 30, good count; widespread in small numbers.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: Cort CBC 15 Dec; TIOG 17 Dec NClub; Dec TBC, rare in winter.
Downy Woodpecker: max 156 BCBC 15 Dec; 74 OnCBC 15 Dec.
Hairy Woodpecker: max 61 BCBC 15 Dec; 38 OnCBC 15 Dec.
N. Flicker: max 4 OwCBC 30 Dec; 4 other reports.
Pileated Woodpecker: max 12 BCBC 15 Dec; 9 OwCBC 30 Dec; 6 OnCBC 15 Dec, good numbers.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: max 5 CCBC 15 Dec; 38 other reports, good numbers.
Blue Jay: max 409 BCBC 15 Dec; low numbers Jan; returned to normal by late February.
Am. Crow: max 1485 BCBC 15 Dec; 1250 in 10 minutes Norwich 18 Feb (DW); 1049 OwCBC 30 Dec.
Fish Crow: Binghamton 6 Jan; OwCBC 30 Dec.

Com. Raven: max 31 OnCBC 15 Dec; 20 Pharsalia 24 Jan; 10 WBurl Jan to early Feb; now regular and widespread.
Horned Lark: max 36 24 Feb Nclub; numerous reports of small flocks.
TREE SWALLOW: handful Roxbury 12 Feb; Delhi 14 Feb SW, previously unknown in winter in Region.
Black-capped Chickadee: max 941 BCBC 15 Dec.
Tufted Titmouse: max 245 BCBC 15 Dec.
Red-breasted Nuthatch: max 62 OwCBC 30 Dec; scarce after Dec except at a few locations.
White-breasted Nuthatch: max 169 BCBC 15 Dec.
Brown Creeper: max 10 BCBC 15 Dec; 6 other reports.
Carolina Wren: max 10 BCBC 15 Dec, good numbers, appears to be increasing.
Winter Wren: Scott 26 Jan BC, unusual.
Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 3 OnCBC 15 Dec.
E. Bluebird: max 48 BCBC 15 Dec; many reports; none from DELA.
Hermit Thrush: OnCBC 15 Dec, unusual.
Am. Robin: max 100 Scott 20 Jan; reported elsewhere in BROO, CORT and OTSE.
Gray Catbird: OnCBC 15 Dec, unusual.
N. Mockingbird: max 6 BCBC 15 Dec.
European Starling: max 2446 BCBC 15 Dec.
Cedar Waxwing: max 181 BCBC 15 Dec; widespread flocks.

WARBLERS

None

TANAGERS - WEAVERS

Am. Tree Sparrow: max 235 BCBC 15 Dec.
Chipping Sparrow: BCBC 15 Dec, unusual.
Field Sparrow: BCBC 15 Dec, unusual.
Fox Sparrow: TIOG Dec TBC, only report.
Song Sparrow: max 16 BCBC 15 Dec; present all winter, more than expected.
Swamp Sparrow: CCBC count week; BCBC 15 Dec, unusual in winter.
White-throated Sparrow: max 40 BCBC 15 Dec; regular early, a few lingered at lower elevations.
Dark-eyed Junco: max 617 BCBC 15 Dec.
Lapland Longspur: Homer 18 Dec (MY), only report.

Snow Bunting: max 300 Lisle 10 Feb; max 300 Homer 24 Feb; 4 other reports of flocks; no reports 21 Dec to 10 Feb.

N. Cardinal: max 255 BCBC 15 Dec.

Red-winged Blackbird: early max 25 OnCBC 15 Dec; none Jan; large numbers after 20-22 Feb.

Rusty Blackbird: Morris 13 Feb TW, video taped, unusual.

Com. Grackle: Arr 23 Feb TIOG.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 25 Cort CBC 15 Dec; more than expected at numerous locations.

Pine Grosbeak: max 30 Pharsalia 18 Feb (MY); reports from CORT, CHEN, DELA, and OTSE, *intro*.

Purple Finch: max 22 OnCBC 15 Dec; small numbers to 18 Dec and after 20 Feb, scarce, *intro*.

House Finch: max 378 BCBC 15 Dec; scarce Norwich (DW); scarce other areas; 54 OwCBC 30 Dec, low for that count.

Red Crossbill: Scott 8 Dec (MY); "few" Pharsalia 26 Dec, 18 Feb (MY); Cort CBC, count week; only reports, *intro*.

White-winged Crossbill: Pharsalia 24 Jan (MY), only report.

Com. Redpoll: max 539 Cort CBC 15 Dec; common thru.

COM. "GREATER" REDPOLL: 2 Scott CORT 20 Jan (MY); McGraw CORT 3 Feb (MY); Otselic CORT 18 Feb (MY), *intro*.

Hoary Redpoll: max 2 WBurl feeder (TS); 2 Scott CORT (MY); 11 individuals were reported after 20 Dec from locations in CHEN, CORT and OTSE, *intro*.

Pine Siskin: max 14 McGraw 9 Dec; max afterward 2 Milford thru; 4 total on CBCs, quite scarce.

Am. Goldfinch: max 288 BCBC 15 Dec; scarce after CBCs; missed at many feeders in northern areas; numbers increased but remained low after mid-Feb.

Evening Grosbeak: max 147 CCBC 15 Dec; 117 CHEN 24 Jan (MY); reports from 7 other locations; none from BROO.

House Sparrow: max 498 BCBC 15 Dec.