

REGION 7—ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

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December was snowy, with 6" at Mooers on the 3rd and another 6" at Malone on the 11th. Saranac Lake dropped to -13°F on 13 December, before a storm from the west combined with a Nor'easter, blanketing Peru with 19" of snow on the 16th and then another 6.5" on the 31st. This was the 4th snowiest December at Plattsburgh. January began with a storm that left 7" of snow at Chazy, then

turned cold, with Saranac Lake dropping to -23° on the 3rd, and then to -33° the following day. Thermometers then reversed, reaching 51° at Tupper Lake on 7 January and 56° at Plattsburgh on the 9th, a day of 65 mph winds that brought three-day power outages to much of the Region. Another Nor'easter hit on the 14th, but monthly temperatures were above normal, reaching 43° at Saranac Lake on the 30th, the end of the month bringing light showers, rain, and freezing rain. February began with more snow, rain, and sleet until a storm on the 7th buried Elizabethtown and Moriah in 16" of snow. Saranac Lake dropped to -23° on the 12th, the first day of the month with no snowfall, prior to yet another storm the next day. Thermometers climbed from -15° at Newcomb on the 16th to a balmy 61° in Plattsburgh two days later. A major storm from the west 26-27 February left 10.5" of snow in Moriah, and, with a monthly total of 40" at Plattsburgh, this was the snowiest February on record. Winter snowfall of 100" also set an all-time mark for the Champlain Valley. The season ended with a low of -30° at Saranac Lake on Leap Day, followed by yet another snowstorm.

Lake Champlain stood at 96.81' at the start of the season, rose to 98.58' by 15 January, following the thaw, then fell back to 97.37' by season's end. The lake never entirely froze, providing fair waterfowl variety through the season, with late county records for Ruddy Duck and Red-necked Grebe. Common Merganser was especially abundant, and a record 67 Horned Grebe were reported during the Waterfowl Count. Bald Eagle may also have profited from the open water. Many of the 84 eagles counted along the shoreline during the 15 January aerial survey by the NYS DEC were concentrated outside Region 7 in the Champlain narrows of Washington County, but ten were gathered at Snake Den Harbor and many others found along the broad lake. By the end of January, 18 Bald Eagles were concentrated at Westport alone. Inland eagle numbers were, by necessity, lower, with some gathered at carcasses on the ice of lakes or at an Inlet feeder. By season's end a pair near Tupper Lake was initiating nesting activity. The best winter raptor, however, was the dark-phase **Gyr Falcon** at Cumberland Head on 28 February, although reports of this large falcon have become increasingly regular in recent decades. As the autumn explosion of mice subsided, owls began to move into yards, with daytime feeder reports of Great Horned Owl at Inlet and Barred Owl at Elizabethtown (where one attacked a bander in the act of removing a Downy Woodpecker from a mist net on Valentine's Day), Inlet, Keene, and Tupper Lake.

Half-hardies included a Belted Kingfisher along Alburg Brook on 5 January for a late Franklin County record, and another kingfisher near Inlet on 21 February for the first Hamilton County winter record, perhaps an early arrival. Six Northern Flicker were about average, but there were good numbers of Tufted Titmouse and Carolina Wren. Eastern Bluebird was generally scarce, but American Robin was numerous in the Champlain Valley, with a record 255 at one location north of Essex on 28 January. The only Northern Mockingbird reports came from Cumberland Head, and both Song and White-throated sparrows were rather scarce. The most unexpected half-hardy was a Eastern

Meadowlark that spent 12 days south of Plattsburgh in mid-December.

The two waxwings are usually exclusive here in winter, but this season saw good numbers of both, with 575 Bohemian Waxwing on the Plattsburgh CBC and 231 Cedar Waxwing on the Elizabethtown CBC. Most were still found in single-species flocks, with Bohemians the more numerous, although not as abundant or widespread as at the start of the invasion that began in late October. The concurrent Pine Grosbeak invasion that had commenced even earlier, in early October, similarly continued, with a count record 172 tallied on the Saranac Lake CBC. The series of winter storms forced numbers of these handsome finches into feeders across the Region, with as many as 25 at Inlet and Tupper Lake feeding stations and flocks of up to 30 birds widespread. The other invasive winter finch was Common Redpoll, with 975 counted on the Saranac Lake CBC and large flocks at many regional feeders. Only three Hoary Redpoll reports were received, and "Greater" Redpoll (*C.f. rostrata*) may have been more numerous during this invasion, based upon banding and sight records. Purple Finch, both crossbills, and Pine Siskin were exceedingly scarce, and American Goldfinch were largely confined to the Champlain corridor, with 242 on the Plattsburgh CBC. Numbers of Evening Grosbeak were slightly improved over recent years, with 170 on the Saranac Lake CBC, but still far short of the spruce budworm era of the 1970s. The seasonal total of 96 species was also short of the three-way tie of 109 species attained in the winters of 2001-02, 2005-06, and 2006-07, but respectable given weather conditions and fuel prices that encouraged observers to stay home and feed the woodstove, while enjoying the grosbeaks and redpolls just outside.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

AMR – Akwesasne Mohawk Reserve; AP – Ausable Pt; BB – Bloomingdale Bog; CR – Chazy Riverlands; ECBC – Elizabethtown CBC 29 Dec; FBCB – Ferrisburgh CBC 15 Dec; NP – Noblewood Pk; PCBC – Plattsburgh CBC 16 Dec; PtR – Pt au Roche; SLCBC – Saranac L CBC 30 Dec; TL – Tupper L; WB – Whallon's Bay; WC – NYS Waterfowl Count 12-13 Jan; WD – Wilcox Dock.

WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

Snow Goose: max 1000 CR 5 Dec (JP).

Canada Goose: white-on-red collars
Beekmantown 5-6 Dec (BK). banded St-Paul l'Érmitte, QC 10 Jul '04 & 4 Jul '07; max 200 Cumberland Bay 2 Dec (NO); CH 5 Feb (BK), late.

Mute Swan: 5 imm Plattsburgh 24-28 Dec (JH,J&SP); same 5 CH 1 Jan (BK); last 2 CH 3 Feb (LM).

Gadwall: Westport 15 Dec (J&PT), only report.

N. Pintail: 4 Monty's Bay 30 Dec (BK); pr AP 9 Jan (CK); PtR 13 Jan (BK); m Westport 31 Jan (PO,NW).

Redhead: m Westport 6 Jan (J&PT); max 3 Westport 28 Jan (JP,EKT); 2 pr AP 3 Feb (BK,CM); last 2 Westport 5 Feb (C&RM).

Ring-necked Duck: max 75 Westport 2 Feb (J&PT); last 4 AP 5 Feb (C&RM).

Greater Scaup: max 11 WC; 4 AP 26 Jan (BK,CM); last m Westport 28 Jan (JP,EKT).

Lesser Scaup: 1-3 NP, PCBC, Pt Kent, WD Dec; pr Westport 28 Jan (JP,EKT).

White-winged Scoter: Westport 28 Dec (MDM), only report.

Long-tailed Duck: WD 1-15 Dec, max 4 there 14 Dec (BK); f LP 14 Dec (J&PT); count wk PCBC; 3 WC, nice finds.

Bufflehead: max 300 NP 5 Dec (PO).

Com. Goldeneye: max 1300 AP 24 Dec (DCR).

Barrow's Goldeneye: m Essex harbor 5 Dec; m NP 5 Dec (PO); f AP 29 Dec (BK,CM), always good.

Hooded Merganser: max 34 WC.

Red-breasted Merganser: 2 m AP 24 Dec (DCR); WC, typical low numbers.

Com. Merganser: max 2000 CH 18 Dec (BK,SJ,CM); 1000 Pt Henry 31 Dec (MDM), ties ESSE high.

Ruddy Duck: WD 14-15 Dec (BK), late CLIN; Westport 24 Dec (DN)-28 Dec (MDM); Essex 6 Jan (DCR); Essex 12-13

Jan (GL,JP,DCR), very rare ESSE.

Wild Turkey: max 50 PCBC; 35 Inlet feeder 24 Dec (GL); 32 Jay feeder Jan (L&PO).

Pied-billed Grebe: Westport 19 Jan (J&PT), late.

Horned Grebe: max 67 WC, count record.

Red-necked Grebe: max 3 Westport 15 Dec (J&PT); 2 FCBC; Bluff Point 13 Jan (PG,JH), late CLIN.

Great Blue Heron: WD 4 Dec (BK); 2 Essex 5 Dec (PO); CR 10 Dec (JP); AP 24 Dec (DCR), all late.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: max 18 Westport & 22 between there and Willsboro Bay 31 Jan (PO,NW); 17 Bald Eagle Survey ground count, but 84 CLIN-ESSE-WASH on DEC aerial survey of L Champlain 15 Jan, including 10 Snake Den Harbor (PN); 1-2 Inlet feeder thru (GL); pr Moody 29 Feb (SC), refurbishing nest with sticks from muskrat houses; many other reports.

N. Harrier: Essex 5 Dec (PO); ad m CH 11-12 Dec (BK), fairly late here.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: Witherbee feeder 21-22 Feb (CW, photo), perched on head of St. Francis statue, but hardly saintly.

Red-tailed Hawk: feeding on deer carcass L Simond ice 17 Feb (CD).

Rough-legged Hawk: max 6 AMR 5 Dec; feeding on dog carcass AMR 28 Feb (HW).

Merlin: ad Pt Kent 7 Jan (DCR), very rare winter visitant.

GYRFALCON: dark phase Colligan Pt, CH 28 Feb (BK,SJ), no NYSARC report.

Peregrine Falcon: imm Valcour 17 Dec (WS); ad Split Rock 25 Feb (EKT), very rare in winter.

Am. Coot: WD 4-6 Dec (BK); AP 6 Jan (DCR), only reports.

Iceland Gull: imm AP 29 Jan (BK,CM), a nice find.

Great Black-backed Gull: max 71 PCBC; 29 WC; 3 FCBC.

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

Great Horned Owl: Inlet feeder 1 Dec (GL).

Snowy Owl: Porter Mt 7 Dec; Keene 19 Jan (J&PT), nice finds.

Barred Owl: 2 Keene feeders thru (J&PT); 10 daytime visits Elizabethtown feeder 8 Jan-15 Feb (JP), banded 14 Feb; Inlet feeder 10 & 16 Jan (GL); TL yard 14 Feb (GF).

Short-eared Owl: T Bombay 1 Dec; T Moira 8 Dec (MAM); CH 15 Dec (NO), encouraging.

Belted Kingfisher: Alburg Bk, T Dickinson 5 Jan (MAM), 1st Jan record FRAN; Limekiln Rd 21 Feb (GL), 1st winter record HAMI.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: Willsboro Pt 5 Feb (C&RM), a good find.

Downy Woodpecker: max 57 SLCBC, count record.

Hairy Woodpecker: max 60 SLCBC, ditto.

Black-backed Woodpecker: 2 SLCBC; Shallow L, only reports.

N. Flicker: Essex 5 Dec (PO); Valcour 13 Dec (EF), 2 PCBC; Westport 26 Dec (EDT), Plattsburgh 7 Feb (EF), about average.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: 25 locations, including 5 feeders, a strong showing.

Gray Jay: max 18 SLCBC; 2-3 Paul Smiths VIC feeder thru (LW), present from early Oct; 4 Upper Saranac L feeders to 29 Feb (CD); 2 Vermontville feeder Dec (JK); max 5-6 BB 6 Jan (TD).

Am. Crow: 425 PCBC, but 1000+ Plattsburgh roost 28 Dec (J&SP).

Com. Raven: max 59 SLCBC, count record; 12 FCBC & 3 AP 16 Jan (BK,CM), both low elevations.

Horned Lark: max 50-60 Essex 5 Jan (TD); smaller flocks FCBC, N Bangor, PCBC, Peru, Westport, Whallonsburg.

Black-capped Chickadee: max 1186 SLCBC.

Boreal Chickadee: max 7 SLCBC; Bigelow Rd 21 Jan (TD), only reports.

Tufted Titmouse: max 20 PCBC; also Elizabethtown, FCBC, Jay, LP, SLCBC, Ticonderoga, TL, Witherbee.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: max 95 SLCBC; 12 PCB; 10 ECBC, generally scarce.

White-breasted Nuthatch: max 61

SLCBC, count record.

Carolina Wren: 2 Plattsburgh 4 Dec (CM); 2 PCBC; Westport 28 Jan (EKT); CH 4 Feb (NO); Willsboro Pt Feb (RL), an excellent showing.

E. Bluebird: max 6 m Peru 14-15 Jan (E&HF); 3-5 Essex, PCBC, 3 Plattsburgh, Westport, Willsboro, low numbers.

Am. Robin: max 255 Essex 28 Jan (JP,EKT), record high ESSE; other flocks of 100-200 Essex, Ticonderoga, Valcour.

N. Mockingbird: CH 20 Dec (NO), feeding on small apples, euonymous, & highbush cranberry; Sunnyside Rd, CH 1 Jan (BK), only reports.

Bohemian Waxwing: max 575 PCBC; 210 Westport 26 Dec (DN); 200 W Chazy 2 Dec (JH); 200 Peru 5-9 Dec (EF,DCR); 171 Westport 15 Dec (J&PT); smaller flocks Chesterfield, Elizabethtown, Paul Smiths, SLCBC; 3 collected Wadhams 19 Feb (AMNH,JP).

Cedar Waxwing: max 231 ECBC, count record; flocks of 30-60 Essex, Peru, Valcour, WB, Willsboro, Willsboro Pt; 4 collected Whallonsburg 19 Feb (AMNH,JP).

TANAGERS - WEAVERS

Song Sparrow: PCBC; SLCBC; CH 15-16 Feb (NO), only reports.

White-throated Sparrow: max 3 PCBC; SLCBC, only reports.

Dark-eyed Junco: max 301 PCBC; 108 FCBC; others CH, Elizabethtown, Keene, Ticonderoga, TL, Witherbee.

Lapland Longspur: Essex 5 Dec (PO); max 7 in pure flock Northway Exit 39 14 Dec (BK,CM), high CLIN.

Snow Bunting: max 1500 CR 5 Dec (JP), with Snow Geese; 500 Essex 5 Dec (PO); a dozen other reports of 1-100, a good showing.

N. Cardinal: max 129 PCBC; 37 FCBC, record high ESSE.

Red-winged Blackbird: Essex 15 Dec (CS); 2 PCBC, only reports.

E. Meadowlark: S of Plattsburgh [Blaine Rd, off Lyons Rd] 11-22 Dec (EF), only Dec record CLIN, but late county date is 7 Jan.

Rusty Blackbird: PCBC, a good find.

Com. Grackle: max 17 PCBC; 2 Essex 15 Dec (CS), only reports.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 12 Keeseville 16 Dec (JL); 11 PCBC; others

Essex, Plattsburgh, Pt Henry, SL, but increasingly scarce here in winter.

Pine Grosbeak: max 172 SLCBC, count record; 108 PCBC; flock of 30 Essex 15 Dec (JP,RW); visited feeders Elizabethtown, Inlet, Jay, LL, Paul Smiths,TL, Vermontville; ~25 other reports, a major invasion.

Purple Finch: 4 PCBC, only report.

House Finch: max 130 PCBC; 2 Westport 15 Dec (J&PT), only reports.

Red Crossbill: 6 Rte 2, Blue Ridge 23 Feb (J&PT), only report.

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

Com. Redpoll: max 975 SLCBC; 258 PCBC; 203 FCBC; 158 ECBC; ~26 other reports; 6 "Greater" Redpoll (*C.f. rostrata*)

banded Elizabethtown 13 Dec & 3 Feb (JP); "Greater" sight records Elizabethtown 31 Dec (J&SP) & 11 Feb (JP); ~10+ apparent *rostrata* New Russia feeder 23 Dec (EKT).

Hoary Redpoll: SLCBC; apparent nominate *C.h. hornemanni* New Russia feeder 29-30 Dec (EKT); *C.h. exilipes* Elizabethtown feeder 31 Dec-1Jan (J&SP).

Pine Siskin: max 33 PCBC; others Elizabethtown, Essex, TL, Ticonderoga, W Chazy, fairly scarce.

Am. Goldfinch: max 242 PCBC; 100 Willsboro Pt feeder Feb (RL); ~6 reports of up to 30 elsewhere, but thinly distributed.

Evening Grosbeak: max 170 SLCBC; 100 Vermontville 29 Dec (JK); ~9 other reports of flocks as large as 30, mostly at feeders.

CAVEAT: Any NYS studies based upon Christmas Bird Count data should disregard the compilation for **Ferrisburg** [VTFE] published in *The Kingbird* 57:2, pp. 115-16. As noted in the same issue (p. 174), "For the first time since 1973, no separate compilation for the NYS side of the Ferrisburg, VT/NY, count circle was available." The Essex County portion of the circle comprises a thin crescent of shoreline between Coll and Whallon's bays, extending inland only to the CPR tracks at Westport and Whallonsburg, and just three of the 38 observers covered the New York side in 2006. The **Greater White-fronted Goose**, **Wood Duck**, and **Snowy Owl** did not occur in Region 7, and the majority of species and individuals occurred in VT.