

REGION 4—SUSQUEHANNA

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Overall, the winter period was marked by seasonable temperatures that averaged slightly below normal and precipitation and snowfall as a whole that were below normal. Lake effect snow, as usual, affected the more northern counties, particularly in January. Generally speaking many storms that developed only grazed the southern tier and eastern counties, which was indicative of the snowier winter the farther you went south into the Mid-Atlantic States. Only one major storm hit the area on 25-26 February with much of the Region getting anywhere from 1-2 feet.

The cone crop was overall poor across the entire Region, with only red and white pine, and European larch producing locally fair at best cone crops. The spruce crop was non-existent, thus setting the table for a good crop that should develop in 2010. Cone crops tend to be cyclical and often a good crop develops after a year where there's been a complete failure in the crop. The fruit crop was fair in some areas, and only white ash and some oaks seemed to produce a fair to good crop of seeds and acorns.

One word can basically sum up the winter period across the Region—lackluster! There were no major gull, owl or finch influxes. Waterfowl and songbird rarities seemed to be less than usual as well. There were really no big surprises during the annual mid winter waterfowl count, which was again conducted a little later in January so that it wouldn't overlap with the hunting season. The only surprise for the count was two **Green-winged Teal**. Overall numbers on the count appeared to be lower than in some recent years. One other nice find for the Region was a **Red-necked Grebe** on the Binghamton CBC on 20 December.

Cooper's Hawks continue to be reported more commonly in winter than historically, thus outnumbering Sharp-shinned Hawks across the Region. **Merlins** continue to overwinter in Binghamton, Cortland, and perhaps even Oneonta. Merlins are now almost as common in winter as the once fairly common American Kestrel. It appears that every year at least a few wintering **Golden Eagles** are found across the Region, particularly in Otsego and Delaware counties where they continue to monitor the wintering population. A handful of Golden Eagles were seen at monitoring sites in Otsego and Delaware counties. Other than the 20 reported at Franklin Mt. Hawk watch in December, there were an additional 19 reports of Golden Eagles across the Region! Some birds are clearly migrants, but other birds appear to stop over for a time or try to overwinter. There were two reported **Red-shouldered Hawks**, one on the Cortland CBC and one on the Binghamton CBC. Bald Eagles were once again reported in numbers along rivers and lakes.

Perhaps the two best sightings for the Region were the two **Barn Owls** documented in Otsego County and the six **Sandhill Cranes** seen in Scott, Cortland County, on the Cortland CBC. Unfortunately the two Barn Owls died. One N. Saw-whet Owl was heard in Tioga in February, and two late Killdeer were also reported in Tioga on 12 December.

Good songbird finds were few and far between. Notable were an adult **Red-headed Woodpecker** in Scott, Cortland County 8 February, a Yellow-rumped Warbler in Conklin 13 December, a Fox Sparrow on the Binghamton CBC, and Savannah and **Chipping Sparrows** on the Cortland CBC.

Overall, finches were nearly non-existent, with just a few scattered Pine Siskins here and there, a handful of Evening Grosbeaks at usual high elevation and remote locations, and a pair of Common Redpolls on the Binghamton CBC. There was a small but noticeable late January to mid February push of Purple Finches, which seems on par with years that the white ash forms at least a good seed crop. Lastly, only a few scattered **Type 1 Red Crossbills** were found and recorded, which again was indicative of the poor cone crop. Even in bad cone crop years, these appear to be quasi-resident in state forests of Region 4.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BCBC – Binghamton Christmas Bird Count; CCBC – Cortland Christmas Bird Count; FMHW – Franklin Mountain Hawk Watch; NWC – NYSOA Waterfowl Count; OnCBC – Oneonta Christmas Bird Count; OwCBC – Owego Christmas Bird Count; SHCBC – Sherburne Christmas Bird Count; SkanL – Skaneateles Lake; TBC – Tioga Bird Club; NCBCWW – Naturalists' Club of Broome County Weed Walkers.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Snow Goose: several hundred in Reg 8-18 Dec; regular early-mid Dec.

Mute Swan: 3 BCBC 20 Dec.

WOOD DUCK: 2 NWC mid-Jan; 1 CCBC 19 Dec.

Am. Black Duck: max 52 BCBC 20 Dec; 188 NWC mid-Jan.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL: 2 NWC mid-Jan.

Redhead: max 31 NWC mid-Jan; 19 SkanL CCBC 19 Dec.

Ring-necked Duck: 3 NWC mid-Jan.

Greater Scaup: max 6 Springfield OTSE 1 Jan; only two reports.

Lesser Scaup: max 25 SkanL CCBC 19 Dec.

Bufflehead: 9 SkanL CCBC 19 Dec.

Com. Goldeneye: max 55 SkanL CCBC 19 Jan.

Com. Merganser: max 268 NWC mid-Jan.

Ring-necked Pheasant: max 7 Cold Brook Rd COURT Dec.

Ruffed Grouse: max 16 CCBC 19 Dec; good numbers reported.

Wild Turkey: max 381 OnCBC 19 Dec; higher than avg numbers reported.

Com. Loon: 14 Bing 2 Jan.

Pied-billed Grebe: 1 Otsiningo Park BROO 2 Feb.

RED-NECKED GREBE: BCBC 20 Dec, only report, rare in winter.

Am. Coot: 21 Otsego Lake 17 Jan.

Great Blue Heron: max 5 SHCBC 19 Dec; below average numbers throughout area in Dec, with typical decline in numbers during early Jan-late Feb.

Turkey Vulture: a few early Dec; 2 Vestal 9 Feb.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: 10 BCBC 20 Dec; 3 OnCBC 19 Dec; 15 FMHW Dec totals; larger numbers concentrated in Delaware River basin; reported from all counties; now regular in smaller numbers near medium sized rivers including along Tio R from E. Homer to Whitney Pt.

N. Harrier: max 4 OwCBC 27 Dec.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: max 7 OwCBC 27 Dec; overall less common than Cooper's Hawk.

Cooper's Hawk: 9 BCBC 20 Dec; regular.

N. Goshawk: 1 OnCBC 19 Dec; 1 BCBC 20 Dec; only one other report, scarce.

RED-SHOULDERED HAWK: CCBC 19 Dec; BCBC 20 Dec; only reports, rare.

Red-tailed Hawk: 51 FMHW Dec totals; max 94 CCBC 19 Dec.

Rough-legged Hawk: 9 CCBC 19 Dec; low numbers overall.

GOLDEN EAGLE: 20 FMHW Dec totals; 19 other reports; rare but regular and perhaps increasing winter visitor thru period esp. in OTSE and DELA, *intro*.

Am. Kestrel: max 5 OwCBC 27 Dec; scarce after Dec; overwintering birds declining for years despite generally warmer winters.

MERLIN: CCBC 19 Dec; BCBC 20 Dec; Binghamton and Cortland thru; probably occurring in winter in other areas as increase in both winter and breeding numbers continues.

Peregrine Falcon: 2 Binghamton thru, expected.

KILLDEER: 2 TIOG Dec 12, late birds.

SANDHILL CRANE: 6 CCBC Scott COURT 14 Dec (MY), exceptional sighting, but not surprising given its increasing status.

Am. Coot: max 23 Otsego Lake, where seen every winter.

Ring-billed Gull: max 380 CCBC 19 Dec.

Herring Gull: max 85 CCBC 14 Dec, low.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL: Preble Cort Feb.

Great Black-backed Gull: max 6 CCBC 18 Dec, low.

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

Mourning Dove: max 603 CCBC 19 Dec.

BARN OWL: 2 E. Springfield OTSE Dec-mid Feb, well documented; both birds dying Jan-Feb; in very poor shape (TS, PN *et al.*).

E. Screech-Owl: several reports, good numbers.

Great Horned Owl: several reports and generally well distributed.

Barred Owl: 2 SHCBC 19 Dec; few reports, obviously underreported.

N. SAW-WHET OWL: 1 TIOG 20 Feb

Belted Kingfisher: max 2 BCBC 20 Dec, lower than average numbers overall.

RED-HEADED WOODPECKER: adult Scott Cort 8 Feb.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: numerous reports along river valleys and towns at <1500'; increasing reports from 1500'-2000'; 4 present on OnCBC in area still scarce.

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER: CCBC 19 Dec; only report compared with a handful last year.

N. Flicker: max 2 CCBC & OnCBC 19 Dec; absent again on SHCBC; still generally scarce.

Pileated Woodpecker: good numbers reported throughout area.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: max 3 CCBC 19 Dec; few reports, quite scarce.

Blue Jay: max 487 OnCBC 19 Dec.

Fish Crow: BCBC 20 Dec; at typical locations near waterways between Binghamton and Owego but still not found north to Cortland despite it being found in Ithaca and Syracuse.

Com. Raven: 1-9 reported on all area CBC's; max 45 Middlefield NY Feb; >15+ at Chenango Co dump; sev widely scattered rep thru; winter numbers appear to be increasing.

Horned Lark: a few widely scattered reports in CORT, BROO, & TIOG; max 60 MacFairlane Rd Cincinnatus CORT 28 Feb; missed on 2 of 5 area CBC's.

Tufted Titmouse: max 190 BCBC 20 Dec; tied high count of 37 set for higher elevation SHCBC 20 Dec; continues to increase along many river valleys and villages of Region <1500' and starting to increase even during winter up to 1800'.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: max 41 CCBC 19 Dec, some likely from CAYU; numbers were down in all state forests.

Brown Creeper: max 16 BCBC 20 Dec, high count; average numbers reported otherwise.

Carolina Wren: max 20 BCBC 20 Dec; reported from all CBC's; continues to increase areawide.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 46 CCBC 14 Dec, some likely from CAYU, high count; missed on OnCBC & OwCBC.

E. Bluebird: max 96 OwCBC 27 Dec; many reported thru period, but generally more common along "southern tier" counties.

Am. Robin: max 40 Springfield 9 Feb; low numbers, no large concentrations compared with recent years.

N. Mockingbird: max 6 BCBC 20 Dec; also reported on OwCBC.

Cedar Waxwing: max 59 OwCBC 27 Dec; seen on all CBC's, but numbers appeared to be below average for winter.

WARBLERS

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER: Conklin 13 Dec Feb (JW), rare.

TOWHEES - WEAVERS

Am. Tree Sparrow: max 444 CCBC 14 Dec; unevenly distributed with several areas reporting very low numbers.

FOX SPARROW: 1 BCBC 20 Dec.

SAVANNAH SPARROW: 1 CCBC 14 Dec, good details.

CHIPPING SPARROW: 1 CCBC 14 Dec, good details.

Song Sparrow: max 13 BCBC 20 Dec; reported from all area CBCs, but in lower numbers than last year

Swamp Sparrow: max 2 BCBC 20 Dec; at least a few overwinter in various marshes somewhere in Reg every year.

White-throated Sparrow: max 21 BCBC 20 Dec; reported from all CBC's.

Lapland Longspur: 1 Preble Cort Feb.

Snow Bunting: max 222 OnCBC 19 Dec; missed on OwCBC.

Red-winged Blackbird: 1 each CCBC, SHCBC, & OnCBC; first returning migrants seemed late this year, first noticeable pulse not until early Mar.

Com. Grackle: 2 BCBC 20 Dec, only CBC report; first returning migrants late.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 21 CCBC 14 Dec; reported from most CBC's; most common winter blackbird; first returning migrants Mar.

Purple Finch: max 11 OnCBC 19 Dec; largely scarce but becoming slightly more common at

feeders mid-late Jan thru.

House Finch: small number in towns, hamlets, and farms; numbers haven't rebounded to early 90s highs.

Red Crossbill: just a few Type 1 Pharsalia CHEN Feb in larch or pine habitat; very scarce, typical for poor overall cone crop year.

COMMON REDPOLL: 2 BCBC 20 Dec; only report, non-flight year after back to back flights

the past two years.

Pine Siskin: 1-2 each CCBC, BCBC & SHCBC; 4 other reports; non-flight year after last year's massive flight.

EVENING GROSBEAK: max 6 BCBC 20 Dec; a few along Reg 4/5 boundary; non-flight year.

Am. Goldfinch: max 319 BCBC 20 Dec; about average numbers thru.