

REGION 8—HUDSON-MOHAWK

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Winter 2010 was mild overall, with snow occurring only at the very beginning and end of the season. The first snow of the season occurred on 5 December. The month ended slightly cooler than average, but with several days with daytime highs above freezing. January ended 2.2° F above average, with a strong prolonged January thaw lasting from the 15th-27th, sufficient to melt almost all snow from the Region, to remove frost from ground with southern exposure, and to free up the margins of large bodies of water. February continued warmer than average and remained largely snowless until 16-23 February, when a series of heavy wet snow storms hit the Region and dumped almost 7 feet of snow in the Catskills.

With mild weather and large storms advancing up the eastern seaboard some late winter migrants arrived earlier than average to the Region. Turkey Vultures often dribble into the southern counties of the Region in late February, but they were common in early February this year. Rich Guthrie and Chad Witko spotted a **Laughing Gull** at the Coxsackie boat launch, which continues to host a small list of interesting white-winged gulls each winter.

The NYSDEC finished its second season of the Wintering Raptor Monitoring Project, funded through the State Wildlife Grants program. As part of the project, volunteers and DEC staff conducted biweekly surveys to count wintering raptors in Montgomery County and at the Coxsackie grasslands in Greene County. Survey periods ran from a half-hour before sunset to half-hour after sunset. This year's highlights include large single location maxima of Northern Harriers and Short-eared Owls in Greene County, data that are all the more remarkable because of sampling efforts designed to safeguard against double counting birds.

Among the news of the weird, a Hairy Woodpecker with a deformed sickle-shaped upper mandible visited the feeder of a resident in Saratoga County for several weeks. It apparently appeared healthy enough to feed on suet until it was captured and eaten by an accipiter. Another unusual bird, perhaps a ***Zonotrichia* sp. x Eastern Towhee hybrid**, was photographed visiting a feeder in Stuyvesant, Columbia County.

Eastern Phoebe were observed in the Region this year in January, the rarest month of the year to find them in our area usually late for half-hardy lingerers and too early for migrants. Despite the mild weather, birders discovered few half hardies this season except for a few Gray Catbirds in December and the CBC bird of the season, a **Veery**, found by Bill Cook, Jeff Novick, and Jon Boulette in Stockport, Columbia County. The bird was photographed and good details exist to separate the bird from Hermit Thrush.

The three species of common *icterids*, Common Grackle, Red-winged Blackbird, and Brown-headed Cowbird, all appeared frequently throughout the winter. Migration began in mid-February and continued steadily into spring without large staging events. As these species have built up larger wintering populations in the Region, it's getting harder and harder to parse out the first migrants from those that overwinter.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

CBC – Christmas Bird Count; COX – T Cocksackie GREE; FtE – T Fort Edwards WASH; TR – Tomhannock Res RENS; VF – Vischer's Ferry SARA.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Snow Goose: max 500 Lock 7 SCHE 16 Dec.

Cackling Goose: COX boat launch 4 Feb.

Wood Duck: Lock 7 SCHE 19 Dec; Hudson Falls CBC 19 Dec.

Gadwall: 2 VF 2 Dec; 3 ALBA CBC 20 Dec.

Am. Wigeon: 2 VF 1 Dec.

N. Shoveler: VF 1 Dec.

N. Pintail: max 5 Saratoga L SARA 4 Dec.

Canvasback: max 55 Germantown COLU 28 Feb.

Redhead: Hudson Falls CBC 19 Dec; 2 Troy CBC 2 Jan; 2 Stillwater SARA 7 Jan.

Ring-necked Duck: max 78 ALBA CBC.

Greater Scaup: COX boat launch 20 Jan-5 Feb.

Lesser Scaup: COX boat launch 9 Jan.

Long-tailed Duck: COX boat launch 12 Dec.

Bufflehead: max 10 Vly Res ALBA 12 Dec.

Com. Goldeneye: max 80 Stillwater SARA 2 Feb.

Hooded Merganser: max 110 TR 2 Dec.

Com. Merganser: max 490 TR 2 Dec.

Red-breasted Merganser: Catskill GREE 31 Jan.

Ruddy Duck: max 14 TR 2 Dec.

Ruffed Grouse: Burnt-Rossman Hills SCHO 13 Dec; Hudson Falls CBC 19 Dec; SCHE CBC 19 Dec; 7 ALBA CBC 20 Dec; 5 RENS CBC 28

Dec; Salem CBC 2 Jan; Ft Plain CBC 32 Jan; Churchtown COLU 30 Jan.

Com. Loon: max 2 L George WARR 24 Dec.

Red-throated Loon: Tomhannock Res RENS 2 Dec.

Pied-billed Grebe: SCHE CBC 19 Dec.

Double-crested Cormorant: Catskill GREE 18 Jan.

Great Cormorant: Germantown COLU 28 Feb.

Black Vulture: 2 Hudson COLU 25 Jan.

Turkey Vulture: Germantown COLU 10 Jan; Slingerlands 7 Feb; Ravena ALBA 17 Feb; Albany 20 Feb.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: max 16 Troy CBC 2 Jan.

N. Harrier: max 56 COX flats 11 Feb, large single location maximum.

N. Goshawk: SCHE CBC 19 Dec; 2 Burnt-Rossman Hills SCHO 30 Dec; Rensselaerville RENS 7 Feb.

Rough-legged Hawk: max 18 FtE 10 Jan.

Golden Eagle: Philmont COLU 31 Jan; Blenheim SCHO 21 Feb.

Merlin: COX 28 Dec; 2 Troy CBC 2 Jan; Cohoes ALBA 17 Jan; Brunswick RENS 26 Jan.

LAUGHING GULL: COX boat launch 22 Feb.

Iceland Gull: max 4 COX boat launch 27 Jan.
Lesser Black-backed Gull: COX boat launch 8 Dec; 2 Crescent ALBA 28 Dec.
Glaucous Gull: 2 COX boat launch 16 Dec.

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

Snowy Owl: Rotterdam SCHE 4 Dec; Malta SARA 7 Feb.
Short-eared Owl: 2 Minden MONT 24 Dec; Amsterdam MONT 10 Jan; 6 Saratoga Battlefield SARA 20 Jan; max 10 COX flats 27 Jan.
N. Saw-whet Owl: Ft. Plain MONT 2 Jan; max 3 Berne ALBA 15 Feb.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: max 5 Troy CBC 2 Jan.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

E. Phoebe: New Salem ALBA 24 Jan, rare in Jan.
N. Shrike: Galway SARA 7 Dec; COX 5-15 Jan; FtE 10 Jan; Slingerlands ALBA 17 Jan; Saratoga Battlefield SARA 25 Jan.
Horned Lark: max 500 Poestenkill RENS 28 Dec.
Marsh Wren: VF 4 Dec-8 Jan.
Ruby-crowned Kinglet: Chatham CBC 19 Dec; Troy CBC 2 Jan.
E. Bluebird: max 133 ALBA CBC 20 Dec.
VEERY: Chatham CBC 19 Dec (BC).
Hermit Thrush: S Glens Falls WARR 27 Dec; COX 6 Jan; Thatcher Park ALBA 4 Feb.
Gray Catbird: ALBA CBC 20 DEC.

Am. Pipit: New Scotland ALBA 10 Dec; Albany 14 Dec; Stillwater SARA 16 Dec.

WARBLERS

COM. YELLOWTHROAT: VF 1 Dec.

TOWHEES - WEAVERS

Chipping Sparrow: last Albany 12 Dec.
Savannah Sparrow: max 20 COX flats 18 Feb.
Fox Sparrow: VF 4 Dec; 4 ALBA CBC 20 DEC; Ghent COLU 7 Jan; New Voorheesville ALBA 8 Jan.
Swamp Sparrow: SCHE CBC 19 Dec.
White-crowned Sparrow: max 6 New Scotland ALBA 12 Dec.
Lapland Longspur: max 4 Schaghticoke RENS 12 Jan.
Snow Bunting: max 2924 Troy CBC 2 Jan; 300 Easton WASH 10 Jan.
Red-winged Blackbird: West Sand Lake 18 Feb; 4-mile Point GREE 20 Feb; 6 Florida MONT 22 Feb; Albany 24 Feb.
Rusty Blackbird: 10 Hillsdale COLU 10 Jan.
Com. Grackle: Taghkanic COLU 2 Jan; Florida MONT 22 Feb; 2 Albany 24 Feb.
Brown-headed Cowbird: max 67 ALBA CBC 20 Dec.
Pine Grosbeak: 8 Chatham COLU 5 Dec.
Purple Finch: max 21 ALBA CBC 20 Dec.
Red Crossbill: max 11 Burnt-Rossman Hills SCHO 6 Dec - 21 Feb.
Com. Redpoll: 7 Ft. Plain CBC 2 Jan.
Pine Siskin: 15 ALBA CBC 20 Dec; Taghkanic COLU 10 Jan.