

REGION 4—SUSQUEHANNA

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Winter got off to a relatively early start with a colder than normal December. Snow was less than normal for Southern Tier counties, but significant lake effect snows were impressive for Cortland and Chenango Counties in December. In January, northwestern sections of the Region, i.e., northern Cortland and Chenango Counties, continued to receive impressive, higher than normal lake effect snow. In general, January snowfall totals were below average for Southern Tier counties. Temperatures were again below normal across the Region for January. February was noted for small measureable lake effect snows on most days and two widespread snow events that brought a general 5-10 inches across the Region. Temperatures for February were near average across the Region. Overall, it made for a long, colder, and snowier winter, not seen since at least 2003.

The cone crop was terrible again for the second consecutive year. It's unusual to have two bad back-to-back cone crop years, but this sets the table for what should be a great conifer cone crop in 2011-12. The only conifer with seeds was red pine, and the crop was modest at best. Other winter food crops like fruiting trees and birches produced an average to above average crop, but shrubs, maples, oaks, and ashes were below average.

There were no big surprises during the annual mid winter waterfowl count. The best finds were one Wood Duck, three Gadwall, two Lesser Scaup, and a Long-tailed Duck. Snow Geese moved through a bit earlier than in previous years and so were missed on area Christmas Bird Counts. However, the two lingering **Double-crested Cormorants** on the Binghamton CBC were a nice find.

Turkey Vultures continue to stay later and return earlier, with a few now appearing to even overwinter. Two were seen on the Sherburne CBC 18 December, and six were seen in Windsor on 1 February. Perhaps the best find for the Region was the **Black Vulture** seen in Johnson City with Turkey Vultures on 19 January. This bird was perhaps the same one that spent over a week in the Ithaca area. Cooper's Hawks continue to be reported more commonly in winter than historically. They are now conspicuously more common in winter than Sharp-shinned Hawks. **Merlins** continue to overwinter

in Binghamton, Cortland, and perhaps Oneonta. **Golden Eagles** were seen on the Cortland and Binghamton CBCs; it appears that almost every year now at least 2-3 are reported on area CBCs. Some birds are clearly migrants, but other birds appear to stop over for a time or try to overwinter. In Otsego and Delaware Counties, where members of the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society have set up eagle monitoring sites, both eagle species are seen annually. This year there were only four Bald Eagles and one Golden Eagle seen, along with many Red-tailed Hawks, a few Rough-legged Hawks, and as many as 40 Common Ravens. A handful of other Golden Eagles were reported across the Region, and Bald Eagles are now an expected species along most moderate-to-large waterways. Franklin Mountain Hawk Watch ended up breaking their record for Bald Eagles with a count of **221**, but only had half the annual average of Golden Eagles reported. Rough-legged Hawk numbers were higher than average. **Red-shouldered Hawks** were reported on the Binghamton and Owego CBCs. **Long-eared** and **Saw-whet Owls** were nice additions to the Cortland Christmas Bird Count.

A number of half-hardies were reported, among them: Yellow-bellied Sapsucker and **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** on two CBCs; Winter Wren; Hermit Thrush; and **Field, Fox, and Chipping Sparrows**, the latter being reported on three of the areas CBCs. Perhaps the best half-hardy reported for the Region was the **Gray Catbird** seen in mid-December in Broome County.

It was a pretty good finch winter, which certainly helped many get through the long, cold, snowy winter. It was a bad cone crop year, so only a few White-winged and **Red Crossbills (Type 1)** were reported. Pine Siskins and Purple Finches largely moved through the area, with both lingering in small, scattered numbers throughout Region. There was a good push of **Evening Grosbeaks** through the Region in November-December, with several small flocks wintering in the hills of Chenango and Cortland Counties. After much anticipation by some, a late, moderate to large invasion of **Common Redpolls** materialized in late December-early January. As typical with redpoll invasions, a few scattered **Hoary Redpolls** and "**Greater**" **Common Redpolls** were reported.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BCBC – Binghamton Christmas Bird Count; Bpd – Boland Pond; CCBC – Cortland Christmas Bird Count; CVSP – Chenango Valley State Park; FMHW – Franklin Mountain Hawk Watch; NYSOA – New York State Ornithological Association; 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: max 200 W Burlington 9 Dec; last flocks moved thru early Dec, most moved through earlier than in recent years; 1 Bing 8 Jan.
Mute Swan: 2 NYSOA Waterfowl Count mid Jan.

Wood Duck: 2 CCBC 18 Dec; NYSOA Waterfowl Count mid Jan.

GADWALL: 3 SkanL NYSOA Waterfowl Count mid Jan.

Am. Wigeon: 1 NYSOA Waterfowl Count mid Jan.

Am. Black Duck: 256 NYSOA Waterfowl Count mid Jan; 41 BCBC 18 Dec.

N. Pintail: 1 NYSOA Waterfowl Count mid Jan.

Redhead: 6-11 Hillcrest Pits Dec & Feb; 3 SkanL CCBC 18 Dec.

Ring-necked Duck: 1 Bpd thru; 2 NYSOA Waterfowl Count mid Jan; few reports from BROO, TIOG, CORT.

Greater Scaup: 2 Hillcrest Pits 16-18 Feb.

Lesser Scaup: 2 SkanL CCBC 18 Dec.

Bufflehead: 3 scattered rep of singles; 2 SkanL CCBC 18 Dec.

Com. Goldeneye: max 75 SkanL CCBC 18 Dec.

Hooded Merganser: max 85 NYSOA

Waterfowl Count mid Jan; 78 BCBC 18 Dec.

Com. Merganser: max 459 NYSOA Waterfowl Count mid Jan; reported on all CBCs.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER: max 4 NYSOA Waterfowl Count mid Jan; 2 BCBC 18 Dec.

Ring-necked Pheasant: missed on all area CBC's; few reports.

Ruffed Grouse: max 4 CCBC and BCBC 18 Dec; lower numbers than last year.

Wild Turkey: max 351 OnCBC 18 Dec; good numbers reported.

Com. Loon: Murphy's Island Endwell mid Jan.

Pied-billed Grebe: 1 Chagnum River Walk 23 Jan.

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT: 2 BCBC 18 Dec.

Great Blue Heron: max 5 BCBC & CCBC 18 Dec; lower number of reports this year than last with typical decline in numbers during early Jan-late Feb.

BLACK VULTURE: Johnson City 19 Jan (DN); very rare in winter, perhaps same bird seen in Ithaca area around the same time.

Turkey Vulture: a few early Dec; 2 SHCBC 18 Dec; 6 Windsor BROO 1 Feb; first larger wave of returning migrants mid-late Feb; rare in winter, but increasing in southern tier and CNY.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: max 5 BCBC 18 Dec; reported on all CBCs except SHCBC; larger numbers concentrated in Delaware River basin, but reported from all counties; also now regular in smaller numbers near medium sized rivers including along Tio R from E Homer to Whitney Pt; 15 FMHW Dec; record high 221 for season FMHW; 4 at winter Eagle Survey Stations in OTSE.

N. Harrier: max 18 OwCBC 26 Dec, very high count; low numbers for rest of Reg, typical.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: max 6 CCBC 14 Dec.

Cooper's Hawk: 14 BCBC 18 Dec; regular and more common now than Sharp-shinned.

N. Goshawk: singles BCBC, CCBC, & OwCBC; only two other reports, scarce.

Red-shouldered Hawk: BCBC 18 Dec; OwCBC 26 Dec; Endicott 6 Dec, 10 Jan (photos NM); 1 BROO 16 Jan (DN).

Red-tailed Hawk: 106 CCBC 18 Dec, count high; above ave numbers reported throughout Reg, much higher than last year; total 48 FMHW Dec; total 12 FMHW Jan.

Rough-legged Hawk: 24 OwCBC 26 Dec; higher than ave numbers.

GOLDEN EAGLE: total 8 FMHW Dec; season total 93 FMHW, approx half normal ave of 181; BCBC & CCBC 18 Dec; 6 other rep; a few seem to stopover or try to overwinter annually esp in OTSE and DELA.

Am. Kestrel: 1-2 on all CBCs; scarce after Dec; overwintering birds declining for years despite generally warmer winters.

Merlin: CCBC & BCBC 18 Dec; Binghamton and Cortland thru; probably occurring in winter in other areas as increase in both winter and breeding numbers continues throughout southern half of state..

Peregrine Falcon: Binghamton thru, expected.

Am. Coot: max 41 NYSOA Waterfowl Count mid-Jan; S SkanL CCBC; Otsego Lake, annual.

AMERICAN WOODCOCK: Windsor 1 Feb, no details.

Great Black-backed Gull: max 7 CCBC 18 Dec, low.

BONAPARTE'S GULL: 2 Murphy's 13 Dec (DW), late.

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

Mourning Dove: max 470 OwBC 26 Dec.

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

Great Horned Owl: several reports, widely distributed.

Barred Owl: reported on 3 of 5 CBCs; few reports, underreported. **LONG-EARED OWL:** Scott CORT 18 Dec; only report.

N.SAW-WHET OWL: 2 CCBC 18 Dec, only report.

Belted Kingfisher: max 7 BCBC 18 Dec; sev rep, dip in numbers early Jan-late Feb.

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

YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER: max 3 BCBC 14 Dec; CCBC 18 Dec; 2 other rep..

N. Flicker: max 5 CCBC & BCBC Dec 18; missed only on OnCBC; numbers up from low numbers last year but still generally scarce.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: few reports; max 3 CCBC 18 Dec, higher than expected.

Blue Jay: max 387 BCBC 18 Dec.

Fish Crow: missed on CBCs; a few rep from typical loc near waterways between Binghamton and Owego; still not found north to Cortland despite being found in Ithaca and Syracuse.

Com. Raven: max 40+ OTSE, at eagle survey sites; reported on all area CBC's except SHCBC; max 21 CCBC 18 Dec; sev other widely scattered rep thru, increasing.

Horned Lark: a few widely scattered rep CORT, BROO, and TIOG; max 90 Cornell Ln CCBC 18 Dec; missed on 2 of 5 area CBC's.

Tufted Titmouse: max 148 BCBC 18 Dec; 37 SHCBC 18 Dec; increasing along many river valleys and villages of Region <1500' and starting to increase even during winter up to 1800-2000'.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: max 48 CCBC 18 Dec; below ave in state forest, but modest numbers at feeders.

Brown Creeper: max 22 BCBC 18 Dec, high count; ave numbers otherwise.

Carolina Wren: max 15 BCBC 18 Dec; continues to increase area-wide.

WINTER WREN: Norwich 12 Dec; CVSP 15 Jan, rare in winter, but often then here.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 32 CCBC 18 Dec; rep on all CBCs.

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET: 2 CCBC 18 Dec; Chagnot River BROO thru much of period.

E. Bluebird: max 58 OwCBC 26 Dec; many reported thru, but generally more common along "southern tier" counties; missed on 2 higher elevation CBCs.

HERMIT THRUSH: 1 Fernwood Ave BROO 24 Feb (DG).

Am. Robin: max 9 CCBC 14 Dec; relatively low numbers reported.

GRAY CATBIRD: BROO 12 Dec (MB!).

N. Mockingbird: max 7 BCBC 18 Dec; 4 CCBC, high count; few OwCBC.

Cedar Waxwing: max 95 CCBC 18 Dec; low numbers reported on all five regional CBCs.

LONGSPURS - WARBLERS

Snow Bunting: max 208 CCBC 18 Dec; rep all CBCs; sev rep moderate to large flocks thru.

TOWHEES - WEAVERS

Am. Tree Sparrow: max 589 CCBC 18 Dec; best numbers on all CBCs in a number of years!

FIELD SPARROW: Brick Pond Berm Trail 4 Feb (BO).

CHIPPING SPARROW: BCBC, OwCBC, and SHCBC's; max 2 BCBC 18 Dec.

FOX SPARROW: Cortland thru, good details provided.

Song Sparrow: max 23 BCBC 18 Dec; rep all area CBC's.

Swamp Sparrow: singles BCBC & CCBC 18 Dec; a few overwinter in marshes along with higher numbers of Song Sparrows.

White-throated Sparrow: max 20 CCBC 18 Dec; rep all CBC's except OnCBC.

Red-winged Blackbird: max 13 OwCBC 26 Dec; CCBC 18 Dec; 21 Wildwood Nature Preserve 19 Jan thru (MB); a few migrants late Feb.

Com. Grackle: no rep.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 32 CCBC 18 Dec; most common winter blackbird.

Purple Finch: max 43 OnCBC **20 Dec**; widely scattered in small numbers.

House Finch: max 285 BCBC 18 Dec; small numbers in towns, hamlets, and farms; numbers haven't rebounded to early 90's highs.

Red Crossbill: 1 Kolb Rd feeders early Feb; a few Type 1 in hills CHEN.

WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL: Cortland Jan & Morris OTSE 19 Jan.

COM. REDPOLL: moderate - large invasion late Dec/early Jan thru; low area CBCs; at most Reg feeders Feb & Mar.

"GREATER" COMMON REDPOLL: a few scattered at feeders; 2-3 Scott CORT Feb; 1 Cuyler CORT Feb.

HOARY REDPOLL: 2-3 Scott CORT Feb-early March, at feeders; 1 Truxton Jan-Feb; 2-3 Endwell feeders (NM ph).

PINE SISKIN: max 43 OnCBC 18 Dec; reported in very small numbers from 4 of 5 CBC's; a few wintered across Reg.

Evening Grosbeak: a few small flocks wintered in hills of CORT & CHEN and probably OTSE; max 40 Truxton CORT thru.

Am. Goldfinch: max 586 CCBC 18 Dec, count high; ave to slightly above thru.

ADDENDA

WHITE EYED VIREO: 11 May 2010 Parsons Rd BROO (NM), rare!

Cerulean Warbler: CVSP 31 May 2010 (JS), heard and seen; pr CVSP 3 June (NM), seen.

ORCHARD ORIOLE: 2 May BU Nature Preserve (NM), rare!