

REGION 8—HUDSON-MOHAWK

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Winter 2011 brought us colder temperatures and more snow than average. The first day of December brought a high of 60° F at Albany International Airport and nearly two inches of warm rain. It was the last mild weather of the season. The month of December finished 2.1° colder than average, with few snowstorms. January continued cold, 1.7° below average, with a monthly snowfall total near average. Frequent small storms, however, delivered that average snowfall on 14 days, and several more days in January received trace amounts of snow. January logged only one clear day at Albany. By February, which finished 1.1° below average, the season snow totals began to pile up. By 28 February, Albany recorded 75.1" of snow compared to a seasonal average of 62.7". In many areas, snow completely covered the ground from late December through the season without a mid-winter thaw.

Snow geese made a good showing in the Hudson River Valley this winter, with large flights occurring on the evening of 7 December. Over two thousand staged in Rensselaer County, and large numbers continued in the Region until the Christmas Bird Count season. Elizabeth Grace found a Cackling Goose in Columbia County, and a **Eurasian Wigeon** lingered at Vischer's Ferry, Saratoga County, long enough to be observed by multiple birders.

A modest winter roost of Black Vultures has become established near the abandoned cement quarries just east of the city of Hudson, and birders in that area found up to half a dozen vultures winging around the city this season or loitering around dumpsters. An unusual mid-winter sighting of **Osprey** occurred in February in Montgomery County, and a Golden Eagle hung around the Helderbergs of Albany County.

Few surprises showed up on Regional Christmas Bird Counts. Albany counters found a Wilson's Snipe. Some of the half hardies include Gray Catbirds on four counts and a Baltimore Oriole at Catskill-Coxsackie. A late Eastern Phoebe managed to eke out a living in Northumberland, Saratoga County, until the middle of January—no small feat during this colder- and stormier-than-average winter.

The season produced a decent owl list for the Region, if you include the carcass list. Paul Novak found a dead Northern Saw-whet Owl in Voorheesville. Thankfully live saw-whets were found by others this winter. Bob Yunic reported finding a dead emaciated Long-eared Owl in Saratoga County. Snowy Owl showed up once, and Short-eared Owl seemed scarce, with only a lone sighting at Fort Edward and a total of four on the Fort Plain CBC.

Anecdotally, many Regional birders reported that bird activity was low in the field this year and that activity was sparse even at feeders. American Pipits go unreported in this Region even during migration, so an early January sighting at the Coxsackie grasslands and two on the Salem CBC are nice winter

surprises. Steve Abrahamsen's quick eye spotted a **Bohemian Waxwing** in a flock of Cedar Waxwings in Saratoga County. Many birders this winter managed to tease Lapland Longspurs out of modestly abundant flocks of Horned Larks and Snow Buntings.

Despite many reporters noticing a poor cone crop this winter, we experienced a small irruption of **White-winged Crossbills**, appearing in five counties, mostly at feeders, from mid-January through the end of the season. Common Redpolls arrived in late December and nearly everyone reported at least a few at their feeders. Only one birder, however, T. Lloyd Williams, reported the rarer **Hoary Redpoll**.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

CAT – T Catskill, GREE; COX – T Cocksackie, GREE; FtE – T Fort Edwards, WASH; TR – Tomhannock Res, RENS; VF – Vischer's Ferry, SARA.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Snow Goose: 1000 HR GREE-ALBA 7 Dec; 2500 Brunswick RENS 9 Dec; 3500 CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec.

CAACKLING GOOSE: Ooms Pd Chatham COLU 30 Dec (EG).

Tundra Swan: Stafford Bridge SARA 19-21 Feb.

Wood Duck: 13 CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; last Hillsdale COLU 18 Dec.

Gadwall: VF 3 Dec.

EURASIAN WIGEON: VF 1-4 Dec (mob).

Am. Wigeon: 7 Albany CBC 19 Dec.

N. Pintail: CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; VF 3-18 Dec.

Canvasback: 2 Saratoga CBC 20 Dec; Stafford Bridge SARA 22-23 Feb.

Redhead: TR 3-11 Dec; Albany CBC 19 Dec; Saratoga CBC 20 Dec; Troy CBC 2 Jan; 6 Stafford Bridge SARA 19-23 Feb.

Greater Scaup: max 12 CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec.

Lesser Scaup: CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec.

Long-tailed Duck: Schenectady SCHE 16 Dec.

Barrow's Goldeneye: TR 3 Dec; FtE 1 Jan; Ft Miller SARA 17-20 Feb.

Red-breasted Merganser: Basic Creek Res ALBA 2 Dec; CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; 4 Salem CBC 18 Dec; Ft Miller SARA 18-19 Feb.

Ruddy Duck: max 69 TR 3 Dec.

Ruffed Grouse: Stony Creek WARR 9 Dec; Hudson Falls CBC 18 Dec; SCHE CBC 18 Dec; 4 Albany CBC 19 Dec; Johnstown-Gloversville CBC 27 Dec; S RENS CBC 30 Dec; 2 Troy CBC 2 Jan.

Com. Loon: max 6 TR 4 Dec.

Pied-billed Grebe: arr Stafford Bridge SARA 19 Feb, early.

Red-necked Grebe: Hudson Falls CBC 18 Dec.

Great Blue Heron: last Austerlitz COLU 20 Jan.

Turkey Vulture: CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; arr Palenville GREE 13 Feb.

Black Vulture: 5 Hudson COLU 12-26 Dec; 2 Albany 1 Jan.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

OSPREY: Amsterdam MONT 18 Feb (JL), rare in Feb.

N. Goshawk: Thatcher P ALBA 5 Dec; 6 reports of singles.

Red-shouldered Hawk: Fort Plain CBC 31 Dec; COX grasslands 29 Jan; Route 211 MONT 23 Feb.

Rough-legged Hawk: max 4 Florida MONT 4 Jan, generally scarce at expected locations.

Golden Eagle: Voorheesville ALBA 23 Feb.

Merlin: 12 reports of single birds thru.

Am. Coot: Chatham COLU 18 Dec; Stafford's Bridge SARA 25-26 Feb.

Wilson's Snipe: Albany CBC 19 Dec, uncommon in winter.

Iceland Gull: COX boat launch 14 Dec-11 Jan; Crescent Power Plant ALBA 15-17 Jan.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: COX boat launch 2-9 Jan.

Glaucous Gull: 2 Crescent Power Plant ALBA 15 Jan-19 Feb.

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

Snowy Owl: Northumberland SARA 8 Jan.

Long-eared Owl: Fitch Rd SARA 26 Jan (RY), found dead and emaciated.

Short-eared Owl: FtE 14 Dec; 4 Fort Plain CBC 31 Dec.

N. Saw-whet Owl: Voorheesville ALBA 3 Dec (PN), found dead; Ft Plain CBC 31 Dec; Cherry Plains RENS 23 Jan; New Baltimore GREE 25 Jan.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

E. Phoebe: Northumberland SARA 14 Jan, late.

N. Shrike: FtE 2 Dec; Charlton SARA 4 Dec; Rensselaerville ALBA 4 Dec; 2 Albany CBC 19 Dec; Gansevoort SARA 26 Dec; FtE 31 Dec, banded; Berne ALBA 1 Jan; FtE 15 Jan; Knox ALBA 4 Feb; Five Rivers ALBA 8 Feb.

Horned Lark: max 240 Clermont COLU 2 Feb.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec; last Germantown COLU 18 Dec.

Hermit Thrush: FtE 17 Jan.

Gray Catbird: CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec;

Schenectady CBC 18 Dec; Fort Plain CBC 31 Dec; 2 Troy CBC 2 Jan.

Am. Pipit: 2 Salem CBC 18 Dec; COX 8 Jan.

BOHEMIAN WAXWING: Saratoga SARA 12 Dec (SA), found in flock of Cedar Waxwings.

LONGSPURS - WARBLERS

Lapland Longspur: max 7 Northumberland SARA 10 Feb; several reports of singles.

Snow Bunting: max 250 Clermont COLU 3 Jan; numerous reports of flocks under 30 thru.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: last Germantown COLU 18 Dec.

TOWHEES - WEAVERS

Field Sparrow: Troy CBC 2 Jan.

Fox Sparrow: Hillsdale COLU 26 Jan.

White-crowned Sparrow: Stuyvesant COLU 16 Dec; Chatham COLU 18 Dec; 2 Papscaene RENS 16 Jan.

E. Meadowlark: 2 COX 2 Jan; 4 FtE 11 Jan.

Rusty Blackbird: Kinderhook COLU 18 Dec; Hillsdale COLU 19 Jan.

BALTIMORE ORIOLE: CAT-COX CBC 14 Dec, 4-mile Pt GREE (RG).

Pine Grosbeak: 6 Saratoga SARA 10 Dec.

Purple Finch: max 8 Claverack COLU 28 Jan.

White-winged Crossbill: Colonie ALBA 13 Jan; Claverack COLU 19 Jan; Taghkanic COLU 21 Jan; Saratoga SARA 5-6 Feb; 2 Glenville SCHE 8 Feb; 9 Stony Creek WARR 11 Feb; Loudonville ALBA 13 Feb.

Com. Redpoll: max 150 Burnt Hills ALBA 26 Dec; numerous flocks less than 50 thru.

HOARY REDPOLL: Berne ALBA 1 Jan (TLW).

Pine Siskin: Austerlitz COLU 4 Dec; Stony Creek WARR 9 Dec; Bolton Landing CBC 18 Dec; Hudson Falls CBC 18 Dec; 39 Fort Plain CBC 31 Dec; 8 Stillwater SARA 12-19 Feb.

Evening Grosbeak: 2 Rensselaerville ALBA 4 Dec; max 30 Stony Creek WARR 9 Dec.

