

REGION 7—ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

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The winter of 2011-2012 was quite mild for a North Country winter, with above average temperatures and below average precipitation. December temperatures ranged 5-6° above average, causing lakes and rivers to freeze much later than usual and leaving much of Lake Champlain open throughout the winter. Precipitation was average for the month, but it fell mostly as rain rather than snow. A few inches of snow were recorded in some Adirondack towns on the 23rd and 28th, but no snow was recorded for the month in the Champlain Valley. January was more of the same, with temperatures 4-5° above normal and snowfall well below average. When snow did fall it didn't last, as temperatures rose above freezing throughout the month, the high being 46° in Peru on the 24th. The lowest temperatures of the season came on 15 January, when temperatures fell to -20° in Lake Placid and -10° in Dannemora. To the dismay of skiers across the Region January did not have any significant snowstorms, as the biggest snowfall fell on 29th and brought only 3-6" to the Region. February continued to have temperatures 5-7° above normal, reaching a high temperature of 48° in Peru on the 1st, and a low of -5° in Lake Placid on the 12th. Snowfall totals were 6-12" below average for the month, with the biggest "snowstorm" bringing only 7" in Tupper Lake and 2" in the Champlain Valley on the 25th.

As would be expected, a mild winter led to an above average season for birding. The late onset of winter caused many migrants to linger in the Region well beyond their usual dates. Common Loons were recorded on inland lakes well into December and seen on Lake Champlain throughout the winter. Many species of dabbling ducks were seen well into winter, with record late sightings of a Green-Winged Teal on 14 February and Wood Duck on 4 February in Clinton County. Other notable waterfowl include Red-necked Grebe on 8 January, Northern Pintail on 29 January, and White-winged Scoter and Double-crested Cormorant on 7 February. A Greater-white fronted Goose was found on the Ferrisburgh CBC in a flock of 1,000 Canada Geese, and a lone Cackling Goose was found in Westport. The most popular wintering waterfowl of the season were the three Tundra Swans that were first seen on 22 January at

Ausable Marsh and then reliably sighted through the end of February. These birds became quite the celebrities, drawing the attention of newspapers, television crews, and numerous visitors. While Tundra Swans have been seen at Ausable in the past it is unusual for them to stay for such a period of time. They were a nice treat to have this winter.

The other celebrity of the season was a Snowy Owl that was seen in downtown Plattsburgh in mid-December by multiple observers, though it was not the only owl that would draw the attention of birders this winter. A flock of six Short-eared Owls was discovered in the last hour of CBC desperation on the Ferrisburgh count on Clark Road, one of the roads that make up the famous "Magic Triangle" in Essex County. The owls stayed in the area until at least 20 January and attracted numerous birders to the once famed birding area. The Magic Triangle has lost some of its magic since the water levels dropped in the Webb Royce Swamp, but in the winter this is still one of the best birding locations in the Region. Birders drawn to the owls also found good numbers of Northern Harriers, Rough-legged Hawks, and American Tree Sparrows, all species that were hard to find elsewhere in the Region this winter. Other notable owl sightings include a Great-Horned Owl on the Saranac Lake CBC, an Eastern Screech Owl at Point Au Fer, and two N. Saw-whet Owls at Pyramid Lake.

With the mild winter a number of species that usually migrate south were seen in each month of the period, including Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, and Red-winged Blackbird. A Northern Flicker was sighted in January and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was sighted in early February. A lingering Yellow-rumped Warbler was found on the Plattsburgh CBC, only the second record for this CBC.

An excellent cone crop in the Adirondacks this past year led to very strong invasions of Pine Siskins and White-winged Crossbills in the Adirondacks. Pine Siskins were reported by the hundreds throughout the winter in coniferous forests, their calls filling the otherwise silent woods. White-winged Crossbills were reported from a number places in flocks ranging from two on Hurricane Mt. to 74 in Bloomingdale Bog. Red Crossbills were reported throughout December from the Roosevelt Truck Trail, with a high count of 23 birds on 14 December, but the only other reports all winter was of two birds at Paul Smith's on 14 December and two more at Long Lake on 23 February. Evening Grosbeaks were reported from a number of locations this winter, including a flock of 23 at the Paul Smith's Interpretive Center on 23 January and 35 in Long Lake, also on 23 February.

Most of the northern species that winter in the Adirondacks were reported, though many in smaller numbers than usual. With the lack of snow, Snow Buntings were fairly scarce compared with most winters, with the only sizable report being a flock of 119 in the magic triangle on 14 January. Horned Larks were also scarce, with only two reports all winter, both from Chazy. There were no Lapland Longspurs reported. Bohemian Waxwings arrived in mid-January and were seen in small numbers until mid-February, a much later arrival than in 2010 when they picked through my crabapple tree in early December. Northern

Shrikes were reported as one-day-wonders across the Region, in typical numbers.

In all a total of 100 species was reported this winter, a good number but shy of the record of 109 species.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

AP – Ausable Point; BB – Bloomingdale Bog; CH – Cumberland Head; CR – Chazy Riverlands; FCBC – Ferrisburgh CBC; GBM – Gilbert Brook Marina; IF – Intervale Farm; LC – Lake Champlain; LP – Lake Placid; LL – Long L; MT – Magic Triangle; NYSWC – NYS Waterfowl Count; NP – Noblewood P; PCBC – Plattsburgh CBC; PS – Paul Smiths; PtR – Point Au Roche SP; RP – Rouse's Pt; RTT – Roosevelt Truck Trail; SB – Sabattis Bog; SLCBC – Saranac L CBC; TL – Tupper L; WD – Wilcox Dock; WB – Whallon's Bay; WP – Westport.

WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

Snow Goose: 1500 RP 14 Dec; max 1650 Hurricane Mt 18 Dec; 400 RTT 24 Dec (JC).

Cackling Goose: WP 17 Dec (FCBC).

Greater White-fronted Goose: WP 17 Dec (FCBC).

Tundra Swan: 3 (2 Ad, 1 imm) AP 22 Jan thru, multiple observers.

Wood Duck: RP 21 Dec (WS); WB 29 Dec (SP); CH 4 Feb, record late CLIN.

Am. Black Duck: max 50 LC 18 Feb (BN).

N. Pintail: 2 Essex 29 Jan (T&CW).

Green-winged Teal: GBM 1 Jan (JO); AP 24 Jan, 14 Feb (BK), record late CLIN.

Canvasback: male WD 17 Dec (BK); fem CH 23 Jan (AB).

Redhead: LC 9 Jan (NYSWC); 2 CH 23 Jan (AB); Essex 26 Jan, 3 Feb (DL, LL).

Ring-necked Duck: max 20 Willsboro 29 Dec; 13 WP 31 Dec (SP).

Lesser Scaup: 2 RP 2 Jan (PH); max 24 LC 25 Feb (WS).

White-winged Scoter: CH 18 Dec (PCBC); RP 7 Feb (BH).

Long-tailed Duck: max 20 CP 3 Dec (AB); 2 RP 21 Dec (WS).

Bufflehead: max 42 Willsboro 29 Dec (SP).

The Kingbird 2012 June; 62 (2)

Com. Goldeneye: max 1256 RP 2 Jan (PH).

Hooded Merganser: 8 Piseco L 3 Dec (LH); max 19 Fifth L 14 Dec.

Com. Merganser: max 400 LC 9 Jan (NYSWC).

Ring-necked Pheasant: MT 1 Jan (DL).

Com. Loon: Little Tupper L 6 Dec (JC); multiple reports on LC thru.

Horned Grebe: Piseco L 3 Dec (LH); max 17 AP 18 Dec (PCBC).

Red-necked Grebe: WP 8 Jan (J&PT).

Double-crested Cormorant: WP 7 Feb (EG).

Turkey Vulture: PCBC 18 Dec.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: 3 RP 2 Jan (PF); 3 CP 8 Feb (SS); 3 Ticonderoga 18 Feb (BN).

N. Harrier: max 6 MT 6 Feb (ET), numerous reports from here.

Cooper's Hawk: Mirror L 1 Jan (SLCBC).

Rough-legged Hawk: 4 CP 3 Dec (AB); PtR 25 Dec (NO); max 5 MT 31 Dec thru.

GOLDEN EAGLE: Saranac L 1 Jan (SLCBC).

Am. Kestrel: WP 8 Jan (J&PT).

Peregrine Falcon: Pyramid L 7 Jan (EG).

Am. Coot: 3 CH 14 Dec (BK); LC 9 Jan (NYSWC); GBM 13 Jan (BK).

Little Gull: CH 9 Dec (DH), record late CLIN; Essex 29 Dec (SP).

Iceland Gull: LC 1 Jan (JO).

Great Black-backed Gull: max 26 LC 1 Jan (NYSWC).

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

E. Screech-Owl: RP 1 Jan (JO).

Great Horned Owl: BB 1 Jan (SLCBC); LP 21 Feb (LM).

Snowy Owl: Beekmantown 12 Dec (JH); Champlain 1 Jan (JO); Plattsburgh 12-18 Jan, multiple observers throughout downtown area.

Short-eared Owl: max 6 MT 17 Dec-20 Jan (mob), first observed on FCBC.

N. Saw-whet Owl: 2 Pyramid L 7 Jan (EG).

Belted Kingfisher: 3 Saranac R 1 Jan (SLCBC); Dickinson Ctr 20 Feb (AN).

Red-bellied Woodpecker: Albee Rd 15 Dec (DL); WP 17 Dec (FCBC).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: Peru 5 Feb (PJ).

Black-backed Woodpecker: 2 RTT 31 Dec (JC); IF 1 Jan (SLCBC); 2 BB 21 Feb (AB); 2 Ferds Bog 21 Feb (KH).

N. Flicker: MT 26 Dec (ET); 2 Essex 24 Jan (SF).

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: DC 29 Dec; BB 1 Jan; IL 3 Jan; PS 22 Jan; MT 29 Jan; IL 19 Feb.

Gray Jay: 2 Ferds Bog; multiple reports from BB, max of 26 on SLCBC.

Horned Lark: 17 Chazy 6 Feb (BK); 78 Chazy 26 Feb (JH), only reports.

Boreal Chickadee: 11 RTT 14 Dec (JC); max 15 BB 1 Jan (SLCBC); 3 Wright Peak 12 Jan (JD).

Tufted Titmouse: Indian L 1 Jan; LL 26 Feb (RF).

Carolina Wren: CH 31 Dec thru (NO).

Am. Robin: max 410 MT 24 Jan (SF), unusually high number.

Gray Catbird: Keene 1 Dec (MMc).

N. Mockingbird: 2 Plattsburgh 18 Dec (PCBC).

Bohemian Waxwing: arr 35 Indian L 22 Jan; max 250 Keene 26 Jan; 4 Saranac L 28 Jan; 200 LL 4 Feb; 60 Belmont 20 Feb, last.

LONGSPURS - WARBLERS

Yellow-rumped Warbler: 1 near AP 18 Dec (PCBC).

TOWHEES - WEAVERS

Am. Tree Sparrow: arr AP 18 Dec (PCBC); max 30 MT 31 Dec (SP), scarce this winter.

Song Sparrow: AP 18 Dec (PCBC); CH 14-18 Jan (BK); BB 21 Feb (AB).

White-throated Sparrow: Peru 15 Jan (JK); 3 BB 21 Feb (AB); 3 PS 22 Feb (AB).

Red-winged Blackbird: MT 1, 18 Jan (DL, SF); CH 19 Jan thru (NO); Inlet 20-23 Jan (GL).

Purple Finch: max 40 LL 13 Jan (JC).

Red Crossbill: max 23 RTT 7-24 Dec (JC); 2 PS 14 Dec (BM); 2 LL 23 Feb (AB).

White-winged Crossbill: 27 RTT 24 Dec (JC); 25 Sabattis 27 Dec; max 74 BB 1 Jan (SLCBC); 8 Ferds Bog 21 Feb (KH); 8 Mt Colvin 22 Feb (MMc).

Com. Redpoll: Gabriels 24 Jan (JS); 12 BB 18 Feb (CC), only reports.

Pine Siskin: 195 RTT 14 Dec; 450 Raquette Falls 7 Jan; max 500 Sabattis 10 Jan (JC); 23 PS 23 Jan; 300 BB 28 Jan; 35 LL 23 Feb, a very strong invasion this winter.

Evening Grosbeak: 2 Sabattis 27 Dec (JC); 23 PS 23 Jan (KH); 30 Kickerville Rd 16 Feb (AC); 35 LL 23 Feb (AB).