

REGION 6 - ST. LAWRENCE

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Many North Country residents seemed to think it was a cold winter, but weather data actually indicate a warmer than average winter. December and January averaged 4.5° F and 4.6° above normal, respectively, although February's mean temperature was within 0.2° of normal. December was wet, as the 6.6" of precipitation that fell was more than twice average, but the rest of the winter received about average precipitation, with about an inch less than normal falling in January and about an inch more than normal falling in February.

An **Eared Grebe** on the St. Lawrence River in Ogdensburg on 1 December was the first of a relatively large number of rarities seen in Region 6 this winter. Soon afterward, Nick Leone saw an interesting loon in Black River Bay from several vantage points over a period of a week or so, but did not get a close enough view until 12 December to confirm that it was a **Pacific Loon**. The loon continued to at least 20 December allowing several birders to see it. But a **Great Gray Owl** found by Mary Curtis at Robert Moses State Park on 27 January was not so cooperative, and none of the dozen or more birders that

chased the owl had any luck. The biggest surprise of the season was a female **Smew** I found on the St. Lawrence River in Lisbon 16 February, which drew a crowd immediately, but, unfortunately, flew off just before the first birders arrived to see it. The Smew was initially spooked by a snowmobile that passed by on the shore of the river, and the obvious alarm shown by the bird could be taken as a good sign regarding origins, but no definitive evidence was obtained that might shed light as to whether this bird was an escapee or a likely natural vagrant.

Aside from the Smew, the waterfowl picture in Region 6 was mixed. Dabbling ducks were generally present in average numbers, with more Northern Pintails than usual, including an exceptional winter count of nine in Lake Ontario off Black Pond WMA on 18 January. Diving duck numbers also seemed about average, but scoter numbers were relatively high for the second consecutive winter. Four Black Scoters were reported from Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River 17-19 January and none the rest of the reporting period, suggesting a mid-winter movement. Goldeneye seemed less abundant than usual, and the two Barrow's Goldeneye was fewer than have been reported most recent years.

It was an exceptionally poor winter for buteos, with very low numbers of Rough-legged Hawks and marginally higher numbers of Red-tailed Hawks. The latter species seemed to be more common in semi-wooded areas than more open habitats, probably because small mammals were more abundant in woodlands than grasslands, if mammal-trapping data from Fort Drum reflect the status of small mammal populations regionally as a whole. Poor grassland mammal numbers also are the likely explanation for low numbers of Short-eared Owls, but what then explains the relatively high number of American Kestrels that overwintered throughout the Region? At least nine, and probably more, Snowy Owls were in northern Jefferson County through the winter, but none were reported outside of this relatively small area.

Compared with last winter, many fewer half-hardies were present this season, although Red-headed Woodpeckers made a good showing. At least two and possibly more adult Red-headed Woodpeckers successfully overwintered on Fort Drum, thanks to a huge acorn crop last summer. Gerry Smith and Tom Carrolan saw two immature Red-headed Woodpeckers on Point Peninsula on 24 January, and I received a late report of another overwintering individual in Cape Vincent, although no details were provided regarding age. Other half-hardies included Great Blue Heron, Belted Kingfisher, Winter Wren, Hermit Thrush, Northern Mockingbird, and the usual assortment of sparrows.

Bohemian Waxwings and several finch species put on a good show. Bohemian Waxwings were particularly widespread, with reports of sizeable flocks from all portions of the Region. Numerous Pine Grosbeak flocks were reported, mostly from central and northern St. Lawrence County and along the St. Lawrence River in Jefferson County, with most flocks including no adult males. Common Redpolls were ubiquitous in December, but apparently most

redpolls moved farther south by mid-January, as few were observed away from feeders during the latter half of the winter. Hoary Redpoll reports trickled in throughout the winter, but as usual many reports lacked details. White-winged and Red Crossbills and Evening Grosbeaks also were present in Region 6 but were generally scarce outside the Adirondacks with a few exceptions.

For the season a total of 121 species was reported, more than most winters, and somewhat surprisingly just two shy of the tally from the previous rather exceptional winter. The highlight of the season was the excellent number of rarities reported, although this number probably wouldn't be considered exceptional in most Regions. Unfortunately, only one or a small handful of observers saw most of these rarities. For many, then, the excellent showing by Bohemian Waxwings, Pine Grosbeaks, and redpolls was the main attraction this winter.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

BI – Barnhart Island, T Massena; BP – Black Pond WMA, T Ellisburg; BI – Barnhart Island, Massena; BRB – Black River Bay; CBy – Chaumont Bay; CCSP – Coles Creek SP, T Waddington; CPSP – Cedar Point SP; CV – T Cape Vincent; ED – El Dorado Shores Preserve, T Ellisburg; FD – Fort Drum Military Reservation; FL – Fisher's Landing, T Alexandria; HH – Henderson Harbor; HPt – Hawkins Point, Massena; ICNC – Indian Creek Nature Center, T Canton; KC – Kelsey Creek, T Watertown; LB – Lisbon Beach, T Lisbon; MB – Millen's Bay; PilPt – Pillar Point; PtPen – Point Peninsula; RMSP – Robert Moses SP, T Massena; SBSP – Southwick Beach SP; SLR – St. Lawrence River; StPt – Stony Point, T Henderson; ULLWMA – Upper and Lower Lakes WMA, T Canton; WI – Wellesley Island.

WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

Snow Goose: heaviest movement of "fall" thru 15 Dec; last flock Canton 23 Dec; singles lingered to 12 Jan.

Cackling Goose: PilPt 2 Jan (WH).

Mute Swan: 4 CBy 5 Dec; 4 FL 4 Jan.

Trumpeter Swan: 4 CV 5 Dec; 3 ULLWMA thru 6 Jan, where 1 heard 24 Feb.

Tundra Swan: max 196 BRB 13 Dec; midwinter max 100 StPt 13 Jan.

Wood Duck: last BI 9 Dec.

Gadwall: max 220 CV 17 Jan.

Am. Wigeon: max 4 MB 13 Jan; 6 other reports.

Mallard: max 585 SLR Lisbon 19 Jan.

Am. Black Duck: max 400 PilPt 15 Dec.

N. Pintail: max 9 BP 18 Jan (JB); 10 other reports, high.

Green-winged Teal: m FL 17 Jan (JB).

Redhead: max 720 PtPen 13 Feb.

Ring-necked Duck: max 83 PtPen 17 Jan.

Greater Scaup: 1020 BRB 13 Dec; max 2000 PtPen 24 Dec.

Lesser Scaup: max 75 FL 18 Jan.

Surf Scoter: BP 17 Jan (CC, GL, BV), only report.

White-winged Scoter: max 266 BP 26 Dec.

Black Scoter: 2 BP & 1 SBSP 17 Jan (CC, GL, BV); CCSP 19 Jan (JB).

Long-tailed Duck: max 2400 BP 18 Jan (JB).

Bufflehead: max 70 PtPen 3 Dec.

Com. Goldeneye: max 1000 FL 13 Feb.

Barrow's Goldeneye: m MB 1 Jan (NL); f FL 2 Jan to 24 Feb (NL, JB).

SMEW: f LB 16 Feb (JB, photos, report to NYSARC).

Hooded Merganser: max 65 FL 8 Jan.

Com. Merganser: max 475 SLR Ogdensburg 9 Feb.

Red-breasted Merganser: max 140 HH 26 Dec.

Ruddy Duck: max 9 PilPt 12 Dec; HH 26 Dec & 2 RMSP 26 Jan only other reports.

Ruffed Grouse: max 9 ICNC 24 Feb.

Wild Turkey: several flocks of 160-200 reported.

Red-throated Loon: 1-3/day BRB thru 20 Dec; SLR Massena 14 Dec; carcass recovered Henderson 5 Dec tested for botulism.

PACIFIC LOON: BRB 12 to 20 Dec (NL, JB, BP, reports to NYSARC).

Com. Loon: 1-2/day L Ontario & SLR thru 13 Dec; max 8 KPSP 2 Dec; last SLR Waddington 19 Jan.

Pied-billed Grebe: WHWMA 9 Dec; FL thru 11 Jan, only reports.

Horned Grebe: max 7 PilPt 13 Dec; last RWSP 18 Jan.

Red-necked Grebe: CCSP 9 Dec, only report.

EARED GREBE (R6): SLR Ogdensburg 1 Dec (JB).

Double-crested Cormorant: last SLR Massena 5 Jan.

Great Blue Heron: I saw 6; last Dekalb 28 Jan.

Turkey Vulture: 2 Indian River LEWI 15 Feb, presumed early arr; only report (LP).

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: 16 WI 26 Jan, high count.

N. Harrier: scarce after mid Jan.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: 9 reports.

Cooper's Hawk: 25 reports.

N. Goshawk: ad FD 7 Dec; ad ULLWMA 26 Feb.

Red-tailed Hawk: 5-7/day N JEFF thru, low.

Rough-legged Hawk: widely scattered singles with few reports of more than 2, low.

Golden Eagle: ad WI 18 Feb (BB, ED), only report.

Am. Coot: PilPt 15 Dec; MP 26 Dec; 1-2/day FL 4-11 Jan.

Killdeer: last ED 2 Dec (AS), late.

Bonaparte's Gull: max 16 WI 5 Dec; last 15 CPSP 17 Jan, high for date.

Ring-billed Gull: last SBSP 18 Jan.

Iceland Gull: TP 10 Jan, only report!

Herring Gull: max 785 HP 22 Dec; low numbers throughout after Dec.

Glaucous Gull: CCSP 9 Dec; several reports 1-2 HPt thru; scarcer than most years.

Great Black-backed Gull: max 300 RMSP 18 Jan; numbers generally low after Dec.

PIGEONS - PARROTS

Mourning Dove: max 160 PilPt 17 Dec.

E. Screech-Owl: CV 3 Feb.

Snowy Owl: at least 9 wintered NW JEFF; none elsewhere.

GREAT GRAY OWL: RMSP 27 Jan (MC, photos!).

Short-eared Owl: at least 2 CV Dec thru.

Belted Kingfisher: ULLWMA 4 Jan; FD 10 Jan; CV 14 Jan; WISP 6 Feb.

Red-headed Woodpecker: 2-3 ad remained on FD breeding terr thru (JB); CV thru; 2 imm PtPen 24 Jan (TC, GS).

N. Flicker: 16 reports, lower than some years.

Am. Kestrel: more than 25 reports throughout winter, more than usual.

Merlin: Canton 16 Dec & 23 Feb; PtPen 24 Dec; CV 25 Jan, WISP 6 Feb.

Peregrine Falcon: Ogdensburg 8 Dec; 2 BI thru.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: about 50 reported.

Am. Crow: max 25000-30000 at Watertown roost to early Jan, when dispersed by hazing.

Horned Lark: 45 Canton 5 Jan; numbers low.

Carolina Wren: 2-3/day Canton thru.

Winter Wren: FD 25 Feb (JB), rare in winter.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: scarce throughout.

E. Bluebird: max 9 PtPen 17 Jan; few other reports.

Hermit Thrush: StPt 26 Feb (KH), rare in winter.

Am. Robin: max 78 PilPt 9 Jan; many fewer than previous winter.

N. Mockingbird: RMSP 15 Jan (MC).

Bohemian Waxwing: 450 FD 17 Jan; widespread smaller flocks all parts of Region thru.

Cedar Waxwing: most reports of 2-20 ind, often in larger groups of Bohemians; generally scarce.

LONGSPURS - WARBLERS

Lapland Longspur: 5 Canton 5 Jan; 6 Ellisburg 10 Feb; 5 CV 13 Feb; relatively scarce.

Snow Bunting: max 325 Dekalb 30 Jan; generally present in lower than usual numbers.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: several reports PilPt to 9 Jan.

TOWHEES - WEAVERS

Am. Tree Sparrow: max 80 ULLWMA 28 Dec.

Savannah Sparrow: Lowville 2 Dec (EM), only report.

Song Sparrow: 13 reports.

Swamp Sparrow: FD 10 Jan (JB), only report.

White-throated Sparrow: max 11 KC 25 & 28 Feb.

Dark-eyed Junco: max 25 WISP 5 Dec.

Rusty Blackbird: at Canton feeder 1 Dec.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 70 Fort Jackson 16 Feb; 6 other reports of 1-5.

Pine Grosbeak: max 48 WI 19 Jan; many reports of smaller flocks, nearly all in female or immature plumage.

Purple Finch: 15 reports; scarce.

Red Crossbill: CV 8 Jan, only report.

White-winged Crossbill: up to 55/day CV 28 Dec to 26 Feb.

Com. Redpoll: numerous & widespread flocks of up to 250 in birch woodlands Dec; fewer after early Jan when most at feeders.

Hoary Redpoll: FD 17 & 19 Dec (JB); at CV feeders thru 11 Jan (NL); 2 PtPen 18 Feb (BB, ED); at least 5 other reports lacked details.

Pine Siskin: max 40 Canton 26 Feb; few reports.

Evening Grosbeak: max 15 Winona SF 18 Feb.