

REGION 7- ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

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The winter of 2012-2013 was a fairly typical winter for the Region, with average snowfall and fairly normal temperatures. The winter began with temperatures well above average in the month of December, with temperatures in the 60s on the 5th. But February ended the season with temperatures well below average, never reaching above the 40s. Extreme temperatures in December ranged from 63° F in Ellenburg Depot on 5 December to -2° in Newcomb on 26 December. The weather event of December was most certainly the post-Christmas snowstorm that occurred on the 26th, dumping as much as 8-17" across the Region. That snowstorm was followed by smaller snow amounts a few days later, leading to above average monthly snowfall totals of 22" in Peru and 27" in Lake Placid, making for some cold and snowy Christmas Bird Counts. In contrast to December, January was a mild month, with temperatures slightly above normal and snowfall totals 4-8" below normal. A snap of arctic air brought temperatures down to -25° in Lake Placid on 25 January, but abnormally high temperatures followed on the 31st, reaching 64° in Ellenburg Depot and 56° in Lake Placid. The warm thaw of January was soon forgotten, however, when February rolled in and temperatures stayed below average through the month. Temperature extremes ranged from 42° in Peru on the 8th to minus 18° in Indian Lake on the 10th and 11th. Snowfall totals were above average for the month, with monthly totals of 29" in Tupper Lake, 21" in

Elizabethtown, and 12" in Plattsburgh. A storm on 8–9 February brought high winds and the highest snowfall totals, leaving 9" in Lake Placid and 10" in Peru.

A mild start to winter brought mostly good weather for the Region's December Christmas Bird Counts. Highlights of the Ferrisburgh, VT count on 15 December, which includes part of NY's lakeshore, included a male Wood Duck, a pair of Green-winged Teal, three Northern Harriers, and three Rough-Legged Hawks. On the following day the Plattsburgh count was highlighted by 16 Red-Breasted Mergansers, a Peregrine Falcon, and 62 Bohemian Waxwings, though the real highlight of the count was a female **Harlequin Duck** that was seen at Ausable Point 19-20 December. This was only the third record of the species in Clinton County and was seen just in time to be included in the CBC records. The Elizabethtown CBC took place on 22 December, and highlights were an Eastern Screech Owl and two Northern Shrikes. While most of the Region's counts saw fairly typical numbers of species, the Saranac Lake CBC set a new species count record on 30 December, due in part to a record high number of participants. Highlights of the Saranac Lake CBC include a late Wood Duck, two Northern Shrikes, 10 Gray Jays, 11 Snow Buntings, 30 Pine Grosbeaks, five Red Crossbills, four White-winged Crossbills, and a record **eight Hoary Redpolls**.

The most exciting bird of the season appeared in the Region shortly after the CBCs, bringing birders from all over the northeast to the Region. A **Common Pochard** was first sighted in Vermont on 2 January and was first seen in the Region from the Crown Point bridge on 5 January and at Port Henry on 6 January, where it stayed for a number of days. I joined the hordes of birders searching for it on the 6th, when the bird was sighted very close to shore in a raft of dabbling ducks affording excellent views and photographing opportunities. One of the photographers was able to document a leg band that was used to determine that the bird was likely an escape from a private collection, much to the disappointment of many of the people who travelled to see it. But regardless of origin it was a beautiful bird to behold, and the flocking of birders to see it resulted in numerous other bird sightings. When I unsuccessfully sought the bird on 3 January, I was fortunate enough to see a Glaucous Gull from the Crown Point Bridge instead, and an Iceland Gull was seen there on the 5th. Surrounding the pochard were rafts of thousands of ducks, within which multiple observers found two **Barrow's Goldeneye**, 10 Redhead, one Canvasback, and one Red-Breasted Merganser. Port Henry observers also reported 15 Bald Eagles and a lingering Winter Wren.

The big winter irruption this year was the Common Redpoll, which started appearing in small numbers in early December and in large flocks by the end of the month. Numbers died down in January but peaked again as the birds moved back through in late February. A number of rarities were spotted within the redpoll flocks, including one "Greater" Common Redpoll in Plattsburgh on 12 December. **Hoary Redpolls** were widely reported, with reports from Cumberland Head on 12 December, Intervale Lowlands on 13 December, my

feeder in Keene on 1 January, Long Lake 19-22 January, and again in Keene 15-18 February. Pine Siskin numbers were way down from last year, with the largest flocks reported being only 32 in Essex on 22 December and 25 in Saranac Lake on 30 December. Crossbills were sparsely reported from Bloomingdale Bog throughout the season, and Pine Grosbeak and Evening Grosbeak reports were sporadic.

Our usual winter visitors were well reported across the Region. Bohemian Waxwings were first reported in Plattsburgh on 16 December and were reported sporadically through the season. Two flocks in Westport contained an estimated **825** Bohemian Waxwings, setting a new record high for Essex County. Snow Buntings appeared late and were sighted in mostly small numbers, with the exception of flocks of 175 sighted at Crown Point on 3 January and 80 on Adirondack Loj Road on 28 January. The Crown Point flock also had 16 **Lapland Longspurs**, which were also reported in smaller numbers in the Chazy area and in Essex County.

In all a total of 101 species was reported for the period, one more than last year and shy of the record of 109.