

REGION 8 – HUDSON-MOHAWK

Will Yandik

269 Schneider Road, Hudson NY 12534

wyandik@hotmail.com

Winter 2013 began warmer than average and slightly wet with snows arriving after Christmas. December ended 4.8° F above average with 1.12 more inches of precipitation than average. The end of January ushered in a cold snap, but the month still ended nearly 3° warmer than average. February brought in seasonable temperatures with a few small snowstorms. In many places, snow and ice remained through the season, with brief thaws quickly replenished with a light cover of snow.

Snow Geese staged in the Region this winter in larger than average numbers, with a max of 5,000 reported in Amsterdam, Montgomery County, on 12 December, and several other flocks of 3,000+ around that time. A **Greater White-fronted Goose** appeared at Fort Miller, Washington County, on 14 December. The rarest waterfowl of the season is the **Harlequin Duck** that showed up in Northumberland, Saratoga County, from 23-26 December.

On the last frosty days of February, when most non-birders are in the throes of winter's lingering gloom, the Region's birders found the earliest signs of spring—the rocking flight of a few northward-bound Turkey Vultures, a few early Wood Ducks in the red maple swamps along creek bottoms, the dress rehearsals of American Woodcocks that seemed to thud down into the select few

tussocks bounded by snow, and a few Killdeer that seemed to prefer the black asphalt of parking lot margins to the frozen fields and snow-covered golf courses. A birder sees such signs of spring long before American Robins nest in suburban garages.

Most people are beginning to yawn at reports of Black Vultures here in Region 8, but Sandhill Cranes are still uncommon enough to get people moving and increasingly frequent enough that listers can count on finding them here every year now. One pair wandered around Saratoga County for more than a month this winter.

Will Raup reported a **Northern Hawk-Owl**, which unfortunately decided to land on grounds owned by the Knolls Atomic Laboratory in Ballston Spa, where security is tight and the space off limits to birders. An employee at the site photographed the bird and emailed it to Will who, with others, confirmed its identity.

Two unusual warblers appeared this winter, a **Yellow-throated Warbler** and **Wilson's Warbler**, both spotted in Albany by Will Raup in December. The typical few winter sightings of Yellow-rumped Warblers did not continue past the Christmas Bird Count Season.

Snow Buntings and Lapland Longspurs seemed everywhere this winter. Rich Guthrie reports the following pleasant image near his home: "I came across an enormous flock of Snow Buntings on River Road (Co. Rt 61) just north of the Village of Coxsackie, Greene County. Getting a number on the size of this swarm was difficult because they were so flighty. But I'd put a conservative estimate at around 600. They just kept flowing onto the road surface and shoulders until the next vehicle went by. Then they'd flow out as a black and white ribbon cloud rising and dipping across the fields."

Longspurs, often missed many winters, were proportionally common this year. One is often all anyone ever sees, the smudge of brown feathers in a white flock of larks or buntings, but a single location maximum of seven at Coxsackie Flats, Greene County, this winter is highly unusual.

All Regional Christmas Bird Counts showed comparatively few half hardies or rarities this year. Typical now for our Region, the common three icterids—Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, and Brown-headed Cowbird—are no longer found as singles at a few feeders in river-hugging townships, but overwinter in flocks of hundreds in recent years. Common Redpolls seemed at nearly everyone's feeders this winter and a few irruptive Pine Grosbeaks and crossbills could be found in small numbers.

CONTRIBUTORS

Steve Abrahamsen, Alan Devoe Bird Club monthly sighting reports, Larry Alden, Dave Baim, Hope Batcheller, Mona Bearor, Mimi Brauch, James Coe, Gerry Colborn, Bill Cook, ebird.org, Gordie Ellmers, Larry Federman, Peter Feinberg, Corey Finger, Elizabeth Grace, Jane Graves, Bernie Grossman, Richard Guthrie, David Harrison, Ron Harrower, John Hershey, Drew Hopkins, Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club's Birdline of

Eastern New York, Nancy Kern, Bill Lee, Larry Main, David Martin, Andrew Mason, Matthew Medler, Roger Miller, Jeff Nadler, Gail & Rich Nord, Paul Novak, Jeff Novick, Tom Palmer, John Piwowarski, Barb Putnam, Gregg Racer, David Rankin, Will Raup, Tom Salo, Kathryn Schneider, Helen Specht, Marion Ulmer, Alison Van Keuren, Carol & Owen Whitby, Phil Whitney, T. Lloyd Williams, Chad Witko, Will Yandik, Robert Yunick.

ABBREVIATIONS

CBC – Christmas Bird Count; FtE – T Fort Edwards WASH; VF – Vischer's Ferry SARA.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE

(R8): Ft Miller WASH 14 Dec.

Snow Goose: max 5000 Amsterdam MONT 12 Dec.

Wood Duck: arr Catskill COLU 24 Feb.

N. Shoveler: Saratoga CBC 15 Dec.

N. Pintail: Niskayuna SCHE 14 Dec; SCHE CBC 22 Dec.

Redhead : 2 Loughberry L SARA 2 Dec; Troy CBC 5 Jan; 2 Stillwater SARA 18-26 Feb.

Lesser Scaup: max 240 Saratoga L SARA 28 Dec.

HARLEQUIN DUCK (R8) : Northumberland SARA 23-26 Dec.

Greater Scaup: max 100 Saratoga L SARA 9 Dec.

White-winged Scoter: VF 13 Dec; SCHE CBC 22 Dec.

Black Scoter: Collins L SCHE 12 Dec.

Red-breasted Merganser: max Saratoga L SARA 9 Dec.

Com. Loon: max 3 Alcove Res ALBA 8 Dec.

Pied-billed Grebe: Loughberry L SARA 7-8 Dec.

Great Cormorant: Germantown COLU 24 Feb.

Turkey Vulture: arr Hudson COLU 16 Feb.

Black Vulture: max 6 Hudson COLU 11 Dec.

HAWKS - ALCIDES

N. Goshawk: Germantown COLU 2 Jan, three other reports nearby.

Red-shouldered Hawk: S RENS CBC 3 Jan; 2 Galway SARA 16 Feb.

Rough-legged Hawk: max 6 Troy CBC 5 Jan.

Am. Coot: Loughberry L SARA 13 Dec; Saratoga CBC 15 Dec.

SANDHILL CRANE (R8): 2 Halfmoon SARA 7 Jan-15 Feb; 2 Clifton Pk SARA 14 Jan; 2 Colonie ALBA 7-12 Feb.

Am. Woodcock: arr 5 Livingston COLU 28 Feb.

Killdeer: arr Livingston COLU 28 Feb.

LAUGHING GULL(R8): Coeymans Landing ALBA 10 Dec (RG).

Iceland Gull: New Baltimore GREE 23 Dec; 2 Troy CBC 5 Jan; 3 Crescent ALBA 5 Jan-18 Feb; Halfmoon SARA 10 Jan.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Crescent ALBA 14-17 Feb.

Glaucous Gull: Crescent ALBA 14 Jan-18 Feb; Cohoes ALBA 12 Jan.

PIGEONS - PARROTS

N. HAWK OWL: Ballston Spa SARA 19 Jan (WR).

Short-eared Owl: 5 FtE WASH 1 Dec; 2 Saratoga Battlefield SARA 5 Jan.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: Brunswick RENS 4 Dec; Glen MONT 20 Dec; Florida MONT 3-9 Jan; FtE 10 Jan; Coxsackie GREE 13 Jan; 3 Rensselaerville ALBA 8 Feb.

Horned Lark: max 300 Stuyvesant COLU 5 Dec.

Hermit Thrush: Schenectady SCHE 11 Dec-6 Feb; SCHE CBC 22 Dec; Delmar ALBA 22 Jan.

Am. Pipit: max 3 Northumberland SARA 1 Dec; Stuyvesant COLU 30 Dec; 4 Delmar ALBA 1 Jan; Troy RENS 5 Jan.

BOHEMIAN WAXWING: Queensbury WARR 13 Dec (mob).

LONGSPURS WARBLERS

Lapland Longspur: 4 Northumberland SARA 1-29 Dec; Stuyvesant COLU 5 Dec; Ft Edward WASH 30 Dec; 7 Coxsackie GREE 1 Jan; Troy CBC 5 Jan; Stuyvesant COLU 6 Jan; 2 Saratoga SARA 6 Jan, relatively numerous this winter.

Snow Bunting: max 600 Cocksackie GREE 1 Jan, widespread.

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER: Albany 9 Dec (WR).

WILSON'S WARBLER: Albany 11 Dec (WR).

TOWHEES - WEAVERS

Savannah Sparrow: max 9 Stuyvesant COLU 30 Dec, unusual winter high count.

White-crowned Sparrow: 2 Delmar ALBA 1-21 Jan.

E. Meadowlark: FtE 30 Dec; 5 Cocksackie GREE 3 Jan.

Com. Grackle: max 600 Livingston COLU 22 Dec.

Pine Grosbeak: max 30 Queensbury WARR 1 Dec.

Red Crossbill: 3 Five Rivers ALBA 9 Dec; max 8 Partridge Run ALBA 10 Jan.

White-winged Crossbill: 20 Delmar ALBA 4 Dec; 15 Pine Bush ALBA 20 Jan.

Com. Redpoll: irruptive year, widespread at feeders in flocks of 1-20 reported thru.

Pine Siskin: max 50 Stephentown RENS 1 Jan.