

REGION 7—ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

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The story of this winter was cold, ice, and snow, which brought back memories of how harsh winters used to be in the Region. Lake Champlain froze over in early February for the first time since 2007, turning the icebreaking Essex Ferry into a birding hotspot in January. A cold November gave way to an even colder December, with lows 3-5° below normal. The highest temperatures, in the low 50s, occurred early in the month, but cold temperatures were all that would follow. A low of -27° in Ellenburg on 17 December was the coldest temperature in the state for the month, an extreme low for so early in the season. The first significant snowfall in the Adirondacks fell on 15 December, with 7" in Indian Lake, but no significant snow fell in the Champlain Valley during the month. The cold snap on 17 December was followed by a front on the 20th that brought mixed precipitation and as much as 2" of ice across the Region, creating a crust that endured for over a week with the stretch of cold temperatures that followed. January temperatures again averaged 2-4° below normal across the Region, with multiple nights dipping to -20° or lower. Precipitation in January was above average in the Adirondacks but below average in the Champlain and St. Lawrence Valleys. A snowstorm on 3 January brought 2-8" of snow to much of the Region, the only significant storm of the month. The harsh winter continued into February, where temperatures remained 3-4° below normal and snowstorms

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started to pound the Region. February snowfall was above average, with monthly totals of 29" in Indian Lake and 20" in Dannemora. Storms on 6 and 15 February brought the most significant snowfall totals, ranging from 6-12" per storm across the Region.

The story of the season was most definitely the biggest irruption of Snowy Owls I've seen since moving to the Region fifteen years ago. The very first report came at the end of November and was quickly followed by a handful of other reports in early December. The first report from Essex County came in early December, when an owl was seen atop the old barn at the Rte 73 and 9N junction in Keene. This owl stayed in the area for a few days but unfortunately was hit by a car near the Marcy airfield. Many reports followed, however, and there were numerous opportunities to see Snowy Owls in the Region. I've listed sightings of what appear to be as many as 17 different individuals, the majority of which were reported from the more populated Clinton County.

While Snowy Owls were invading the Region, all the other winter irruptive species seemed to be MIA. There were very few reports of redpolls, siskins, and crossbills, and not a single report of Bohemian Waxwings. Regular winter specialties, such as Northern Shrikes, Snow Buntings, and Lapland Longspurs, appeared in their usual numbers. Rough-legged Hawks seemed to be less abundant than most years based on the handful of reports. Four Short-Eared Owls were seen at the magic triangle in Essex again this year, and an individual was sighted in Beekmantown as well.

Waterfowl sightings on Lake Champlain were sparse early in the season, but a good variety of species started taking advantage of the open water at the Essex Ferry Dock as the lake froze over in late January. Species seen there included a male Tufted Duck, two Long-tailed Ducks, Northern Pintail, Gadwall, and Barrow's Goldeneye.

Other notable sightings on the lake include Iceland and Glaucous Gulls in Plattsburgh, with a maximum of three individuals of the latter in Plattsburgh on 15 February. Another Glaucous Gull was reported from Crown Point on 19 January. A Double-crested Cormorant lingered in the lake until 1 January. A Barnacle Goose was reported from 1-7 December in Westport, where a late Cape May Warbler was also seen on the 7th.

The Region's boreal specialties were reported from Bloomingdale Bog in good numbers, with maxima of five Boreal Chickadees, eight Gray Jays, and seven Black-backed Woodpeckers. Boreal Chickadees were also well reported in the High Peaks Region. A lone Rusty Blackbird was seen at a feeder in Port Kent on 19 February, an unusually early date for the species.

A total of 92 species was reported during this season.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

AP – Ausable Pt; BB – Bloomingdale Bog; CH – Cumberland Head; CRL – Chazy Riverlands; EFD – Essex Ferry Dock; LP – Lake Placid; LL – Long L; PS – Paul Smiths; PtR – Point Au Roche SP; SB – Sabattis Bog; SL – Saranac L; TL – Tupper L; WB – Whallon's Bay; WD – Wilcox Dock.

WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

Snow Goose: max 3000 CH Dec (DB); 30 Indian L 15 Dec (MMo); 500 Westport 15 Dec (PJ).

Ross's Goose: CH 13 Dec (BK), late rec CLIN.

BARNACLE GOOSE: Westport 1-7 Dec (GC, AB, BM).

Wood Duck: CH 17 Dec (BK).

Gadwall: EFD 31 Jan (PJ); 3 EFD 25 Feb (BA).

Am. Wigeon: AP 27 Dec (ED), late rec CLIN.

Am. Black Duck: max 4 EFD 28 Feb (JD).

N. Pintail: Westport 13 Dec (PJ); EFD 6 & 8 Feb (AB).

Canvasback: Ticonderoga 28 Jan (GC).

Redhead: AP 18 Jan (ED); EFD 31 Jan (PJ) & 21 Feb (MK).

Ring-necked Duck: max 50 EFD 20 Feb (MF).

TUFTED DUCK: male EFD 25-28 Feb (mob).

Greater Scaup: max 100 EFD (JD); 32 CH 28 Feb (NO).

Lesser Scaup: max 100 WB (D&AE).

Long-tailed Duck: CH 15 Dec (BM); 2 EFD 28 Feb (mob).

Bufflehead: max 50 Westport 6 Jan (PJ).

Com. Goldeneye: max 745 PH 17 Dec (GC).

Barrow's Goldeneye: 2 PH 18 Dec (IW, RP); EFD 25 Jan (AB) & 25-28 Feb (ZC, JD).

Hooded Merganser: max 20 Ticonderoga 28 Jan (GC).

Com. Merganser: max 26 WB 4 Feb (GC).

Red-breasted Merganser: CH 15 Dec-18 Jan max 4 15 Dec (BK); WB 4 Feb; Ticonderoga 11 Feb (GC); EFD 10 & 28 Feb (J&PT).

Wild Turkey: max 25 Essex (DN).

Com. Loon: max 3 CH 15 Dec (BM); CH 5 Jan (BK), last.

Pied-billed Grebe: EFD 7-22 Dec (BM, DN).

Horned Grebe: max 6 EFD 7 Dec (BM).

Double-crested Cormorant: PtR 1 Jan (PO), late rec CLIN.

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Great Blue Heron: 2 AP 29 Dec (TF); Rand Hill 15 Feb (CMj), last.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: max 4 EFD 28 Feb (SE); 4 Inlet 1 Dec (GL); Benson 26 Dec (JHo).

N. Harrier: Beekmantown 15 & 22 Dec (BK, PO); Hopkinton 21 Dec (JCI); Plattsburgh 1 Jan (PO).

Rough-legged Hawk: 2 Beekmantown 28 Dec (MB); max 3 CP 4 Jan (CW); Westport thru.

Wilson's Snipe: Westport 1 Dec (PJ).

Iceland Gull: 2 imm Plattsburgh 19-30 Dec (PO), 4 Jan (LM), 15 Feb (PO).

Glaucous Gull: CH 14-16 Dec (BK); 2 Plattsburgh 19-30 Dec (BK); max 3 15 Feb (PO); CP 19 Jan (MMe).

Great Black-backed Gull: max 11 Plattsburgh 20 Jan (MMe).

PIGEONS - PARROTS

Great Horned Owl: IL 1 & 23 Jan (LM).

Snowy Owl: IL 3 Dec; CH 8 Dec; Keene 5-7

Dec, hit by car 7 Dec; Malone 18-34 Dec;

Chateaugay L 18 Dec; 2 Moffit Rd

Beekmantown 8 Dec-6 Jan; CP 28 Dec & 12

Feb; Chazy 2 Jan; Conroy Farm Beekmantown

3-12 Jan; 2 Plattsburgh 4 Jan; CRL 9-22 Jan; 2

CRL 16 Jan; Westport 17-19 Jan; Champlain 21

Jan; Peru 24-30 Jan.

Barred Owl: max 5 Saranac L 29 Dec (JCI, SO).

Short-eared Owl: Beekmantown 26 Dec (TJ); max 4 Clark Rd Essex 6 Dec (EG).

N. Saw-whet Owl: CH 21 Dec (BK).

Belted Kingfisher: Ticonderoga 22 Dec (GC).

Red-bellied Woodpecker: CP 28 Dec & 14

Jan (PJ); Westport 4-8 Feb (GC, AB).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: Westport 14 Dec (PJ), last.

Black-backed Woodpecker: 3 SB 23 Dec (JCI); max 7 BB 29 Dec (JCI, SO); RTT 29 Dec (PJ); Malone Rte 454 15 Feb (KM).

N. Flicker: Ticonderoga 7 Dec-31 Jan (GC).

Pileated Woodpecker: max 3 AM 15 Feb (MF).

Merlin: Keene 4 Dec (J&PT); Beekmantown 25 Dec (BM); Plattsburgh 4 Jan (MB).

Peregrine Falcon: Plattsburgh 15 & 31 Dec (PO).

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: LP 1 Dec; Beekmantown 15 Dec; Newcomb 30 Dec; Westport 6 Jan thru; Ticonderoga 12 Jan; CH 18 Jan (BK); PH 16 Feb.

Gray Jay: Minerva 1 Jan (JCI); max 8 BB 15-16 Feb (KM), multiple reports thru.

Horned Lark: max 28 Beekmantown 25 Dec (BM); 22 Chazy 20 Jan (MMe).

Boreal Chickadee: max 10 Mt Colvin 15 Feb (DD); 5 Newcomb 15 Feb; 5 BB thru; 2 RTT 1 Feb; 3 Macomb Mt 2 Feb.

Tufted Titmouse: max 5 Ticonderoga 26 Feb (GC).

Carolina Wren: Westport thru; CH 1 Dec-16 Feb (NO); Inlet Sixth L 12 Dec (GL); Indian L 20 Jan (MMo).

E. Bluebird: max 11 Westport 22 Dec (PJ).

Am. Robin: max 200 Essex 22 Feb (D&AE).

N. Mockingbird: Plattsburgh 4 Jan thru (MB, C&JM).

Cedar Waxwing: max 150 Ausable Chasm 2 Feb (MB).

LONGSPURS - WARBLERS

Lapland Longspur: 3 Malone 29 Dec (JS); CP 4 Jan (CW); max 16 Chazy 20 Jan (MMe); 5 Essex 8 Feb (AB).

CAPE MAY WARBLER (R7): Hoisington Brook Outlet Essex 7 Dec (AB).

TOWHEES - WEAVERS

Am. Tree Sparrow: max 14 Essex 7 Dec (BM); 7 Ticonderoga 19 Jan.

Chipping Sparrow: 2 Indian L 29-30 Dec (MMo).

Song Sparrow: Ticonderoga 9 Jan thru (GC); CH 12, 16 Feb (BK).

White-throated Sparrow: max 4 Westport 20 Jan (PJ).

Snow Bunting: max 300 LP 24 Dec (LM); 150 CRL 20 Jan (MMe); 20 CP 19 Dec.

Red-winged Blackbird: IL 28 Dec (LM); CH 1-4 Jan, last.

Rusty Blackbird: Port Kent feeder 19 Feb (DR).

Purple Finch: max 14 LP 3 Jan (DR).

Red Crossbill: 6 Inlet 24 Dec (GL); PS 11 Dec & 1 Jan (BM); 8 Stony Pond Minerva 12 Jan (WL) 3 RTT 1 Feb (JCI).

White-winged Crossbill: 8 Inlet 16 Feb (GL).

Com. Redpoll: 4 BB (BR), only report.

Pine Siskin: max 6 BB 13 Jan (BR); SL 16 Feb.

Am. Goldfinch: max 290 IL 18 Dec (LM); 179 banded by GL thru.

Evening Grosbeak: RTT 1 Feb (JCI).