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REGION 4—SUSQUEHANNA

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Temperatures, snowfall, and corresponding precipitation were above normal for the 2016-2017 winter season. Data from the Binghamton National Weather Service station was used as a proxy for Region 4. February in particular was unseasonably warm, with a record high temperature of 70° F on the 24th and the second highest monthly average temperature on record. For the winter period, mean temperature was 28.6°, 3.9° above normal. Total precipitation was 9.85", 2.26" above normal. Snowfall was 64.9", 7.8" above normal. Snowfall from the beginning of the season to the end of February was 93.5", 29.6" above normal. Periods of high temperatures and heavy rainfall resulted in average snow depth (three inches) actually being below normal by one inch for the season.

December started relatively warm, with little to no snow cover across much of the Region. Temperatures turned colder with several snowfalls building

to a maximum snow depth of 10 inches on 17 December. This date coincided with a number of Christmas Bird Counts in the Region affecting access to state forest lands and seasonal roads in the higher elevations. Mid-December was also when most ponds and smaller lakes iced in. Warmer days and rainfall in late December and early January again resulted in little to no snow cover. 12-13 January recorded temperatures in the low 50s. While most ponds and lakes were frozen over for the mid-winter waterfowl count, snow cover was minimal and most rivers were relatively ice free with high water levels. Average snow depth in January was only one inch.

Mid-February saw colder weather and several snowfalls building again to an average snow depth of 10 inches on the 16th-17th. It was immediately followed by a significant warming trend, with many daily high temperature records set from the 23rd-28th. We see very significant early migration of waterfowl, American Robin, Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Turkey Vulture, and other species starting around 18 February, corresponding with this major southerly air flow.

There were good numbers and distribution of several winter migrants, including: Snow Bunting, Horned Lark, American Tree Sparrow, and Rough-legged Hawk. Cedar Waxwings were reported in good numbers. Purple Finch reports were lower than normal. Northern Shrike reports were concentrated in Broome, Chenango, and Cortland Counties. Other winter migrants were virtually absent or reported in very low numbers. There was one report of two Common Redpolls at Long Pond State Forest and one report of a single Red Crossbill at Whitney Point Multiple Use Area, both in December. Pine Siskins were reported infrequently and in very small numbers. Evening Grosbeaks were primarily seen at a feeder location near Truxton and another in Downsville. There were no reports of Pine Grosbeak.

There were many lingering half-hardies including: Chipping Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, Gray Catbird, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Red-winged Blackbird, Rusty Blackbird, and Common Grackle. With mostly open water at the start of the winter season, there was a large number of waterfowl species present well into December and even into early January. Several species made unexpected mid-winter appearances including: Gadwall, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, Ring-necked Duck, Greater Scaup, White-winged Scoter, Red-breasted Merganser, Red-necked Grebe, and Pied-billed Grebe. Of note, is a high count of 85 American Coot at Otsego Lake on 28 January.

There were a number of rare species reported in the Region this period. What is believed to be the first Ross's Goose record for Broome County was three individuals seen at the Polar Shot Driving Range in Johnson City on 18 December. Luck struck twice, with a second sighting of a single Ross's Goose in the Chenango Bridge area from 15-20 January. These sightings are the second eBird report of Ross's Goose in Region 4.

Other Region 4 winter rarities include: Cackling Goose seen at Pepacton Reservoir and Stupke Pond in Cortland; Short-eared Owl at Raish Hill in

Candor; Northern Saw-whet Owl in North Norwich; Lapland Longspur in McDonough & Lisle; Black Scoter at Chenango Lake in New Berlin; and Lesser Black-backed Gull at Plymouth Reservoir.

Tom Salo provided some interesting information relative to the Delaware-Otsego Audubon Society (DOAS) camera trapping activities. They operated nine camera trap sites this winter, baited with road-killed deer. Golden Eagles were recorded feeding less often than in recent winters. Five sites had goldens present during the period. Most of these birds made single appearances at various sites. The one site located within the Catskill Park (Town of Middletown, Delaware) had many more individuals than other sites, as is typical for this area. However, even this site had fewer individuals than normal. At least six individuals fed there during January and February, with goldens present most days. A juvenile bird tagged with a GPS device on 2 February returned and continued feeding at the site into April.

Golden Eagles were observed in person on several occasions in Burlington, Otsego County. These birds, a first winter bird and an adult, were never photographed feeding on carrion. Their behavior, observed from a distance, and also from a blind at the site, suggested they were hunting ravens. Raven numbers reached at least 70 at that site and the site in the Town of Middletown.

A juvenile Northern Goshawk was present most days (after 7 February) feeding on carrion at the Middletown site. Patterns of behavior in the photographic record suggest the ravens considered the goshawk a serious threat. Ravens keep a distance from Golden Eagles but were very rarely in the same photograph as the goshawk. The trapper in the blind observed the goshawk chasing and grabbing a raven. The birds then went out of sight. The remains of one raven were discovered under a bush, where an eagle would be unlikely to feed.

Bald Eagles were photographed at every site, with 10-12 typical daily at the site in Burlington. Rough-legged Hawks were scarce with only three individuals photographed this winter. Red-tailed Hawks were common at sites with few ravens. A Barred Owl was photographed in Springfield.

In total, 119 species were reported in Region 4 during the winter season.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

BCBC – Binghamton Christmas Bird Count; Bpd – Boland Pd; BUNP – Binghamton University Nature Preserve; CANN – Cannonsville Res; CCBC - Cortland Christmas Bird Count; CHLk – Chenango L, New Berlin; DOR – Dorchester P, Whitney Pt; HCP – Hillcrest Pits, Port Dickenson; LIME – Lime Hollow, Cortland; MICH – Michigan Hollow, Spencer, Tioga; OTLk - Otsego L; PEP – Pepacton Res; SKAN – Skaneateles L, CORT; STUP – Stupke Pd, Cortland; SUS - Susquehanna Ri, Broome; ULCP – Upper Lisle CP; WHIT – Whitney Pt Res.

WATERFOWL – VULTURES

ROSS'S GOOSE (R4): 3 Johnson City 28 Dec, 1st record BROO, 2nd Reg 4 eBird record; 1 Chenango Bridge 15-20 Jan.

Cackling Goose: 2 PEP 4 Dec; 1 STUP 28 Jan; rare.

Mute Swan: 1 Hickories Park Owego 3 Dec, unusual.

Wood Duck: 2 Chenango R. Greene 28 Dec; 1 Cortland 15-20 Jan; late.

Gadwall: 1 or 2 in multiple loc BROO, CORT & DELA Dec & Jan, unusual number of sightings for winter.

Am. Wigeon: last 1 Downsview 27 Dec; first 4 HCP 8 Feb.

N. Shoveler: 1 CHLk 1-9 Dec, late; 1 LIME 13 Jan, rare.

N. Pintail: BROO, LIME, Marathon, unusual # sightings mid-winter.

Green-winged Teal: last 2 LIME 12 Dec; 2 MICH 24 Jan, early.

Redhead: max 60 Otsego Lake 14 Jan; max 39 CCBC 17 Dec; max 20 HCP 20 Feb, overwintered sev loc.

Ring-necked Duck: max 370 Allen Lake OTSE 2 Dec; overwintered sev loc across Reg, unusual.

Greater Scaup: 8 CANN 2 Jan; 1 Susquehanna River BROO 4 Jan, 9 Jan, & 4 Feb; unusual.

Lesser Scaup: 1 Whitney Point NY-79 gravel pit 16 Dec, late; first 2 Clarke Pond Otsego Lake 27 Feb.

White-winged Scoter: 2 Chenango River Binghamton 31 Dec-3 Jan, unexpected loc & time.

Black Scoter: 1 CHLk thru 1-9 Dec, first seen 8 Nov, first eBird winter record.

Long-tailed Duck: 2 DOR 2 Dec; 2 SUS 14 Dec; 1 PEP 31 Dec; 1 HCP 1 Jan; 1 SKAN 8 Jan; late dates.

Bufflehead: max 10 CHLk 1 Dec.

Com. Goldeneye: max 60 SKAN 28 Dec

Hooded Merganser: max 70 WHIT 7 Dec.

Com. Merganser: max 500 WHIT 15 Dec.

Red-breasted Merganser: last 1 DOR 15 Dec; WHIT 26 Jan, early; most winter sightings in BROO.

Ruddy Duck: max 13 CHLk 4 Dec; last 1 HCP 19 Dec, late.

Ring-necked Pheasant: scarce, sporadic sightings across Reg.

Wild Turkey: max 150 Greene 14 Jan.

Red-throated Loon: 3 CANN 4 Dec; 2 OTLk 20 Feb; rare.

Com. Loon: 1 SKAN 17 Dec; 1 PEP 22 Dec; 2 OTLk 24 Dec; 1 PEP 27 Dec-1 Jan; 5 OTLk 14

Jan; 6 OTLk 22 Feb; 2 OTLk 27 Feb, unexpected numbers this winter.

Pied-billed Grebe: 2 OTLk 28 Dec; 1 SUS 2 Jan; 1 Tioughnioga River Virgil 15-16 Jan; rare in winter; first 1 BPd 25 Feb.

Red-necked Grebe: 1 HCP 9 Jan, rare.

Double-crested Cormorant: 1 SUS 9 & 17 Dec, rare.

Turkey Vulture: rare 1 Dickinson Broome 2 Jan; 1 Hartwick Otsego 8 Jan; rare in winter; 1 Owego 19 Feb, early.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: max 12 CANN 23 Jan, fairly common thru Reg.

N. Harrier: unusual, fair number of sightings rep thu.

N. Goshawk: rare 1 Oxford 19-21 Dec; 1 Colchester 17 Feb; 1 Meredith 18 Feb; rare in winter.

Red-shouldered Hawk: 1 OTLk 14 Jan; 1 Vestal 25 Feb, scarce or under reported.

Rough-legged Hawk: max 11 Sherburne CBC 17 Dec; widespread, fair numbers rep CHEN.

Golden Eagle: max 8 Franklin Mountain 9 Dec.

Am. Coot: max 85 OTLk 28 Jan, overwintered HCP & OTLk.

Killdeer: last 3 Cincinnatus Lake CHEN 9 Dec; first 1 Downsview 19 Feb.

Am. Woodcock: first 1 Otsego 23 Feb.

Bonaparte's Gull: 2 DOR 2 Dec, late.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: 1 Plymouth Res. CHEN 2-4 Dec; 1 CCBC 17 Dec; rare.

Greater Black-backed Gull: 10 CCBC 17 Dec; 3 Cortland Gravel Pits 24 Dec; 1 Cortland Gravel Pits 1-3 Jan & 28 Jan.

PIGEONS - PARROTS

E. Screech-Owl: 1 MICH thru; 1 Pharsalia 14 Dec; 1 Union BROO 17 Dec; 1 Greene 29 Dec; 1 Otsego 1 Jan; 1 Bainbridge 15 Jan; 1 Truxton 2 Feb; 1 BUNP 27 Feb; scarce, probably underreported.

Great Horned Owl: scarce, distributed but underreported.

Barred Owl: scarce, probably underreported.

Short-eared Owl: 1 Raish Hill Candor 4 Dec, rare.

N. Saw-whet Owl: 1 North Norwich 1 Dec, rare.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: 2 Scott CORT 2 Jan, rare in winter.

N. Flicker: 1 Cortlandville 9 Dec; 1 Scott 28 Dec; 1 Owego 1 Jan; 1 Fenton 22 Jan; 1 South Kortright 4 Feb.

Merlin: scarce, a few rep throughout Reg.

Peregrine Falcon: 2 Binghamton thru, expected.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: BROO, CHEN, & CORT thru, scarce.

Fish Crow: scarce, a few rep near waterways between Binghamton & Owego;

Com. Raven: max 70+ OTSE, at eagle survey sites; fairly widespread thru.

Horned Lark: max 120 Preble 9 Jan; scattered rep BROO, CHEN, & CORT.

Winter Wren: 1 ULCP 4 Dec; 1 Chenango Valley SP 3-16 Jan; rare in winter.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: 1 River Rd Endwell 11 Feb, rare in winter.

Hermit Thrush: 1 BUNP 18 Feb, rare in winter.

Gray Catbird: 1 Downsville 10-11 Dec & 26 Feb; 1 Greene 16 Dec; rare in winter.

N. Mockingbird: scarce, scattered rep BROO, CORT & TIOG.

Cedar Waxwing: max 110 Barton TIOG 21 Feb; fairly widely reported.

LONGSPURS - WARBLERS

Lapland Longspur: 1 McDonough 4 Dec; Lisle 1 Jan; rare.

Snow Bunting: max 300 Lisle thru Jan; first DOR 7 Dec, widespread.

TOWHEES - WEAVERS

Am. Tree Sparrow: max 50 Whitney Point MUA 15 Dec, widespread.

Chipping Sparrow: 1 BUNP 9 Dec; 1 Laurens 11 Dec; late.

Fox Sparrow: 1 River Rd Endwell 22 Dec; 1 South Kortright 4 Feb; rare in winter.

Swamp Sparrow: 1 Downsville 4 Dec & 2 Jan; 1 MICH 4 Jan; 3 ULCP 25 Jan.

Red-winged Blackbird: 1 Pharsalia 19 Dec; 1 Maine BROO 29 Jan; 1 Chenango BROO 7 Feb; unusual in winter; first 1 Smithboro TIOG 18 Feb.

Rusty Blackbird: 3 Otsego 18 Dec; 1 Owego 1 Jan; 1 LIME 6 Feb; rare in winter; first 1 BPD 24 Feb.

Com. Grackle: 1 Whitney Point 14 Dec, late; 4 Otsego 12 Feb, early.

Brown-headed Cowbird: scarce, a few mid-winter rep BROO, CHEN, CORT, & TIOG.

Purple Finch: scarce, a few scattered rep across Reg.

Red Crossbill: 1 Whitney Point MUA 7 Dec, rare; not reported in high elevation conifer plantations in CHEN & CORT.

Com. Redpoll: 2 Long Pond SF 4 Dec, extremely scarce.

Pine Siskin: 1 Richford 6 Dec; 1 Laurens 11 Dec; 3 Afton 13 Dec; 2 Virgil 27 Jan-12 Feb; 7 Colchester 17-20 Feb; 1 Union BROO 19 Feb; scarce.

Evening Grosbeak: 1 Long Pond SF 4 Dec; 6 Downsville thru; 18 Truxton thru; consistently seen only at two feeder loc.

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