

REGION 8—HUDSON-MOHAWK

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December 2016 was warmer and drier than normal. The temperature was 1.8° F above average, and precipitation was more than an inch below the December average of 2.93". There was a total of 12.1" of snow during the month, with no big storms. Temperatures during the last ten days of the year were well above normal. January 2017 was a full 8.0° above normal, with twelve days reaching 40° or higher. The only cold spell was 6-9 January, which briefly iced over local water bodies. Precipitation was nearly all rain, 3.13" being about half-an-inch above normal, with a paltry 4.6" of snow. February continued January's warmer, wetter trend at +7.4° and 0.65" more than average. A cold air intrusion during the second week of the month led to 20 inches of snowfall over a four-day period. The snow cover was a distant memory by 22 February however, with successive high temperatures of 57°, 69°, 74°, and 70°.

Many reports were received of large Wild Turkey flocks throughout the Region. It seems that the breeding season was very productive last year.

Snow Goose migration day this season occurred on 15 December, with many thousands of birds in very large skeins observed flying overhead heading south towards their wintering grounds. Jeremy Collison watched an estimated 4500 geese fly over his location in Guilderland, the highest individual count I could find, but it seemed like many birders got to witness the spectacle this year, with the birds highlighted by a sunny, blue sky background. Stacy Robinson found a **Ross's Goose** associating with a flock of Canada Geese along the Hudson River in Stillwater, Saratoga County on 7 December. The bird remained in the area for a week, and allowed many observers close-up views and photographs.

The **Eared Grebe** found in late November at Copake Lake, Columbia County, continued there through the first few days of December.

Jane Tatlock observed and photographed a very late Blackpoll Warbler in Galway, Saratoga County, foraging on the ground around her feeders on 3 December.

Undoubtedly the most unusual report of the season came from Rich Guthrie, who discovered a small bird around the checkout lanes of the Lowe's Home Improvement Store in Glenmont, Albany County. This proved to be a **Virginia's Warbler**, and his account of its discovery, identification, and attempted rehabilitation (it did not survive but is preserved at the State Museum in Albany) was published in the previous issue of *The Kingbird* (Volume 67, pp. 2-6.).

Some highlights from this year's Christmas Bird Counts include:

Schenectady CBC 17 Dec. Eighty (not a typo) Black Vultures at the NYS DOT yard in Voorheesville, where a deer carcass pile was providing a ready source of food. (LA).

Chatham CBC 17 Dec. Marian Sole's group had both a Killdeer and an Eastern Towhee during the day. Bill Cook and company had Lesser Black-backed Gull and Evening Grosbeak.

Albany CBC 18 Dec. Two Rusty Blackbirds feeding at the roadside in the Town of Bethlehem, a first in the 30-year history of the count. (TL). A Marsh Wren was detected in the reeds just south of Coeymans Landing. (RG).

S. Rensselaer Co. CBC 26 Dec. An American Coot, an elusive species in our Region, was lingering at Snyder's Lake. (NL).

Troy CBC 31 Dec. Two Winter Wrens, and four Rusty Blackbirds were unusual for the count. (SM).

Ft. Plain CBC 31 Dec. A flock of twelve Brant was observed flying down the Mohawk River near Sprakers.

Bob Yunick's field notes for the period included some interesting raptor information, excerpted below:

"Raptor trapping at FE (Ft. Edward Grasslands), NUL (T. Northumberland) and MC (Montgomery Co.) The **two positives** were the banding of **Am. Kestrels** in every month of the period, a first for me in 18 yrs., and the banding of an SY/M **Snowy Owl** at FE on 1/31. The bird first reported 1/24 and still present as of my last visit there on 2/20. Rather oddly, the bird frequented during the day a small mound of weedy ground 1-2 ft tall in the middle of an oval harness race horse training track totally unperturbed by the numerous horses that were exercised daily on the track. Re the **Am. Kestrels** I banded: 3 in Nov, 1 in Dec, 2 in Jan, and 1 in Feb and recaptured on 2/17 a bird banded 1/7/16. Daily counts during banding sessions were 2-4 per day. Early on, the lack of snow cover favored the retention of these birds as well as **N. Harriers**. But even after two storms dumped ~20 in. of snow (2nd storm on 2/12) locally, these birds persisted: N. Harrier counts were 1-3 per day, with 3 on 2/20 following the snow; and Am. Kestrel counts were 2-4 per day on every banding trip.

The **two negatives** were the relatively **low numbers of Red-tails** and a **scarcity of Rough-legs**. I banded 8 **Red-tails** in January and 2 in February. While a maximum of 43 was seen on 1/7, most days that total was 16-30 well below normal of 40-55. However, one of the Red-tails banded on 2/18 in TG/MC was a stellar **leucistic** bird. We have seen what we think is this same bird for about ten yrs. but have never before been able to capture it. It was a

large female weighing 1540 g. Other than for one pale orange rectrix, two brown/orange upper tail coverts, and a few scattered dark feathers on the forehead and nape, the bird was a brilliant white all over! In 2003 in MC ~9 mi from where this bird was banded, I banded another leucistic Red-tail, not quite as totally white as this one but close. I banded no **Rough-legs**, saw 1-4 per day on 4 occasions at FE, and never saw a one in MC! It was not a Rough-leg winter.

While not a raptor, **N. Shrikes** appeared more abundantly than usual. I banded one in November and one each on 1/7 and 2/18 both in MC. The local Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club website received reports of 4 or 5.

Falcon Hat Trick – It is rare at this latitude in winter to record in one day the 3 species: AMKE, MERL, and PEFA. However, it happened three times this winter: twice at FE on 1/2 and 2/11 and once at MC on 2/18. Merlins, once totally absent here in the winter, have become a regular in modest numbers, and Peregrines have made a welcomed recovery. Climate change has added the Am. Kestrel.”

CONTRIBUTORS

Larry Alden, Will Aubrey, Ramona Bearor, Susan Beaudoin, Mike Birmingham, Matt Brunelle, Nancy Castillo, Glen & Malinda Chapman, Steve Chorvas, Jeremy Collison, Bill Cook, Alan Devoe Bird Club recent sightings, Amanda Dillon, Craig Driggs, Bruce Dudek, Alan Dupuis, Lindsey Duval, Larry Federman, Debra Ferguson, Mark Fitzsimmons, Brianna Gary, Bernie & Chris Grossman, Rich Guthrie, HMBirds Yahoo Group, Larry & Barbara Hall, David Harrison, Ron Harrower, John Hershey, John Kent, Nancy Kern, Bill Lee, Naomi Lloyd, Tristan Lowery, Larry Main, Alan Mapes, Leigh McBride, Thom McClenahan, Steve Mesick, Joyce Miller, Frank Mitchell, Frank Murphy, Jenny Murtaugh, Ellen Pemrick, Will Raup, Gregg Recer, Neal Reilly, Stacy Robinson, John Roosenberg, Jeanette Roundy, Kathy Schneider, Zach Schwartz-Weinstein, Marian Sole, George Steele, Scott Stoner, Craig Thompson, Alison Van Keuren, Phil Whitney, Tom & Colleen Williams, Donna Wright, Will Yandik, Robert Yunick.

ABBREVIATIONS

APBP – Albany Pine Bush Preserve, ALBA; AR – Alcove Res, ALBA; BCM – Black Creek Marsh, ALBA; BCR – Basic Creek Res, ALBA; BMB – Bog Meadow Brook Nature Trail, SARA; CCGP – Coxsackie Creek Grasslands Preserve, GREE; CF – Cohoes Flats, ALBA; CL – Collins L, SCHE; CRM – Cline Rd. Marsh, FULT; FR – Five Rivers EEC, ALBA; FtEG – Ft. Edward Grasslands, WASH; FV – Franklinton Vlaie, SCHO; HP

– Huyck Preserve, ALBA; OCA – Ooms Conservation Area, COLU; PRWMA – Partridge Run WMA, ALBA; SNHP – Saratoga National Historical Park, SARA; TR- Tomhannock Res, RENN; VFNHP – Vischer Ferry Nature & Historic Preserve, SARA; WMP – Wilson M. Powell Wildlife Sanctuary, COLU.

WATERFOWL - VULTURES

Snow Goose: max 4551 Guilderland ALBA 15 Dec.

ROSS'S GOOSE (R8): Blockhouse P, Stillwater SARA 7-13 Dec (SR).

Brant: 12 Mohawk Ri nr Sprakers MONT 31 Dec.

Cackling Goose: Fultonville FULT 13 Dec (DH); Battenkill Ri nr Greenwich WASH 16 Jan (GR); Hudson Ri btwn Stillwater and Coveville SARA 24-25 Feb (ADu, LD).

Wood Duck: max 12 Schodack RENN 27 Feb.

Gadwall: max 48 Stanton Pond ALBA 5 Dec.

Am. Wigeon: max 22 AR 4 Jan.

N. Shoveler: max 9 Stanton Pd ALBA 3 Dec.

N. Pintail: max 20 Schodack RENN 22 Feb.

Green-winged Teal: max 18 Stillwater SARA 25 Feb.

Canvasback: max 2 BCR 3 Dec.

Ring-necked Duck: max 318 BCR 18 Dec.

Greater Scaup: max 85 Saratoga L SARA 7 Dec.

Lesser Scaup: max 12 Loughberry L SARA 3 Dec.

White-winged Scoter: max 7 Saratoga L SARA 7 Dec.

Black Scoter: max 5 Saratoga L SARA 7 Dec.

Long-tailed Duck: max 2 Saratoga L SARA 7 Dec.

Bufflehead: max 180 Saratoga L SARA 7 Dec.

Com. Goldeneye: max 150 Stillwater SARA 14 Jan.

Hooded Merganser: max 120 BCR 6 Dec.

Red-breasted Merganser: max 4 Greenwich WASH 28 Dec.

Ruddy Duck: max 400 BCR 6 Dec.

Wild Turkey: max 102 Albany Co. CBC 18 Dec.

Red-throated Loon: Green Island ALBA 20 Dec, only report.

Com. Loon: max 5 Lake George WARR 17 Dec.

Horned Grebe: 4 Lake George WARR 19 Dec, only report.

Red-necked Grebe: max 2 Lake George WARR 1 Dec.

EARED GREBE (R8): Copake L COLU 3 Dec, continuing rarity.

Great Cormorant: arr Germantown COLU 24 Feb.

Double-crested Cormorant: last Crescent Rd, Colonie ALBA 21 Dec.

Great Egret: Towpath Rd, Halfmoon SARA 8 Dec, very late.

HAWKS – LARIDS

Black Vulture: max 80 NYS DOT yard, Voorheesville ALBA 17 Dec.

Turkey Vulture: last Colonie ALBA 1 Dec; arr Kinderhook COLU 18 Feb.

N. Harrier: max 6 FtEG 10 Dec.

Bald Eagle: max 13 Crescent Rd, Colonie ALBA 25 Feb.

Rough-legged Hawk: max 5 FtEG 8 Jan.

Golden Eagle: 5 reports 11 Jan- 25 Feb.

Am. Coot: 5 reports 26 Dec- 20 Jan.

Killdeer: last Chatham CBC 17 Dec, late; arr nr Greenwich WASH 22 Feb.

Wilson's Snipe: 2 Glenville SCHE 14 Dec, late.

Am. Woodcock: arr Catskill GREE 22 Feb.

Greater Yellowlegs: Rexford SARA 14 Dec, late.

Iceland Gull: arr Crescent Rd, Colonie ALBA 16 Dec; max 3 Fulton Co. Landfill FULT 13 Feb.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Ft Hunter MONT 14 Dec; Crescent Rd, Colonie 16 Dec; Stockport Flats COLU 17 Dec.

Glaucous Gull: arr Cohoes Falls ALBA 20 Dec; Stillwater SARA 11 Jan; Fultonville FULT 13 Feb.

PIGEONS – PARROTS

Snowy Owl: FtEG 29 Jan- 9 Mar, only report.

Long-eared Owl: Guilderland ALBA 26 Jan.

Short-eared Owl: max 15 FtEG 23 Dec; reports from ALBA, COLU, GREE, MONT, SARA, and WASH.

N. Saw-whet Owl: 4 reports 4 Dec- 28 Dec.

RED-HEADED WOODPECKER (R8): Ballston L SARA 11 Dec.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: arr Berne ALBA 30 Dec.

Horned Lark: max 450 T Northumberland
SARA 11 Feb.

Am. Pipit: max 13 Schodack RENN 21 Dec.

LONGSPURS – WARBLERS

Lapland Longspur: max 16 T Northumberland
SARA 19 Feb.

Snow Bunting: max 1000 T Northumberland
SARA 11 Feb.

Blackpoll Warbler: Galway SARA 3 Dec,
very late.

TOWHEES – WEAVERS

White-crowned Sparrow: max 10 Stuyvesant
COLU 5 Jan.

Rusty Blackbird: max 21 Coveville SARA 14
Dec.

Com. Redpoll: 5 Minden MONT 1 Jan, only
report.

Pine Siskin: max 29 Elka Park GREE 16 Feb.

Evening Grosbeak: max 5 Hoags Corners
RENN 28 Feb.