

REGION 10 - MARINE

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Winter weather in Region 10 began with mild conditions. Birders enjoyed temperatures ranging as high as 60°F in earlier parts of December with temperature fluctuations of up to 50° persisting through 23 December. This, however, barely prepared us for the arctic-like conditions that would eventually envelop the Region for a brutal, fourteen-day stretch from 26 December through 8 January. While true temperatures never dipped below 0°, there were several consecutive days with wind chill factors dropping below -10° bringing forth severe conditions. The temperature never climbed above freezing during this memorable event and for the first time in many years the Great South Bay was completely frozen at its widest point where tiny pockets of open water hosted dense congregations of waterfowl. Despite the warm start of the season, the severe cold tipped the balance and bucked the warming trend, and temperatures averaged below normal in both December and January as recorded at Central Park and Islip's weather stations. February brought forth more mild conditions where temperature departures of +6.7° and +6.3° were recorded at Central Park and Islip's weather stations, respectively.

	Central Park			Islip		
Temp	Mean	Normal	Deviation	Mean	Normal	Deviation
Dec	35.0°	37.5°	-2.5°	33.8°	35.6°	-1.8°
Jan	31.7°	32.6°	-0.9°	30.1°	30.6°	-0.5°
Feb	42.0°	35.3°	+6.7°	39.1°	32.8°	+6.3°

	Central Park			Islip		
Precip	Total	Normal	Deviation	Total	Normal	Deviation
Dec	2.21"	4.00"	-1.79"	2.12"	4.06"	-1.94"
Jan	2.18"	3.65"	-1.47"	3.74"	3.64"	+0.10"
Feb	5.83"	3.09"	+2.74"	6.21"	3.26"	+2.95"

The season opened with some exciting **Bonaparte's Gull** activity, something the Region has not experienced in a very long time, with huge numbers of birds feeding on lingering bait balls of anchovies off western Long Island's productive inlets and beach fronts. Four thousand individuals were estimated on 2 December from Jacob Riis Park and an additional three thousand

individuals recorded from Robert Moses State Park (RMSP) on the same date. Among the interesting birds found within these dense feeding frenzies were two **Parasitic Jaegers**, one seen from RMSP on 2 December and another at Jones Beach on 3 December, possibly the same individual patrolling the coastline and working the flocks of feeding gulls. The **Black-legged Kittiwake** high count of the season came on 5 December from RMSP with 10 individuals seen joining the Bonaparte's frenzy. Despite the large influx of Bonaparte's Gulls, only two **Black-headed Gulls** were recorded this season further arguing against the thought that large Bonaparte's Gull numbers result in more Black-headed Gulls and other uncommon two-cycle gull species. Conversely, we have seen greater numbers of Black-headed Gulls during recent winters where Bonaparte's Gull numbers were low. Two **Little Gulls** were discovered this winter, one of which was an adult found in the massive Bonaparte's Gull flock at Jacob Riis Park on 2 December. The second Little Gull record, also an adult, came from Montauk Point on 2 February and lingered about the area throughout the remainder of the season. The gull rarity highlights this winter were restricted to three **Mew Gulls**. The first two records came from Veterans Memorial Pier on 16 January and nearby Prospect Park on 20 January, a more traditional area in the Region where large flocks of Ring-billed Gulls gather and where Mew Gull has been detected consistently for the past decade. Finally, after a seventeen-year absence, a Mew Gull was discovered in Suffolk County. The bird was seen and photographed at Orient Point County Park on 10 February before it eventually flew north across the Long Island Sound towards Connecticut. The last Mew Gull record, outside of the New York Bay region, came from Shinnecock Inlet where a more reliable bird delighted observers for nearly a full month from January through February 2000.

There were several rarity highlights recorded throughout the Region this winter, but perhaps the most noteworthy bird was a **Graylag Goose** taken by a goose hunter in Mattituck on 30 January. While the specimen was not donated to the American Museum of Natural History's ornithology collection, feather and tissue samples were gathered and are slated for lab analysis. Existing images of the specimen pose an argument against domestic lineage, however physical identification attributes of Graylag Geese pose challenges and this topic has generated lively listserv discussions in recent years among neighboring states that have hosted interesting Graylag Geese. A full report will be submitted to the New York State Avian Records Committee following analysis of the feather samples. Graylag Goose has been a much anticipated "next" goose species for the New York State Checklist, therefore acceptance of this record would constitute a state first and would be one of the few accepted records for the North American continent. Additional western palearctic geese recorded this winter were **Pink-footed Goose** and **Barnacle Goose**, annual visitors now but for the first time in years, the Region nearly missed the latter species. Fortunately, two Barnacle Geese were discovered at Gerry Park in Roslyn on 21 February, remaining only for a few hours. Careful photo analysis proved these to

be the same two individuals that were briefly spotted on Mill Pond in Sayville just prior to the season in late November. The Pink-footed Goose record came from Deep Hollow Ranch, a continuing bird from the fall season which remained in the Montauk Point vicinity throughout the duration of the winter season.

Most of the noteworthy waterfowl highlights came during and after the deep freeze when Region 10's beaches, harbors, and bays became the recipients of large numbers of birds fleeing their icy haunts of the north. The Great South Bay held massive rafts of mixed *Aythya* species largely dominated by **Greater Scaup and Lesser Scaup**, as expected, with a high count of fifty thousand estimated from Heckscher State Park on 12 February. The amazing spectacle continued throughout much of the winter season and despite the enormous numbers of scaup only one **Tufted Duck** was found at Santapogue Creek in Babylon on 24 December. Santapogue Creek also hosted a **Ring-necked Duck X scaup sp.** hybrid, likely a returning individual from previous winters. Adding to the interesting *Aythya* hybrids found this season was an apparent **Redhead X Ring-necked Duck** that was found on Eastport Lake on 25 February. **Harlequin Ducks** were better represented this season than in recent, previous winters with a high count of sixteen recorded from Point Lookout on 20 January. In addition, a fascinating Harlequin Duck discovery took place at Shinnecock Inlet on 6 January where an immature male was photographed inside the inlet sporting a blue leg band with legible white characters "CI." The origins revealed that this individual was banded as a hatchling along Upper McDonald Creek at Glacier National Park in Montana on 29 August 2017. This resight is noteworthy in that it constitutes the first ever documented record of a "Pacific coast" Harlequin Duck migrating to the Atlantic coast. There is a previous record of a juvenile, first-fall Harlequin Duck, also with Montana origins, taken by a duck hunter on Lake Erie, Erie, Pennsylvania in the fall of 2015. Other than the Lake Erie record, there is no existing evidence that West Coast breeding populations make the long journey east across the continent to winter along the Atlantic coast.

Of the more puzzling avian mysteries of the season was the unprecedented arrival of **Purple Gallinules** immediately following the end of the deep freeze-out event. Region 10 received three records within a tight date range, 13-16 January, with an additional bird recovered much further north in Region 5 during the week of 22 January. Unfortunately, all three of the Region 10 Purple Gallinules perished in rehabilitation but the Region 5 bird was expected to make a full recovery. This begs the question as to why these extreme southern breeders would retreat to the cold north during the heart of winter. A possible explanation of this event was described by Farnsworth, et al. (2015), where they examined 77 occurrences of vagrant Purple Gallinules, using eBird data, during the months of November to February from 1957-2014, carefully comparing these records to climate data. They found that warmer, late summer temperatures in southern breeding areas correlated directly to these types of

vagrancy patterns. Their study also showed that drier conditions in eastern Mexico yielded similar relationships.

Additional rarity highlights include a well-documented **Hammond's Flycatcher** found in Central Park that carried over from the fall season through 12 December. Two **Ash-throated Flycatchers** provided little viewing opportunity for Regional observers with a single bird being seen and photographed in under 90 seconds at a private residence in Kings County on 4 December. The second record came from a traditional location for this species, Jones Beach West End, but was only enjoyed by a small handful of observers on 13 December. After a six-year hiatus in the Region, a **Mountain Bluebird** was discovered on 17 December during the Captree CBC at Robert Moses State Park. The bird was found east of the Golf Course frequenting the junipers and associating with American Robins and a lone Baltimore Oriole. A **Townsend's Solitaire** found at Tiffany Creek Preserve in Oyster Bay on 20 December was the Region's third solitaire documented in 2017.

Fourteen species of warblers were detected this season, a likely product of the late fall and early December warmth. The most notable species included a **Yellow-throated Warbler** that lingered at Midland Beach in Richmond County through 2 January. Three **Northern Waterthrush** were detected this season, one seen sporadically in Central Park through 18 December, presumably a continuing individual from the fall season. Another was uncovered during the Montauk Christmas Bird Count (CBC) on 16 December and for the second year in a row a Northern Waterthrush was found at Silver Lake Park in Queens on 30 December. The Montauk area hosted the first South Fork record of "**Audubon's**" **Yellow-rumped Warbler** that was initially discovered in Napeague on 2 December and was last seen during the Montauk CBC on 16 December. The most noteworthy warbler occurrence of the season came from the Suffolk County Farm and Education Center in Yaphank where a cooperative **Prothonotary Warbler** was enjoyed by many birders through 7 December. This constitutes the first winter season record of Prothonotary Warbler in New York State. Despite the excellent warbler diversity **Ovenbird** numbers from city parks were low with only a few sightings from Central Park, likely of the same individual.

Ammodramus sparrows were nicely represented this season, the first being a **Grasshopper Sparrow** that was discovered during the Montauk CBC on 16 December at Hither Hills Campground. In addition, all three regularly occurring marsh specialists were found at productive saltmarsh sites in Suffolk County. A **Saltmarsh Sparrow** was flushed up out of the marsh at Oak Beach on 17 December during the Captree CBC. A **Nelson's Sparrow** and three **Seaside Sparrows** were found on 5 January along Dune Road exhibiting remarkable survivability during the most severe and prolonged freezeout conditions the Region has experienced in recent memory.

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ABBREVIATIONS

APP – Alley Pd P, QUEE; **BPP** – Baisley Pd P, QUEE; **BLSP** – Belmont L SP, SUFF; **BBYC** – Bellport Bay Yacht Club, SUFF; **BP** – Breezy Pt, QUEE; **BC** -

Bridge Creek, QUEE; **BZ** – Bronx Zoo, BRON; **BBP** – Brooklyn Bridge P, KING; **COR** – Cemetery of the Resurrection; RICH; **CP** – Central P, NEWY; **CMB** – Crab Meadow Beach, SUFF; **CMP** – Cow Meadow P, NASS; **CroP** – Crocheron P, QUEE; **DREQ** – Dune Rd E Quogue, SUFF; **FBF** – Floyd Bennett Field, KING; **GB** – Gravesend Bay, KING; **GWC** – Green-Wood Cemetery, KING; **HSP** – Heckscher SP, SUFF; **HLSP** – Hempstead L SP, NASS; **HHCG** – Hither Hills Campground, SUFF; **HP** – Hook Pd, SUFF; **JRP** – Jacob Riis P, QUEE; **JFKMWS** – John F. Kennedy Memorial Wildlife Sanctuary, NASS; **JBSP** – Jones Beach SP, NASS; **JBWE** – Jones Beach West End, NASS; **KP** – Kissena P, QUEE; **LRP** – Little Reed Pd, SUFF; **OMNSA** – Marine Nature Study Area, Oceanside, NASS; **MPB** – Marine Pk Brooklyn, KING; **MB** – Midland Beach, RICH; **MASH** – Mashomack Preserve, SUFF; **MI** – Mattituck Inlet, SUFF; **MP** – Montauk Pt, SUFF; **Nap** – Napeague, SUFF; **OB** – Oak Beach, SUFF; **OPCP** – Orient Point County P, SUFF; **PBP** – Pelham Bay P, BRON; **PNS** – Pine Neck Sanctuary, SUFF; **PL** – Point Lookout, NASS; **PP** – Prospect P, KING; **RB** – Ransom Beach, SUFF; **RMSP** – Robert Moses SP, SUFF; **SH** – Setauket Harbor, SUFF; **SLP** – Silver L P, NASS; **SFED** – Suffolk County Farm & Ed. Center, SUFF; **SMSP** – Sunken Meadow SP; **SC** – Santapogue Creek, SUFF; **SI** – Shinnecock Inlet, SUFF; **SPP** – Southards Pd P, SUFF; **SPCP** – Smith Pt County P, SUFF; **SSNC** – South Shore Nature Center, SUFF; **TCP** – Tiffany Creek Preserve, NASS; **UF** – Uplands Farm Sanctuary, SUFF; **VMP** – Veterans Memorial Pier, KING.
CBC Codes: **QWCC** – Quogue-Watermill.

WATERFOWL - VULTURES

Snow Goose: max 2000 JBWR 26 Feb (DG, SS).

Ross's Goose: BPP 1-15 Jan (mob); Wertheim NWR N to Yaphank 6-11 Jan (RO); 2 East Hampton 11-21 January (PD, mob); Riverhead 13 Jan (RV, SS); 2 Centerport 21 Jan (SM, KC, ph); BLSP & vicinity 26 Jan-12 Feb (DF); 2 Riverhead 4 Feb (DHR); Riverhead 25 Feb (RA).

GRAYLAG GOOSE: Mattituck 30 Jan 2018 (ER, ph).

Greater White-fronted Goose: Centerport P thru (mob); Babylon thru 2 February (mob); Riverhead thru 19 Dec (mob); imm Cutchogue 9-10 Dec (JSp); APP 7-21 Jan (JR); imm Riverhead 13-21 Jan (DHR); Eastport L 26 Jan (KF, SF); HP 17 February (JG).

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE: Montauk thru; *intro*.

Brant: max 16,300 JBWR 16 Dec (DG).

Snow Goose x Brant (hybrid): Canarsie Pier 16 Dec – 26 Feb (PP, ph), apparent returning duo since 2012.

Barnacle Goose: Gerry P 21 Feb (Gary Strauss); *intro*.

Cackling Goose: Well represented with at least 51 inds thru Region; 1 BRON, 1 NEWY, 5 RICH, 1 KING, 7 NASS, 36 SUFF.

Tundra Swan: 2 Hook Pond 15 Dec (TWB, GB); 6 Hook Pond 11 Jan (KF, SF); 58 Breezy Point 24 Feb (PDO, LDe); 41 FBF 24 Feb (CF, STi); 100 Canarsie Pier 26 Feb (LEW); 25 JBWR 26 Feb (DG, SS, JGi, JL); 6 Bronx Zoo 26 Feb (TO).

Eurasian Wigeon: Eastport L thru 5 Jan (mob); Sayville thru 30 Jan (mob); Fort Solonga thru 18 Feb (mob); Southampton 17 December (SN, RV); MPB 14 Dec-13 Jan (JSal); Patchogue 21 Dec - 11 Jan (PB); CMB 7-25 Jan (TS); GB 27 Feb (SB).

Am. X Eurasian Wigeon: Bay Ridge Channel 13 Dec - 20 Feb (ABk, mob); PP 18 Feb (TG, SK).

Blue-winged Teal: JFKMWS 2 Dec (TH); JBWR 17 Dec (MG).

“Eurasian” Green-winged Teal: SC 7 Jan (PMo).

Redhead x Ring-necked Duck: Eastport L 24 Feb (JD); *intro*.

Ring-necked Duck x scaup sp.: SC 24-27 Dec (PMo, ph); *intro*.

Tufted Duck: SC 24-27 Dec (PMo, ph); *intro*.

Greater/Lesser Scaup: Large numbers reported throughout Region; max 50,000 HSP 12 Feb (SSM); *intro*.

King Eider: well reported at traditional locs; max 8 SI 10 Jan (MMcB).

Harlequin Duck: mostly from traditional locs; max 16 PL 20 Jan (GM, JR, PC, JMcM); one banded individual with Montana origins photographed at SI on 6 Jan (DHR, ph); *intro*.

Barrow's Goldeneye: Jamaica Bay 2-15 Dec (DG, mob); fem. RB 29-31 Dec (MMcB); OB 1-21 Jan (SSM, PJL).

Red-necked Grebe: well reported.

Eared Grebe: OB 2 Dec thru 25 Feb (PMo, mob); PL 30 Dec (PR); SI 10 Jan (MMcB); PBP 27 Jan (MBn, Ph).

Am. White Pelican: 2 Flanders, SUFF 17 Dec (QWCC); Brightwaters, SUFF 2 Jan (KB, ph).

Great Egret: very few reps after January freeze.

Snowy Egret: BC 16 Dec (CF); BBYC 18 Dec (MMcB); Freeport 20 Dec (MSh).

HAWKS - LARIDS

Osprey: TMRP thru 6 Dec (BBo); SPP thru 9 Dec (mob); MP 2 Dec (John Cataldo); HLSP 14 Dec (JGi).

Clapper Rail: 2 OMNSA thru 20 Jan (MF); DREQ 5-14 Jan (MMcB, mob).

Virginia Rail: LRP 16 Dec (TS, TH); Port Washington 16 Dec (SP); 2 SSNC 17 Dec (ABk); West Sayville 17 Dec (MMcB); PNS 17 Dec (VC); Ludlow's Creek 1 Jan - 4 Feb (MM).

Com. Gallinule: PP 17-24 Dec (WP).

PURPLE GALLINULE: juv. Manorville 13 Jan (RBA); Rockville Centre 14 Jan (RBA); ad. Southampton 16 Jan (RBA, ph); *intro*.

Sandhill Crane: FBF 19 Dec (LEw).

Am. Oystercatcher: last Jones Inlet 17 Dec (MK); arr Jones Inlet 24 Feb (mob).

Semipalmated Plover: 2 Setauket Harbor 26 Dec - 3 Jan (PS).

"Western" Willet: JBWE 2 Dec (JGl).

Red Knot: max 12 PL 10 Dec (DL); last 10 Jan SI (MMcB).

Long-billed Dowitcher: 5 SC 9 Dec thru 3 Jan (KF, SF, mob).

Parasitic Jaeger: RMSP 2 Dec (SSM, PJL); JBWE 3 Dec (PP, TH); *intro*.

Dovekie: MP 4 Feb (SSM, PJL, PMo).

Razorbill: max 216 MP 15 Jan (MMcB); also noteworthy 168 ind. SPCP 27 Dec (MMcB).

Black-legged Kittiwake: max 10 RMSP 5 Dec (KF, SF); *intro*.

Bonaparte's Gull: High counts; 4,000 JRP 2 Dec (DG); 3,000 2 Dec RMSP (SSM, PJL); *intro*.

Black-headed Gull: ad, SH 28 Dec (PS); 1 CY KING, multiple locs, 9 Dec-18 Jan (ABK, mob); *intro*.

Little Gull: ad. JRP 2 Dec (DG); ad. Montauk 2 Feb thru (SSM, PJL, mob); *intro*.

Glaucous Gull: 12+ reps from SUFF; 3 reps from QUEE.

Nelson's Gull (Herring x Glaucous Gull): several reps from SUFF; MI 11 Dec (BB, ph); SI 22 Dec (PRav, ph); BBYC 28 Dec (MMcB, ph); DREQ 1 Jan (KF, SF, ph); BBYC 14-19 Jan (MMcB, ph). Number of inds remains unclear.

Herring Gull x Lesser Black-backed Gull: BBYC 28-29 Dec (MMcB, ph); RB 11 Jan (MMcB, ph).

MEW GULL: VMP 16 Jan (SB, ph); PP 20 Jan (SS, ph); OPCP 10 February (AR, ph); *intro*.

Common Tern: JBWE 3 Dec (PP, TH).

Forster's Tern: SMSP 20 Jan (MB, ph).

PIGEONS – PARROTS

Barn Owl: Reps from tradition locs at Gateway NP plus a single rep from RICH on 16 Dec.

Snowy Owl: irruption year; many reps throughout Region.

Long-eared Owl: no reps other than a deceased bird found in Southold on 7 Jan (JSp).

Short-eared Owl: reps from RICH, KING, QUEE, NASS & SUFF.

N. Saw-whet Owl: 13 reps, SUFF only.

Red-headed Woodpecker: GWC thru 13 Dec (mob); CP 7-13 Dec (AP); MASH 10 Jan (MSc).

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

HAMMOND'S FLYCATCHER: CP thru 12 Dec (LL, mob); *intro*.

E. Phoebe: Owls Head P KING 1 Dec (JG); Silver Lake P, RICH 3 Dec (HF); BZ 13 Dec - 2 Jan (TO); JBSP 13 Dec (JGi); Mill P, Setauket 14 Dec (LN); SUNY SB 15 Dec (MFu); Manhasset 16 Dec (SP); Manhasset 17

Dec (SP); Stony Brook 27 Dec (TS, SMu, EMu).

ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER: private residence KING 4 Dec (DG, ph); JBWE 13 Dec (BA); *intro*.

White-eyed Vireo: BP 1 Dec (ABk); FBF 2 Dec (DG); Charles Mem P 6 Dec (RS).

Common Raven: widespread. max 34 Brookhaven 26 Dec (MMcB); also 30 SFED 1 Dec (PJL, SSM).

House Wren: JBWR 2-20 Dec (Tait Johansson); CRSP 3 Dec (MF); NYBG 4 Dec (NF); COR 5 Dec (ACi); PP 16 Dec (JK).

Marsh Wren: 11 reps SUFF; 2 reps QUEE.

MOUNTAIN BLUEBIRD: RMPS 17-26 Dec (PJL, PWC, mob); *intro*.

TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE: TCP 20 Dec - 18 Jan (BBo, ph); *intro*.

LONGSPURS – WARBLERS

Lapland Longspur: JBWE 3-7 Dec (TB, GB).

Ovenbird: CP thru 17 Dec; *intro*.

N. Waterthrush: CP thru 18 Dec; SLP 30 Dec (SSM); *intro*.

Prothonotary Warbler: SFEC thru 7 Dec (mob, ph); *intro*.

Orange-crowned Warbler: well reported throughout Region; 4 RICH, 5 BRON, 1 NEWY, 15 QUEE, 1 KING, 1 NASS, 14 SUFF.

Nashville Warbler: MB 1-2 Dec (CB); MPB 2-14 Dec (DG); 2 CP thru 3 Dec; CMB thru 4 Dec (TS).

Com. Yellowthroat: 2 Bryant P thru 15 Dec (mob); Herald Square P 1 Dec (JGl); HP 15 Dec (TWB, GB); LRP 16 Dec (TSt, TH).

N. Parula: CP thru 10 Dec; BP 1 Dec (ABk); CMP 2 Dec (TH); Kirk P, SUFF 2 Dec (LD, PA); JFKMWS 2 Dec (TH); Montauk 2 Dec (PA, LD).

Magnolia Warbler: CP thru 6 Dec (mob).

Palm Warbler: max 5 Nap 2 Dec (DHR).

Pine Warbler: Reps from all counties except NASS.

“AUDUBON’S” YELLOW-RUMPED

WARBLER: Nap 2-16 Dec (DHR, ph); *intro*.

Yellow-throated Warbler: MB thru 2 Jan (mob); *intro*.

Wilson’s Warbler: CP thru 13 Dec (mob); CroP 7-12 Dec (ABk, mob); Carl Shurz P, NEWY 8 Dec (JG).

Yellow-breasted Chat: CroP 7-24 Dec (JR, mob); Westhampton 1-2 Jan (PMa).

TOWHEES - WEAVERS

Grasshopper Sparrow: HHCG 16 Dec (MSc, LSc); *intro*.

Nelson’s Sparrow: DREQ 5 Jan (MMcB); *intro*.

Saltmarsh Sparrow: OB 17 Dec (BBo, TS); *intro*.

Seaside Sparrow: 3 DREQ 5 Jan (MMcB); *intro*.

Clay-colored Sparrow: SFED thru 20 Dec (mob).

Vesper Sparrow: SFED 15 Dec (KF, SF); Atlantic Beach 17 Dec (SA, CF).

WESTERN TANAGER: CroP thru 3 Jan (EM).

Rusty Blackbird: max 45 APP (BBe).

Baltimore Oriole: KING private loc thru 26 Dec (DG); BBP 2 Dec (HW); Nap 2 Dec (DHR); PP 2 Dec (DP, PP, ST); BBP 2 Dec (HW); MPB 3 Dec (HL); RMSP 17-25 Dec (PJL, PWC); SUFF private loc 7 Jan (JD); NASS private loc 28 Jan (JGag).

Purple Finch: HSP 6 Dec (KF, SF).

Pine Siskin: 5 RICH, 14 NEWY, 1 QUEE, 4 SUFF.

