

REGION 6—ST. LAWRENCE

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It was another mild winter, with mean temperatures in Watertown exceeding long-term averages for January and February by 8.2° and 3.4° F, respectively. Winter started out typically enough, as December's mean temperature of 26.2° was within 0.2° of normal, although frequent oscillations between unusual cold and mild typified the month. This roller coaster of warm and cold temperatures was the most distinctive feature of the winter, and I heard more than one complaint from people who couldn't get used to the cold because of the frequent warm spells. One particularly dramatic example came on 9 and 10 February, when the low temperature on the former night of -21° was followed by a low the next night of 32°, a 53° swing in 24 hours. Precipitation was slightly above normal for the winter, as December and February each saw about half an inch more precipitation than average, but January's total was 0.3 inch below normal.

Lacking any prolonged period of cold, most of the St. Lawrence River and nearshore Lake Ontario remained open all winter, so it seemed natural to expect abundant waterfowl, but duck numbers generally seemed rather low. Perhaps the most surprising waterfowl find of the year was a **Brant** Nick Leone spotted among a large Canada Goose flock at Cape Vincent in January, where at least one **Cackling Goose** was also present. The season's only **Barrow's Goldeneye** reports came from Fisher's Landing and nearby Grass Point State Park, where a male and female were seen through most of January. Four Wood Ducks was a good winter tally, and the 185 White-winged Scoters at Westcott Beach State Park on 14 December was a nice assemblage, but high counts for most other ducks were unimpressive.

Winter raptors were present in relatively good but not spectacular numbers in the usual northwest Jefferson County strongholds, and were generally scarce elsewhere. Buteo numbers seemed low in December but there was an apparent influx during the first half of January, which brought more Rough-legged and Red-tailed Hawks than have been seen in most recent winters. Snowy Owls were largely restricted to northwestern Jefferson County, where it was not unusual to see several in a day, and a handful of Short-eared Owls wintered on Point Peninsula. A rumor of two Gyrfalcons on Point Peninsula mid-winter was unfortunately not supported by any firm reports, and may have actually referred to sightings from nearby Ontario, birds that were close enough to Jefferson County that they certainly could have popped over the border a time or two.

Presumably one result of the mild winter was a robust list of half-hardies, including several species not seen in Region 6 most winters. Some of the more unusual wintering passerines included a Brown Thrasher on Wellesley Island, three reports totaling four Gray Catbirds, and a Rose-breasted Grosbeak that

visited a feeder in Great Bend for most of the winter, joined by a Chipping Sparrow one day. On 2 January I observed Carolina, Winter, and Marsh Wrens in Jefferson County, a trifecta apparently unprecedented during winter in Region 6. Winter sightings of Marsh and especially Winter Wrens certainly seem to be increasing, as both were considered rare prior to 2000 but now are nearly annual in occurrence.

Although crossbills were present in the Adirondacks they were scarcely noted in Region 6 with only three reports, although one was of a female breaking off a small twig and flying off with it at Massawepie Mire on 8 December. Pine Siskin and Common Redpoll were similarly represented by just a handful of sightings, and there was only one report of an Evening Grosbeak heard over Fort Drum. Bohemian Waxwing went unreported as well.

For the season I received reports of 111 species, which is about two species below the most recent ten-year average. No true rarities were reported this winter, and what probably stood out most was the relatively good assortment of half-hardies that persisted throughout the winter. These birds were widely scattered, and a number of birders felt that overall it was a rather disappointing winter, especially considering the mild temperatures and presence of open water throughout the season.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

BRB – Black River Bay; **CV** – T Cape Vincent; **FD** – Fort Drum Military Reservation, **JEFF** & **LEWI**; **FdP**—Fort de la Presentation, T Ogdensburg; **FL** – Fisher's Landing, T Alexandria; **GPSP**—Grass Point SP, T Alexandria; **HP** – Hawkins Pt, T Massena; **JEFF** – Jefferson County; **KC** – Kelsey Creek, T Watertown; **LRUD**—Low's Ridge, Upper Dam trail, T Colton; **MM** – Massawepie Mire, T Colton & Piercefield, **STLA**; **MP** – Montario Pt, T Ellisburg; **PRWMA** – Perch Ri WMA, **JEFF**; **PtPen** – Pt Peninsula, T Lyme, **JEFF**; **RMSP** – Robert Moses SP, T Massena; **SBSP** – Southwick Beach SP; **SLR** – St. Lawrence Ri; **StPt** – Stony Pt, T Henderson, **JEFF**; **ULLWMA** – Upper and Lower Lakes WMA, T Canton; **WBSP** – Westcott Beach SP; **WI** – Wellesley I.

WATERFOWL-HUMMINGBIRDS

Snow Goose: 5 reports between 2 Dec & 15 Feb with no clear pattern of movement; max 200 over KC 2 Dec.
Brant: CV 20 Jan (NL); rare in winter.
Cackling Goose: CV 20-24 Jan (NL, JB).
Canada Goose: max 6200 CV Town P 24 Jan.
Mute Swan: max 66 FL 24 Jan.
Trumpeter Swan: max 16 SLR T Hammond 28 Dec.
Tundra Swan: max 27 BRB 14 Dec.
Wood Duck: 3 reports of 4 ind last T Antwerp 22 Jan.
Gadwall: max 9 StPt 2 Jan.
Mallard: max 360 Alcoa Ponds T Massena 22 Jan.
American Black Duck: max 11 PtPen 22 Jan & FdP16 Feb.
Northern Pintail: 2 PtPen 17-18 Jan; max 7 Little Sucker Brook P T Waddington 18 Jan; no other reports.
Canvasback: f StPt 2 Jan (JB) only report.
Redhead: max 502 GPSP 1 Feb.
Ring-necked Duck: 2 MP 14 Dec; SLR T Waddington 15 Dec; last T Henderson 7 Jan; only reports.
Greater Scaup: max 1780 StPt 2 Jan.
Lesser Scaup: 4 reports 1-2 last Henderson Bay 7 Jan.
White-winged Scoter: max 185 WBSP 14 Dec.
Black Scoter: WBSP 14 Dec & 2 Feb only reports
Long-tailed Duck: max 340 CV 24 Jan.
Bufflehead: max 25 multiple locations L Ontario shore.
Common Goldeneye: max 960 Chippewa Bay 28 Dec.
Barrow's Goldeneye: m & f FL 3-24 Jan (RB, JB, BM).
Hooded Merganser: max 10 RMSP 1 Dec.
Common Merganser: max 735 SLR T Massena 22 Feb.
Red-breasted Merganser: max 110 StPt 2 Jan.
Spruce Grouse: MM 8 Dec only report.
Horned Grebe: singles WI 19 Dec & StPt 2 Jan only reports.

RAILS-TROPICBIRDS

Killdeer: arr FD 26 Feb.
Ring-billed Gull: max 175 SBSP 2 Jan (JB) high for winter.
Herring Gull: max 1600 HP 21 Dec.

Iceland Gull: several reports 2-4 HP thru; none elsewhere.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: SLR T Massena 21 Dec & nearby HP 15 Feb only reports.

Glaucous Gull: max 5 HP 5 Jan.

Great Black-backed Gull: max 1200 HP 15 Feb.

LOONS-PARAKEET

Common Loon: last SLR T Massena 20 Jan.

Double-crested Cormorant: last SLR Waddington 15 Dec.

Great Blue Heron: last ULLWMA 4 Feb.

Turkey Vulture: arr T Wanakena 17 Feb (EM, early); only other report T Canton 28 Feb.

Northern Harrier: 22+ reports from NW JEFF none elsewhere.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: 9 reports to ebird.

Cooper's Hawk: 26 reports to ebird.

Northern Goshawk: FD 7 Jan.

Bald Eagle: many reports of up to 20/day.

Red-tailed Hawk: mostly 2-4/day but apparent influx early Jan when up to 16/day.

Rough-legged Hawk: many reports 1-6 NW JEFF; fewer St. Lawrence valley.

Eastern Screech-Owl: 5 reports NW JEFF none elsewhere.

Snowy Owl: many reports 1-4 NW JEFF thru; 1-2/day T Leray & T Philadelphia to 13 Feb; T Lowville 31 Jan & FdP 15 Feb only other reports.

Short-eared Owl: 1-2/day PtPen thru; T Clayton 15 Feb only other report.

Northern Saw-whet Owl: CV 20 Jan only report.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: 30+ reports; still most common W JEFF but increasing elsewhere.

Black-backed Woodpecker: LRUD 28 Dec; T Colton 1 Jan & 16 Feb; only reports.

Northern Flicker: max 4 PtPen 18 Jan; about 15 additional reports.

American Kestrel: 20+ locations NW JEFF; only 4 reported elsewhere.

Merlin: 5 reports seems low compared to recent years.

GYRFALCON: rumored presence PtPen Jan-Feb not backed up by any documentation; may refer to individuals in nearby Ontario.

Peregrine Falcon: 10+ reports from the vicinity of known nesting locations in Massena, Ogdensburg & Watertown; T Canton 16 Feb only other report.

FLYCATCHERS-SNOW BUNTING

Northern Shrike: about 20 reports better than previous year but still historically low.

Canada Jay: MM 8 Dec only report.

Horned Lark: max 9 T Philadelphia 17 Feb; only 7 other reports; low.

Boreal Chickadee: 3 near Wanakena T Fine 17 Feb only report.

Tufted Titmouse: reports from 18 locations, continuing to increase.

Winter Wren: SBSP 2 Jan; different locations FD 7 & 10 Jan of which one still present 25 Feb (JB); apparently increasing in winter.

Marsh Wren: 2 PRWMA 13 Dec (JB); Muskellunge Creek T Hounsfield 2 Jan (JB); rare in winter.

Carolina Wren: 3 reports.

Eastern Bluebird: reports from 11 locations about half in Canton-Potsdam area; max 9 T Potsdam 14 Dec.

Hermit Thrush: FD 8 Jan (JB) only report.

American Robin: max 193 StPt 6 Jan.

Gray Catbird: T Croghan 6 Dec (MR, photos!); 2 Muskellunge Creek T Hounsfield 14 Dec (JB, photos!); CV 2 Feb (SK); rare in winter.

Brown Thrasher: WI 26 Feb (BO, KR, photos!); rare in winter.

Bohemian Waxwing: no reports.

Cedar Waxwing: max 98 FD 26 Feb.

Evening Grosbeak: only report one over FD 14 Jan.

House Finch: max 25 PtPen 18 Jan.

Purple Finch: max 19 LRUD 28 Dec.

Common Redpoll: 7 reports in the Canton-Potsdam area; none elsewhere.

Red Crossbill: 3 reports from Adirondacks including female carrying stick MM 8 Dec; 2 FD 21 Dec only report outside Adirondacks.

Pine Siskin: 2 T Lawrence 11 Jan; 5 SUNY-ESF Ranger School 17 Feb; only reports.

American Goldfinch: max 90 T Canton 19 Jan.

Lapland Longspur: T Ellisburg 2 Jan & 3 T Leray 8 Jan only reports.

Snow Bunting: max 360 T Leray 8 Jan.

NEW WORLD SPARROWS-CARDINALIDS

Eastern Towhee: T Watertown feeder thru (FO).

Chipping Sparrow: T Champion feeder 5 Dec (SM); last at Clarkson Univ feeder to 19 Dec (NK).

Song Sparrow: 21 reports.

Swamp Sparrow: FD 26 Feb only report.

White-throated Sparrow: reports from 22 locations; max 13 T Massena 15 Feb.

Dark-eyed Junco: many reports; max 28 T Hounsfield 14 Dec.

Red-winged Blackbird: arr FD & T Watertown 24 Feb.

Brown-headed Cowbird: 3 T Potsdam 8 Dec only report.

Common Grackle: 2 PtPen 20 Dec; Nicandri Nature Center 20 Jan; 6 T Parishville & 4 T Hammond 14 Feb; only reports.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: PtPen 7 Dec 7 18 Jan only reports.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: f at T Champion feeder thru 16 Feb (SM).