

REGION 8—HUDSON-MOHAWK

Tom Williams

153A Consaul Rd., Albany, NY 12205
trwdsd@fastmail.fm

	Albany			Glens Falls		
Temp	Mean	Normal	Deviation	Mean	Normal	Deviation
Dec	29.9°	28.5°	+1.4°	27.6°	25.0°	+2.6°
Jan	23.3°	22.6°	+0.7°	22.1°	18.0°	+4.1°
Feb	23.7°	25.9°	-2.2°	21.7°	21.3°	+0.4°

Precip	Total	Normal	Deviation	Total	Normal	Deviation
Dec	3.70"	2.93"	+0.77"	1.68"	3.05"	-1.37"
Jan	1.85"	2.59"	-0.74"	1.54"	2.86"	-1.32"
Feb	1.78"	2.20"	-0.42"	1.70"	2.08"	-0.38"

The weather in December 2020 featured slightly above normal temperatures, and wetter than normal conditions. A massive storm on 16-17 December dropped 22.9" of snow at Albany, and the four-day period from 16-19 December averaged 15° F below normal. Remarkably, the weather warmed substantially by Christmas Eve, and Christmas day had a high of 63° at Albany with nearly one inch of rainfall. Virtually all the snow melted at lower elevations, and severe flooding occurred throughout many areas. January 2021 was rather tranquil, with no arctic cold until the last three days of the month, only 12.1" of snow, and dry conditions overall. February had regular light snowfalls, enough to keep the ground covered until the end of the month, but offered no extreme weather.

The major event of the season continued to be the winter finch incursion. Common Redpolls were seemingly everywhere one looked and listened. By late January reports of a few Hoary Redpolls were received, generally seen at feeders but also in the field among large groups of Common Redpolls. Observations of Red Crossbills also became commonplace, and White-winged Crossbills were noted in many places as well, including suburban yards. Pine Siskins, normally a welcomed winter sighting, were ever-present but relegated to background status.

Evening and Pine Grosbeaks also continued in lower numbers, in more select locations.

Waterfowl were of the typical variety and number. A Greater White-fronted Goose spent much of January around the Stillwater area in Saratoga and Rensselaer Counties. A Eurasian Wigeon was spotted near the Vischer Ferry Power Plant in Saratoga County by John Hershey's group, while they were conducting the Schenectady Christmas Bird Count in that sector; nice bird for the count. Redhead ducks were reported in just a few spots, mostly during February, along the Mohawk River in Albany and Montgomery Counties.

On the gull front, it seemed that at least one adult and one immature Iceland Gull spent much of the winter in the Cohoes-Waterford-Crescent corridor of the Mohawk River. Glaucous Gull was also reported from that area, as well as later in the season from the Hudson River near Albany. Similarly, at least one adult and two immature Lesser Black-backed Gulls were sighted along the Hudson and Mohawk Rivers in Albany County.

Red-throated Loons were observed in both Saratoga County (Gansevoort and Crescent) and Fulton County (Broadalbin) in the first week of December. A few Common Loons were seen in the Hudson River corridor up until Christmas week, with spotty reports thereafter from Lake George (Warren) and Stockport (Columbia).

At least one Golden Eagle spent much of the winter in Washington County, being reported and photographed by several observers. One or two birds also were noted from southern Columbia County, as has become the norm in recent years. Rough-legged Hawks were seen in typical numbers in favored habitat.

Only a couple of Snowy Owls were detected this winter, one in the Fort Edward area of Washington County, the other from Berne in Albany County. As many as six Short-eared Owls were present in the Germantown area (Wire Road) of Columbia County this season, which represents a new location for that species. The Fort Edward Grasslands stronghold in Washington County had up to twenty-four Short-eared Owls reported this winter, which is encouraging.

Northern Shrike numbers seemed to be down this winter, with only a half-dozen reports. It is not entirely clear if observer effort factored into this, however.

Overwintering sparrows included a hearty Clay-colored Sparrow that spent much of the season coming to a feeder in the city of Albany. White-crowned and Savannah Sparrows were seen in typical numbers in their favored locations in Washington, Saratoga, Albany, Rensselaer, and Columbia Counties.

A Rose-breasted Grosbeak was photographed at a feeder in Washington County on 3 January.

Dr. Bill Cook writes in his January 2021 monthly summary, which is included in *The Warbler*, the Alan Devoe Bird Club publication:

“SHORT-EARED OWL and LAPLAND LONGSPUR which were “rumors” last month have materialized. I am jumping the gun a bit with the owl because the sightings by club members didn't actually begin until early February. But a longspur was found by David Harrison, a Schenectady birder, in northern Columbia County at the end of January. These

winter visitors have probably been regulars in Columbia County over the years but simply overlooked in the past. The increased efforts of a new cadre of dedicated birders has significantly improved the county coverage.

Climate change may also be playing a role in some changes that we see. Zach Schwartz-Weinstein suggests that the **60 plus** Rusty Blackbirds which are wintering on Trout Brook Road in Copake is climatically “disconcerting”. Will Raup believes that this flock might be a Region 8 winter maximum.

As far as winter finches go, lots of **Common Redpolls** are being found, Will Yandik reported a **Pine Siskin**, but no crossbills went on record this month. Only Roberta Bernstein reported a **Purple Finch** at her feeder. **Snow Bunting** searches were successful mostly in the northern part of the county and a **Northern Shrike** was found along the Hudson River at Hudson.

The **Eastern Towhee** is still hanging around Will Yandik’s feeder. Towhees do winter on Long Island, but they have rarely been found in Columbia County in the winter. **Common Loon** and **Fox Sparrow** have also lingered longer than usual and a very white **leucistic Red-tailed Hawk** is wintering along Black Grocery Road in Copake. Eagles are hardly worth mentioning anymore but Marian Sole found **49** Bald Eagles along the Hudson River as well as occupied nests on the 10th. Further, she and Mike Nicosia continue to find **Golden Eagles** in Copake and Germantown.”

Bob Yunick submitted his field notes for the winter season, excerpted here:

“The following are observations from my feeding/banding operations in the Schenectady NY area: **2)** my Adirondack feeding/banding operation at Jenny Lake (**JL**) at 1250 ft elevation near Corinth in northern Saratoga Co, NY.

2) Intense Black-capped Chickadee irruption at Jenny Lake. Beginning in Aug 2020, there was a faint glimmer of an irruption. By the end of Nov. 2020, 21 chickadees had been captured (20 banded and 1 return capture from a previous year). The irruption seemed to fizzle out in Dec. when only 3 new chickadees were banded but come Jan a drastic change occurred as follows. These capture results are based on operating 2 ½ mist nets for 3-3½ hrs per banding session.

Date	No. Banded	No. Returns	No. Repeats	Total Captures
12/21/20	3	0	4	7
1/1/21	8	1	4	13
1/12/21	33	4	3	40
1/19/21	37	4	19	60
2/4/21	44	2	18	64
2/11/21	25	4	44	73
2/18/21	17	0	36	53
2/26/21	24	2	44	70

Total captures from 8/9/20 to 2/28/21 = 229 (212 banded, 17 returns). Age distribution on newly banded birds was 88.2% imm/ 11.8% ad. Age distribution for all 229 birds captured was 81.7% imm/ 18.3% ad.

Sunflower seed consumption closely tracked the trend in captures. Nov/Dec consumption averaged 100-200 g/day, rising to ~300 g/day by late Dec. In Jan, it

skyrocketed to 1400 g/dy by 1/19/21, peaked at 1850 g/day on 2/4/21, remaining above 1500 g/day through Feb. I’ve burned through 180 lbs. of black oil sunflower seed Dec-Feb.

Based on 50 years of monitoring these irruptions at JL, this year’s pattern was unusual. Typically, bird numbers and seed consumption rise in Oct/Nov with the greatest influx in Dec, peaking in Jan and declining in later Jan as increasing daylight prompts birds to begin their “fee-bee” territorial calls and depart to their breeding areas. This season, the main influx occurred in Jan/Feb, not Dec/Jan, and the season’s highest capture totals persisted through Feb which is unusual.

Along with this irruption of chickadees, there were smaller irruptions of **Red-breasted Nuthatches and Tufted Titmice.**”

Species	No. Banded by Month								
	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Total
RBNU	1	7	3	3	1	2	2	11	30
TUTI					5	2	5	3	15

In Region 8, 132 species were reported during the period.

CONTRIBUTORS

Larry Alden, Ramona Bearor, Susan Beaudoin, Mike Birmingham, Nancy Castillo, Glen & Malinda Chapman, Steve Chorvas, Jeremy Collison, Bill Cook, Brianna Denoncour, Alan Devoe Bird Club recent sightings, Amanda Dillon, David DiSiena, Craig Driggs, Bruce Dudek, Alan Dupuis, Lindsey Duval, Scott Fackenthall, Larry Federman, Debra Ferguson, Mark Fitzsimmons, 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 & Cathy Graichen, Neal Reilly, Stacy Robinson, John Roosenberg, Jeanette Roundy, Kathy Schneider, Zach Schwartz-Weinstein, John Shea, Marian Sole, George Steele, Scott Stoner, Craig Thompson, Alison Van Keuren, Phil Whitney, Tom & Colleen Williams, Will Yandik, Robert Yunick.

ABBREVIATIONS

APBP – Albany Pine Bush Pres, ALBA; **AR** – Alcove Res, ALBA; **BCM** – Black Creek Marsh, ALBA; **BCR** – Basic Creek Res, ALBA; **BMB** – Bog Meadow Brook Nature Trail, SARA; **CCGP** – Cocksackie Creek Grasslands Pres, 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 Pres, ALBA; **OCA** – Ooms Conservation Area, COLU; **PRWMA** – Partridge Run WMA, ALBA; **SNHP** – Saratoga National Historical P, SARA; **TR** – Tomhannock Res, RENN; **VFNHP** – Vischer Ferry Nature & Historic Pres, SARA; **WMP** – Wilson M. Powell Wildlife Sanctuary, COLU.

WATERFOWL – HUMMINGBIRDS

Snow Goose: max 800 Coxsackie GREE 23 Dec.
Greater White-fronted Goose: Schaghticoke RENS 8 Jan.
Mute Swan: max 4 BCR 4 Dec.
Wood Duck: max 14 Halfmoon SARA 28 Feb.
Northern Shoveler: max 5 Cohoes ALBA 1 Dec.
Gadwall: max 26 Stanton Pd ALBA 7 Dec.
Eurasian Wigeon: VFNHP 19-21 Dec.
American Wigeon: max 26 BCR 4 Dec.
Mallard: max 750 Fonda MONT 6 Feb.
American Black Duck: max 294 Mindenville MONT 13 Feb.
Northern Pintail: max 12 Halfmoon SARA 21 Jan.
Green-winged Teal: max 18 TR 8 Dec.
Redhead: max 4 Crescent Power Plant 19 Feb.
Ring-necked Duck: max 250 Loughberry L SARA 10 Dec.
Greater Scaup: max 6 Loughberry L SARA 6 Dec.
Lesser Scaup: max 200 Loughberry L SARA 15 Dec.
White-winged Scoter: 2 Saratoga L SARA 3 Dec; 2 L George WARR 4 Dec; 2 Copake L 7 Dec.
Black Scoter: 6 Saratoga L SARA 6 Dec.
Long-tailed Duck: Ft Edward WASH 1 Jan; Amsterdam MONT 4 Jan; Stillwater SARA 24 Jan.
Bufflehead: max 44 Saratoga L SARA 18 Dec.
Common Goldeneye: max 200 Stillwater SARA 14 Feb.
Hooded Merganser: max 195 Stillwater SARA 14 Feb.
Common Merganser: max 1000 TR 13 Dec.
Red-breasted Merganser: max 4 Saratoga L SARA 18 Dec.
Ruddy Duck: max 167 BCR 4 Dec.
Wild Turkey: max 133 Northumberland SARA 7 Jan.
Pied-billed Grebe: Athens GREE 4 Dec; Troy RENS 19 Jan.

RAILS – TROPICBIRDS

Killdeer: arr 3 Livingston COLU 26 Feb.
American Woodcock: arr 2 Livingston COLU 27 Feb.
Wilson's Snipe: arr Schaghticoke RENS 27 Feb.
Bonaparte's Gull: Overlook P Cohoes ALBA 5 Dec.

Ring-billed Gull: max 500 Waterford SARA 10 Jan.
Herring Gull: max 500 Colonie ALBA 19 Jan.
Iceland Gull: Cohoes ALBA 4 Dec.
Lesser Black-backed Gull: max 2 Cohoes ALBA 1 Jan.
Glaucous Gull: Cohoes ALBA 27 Dec; Rensselaer RENS 19 Jan.
Great Black-backed Gull: max 78 Cohoes ALBA 13 Feb.

LOONS – PARAKEET

Red-throated Loon: Broadalbin FULT 1 Dec; Gansevoort SARA 1 Dec; Halfmoon SARA 4 Dec.
Common Loon: last 4 Hague WARR 24 Jan.
Double-crested Cormorant: last Catskill GREE 15 Dec.
Great Blue Heron: max 3 Niskayuna SCHE 4 Dec; 3 Livingston COLU 21 Dec.
Black Vulture: max 63 Albany ALBA 13 Jan.
Turkey Vulture: mig arr Livingston COLU 11 Feb; a few birds overwintered in scattered loc.
Golden Eagle: max 2 Copake COLU 7 Jan.
Northern Harrier: max 7 Coxsackie GREE 12 Jan; 7 FtEG 12 Jan.
Bald Eagle: max 27 Germantown COLU 30 Dec.
Rough-legged Hawk: arr FtEG 6 Dec; max 6 FtEG 25 Jan.
Eastern Screech-Owl: max 3 FR 9 Dec.
Great Horned Owl: max 3 Ballston Lake SARA 30 Dec.
Snowy Owl: FtEG 29 Dec; Berne ALBA 13 Jan.
Barred Owl: max 2 mult loc.
Short-eared Owl: max 24 FtEG 31 Jan.
Red-bellied Woodpecker: max 10 Livingston COLU 21 Dec.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: max 4 Troy RENS 20 Dec.
Northern Flicker: max 4 Cambridge WASH 13 Dec.
Pileated Woodpecker: max 6 Livingston COLU 21 Dec.
American Kestrel: max 2 mult loc.
Merlin: 2 Meads Ln ALBA 24 Feb.
Peregrine Falcon: max 2 mult loc.

FLYCATCHERS – SNOW BUNTING

Eastern Phoebe: last FR 23 Dec.
Northern Shrike: Stuyvesant COLU 19 Dec; Kinderhook COLU 31 Dec; Queensbury

WARR 4 Jan; Putnam WASH 5 Jan; FtEG 9 Jan; Schodack RENS 18 Feb.
Blue Jay: max 46 Grafton RENS 5 Feb.
American Crow: est 10,000 Troy RENS 14 Jan.
Fish Crow: max 60 Colonie ALBA 26 Dec.
Common Raven: max 11 Ft Ann WASH 11 Jan.
Horned Lark: max 700 Copake COLU 5 Jan.
Red-breasted Nuthatch: max 25 TR 12 Dec.
White-breasted Nuthatch: max 15 Stillwater SARA 26 Jan.
Brown Creeper: max 7 Nassau RENS 28 Feb.
Carolina Wren: max 6 Stuyvesant COLU 8 Dec.
Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 3 mult loc.
Ruby-crowned Kinglet: New Baltimore GREE 6 Dec; Bethlehem ALBA 28 Dec; Catskill GREE 18 Jan; Halfmoon SARA 28 Jan.
Eastern Bluebird: max 25 Dresden WASH 3 Jan.
Hermit Thrush: max 2 FR 20 Dec.
American Robin: max 277 Cambridge WASH 10 Jan.
Northern Mockingbird: max 6 Stuyvesant COLU 5 Jan.
Cedar Waxwing: max 76 Esperance SCHO 12 Feb.
American Pipit: Ft Miller WASH 22 Jan.
Evening Grosbeak: max 157 Summit SCHO 18 Dec.
Pine Grosbeak: max 60 Salem WASH 6 Dec.
Purple Finch: max 10 Summit SCHO 20 Dec.
Common Redpoll: max 250 FtEG 30 Jan.
Hoary Redpoll: singletons rep WASH, SARA, ALBA, RENS.
Red Crossbill: max 35 APBP 30 Jan.
White-winged Crossbill: max 125 Queensbury WARR 10 Jan.
Pine Siskin: max 180 Warrensburgh WARR 31 Dec.

American Goldfinch: max 60 Greenport COLU 22 Jan.
Lapland Longspur: max 6 Northumberland SARA 9 Jan.
Snow Bunting: est 1000 Northumberland SARA 30 Jan.

NEW WORLD SPARROWS – CARDINALIDS

Eastern Towhee: Livingston COLU 19 Dec-9 Feb; Burnt Hills SARA 20 Feb.
American Tree Sparrow: max 72 Saratoga CBC sect D SARA 18 Dec.
Clay-colored Sparrow: Albany ALBA 24 Dec- 8 Jan.
Field Sparrow: max 2 APBP 23 Jan.
Savannah Sparrow: max 11 Kinderhook COLU 23 Dec.
Song Sparrow: max 21 Halfmoon SARA 4 Feb.
White-throated Sparrow: max 200 Schuylerville SARA 13 Dec.
White-crowned Sparrow: max 8 E Greenbush RENS 19 Jan.
Dark-eyed Junco: max 268 Livingston COLU 21 Dec.
Eastern Meadowlark: Sprakers MONT 26 Dec- 17 Jan; FtEG 29-31 Jan.
Baltimore Oriole: Germantown COLU 17 Dec, at feeder during snowstorm.
Red-winged Blackbird: est 1000 Schodack RENS 28 Feb.
Brown-headed Cowbird: est 500 Schodack RENS 28 Feb.
Rusty Blackbird: max 60 Copkae COLU 13 Jan.
Common Grackle: max 300 Schodack RENS 16 Dec.
Northern Cardinal: max 52 FR 1 Feb, high count!
Rose-breasted Grosbeak: White Creek WASH 15 Dec- 21 Jan, at feeder.

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