

REGION 4—SUSQUEHANNA

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We continue a trend of warmer winters with less snowfall. The average temperature as reported by the Binghamton National Weather Service was 30.1° F, +5.1° above normal. Snowfall was 40.9", -17.5" below normal, while overall precipitation was 9.09", +0.98" above normal. Looking at a monthly breakdown, December had half of the seasonal snowfall at 20.4", while the temperature was at the long-term average (28.1°). Both January and February were well above normal temperatures (+8.9°, +6.1°), while snowfall was below normal (-8.8", -11.0"). The high temperature for the season was 61° on 15 February. The low was -13° on 4 February. Average snow depth was 2" while the maximum was 10" on 16 December.

Region 4's winter season ended with the exciting return of a **Barnacle Goose** to the Sherburne 4 Corners area in Chenango County. Only the second time that one has been documented in Region 4 (last year being the first). The bird was discovered by Jeremy Collison on 27 February while scanning a large flock of Canada Geese. The private pond and agricultural fields are a local hotspot for migrating waterfowl. This year's bird lingered for five days, providing many area birders with a viewing opportunity.

Continuing with waterfowl, Greater White-fronted Goose made an appearance in early December at Mead Pond in Norwich, while a flyover was seen a week later from the Binghamton University Nature Preserve. Cackling Geese were seen in small numbers at six different locations across the Region. Paula Bacorn photographed three Mute Swans in early February on the Susquehanna River near Lounsberry, Tioga County. Sandy Covington heard the nocturnal calls of Trumpeter Swan at North Spencer Marsh in mid-December, while the escapee Trumpeter at Boland Pond (first reported in August 2021) continued throughout the winter. Tundra Swans are rare in mid-winter in the region. A single bird was spotted on 15 January during the NYS Winter Waterfowl Count on the Susquehanna River near Bainbridge. On the same date, two adults and three immature Tundras were photographed at North Spencer Marsh. The other Tundras seen during the period were during the normal migration window in late February. Glenn Wilson found an escapee drake **Mandarin Duck** on the ice at West Corners Marsh near Vestal. Glenn was the only individual to see this beautiful species. Finishing out the ducks, the only sighting of a Canvasback was a drake seen flying above the Chenango River near Port Crane by Melissa Zoll in late February.

Moving on to other water birds, a couple of late Red-necked Grebes were seen by Mitch Light at the southern end of Otsego Lake on 12 December. A Pied-billed hung around for five days in December on the Susquehanna River in Binghamton. Horned Grebe made appearances on Otsego Lake, Pepacton Reservoir, and the Susquehanna River in Binghamton over the season. A late migrating Red-throated Loon was seen on Otsego Lake on 12-13 December. The weather pattern must

have been favorable on 12 December as a late Double-crested Cormorant was seen at the Sherburne 4 Corners Pond. Jeremy Collison spotted a nice flock of 15 Common Loons migrating down the Otselic River valley on 2 December. A good count for Region 4.

A very rare mid-winter sighting of a Wilson's Snipe occurred in the wetlands along the railroad bed in Sherburne. Slow flowing water keeps many areas ice free here, except in the coldest periods. A Regionally rare **Iceland Gull** was seen at the Cortland Gravel Pits on 11 December by Jay and Kevin McGowan, the only sighting this winter.

Sightings of **Black Vulture** have become more common in the Binghamton area. The winter season was bookended by reports on 9 December and 26 February. There were scattered reports of Golden Eagle across the Region. What was surprising to me was the limited number of winter sightings in their core Catskill area. Secretive birds or a limited number of birders out looking for them? Of note was a single Golden seen regularly at Birdsong Meadow Farm in Tioga County throughout the month of February. There were a few scattered reports of Northern Goshawk, but kudos to Karen Todd for photographing "an unknown hawk" at her bird feeders and then reaching out to the birding community to get an ID. Her bird was a very handsome juvenile. Rough-legged Hawks were down in numbers across the Region, perhaps staying further north with the mild winter.

Our common owl species are typically under-reported. This year was no exception with a scattering of reports for Barred, Great Horned, and Eastern Screech across the Region. There were no reports of rare owl species. Northern Saw-whet and Short-eared Owl are likely to be present in the Region, but I can appreciate birders not searching for them on cold winter nights.

Moving on to passerines and the half-hardies. A Killdeer was seen by many in Upper Lisle County Park between 10–24 January. A very lost or very hardy bird! Yellow-bellied Sapsucker lingered into December at several locations in Tioga and Cortland Counties. Ruby-crowned Kinglets were seen on 7 and 22 February in Tioga County. An early House Wren was seen by Jonathan Weeks in the town of Maine, Broome County on 14 February. Winter Wrens were scattered in small numbers across the Region and Hermit Thrushes were seen at three different locations. There was a single report by Peter Harrity of a lingering Gray Catbird 22-23 December in the hamlet of Scott, Cortland County. A Chipping Sparrow overwintered at a feeder in the Vestal area. A Field Sparrow lingered long enough to be included in the Sherburne CBC on 17 December. A few Rusty Blackbirds appear to overwinter most years in the Region. A nice group of eight were seen at Lime Hollow Nature Center on 20 January.

Covering winter finches, it was an irruption year for Evening Grosbeak. Sightings were mostly in the northern portion of Region 4. One hotspot was a location in South Otselic that had upwards of 150 birds throughout the heart of the winter. The property owners have an amazing banquet of food for the birds, but unfortunately, they do not use eBird, so few eBird records exist for that location. However, they do regularly post to the Chenango Bird Club Facebook group page. The birds first arrived at the end of October, and a few remained into mid-May. Also of note, was the work of Matt Young and other members of the

Finch Research Network. Matt and his co-workers captured Evening Grosbeak at several feeder locations in Chenango and Cortland Counties. The captured birds were fitted with radio and satellite transmitters as part of FRN's research into the possible causes of the drastic drop in Evening Grosbeak numbers.

This winter's crossbill sightings were a bust compared to last winter's bonanza of Red Crossbill. There were only two sightings, a flyover at Birdsong Meadows Farm (Adam Troyer), and a single male calling from a spruce plantation at Michigan Hill State Forest (Chris Wood). For the other winter finches, Purple Finch was reported across the Region, albeit in mostly low numbers. Pine Siskins were relatively scarce and in low numbers. There were no reports of Common Redpoll, White-winged Crossbill, or Bohemian Waxwing.

Snow Buntings were found mostly in the eastern and southern portion of the Region. An impressive 380 were seen at North Spencer Marsh on 29 January. Lapland Longspur was extremely scarce this winter with but a single sighting by Derek Green on 1 February near Killawog in Broome County.

The first trickle of early spring migrants arrived 9-10 February with larger flocks showing up in the days after. In addition to the normal early species, an Eastern Meadowlark was seen by David Messineo on 19 February in the town of Pitcher, Chenango County.

A total of 120 species were seen in the Region this winter plus the escapee Mandarin Duck.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

ALk – Allen L, OTSE; **BMF** – Birdsong Meadows Farm, TIOG; **BPd** – Boland Pd, BROO; **BUNP** – Binghamton University Nature Pres, BROO; **CanL** – Canadarago L, OTSE; **CannR** – Cannonsville Res, DELA; **CG** – Carantouan Greenway, T Barton, TIOG; **CGP** – Cortland Gravel Pits, CORT; **ChRB** – Chenango Ri, Greater Binghamton, BROO; **CIPd** – Clarke Pd, T Springfield, OTSE; **CRes** – Cannonsville Res & outflow, DELA; **CVSP** – Chenango Valley SP, T Fenton, BROO; **DelR** – Delaware Ri, Deposit, DELA; **DorP** – Dorchester P, Whitney Pt, BROO; **FMHW** – Franklin Mt. Hawkwatch, DELA; **HCP** – Hillcrest Pits, Port Dickenson, BROO; **LHNC** – Lime Hollow Nature Center, T Cortlandville, CORT; **MPd** – Mead Pd, T North Norwich, CHEN; **NSpM** – N Spencer Marsh, T Spencer, TIOG; **OtsL** – Otsego L, OTSE; **PRes** – Pepacton Res & outflow, DELA; **S4C** – Sherburne 4 Corners, CHEN; **SkaL** – Skaneateles L, (SE), T Scott, CORT; **SRRG** – Sherburne RR Grade Marsh, CHEN; **StPd** – Stupke Pd, T Cortlandville, CORT; **SusRB** – Susquehanna Ri, Greater Binghamton, BROO; **SusRO** – Susquehanna Ri, Greater Owego, TIOG; **ULCP** – Upper Lisle CP, T Triangle, BROO; **WPres** – Whitney Pt Res, BROO.

Snow Goose: max 4000 FMHW 9 Dec.
Greater White-fronted Goose: MPd 5 Dec (MD); BUNP flyover 12 Dec (JC).
BARNACLE GOOSE: S4C 27 Feb – 3 Mar (JC, mob).
Cackling Goose: scattered reports across 5 counties.
Canada Goose: max 1300 StPd 4 Dec. (JG).
Mute Swan: 3 Lounsberry, TIOG 7 Feb (PB).
Trumpeter Swan: 3 NSpM 15 Jan (SC); BPd throughout (mob).
Tundra Swan: 5 NSpM 15 Jan (SC); Bainbridge CHEN 15 Jan (MD); other scattered spring migrants.
Wood Duck: a few scattered reports throughout Region.
Northern Shoveler: 3 CIPd 13 Dec; SusRO 5 Feb (DG).
Gadwall: max 15 CIPd 13 Dec.
American Wigeon: max 14 ULCP 26 Feb (JH).
Mallard: max 150 CRes 24 Dec (LV).
American Black Duck: max 75 CRes 26 Feb (LV).
Northern Pintail: max 20 ULCP 26 Feb (JH).
Green-winged Teal: small numbers at typical winter locations.
Canvasback: ChRB 25 Feb (MZ).
Redhead: max 200 OtsL 7 Jan (LHi).
Ring-necked Duck: max 450 ALk 1-5 Dec (PF).
Greater Scaup: a few scattered reports in low numbers.
Lesser Scaup: max 13 CanL 14 Dec (TB).
White-winged Scoter: 2 CGP 17-22 Dec (mob); DorP 15 Dec (GW).
Long-tailed Duck: DorP 4-13 Dec (mob); CRes 17 Dec (LV); CGP 14 Jan (mob).
Bufflehead: max 45 OtsL 2 Dec (ML).
Common Goldeneye: max 120 SkaL 15 Jan (DD).
Hooded Merganser: max 80 CanL 7 Jan (TS).
Common Merganser: max 236 CanL 7 Jan (TS).
Red-breasted Merganser: a few scattered reports across Region.
Ruddy Duck: max 13 OtsL 7 Jan (LHi).
Wild Turkey: max 87 ULCP 1 Jan (DW); widespread throughout.
Ruffed Grouse: scattered reports throughout Region.
Ring-necked Pheasant: a few scattered reports; 4 max ULCP 15 Jan (JH).

Pied-billed Grebe: SusRB 7-11 Dec (mob).
Horned Grebe: 2 OtsL 7 Jan (LHi); PRes 15 Jan (LV); HCP 24 Feb (DN).
Red-necked Grebe: 2 OtsL 12 Dec (ML).

American Coot: max 74 OtsL 11 Feb.

Killdeer: ULCP 10-24 Jan (mob); NSpM 15-27 Feb (SC), early.

American Woodcock: Starr Rd Swamp (OTSE) 16 Feb (LG); T of North Norwich (CHEN) 19 Feb (JMcK); Bunn Hill Rd, Vestel (BROO) 20 Feb (VL).
Wilson's Snipe: SRRGM 14 Jan (MD).

Ring-billed Gull: max 250 SusRB 14 Jan (GW).

Herring Gull: max 1200 CGP 17 Dec (JMcG, KM).

Iceland Gull: CGP 11 Dec (JMcG, KM).
Great Black-backed Gull: 12 Yaman P, T of Cortland CORT; all other sightings Cortland area.

Red-throated Loon: OtsL 12-13 Dec (ML).

Common Loon: 15 South Otselic CHEN 2 Dec (JC), flyover.

Double-crested Cormorant: S4C 12 Dec (MD).

Great Blue Heron: scattered reports throughout Region.

Black Vulture: 3 BUNP 9 Dec (JC, DW); 4 BUNP 26 Feb (JB).

Turkey Vulture: max 11 BUNP 27 Feb (JH); scattered throughout with concentration in BROO.

Golden Eagle: BMF thru Feb (ATro); scattered reports throughout.

Northern Harrier: scattered reports throughout.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: scattered reports throughout, heaviest in BROO.

Cooper's Hawk: reported all counties.

Northern Goshawk: 2 FMHW 9 Dec; T of Guilford CHEN 27 Jan (KT); T of Oxford CHEN 27 Jan (MD); T of North Norwich CHEN (JMcK).

Red-shouldered Hawk: a few reports BROO, OTSE.

Rough-legged Hawk: scattered reports throughout except DELA, numbers lower than average winter.

Eastern Screech-Owl: a few reports BROO, CORT, DELA, TIOG.

Great Horned Owl: a few scattered reports in all counties in Region.

Barred Owl: scattered reports throughout except CORT.

Belted Kingfisher: reported throughout, heaviest along major rivers in Region.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: LHNC 22 Dec (JG); SusRO 30 Dec (DG); NSpM 12 Feb (SC).

Northern Flicker: a few scattered reports, mostly BROO, CORT, TIOG.

American Kestrel: scattered reports throughout Region.

Merlin: reported all counties except OTSE, most reports in BROO, TIOG.

Peregrine Falcon: Binghamton pair reported throughout season, isolated reports CORT, DELA, OTSE.

Northern Shrike: scattered reports in all counties except TIOG.

Fish Crow: max 12 ChRB 15 Feb (JW); all reports concentrated along Susquehanna and lower Chenango Rivers.

Horned Lark: max 65 Richfield Springs OTSE 15 Dec; a few scattered reports throughout.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: CG 7&22 Feb (MB); NSpM 22 Feb (SC).

Cedar Waxwing: max 50 Scott CORT 1 Jan (PH); few reports, mostly BROO.

House Wren: T of Maine BROO 14 Feb (JW), early.

Winter Wren: a few scattered reports in all counties in Region.

Gray Catbird: T of Scott CORT 22-23 Dec (PH), late.

Northern Mockingbird: a few scattered reports, most in BROO.

European Starling: max 3500 S4C 27 Feb; amazing flock in this dairy farm area providing wonderful murmurations during COHA attacks.

Hermit Thrush: LHNC 29 Dec–15 Jan (JG, PH, CW); T of Virgil CORT 4 Feb (CW); T of Hartwick OTSE 28 Feb (ML).

Evening Grosbeak: max 150 South Otselic CHEN throughout Jan, Feb (MF-P); most reports in northern part of Region.

Red Crossbill: BMF 3 Jan (ATro); Michigan Hill SF, T Richford TIOG 12 Feb (CW)

Pine Siskin: a few scattered reports in single digit numbers.

Lapland Longspur: 2 Killawog BROO 1 Feb (DG).

Snow Bunting: max 380 NSpM 29 Jan (SC); scattered reports across region except DELA.

Chipping Sparrow: Vestal BROO, overwintered (JW); NSpM 15 Feb (SC).

Field Sparrow: MPd 17 Dec (ATri), late.

Swamp Sparrow: a few scattered locations in BROO, CHEN.

Eastern Towhee: T Chenango Forks (BROO) 12-16 Dec (LHa); T Butternuts OTSE 18 Feb (MS).

Eastern Meadowlark: T Pitcher CHEN 19 Feb (DM), early.

Rusty Blackbird: NSpM 2 Dec (SC); 8 LHNC 20 Jan (PH).

EXOTICS

Mandarin Duck: West Corners Marsh BROO 27 Feb (GW), escapee.

