

REGION 7—ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

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In December precipitation (melted equivalent) varied greatly across Region 7. The Champlain Valley and the northern edge of Franklin County were the driest with 3-4". The balance of Franklin and the western edge of Clinton Counties got 4-6". Most of Essex County got 5-7" except for the High Peaks Region which got 6-8". Hamilton County was the wettest at 6-8" overall and a small area in the west central portion which got more than 8". Temperatures throughout the winter season were warmer than normal. In December all of Clinton, Franklin and the northern portions of Essex and Hamilton Counties were 3-5° F above normal. The southern portions of Essex and Hamilton were 1-3° warmer. On 22-23 December winter storm *Eliot*, a bomb cyclone, impacted the southern portion of Region 7 more significantly than the northern where 3-4" of a wintery mix fell.

January's temperatures were remarkably uniform and remarkably warm throughout Region 7. All four counties of the Region were 5-7° warmer than normal. Precipitation also showed limited variation over the entire Region. Most areas received 4-5" with the exception of northeastern Essex and areas astride the borders between Hamilton and Essex Counties which got only 3-4".

February opened with winter storm *Olive* on the leading edge of a polar vortex, which brought temperatures of -20° and lower in many areas. Even so, overall, the month continued the warmer than usual trend. The High Peaks Region was the coldest, only deviating from normal by less than a degree either way. A large area surrounding the High Peaks Region was 1-3° warmer and the northern and western edges of Region 7 were 3-5° warmer. The month was relatively dry. Only a small segment in the southwest of Hamilton County got as much as 3-4". The rest of Region 7 got 2-3" except for the Champlain Valley and the western quarter of Franklin County which got only 1-2".

The extent of ice on Lake Champlain reflected the warmth of the season. As late as mid-February the ice sheet in the north was solid across the lake only as far south as Gilbert Brook Marina and was completely open from Point au Roche south well into Essex County. By the end of February, the ice sheet still hadn't reached the Cumberland Head Ferry. At that time the upper end of Plattsburgh Bay and the area between the NY side and Valcour Island had iced over. The lake was open north of the Champlain Bridge. Throughout most of the season the lake north of that bridge would freeze over only to reopen and repeat the cycle multiple times. By the end of the season the ice edge extended only to Stevenson's Bay, roughly halfway between Port Henry and Westport. With all this open water many species of waterfowl lingered well beyond their average departure dates, including

Wood Duck, American Wigeon, Northern Pintail, Green-winged Teal, and Pied-billed Grebe. This is also true of Ruddy Duck which, along with Barrow's Goldeneye, was present in good numbers. Finally, a pair of Trumpeter Swans arrived 13 February at Ausable Point and were present into March.

This year's Winter Finch Forecast prediction that Evening Grosbeak would move south was borne out in Region 7 by reports of multiple individuals from more than a hundred sites. Expected to stay put, Pine Grosbeak was seen at over 75 sites, though in relatively low numbers. Red Crossbill, a resident, was reported from only 10-12 sites and in small numbers. Type was not specified. Even though it was expected this year, White-winged Crossbill was unreported throughout the season. Deemed likely to stay put this year, Common Redpoll was seen at eighteen locations in relatively small numbers. Up to 40 Pine Siskin, a resident species, were reported from over two dozen sites. Expected to stay north, Bohemian Waxwing was reported in good numbers from 30+ sites.

Of the four CBCs in Region 7 only the Saranac Lake count, which tallied 1,383 individuals of 32 species, is entirely in New York State. Plattsburgh counted 51 species and 13,258 individuals including a small number from a sliver of Vermont which has not been separated out of the totals. The highlight was a count week **Harlequin Duck**. Also noteworthy was a count first Lesser Black-backed Gull and a late Double-crested Cormorant. The Point au Roche, NY portion of Vermont's Champlain Island count totaled 36 species and 9,063 individuals. No data were available for the NY side of the Ferrisburgh count.

A **Trumpeter Swan** pair, discovered on 13 February at Ausable Point remained for the rest of the season. This is the first winter season record of Trumpeter Swan in Region 7. **Tufted Duck** continued its strong, annual presence with multiple sightings at four locations from Peru to Port Henry between 5 January and 22 February. **Ruddy Duck** had a strong showing this winter with several reports spanning the Lake Champlain shoreline from Crown Point north to Plattsburgh.

It was an astonishing year for gulls in Region 7, possibly the result of a stronger, more concerted effort to decipher the daily routines of the Plattsburgh *Larus* congregations. The season started out strong with record numbers of white-winged gulls recorded. This included a conservative total of nine different individual **Iceland Gulls**, and among that total was a single site record of seven individuals. At least four **Glaucous Gulls** were discovered, one of which was an adult, a rarely documented age class in the Region. But the first massive rarity of the season came on 11 January with the highlight of an adult **Slaty-backed Gull**, a first record for Region 7. A rare visitor to North America, most sightings on the continent occur in and around Alaska but with many additional records east to New England at established winter gull congregations. The first New York State record of Slaty-backed Gull came from Niagara Falls during the winter of 1992. Since then, the New York State Avian Records data base shows 16 records of Slaty-backed Gull that have been reviewed and accepted by the Committee through 2020 (<https://nybirds.org/NYSARC/HistData/SBGU.htm>), and when updated with subsequent reports will show at least three additional records from 2021 and 2022. Eight of the previously accepted records come from Niagara

County and observations of Slaty-backed Gull gradually become scarcer further east and south of this region. There are only two previous records of Slaty-backed Gull in the Lake Champlain Basin, both from the state of Vermont.

On 10 February, another Region 7 first record and incredible rarity was discovered along the Lake Champlain shoreline; a Common/Mew Gull at the Hoisington Brook Outlet in Westport. The bird remained through 19 February and was further photographed and identified as a **Common Gull** shortly after its discovery. A series of spread-wing images suggest the bird is part of the nominate *canus* population. This not only represents a *Kingbird* Regional first record, but also a first for the entire Lake Champlain Basin, which includes Vermont. This site has been previously viewed as having high potential for hosting a Common/Mew Gull given its faithful winter Ring-billed Gull population.

The only report of **Golden Eagle** was from Baxter Mt. **Snowy Owl** was scarce this winter with only a single sighting on 4 December at Wilcox Dock in Plattsburgh. This area contains abundant prey given its popularity among wintering waterfowl and gulls; however, safe roost locations for Snowy Owls are minimal.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

AMWMA – Ausable Marsh WMA, CLIN; **AP** – Ausable Pt, CLIN; **BB** – Bloomingdale Bog, FRAN; **BRR** – Bull Rock Rd, ESSE; **BWB** – Bulwaga Bay, ESSE; **Chur** – Churubusco, CLIN; **CPSHS** – Crown Pt State Historic Site, ESSE; **CV** – Champlain Valley; **DB** – Dunn Bay, CLIN; **GBM** – Gilbert Brook Marina, CLIN; **HBO** – Hoisington Brook Outlet, ESSE; **HC10** – Hamilton Co. Rte 10, HAMI; **KB** – Kings Bay, CLIN; **KN** – Keene, ESSE; **LC** – Lake Champlain; **LCTM** – Lower La Chute Ticonderoga Marsh, ESSE; **Morr** – Morrisonville, CLIN; **MRP** – Malone Rec P, FRAN; **OPR** – Oregon Plains Rd, FRAN; **PB** – Plattsburgh Bay, CLIN; **SF** – Schuyler Falls, CLIN; **SL** – Saranac L, FRAN; **SRM** – Saranac Ri Mouth, CLIN; **TI** – Ticonderoga, ESSE; **WB** – Whallon Bay, ESSE; **WBR** – Whallons Bay Rd, ESSE; **WI** – Willsboro, ESSE; **WP** – Westport, ESSE; **WPt** – Willsboro Pt., ESSE; **XAB** – Old Air Force Base, CLIN.

Snow Goose: 8000 Point Au Roche, CLIN 18 Dec (AIB); 950 Rouses Pt, CLIN 20 Feb (SiR).

Cackling Goose: 2 MRP 8 Dec (StR).

Canada Goose: 300 KB 16 Feb (SiR).

Trumpeter Swan: 2 AP 13-28 Feb (DaR), scarce here, first R7 winter season record, *intro*.

Wood Duck: 2 LCTM 13 Feb (EGe), late.

Gadwall: 4 CPSHS 18 Jan (StR).

American Wigeon: Port Henry ESSE 8 Jan (StR).
American Black Duck: 21 WPt 11 Dec (DHR).
Northern Pintail: 4 DB 11 Jan (StR); WP 26 Jan (StR), late.
Green-winged Teal: TI 5 Feb (GaC) WP 18 Feb (GaC), late.
Canvasback: 7 CPSHS 1 Jan (GaC); 12 BWB 25 Jan (BMc).
Redhead: 18 AP 2 Jan (DHR).
Ring-necked Duck: 525 GBM 1 Dec (StR).
TUFTED DUCK (R7): rare but regular winter visitor on LC. AP 4-24 Jan (DaR), max 2 14 Jan, *intro*.
Greater Scaup: 3000 BWB 25 Jan (BMc).
Lesser Scaup: 4000 BWB 25 Jan (BMc).
Harlequin Duck: SRM 15 DEC (StR).
White-winged Scoter: CPSHS 2 Jan (AF).
Black Scoter: 2 MRP 9 Dec (JJ).
Long-tailed Duck: 3 CPSHS 10 Dec (StR).
Bufflehead: 34 AP 4 Feb (AmB).
Common Goldeneye: 250 AP 5 Feb (VR).
Barrow's Goldeneye: 5 Port Kent ESSE 2 Jan (DHR).
Common x Barrow's Goldeneye (hybrid): CPSHS 2 Jan (StR).
Hooded Merganser: 25 AP 22 Jan (PJJ, SSM).
Common Merganser: 805 KB 15 Dec (StR).
Red-breasted Merganser: 4 WPt 14 Jan (DHR).
Ruddy Duck: AP 2 Jan (DaR); 8 CPSHS 2 Jan (StR), WP 7 Feb (DC), late.
Wild Turkey: 75 WB 1 Dec (WS).
Ruffed Grouse: 3 Long I HAMI 20 Feb (JBr).
Ring-necked Pheasant: SF 8 Dec (EGr),
Pied-billed Grebe: WP 7 Feb (DC), late.
Horned Grebe: 14 Port Kent ESSE 1 Jan (GaC).
Red-necked Grebe: 3 WP 18 Feb (GaC), late.
American Coot: 1-4 CPSHS 30 Dec - 9 Jan.
Bonaparte's Gull: 4 AP 30 Dec (DHR), late.
COMMON GULL: HBO 10-19 Feb (StR, DHR, ph), **R7 first, intro**.
Herring Gull: max 2,000 Morr 11 Jan (DHR).
Iceland Gull: at least 10 inds: 9 CLIN, 1-2 ESSE; max 7 Morr 11 Jan (DHR).
Lesser Black-backed Gull: 1st cycle SRM 15 Dec (GaC); adult Wilcox Dock CLIN 24 Dec (LM).
SLATY-BACKED GULL: Morr 11 Jan (DHR, ph), **R7 first, intro**.
Glaucous Gull: 2 PB 2 Jan (StR).

Great Black-backed Gull: 20 Cadyville Beach CLIN 15 Dec (DHR).
Herring x Great Black-backed Gull (hybrid): Noblewood P ESSE 6 Jan (StR).

Double-crested Cormorant: 2 CPSHS 1 Jan (StR), late.

Great Blue Heron: SL 18 Dec (JS).

Black Vulture: 20 TI 8 Jan (GI&MC).
Turkey Vulture: TI 20 Dec (GaC).

Golden Eagle: KN 5 Dec (RH), *intro*.
Northern Harrier: Chazy Riverlands CLIN 7 Jan - 19 Feb; 2 WBR 18 Feb (StR).
Cooper's Hawk: 2 TI 29 Dec (StR).
Northern Goshawk: OPR 18 Dec (CV).
Bald Eagle: 4 Morr 11 Jan (DHR).
Red-shouldered Hawk: HC10 5 Dec (EF); WI 3 Jan (DHR).
Red-tailed Hawk: 5 Champlain CLIN 13 Jan.
Rough-legged Hawk: small number of reps in CLIN, ESSE & FRAN from traditional locs.

Eastern Screech-Owl: WBR 17 Dec (StR), only rep.
Great Horned Owl: Champlain CLIN 19 Feb (LH).
Snowy Owl: Wilcox Dock CLIN 4 Dec (DHR).
Barred Owl: 2 Paul Smiths FRAN 8 Jan (LV).
Short-eared Owl: 1-3 WBR 1 Dec - 26 Jan (mob); Uihlein Farm ESSE 21 Feb (K. Johnsen, ph), scarce outside of CV.
Northern Saw-whet Owl: 2 reps: BB 17 Jan (FM); Harrietstown FRAN 19 Feb (JS).

Belted Kingfisher: 5 reps all from LC.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: SL 10 Dec - 18 Jan (ED), scarce outside of CV.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: 1-2 BRR thru 26 Feb (GI&MC).
Black-backed Woodpecker: reps at traditional locs in ESSE & FRAN.

American Kestrel: 4-5 reps including KN 13 Dec - 22 Jan (DHR); scarce in winter outside of CV.

Merlin: 4 reps: AP 30 Dec - 22 Jan (DHR); Plattsburg CLIN 16 Jan (CM); Morr 18 Jan (DHR); HBO 15 Feb (BB).
Peregrine Falcon: 2 ESSE, 1-2 CLIN.

Northern Shrike: 6 ESSE & 2 FRAN.

Canada Jay: 2-9 BB 18-27 Feb (mob).

Fish Crow: KN 27 Jan (YL).
Common Raven: 19 Rte 458 FRAN 19 DEC (LD).

Boreal Chickadee: 3 Long L HAMI 12 Feb.
Tufted Titmouse: 3 SL 26 Dec (ED).

Horned Lark: 150 CPSHS 5 Feb (DHR).

Golden-crowned Kinglet: 1-3 Bigelow Rd FRAN 10 Jan - 9 Feb (mob).

Bohemian Waxwing: 75 Chur 15 Dec (SI); 200 New Russia ESSE 28 Jan (BT).
Cedar Waxwing: 40 KN Valley ESSE 9 Feb (MN).

Red-breasted Nuthatch: 8 Malone FRAN 20 Feb.

Brown Creeper: 10 Point au Roche CLIN (VA).

Winter Wren: Port Henry ESSE 2 Dec-20 Feb (StR).

Carolina Wren: Cumberland Head CLIN 1 Dec -28 Feb (NO).

Gray Catbird: CPSHS 22 Dec (StR).
Northern Mockingbird: XAB 5 Jan (StR).

Eastern Bluebird: 7 AMWMA 22 Jan (PJJ, SSM).

Evening Grosbeak: widespread: max 200 SL 16 Dec (JS); *intro*.

Pine Grosbeak: reps in all 4 counties; max 93 SL 20 Jan (TS); *intro*.

Purple Finch: 1 CLIN; 6 ESSE; 4 FRAN; 1 HAMI.

Common Redpoll: small numbers but w/reps in all 4 counties; max 35 Chur 6 Jan (SC).

Red Crossbill: max 12 BB 16 Jan (RH).

Pine Siskin: 40 FRAN 19 Feb (PS).

Lapland Longspur: reps restricted to CV: 3 Trimble Rd ESSE 19 Dec - 27 Jan (StR); max 4 TI 19 Dec - 5 Feb (StR, GaC); 2 Mace Chasm Rd ESSE 29 Jan (DHR).

Snow Bunting: max 200 Westville FRAN 20 Feb (StR).

Fox Sparrow: Indian L HAMI 27 Dec (MMo).

American Tree Sparrow: max 25 Shanahan Rd ESSE 19 Dec (StR).

White-crowned Sparrow: Lake Placid ESSE 4 Dec (CP).

White-throated Sparrow: 4 Wilcox Dock CLIN 1 Jan (CM).

Vesper Sparrow: Trimble Rd ESSE 19-22 Dec (StR).

Savannah Sparrow: 2 WB 1 Dec (WS); only rep.

Red-winged Blackbird: arr Essex ESSE 16 Feb (StR).

Brown-headed Cowbird: 23 Malone FRAN 29 Feb (CM).

Common Grackle: arr Essex ESSE 18 Feb (StR).