

## REGION 7 - ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

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Warm rain marked the start of the season, with Inlet 55°F and an inch of rain falling on Plattsburgh on 1 December. Inlet thermometers fell to -8° on the 8<sup>th</sup>. Lake Placid registered 42° on the sunny 12<sup>th</sup>, and the remainder of the month was mild, with pussy willows budded in Newcomb on 20 December and another inch of rainfall at Malone and Tupper Lake on the 28<sup>th</sup>. Early January was similarly mild, with Jay reaching 60° on the 6<sup>th</sup>. Plattsburgh saw 44° on the 13<sup>th</sup>,

the last January day above freezing, and by the 17<sup>th</sup> temperatures fell to -21° at Mt. Van Hoevenberg and Saranac Lake. The mercury continued downward, reaching -26° at Saranac Lake on the 25<sup>th</sup> and -29° by the 30<sup>th</sup>. Inlet recorded 13 days below zero from 11-31 January. February continued cold, with Saranac Lake a nippy -32° on the 13<sup>th</sup>. The next day saw the St. Valentine's Blizzard of '07, the second-greatest regional storm ever; short of the Blizzard of December 1969, but surpassing that of January 1934. Essex County saw the heaviest snowfall: 38" at Minerva and Witherbee, 37" on Whiteface Mt., and 36" at Elizabethtown. This Nor'easter was the greatest February storm and deepest 24-hour snowfall on record in the Region, closing the Northway, I-87, from Ticonderoga to Keeseville and placing Clinton, Essex, and Franklin counties under a State of Emergency travel ban. The fine snow blew and drifted in 30 mph gusts over the following week. The season closed with Plattsburgh a sunny 33° on the 28<sup>th</sup>, ending a month that had 18 days touch 0° or lower at Inlet. Lake Champlain stood at 97.62' at the start of the season, rose to 98.22' by 10 January, then fell to 96.60' by season's end, with the north and south ends frozen solid and a fresh layer of skim ice covering most of the broad lake.

The lack of snow cover and late formation of ice, even on inland lakes and ponds, continued the recent winter trend toward late waterfowl and a variety of half-hardy birds wintering in the North Country. The ground was bare for the Plattsburgh CBC on 17 December, bare at lower elevations and only an inch of snow in higher forests during the Elizabethtown CBC on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, and even by the 30<sup>th</sup> the late, higher-elevation Saranac Lake CBC saw snow depths of just 2" to 6". For the first time since 1973, no separate compilation for the NYS side of the Ferrisburg, VT/NY, count circle was available. Most of Lake Champlain and many inland waters remained open when the NYS Waterfowl Count was conducted between 13-16 January. These conditions undoubtedly contributed to the late county records for Snow Goose, Brant, Wood Duck, White-winged Scoter, Common Loon, Double-crested Cormorant, **five Common Moorhens** at LaChute River 17-18 January, **Hermit Thrush** at a Saranac Lake feeder 24-27 February, and even **Savannah Sparrow**, with a bird lingering on the shoreline of Whallon's Bay until 19 January.

The same mild conditions into mid-January may have also influenced some of the other rarities: a **Western Grebe** at Trembleau Point on 25 December, and probably the same grebe seen 15 miles to the south at Essex harbor a week later; **Cackling Goose** at Chazy and Essex into mid-January; a gray-phase **Gyr Falcon** at Cumberland Head on 11 February; a **Sandhill Crane** headed back north at Chazy Rivers on 12 December; a **Ruby-crowned Kinglet** on Hurricane Mt. on 23 December; and a **Gray Catbird** seen outside Elizabethtown on 23 December, with another heard on a back road of Lewis the same day.

The bird that attracted the greatest attention, however, was the **Yellow-throated Warbler** at Ausable Point Campground and State Beach, associating with a flock of chickadees and the odd woodpecker or nuthatch. The original discovery of this colorful warbler on 15-16 November seemed to generate little

interest, but its rediscovery on 16 December prompted a wave of almost daily visitors until the last sighting on 18 January, when temperatures at Plattsburgh ranged from 8° to 20°. Subsequent searches on 19 and 22 January were unsuccessful. The actual date of arrival is unknown, but this bird was present for at least 65 days, from 15 November until 18 January. As NYSARC recently commented (*The Kingbird* 56:3, p. 226) on **Yellow-throated Warbler**: “Two subspecies (*dominica* and *abilora*) are candidates to occur and several observers have made valiant attempts to assign subspecies. It may be that birds on the edge of the core breeding range exhibit a mix of characters confounding identification without having the bird in hand or exceptional photographs.” One regional expert opined of the Ausable Point warbler, “If I had to guess, I would say that this bird was a *dominica* and that it was a 1<sup>st</sup> winter male. If the latter is the case, this bird is different from the **Yellow-throated Warbler** sighted 25 May 2006 at Carpenter’s Flats.”

The greatest number of observers, judged by postings on Northern NY Birds, turned out to see Red and White-winged crossbills, which staged a moderately strong Adirondack winter invasion. Most searches centered on the Town of St. Armand, Essex County (hamlet of Bloomingdale and Bloomingdale Bog) and Town of Franklin, Franklin County (Bigelow, Oregon Plains, and Muzzy roads), and almost all were successful in finding not only crossbills, but also Gray Jay and Boreal Chickadee. One only wishes that the searches had been more widespread and systematic, to outline the true extent of this breeding invasion by both species of crossbills. As with other boreal birds, Spruce Grouse and American Three-toed Woodpecker perhaps the best examples, finding such rarities in a known locale can be time-saving, but adds little to our broader knowledge of range and status. In spite of the effort expended, no crossbill nests were reported.

The Christmas Bird Counts, NYS Bald Eagle Survey, NYS Waterfowl Count, and even the Great Backyard Bird Count generated useful data. The reports of Bald Eagle and Wild Turkey that follow reveal some recent banding and color-banding studies, while Horned Lark provides an opportunity to study subspecific characteristics. The total of 109 species reported established a three-way tie with the record winters of 2001-02 and 2005-06. Not included in the total is the report from a goose hunter of what appeared to be a 2<sup>nd</sup> year Northern Gannet plunge-diving at Chazy Rivers on 12 December, so a new record species count seems quite possible in some not-too-distant winter.

We note with great sorrow the loss of Dr. Lewis Heintz, 69, Professor Emeritus of Chemistry at SUNY Plattsburgh, on 10 February. Roger, as we all knew him, died at his Plattsburgh home after a long illness, cared for by his wife and partner Judy. A biochemist by profession, Roger was a stalwart field observer for Atlas 2000, covering countless remote blocks in Clinton County. He was also a participant in the original Bicknell’s Thrush survey, CBCs, the NYS Waterfowl Count, and a host of other citizen science projects in Region 7, and a regular contributor to these pages, including this issue. He and Judy shared

a NYS life list of 298 species by 2005 and the second-highest Clinton County list of 265 species. We extend our condolences to Judy and their four sons, Claude, Tony, James, and Steven, and to Roger's four grandchildren and other family members. Roger's quiet wit and humor and readiness to assist will be sorely missed.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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## ABBREVIATIONS

AMR - Akwesasne Mohawk Reserve; AP - Ausable Pt; BB - Bloomingdale Bog; CH - Cumberland Head; CR - Chazy Rivers; ECBC - Elizabethtown CBC 23 Dec; FB - Ferd's Bog; KB - King's Bay; MRP - Malone Rec Pk; NP - Noblewood Pk; PCBC - Plattsburgh CBC 17 Dec; PtR - Pt au Roche SP; SLCBC - Saranac L CBC 30 Dec; TL - Tupper L; WB - Whallon's Bay; WC - NYS Waterfowl Count 13-16 Jan; WD - Wilcox Dock.

### WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

**Snow Goose:** 1000s remained MRP 1 Dec (JT); max 15,000 Coopersville 9 Dec (BK,CM); 1500 Auger L 30 Dec; 20 Pok-o-Moonshine 17 Jan (GH); 120 CH 24 Jan (NO), late migrants; last 4 Pt Kent-PtR 3 Feb (TM), late ESSE.

**CAKCLING GOOSE:** Lake Shore Rd, Chazy 18 Dec (E&HF), smaller than Snows; Westport 13 Jan (GH,JP,RW), half size of Canadas, good finds; 2 T Chazy 14 Jan

(J&RH), smaller than Canadas, but reported as "Other/Unidentified" on WC.

**Canada Goose:** max 2000 Limekiln L 5 Dec (GL), new high HAMI.

**Brant:** 30 Inlet 28 Dec (GL), following Canadas, late HAMI.

**Mute Swan:** 4 Monty's Bay 4 Jan (JL).

**Wood Duck:** Seventh L 13 Jan (GL), late HAMI.

**Gadwall:** Essex harbor 13 Jan (GH,JP,RW), only report.

**Mallard:** leucistic f L Placid 3 Dec (LM).  
**Canvasback:** pr Essex 19 Feb (PO), only report.  
**Redhead:** 2 KB 3-12 Dec (BK,CM); f Essex 27 Jan (MDM); pr Pt Kent 4 Feb (E&HF), not often reported.  
**Ring-necked Duck:** max 59 Willsboro Bay 27 Jan (MDM).  
**White-winged Scoter:** 2 pr Indian L to 4 Dec (JT), late FRAN; Pt Kent 7-14 Jan (EF, J&PT).  
**Black Scoter:** KB 3 Dec (BK,CM).  
**Long-tailed Duck:** Plattsburgh from PCBC thru WC.  
**Bufflehead:** max 213 WC, new high total.  
**Barrow's Goldeneye:** WD 13-14 Dec (BK,CM), only report.  
**Com. Merganser:** m L Colby 7 Jan (TD), late inland.  
**Red-breasted Merganser:** PCBC; 2 WC, good finds.  
**Wild Turkey:** max 55 Inlet feeder 28 Feb, 7 banded 13 Feb, 3 banded 18 Feb (DEC,GL).  
**Com. Loon:** 2 Upper Saranac L 5 Dec (UW); Seventh L 1 Jan (GL), late HAMI; max 9 WC.  
**Horned Grebe:** max 25 Pt Kent, 16 NP 31 Dec (EKT).  
**Red-necked Grebe:** Westport 13 Jan (BM), only report.  
**WESTERN GREBE:** Trembleau Pt, Pt Kent 25 Dec (DCR, photo); Essex harbor 1 Jan (J&PT), 2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> ESSE records, if both are accepted by NYSARC, but undoubtedly the same grebe.  
**Double-crested Cormorant:** 2 Pt Henry 13 Jan (DMR,FR); Westport 14 Jan (J&PT), late ESSE.  
**Great Blue Heron:** KB 9 Dec; TL 12 Dec; CR 14 Dec; max 3 PCBC; Plattsburgh Bay 14 Jan (BK); Saranac L HS pond 14 Jan (LL); LaChute R 17 Jan (JC); AP 19 Jan (CF), all late.

**HAWKS - ALCIDS**

**Bald Eagle:** 11 leg bands read at TL deer carcass (JD), most banded in NYS.  
**N. Harrier:** Cook Rd, AMR 19 Dec (HW), late FRAN; ECBC; PCBC; Crown Pt 9 Feb (CW).  
**Rough-legged Hawk:** TL Marsh 18 Jan (CD), unusual in Adks.  
**Golden Eagle:** ad Azure Mt 18 Dec (JEC), only sighting.

**Merlin:** Essex 1 Jan (J&PT), scarce in winter.  
**Gyr Falcon:** gray-phase CH 11 Feb (MD), only sighting.  
**Peregrine Falcon:** pr L Placid 6 Jan (LM); pr Vermontville 7 Jan (TD), flew toward Whiteface Mt; Elizabethtown 20 & 27 Feb (J&PT); Palisades late Feb (*fide* EKT), a good winter showing.  
**COM. MOORHEN:** 5 LaChute R 17-18 Jan (JC), 1<sup>st</sup> Reg & ESSE winter record.  
**Am. Coot:** 1-4 WD 8 Dec-14 Jan (BK); 2 CR 9 Dec (BK,CM); max 6 WC, strong numbers here.  
**SANDHILL CRANE:** CR 12 Dec (BK), flying n, 3<sup>rd</sup> CLIN record.  
**Bonaparte's Gull:** PtR 5 Dec (BK), last report.

#### PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

**Snowy Owl:** CR 6 Dec (BK,CM)-17 Dec (D&TG), present from 15 Nov.  
**N. Saw-whet Owl:** SLCBC; Keene 31 Dec-late Jan; South Meadow 24 Jan; North Elba 25 Jan; Keene Valley 5 Feb; calling Newcomb 13 Feb, high winter number.  
**Belted Kingfisher:** ECBC; AP 27 Feb (MAMc), early CLIN.  
**Black-backed Woodpecker:** Boreas R; Craig Wood golf course; Indian L; Limekiln L; Newcomb; max 4 SLCBC.  
**N. Flicker:** Plattsburgh feeder 20 Jan (DL); Essex 18 Feb (EDT), scarce.

#### FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

**N. Shrike:** Essex; T Franklin; Jay; PCBC; Peru; 2 SLCBC; Witherbee; max 3 ECBC.  
**Gray Jay:** BB; Bloomingdale; T Franklin; Sabattis Bog; Sagamore; max 5 SLCBC.  
**Com. Raven:** 2 PCBC; 28 ECBC; max 122 SLCBC.  
**Horned Lark:** flocks Essex, Keeseville, Peru, PtR; max 60 AMR 29 Dec (HW); 50+ Dunn Rd, CLIN 20 Feb (BK,CM), mixed *E.a. alpestris* & *praticola*.  
**Boreal Chickadee:** BB; 3 ECBC; FB; T Franklin; Hopkins Mt.; Hurricane Mt.; Sagamore; max 13 SLCBC.  
**Tufted Titmouse:** AP; 3 Elizabethtown; 10 PCBC; Ticonderoga; 2 Witherbee; max 28 ECBC.  
**Carolina Wren:** ECBC; PCBC; CH 30 Dec, 2 Feb (NO); Ray Brook 3 Feb (NS); Essex 18 Feb (EDT); 2 Ticonderoga 16 Dec-23 Feb (NC), outstanding.

**RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET:** Trail to Hurricane Mt from south 23 Dec (JT), where reported by same observer 31 Dec '05.

**E. Bluebird:** max 4 PCBC, scarce.

**HERMIT THRUSH:** Saranac L feeder 24-27 Feb (FG, photo), late ESSE and only 4<sup>th</sup> winter record in county.

**Am. Robin:** Lyon Mt 28 Jan (PG), at 3000', temp 8°F; Hurricane Mt 7 Jan (J&PT); 2 Hopkins Mt 21 Jan, 3 Feb (DD), at 2,500'; Marcy Brook 24 Jan, 25 Feb (J&PT), feeding on mountain ash; 8 Phelps Mt 17 Feb (DD), flying overhead at 3,660'; max 60+ Essex 14 Jan (J&PT).

**GRAY CATBIRD:** Blood Hill Rd, Lewis 23 Dec (SP), heard only; County Rte 8, Elizabethtown 23 Dec (HS,EDT), 4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> ESSE winter records, both during ECBC.

**N. Mockingbird:** PCBC; Plattsburgh 20-29 Jan (CM), nice finds.

**Bohemian Waxwing:** 36 Willsboro 28 Dec (EDT), only report.

**Cedar Waxwing:** flocks of 2-30 Keene, Keene Valley, Saranac L, Westport, Willsboro, Willsboro Pt; max 94 PCBC.

#### WARBLERS

**YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER:** AP 17 Dec (JL)-18 Jan (BK), present from 15 Nov '06, believed to be 1<sup>st</sup> winter m of nominate *D.d. dominica*, 2<sup>nd</sup> CLIN & 4<sup>th</sup> Regional record.

#### TANAGERS - WEAVERS

**SAVANNAH SPARROW:** Albee & Lakeshore Rds, Essex 9 Jan (CF, photo), missing a few rectrices, late ESSE & Region 7 by more than a month.

**Song Sparrow:** 1 PCBC; Pt Kent feeder 22 Jan (DCR), only reports.

**White-throated Sparrow:** Keene feeder thru, singing 24 Feb, temp 10°F; Marcy Dam, elev. 2366' 3 Dec (J&PT); TL 3-5 Dec, 23 Jan (CD); PCBC; Plattsburgh 15 Jan (BK); Witherbee 18 Jan thru (CW), a good showing.

**Dark-eyed Junco:** max 215 SLCBC; L

Colden ranger cabin, elev. 2770' Feb (MH).

**Lapland Longspur:** CR 23 Jan (BK); PtR 28 Jan (DL,MAMc); max 30-50 PtR 3 Feb (TM,SO), record CLIN & Reg 7 and an outstanding number.

**Snow Bunting:** max 200-300 CR 9 Dec; 200 Peru 24 Jan (J&RH); 200 Essex 19 Feb (PO), numerous other reports of smaller flocks.

**Com. Grackle:** PCBC; Plattsburgh 19 Dec (CM); Ticonderoga 31 Dec (NC), rare in winter here.

**Brown-headed Cowbird:** PCBC; count wk SLCBC, unusually scarce.

**Purple Finch:** max 180 Bloomingdale 31 Dec (MY); 176 SLCBC, but only 2 ECBC & 3 PCBC, found mostly at higher elevations.

**House Finch:** max 92 PCBC; 4 ECBC; Ticonderoga, otherwise unreported.

**Red Crossbill:** max 8 BB 31 Dec (JB); other reports BB, Bloomingdale, Deer Pd, ECBC, T Franklin, Inlet, LL, Newcomb, Paul Smiths, Sagamore, SLCBC, some in pairs.

**White-winged Crossbill:** max 67 LL 17 Feb (JC); 62 SLCBC; other reports BB, Bloomingdale, Boreas R, Chubb R, Deer Pd, T Franklin, Halfway Brook, Hopkins Mt, Inlet, Newcomb, Paul Smiths, many singing males.

**Pine Siskin:** max 154 SLCBC; 150 Bloomingdale 31 Dec (MY), scattered at higher elevations.

**Am. Goldfinch:** max 872 SLCBC, count record; 800 Bloomingdale area 31 Dec (MY); 240 PCBC; 128 ECBC, widespread, but concentrated higher up.

**Evening Grosbeak:** 23 ECBC; 4 SLCBC; 2 PCBC, indicative of now typical low numbers.

#### ADDENDUM:

**Barrow's Goldeneye:** hen Raquette R at Palmer Brook, Harrietstown 6 Oct (NO), entire bill orange-yellow, viewed while canoeing between Axton Landing & Raquette Falls, 2<sup>nd</sup> FRAN record.