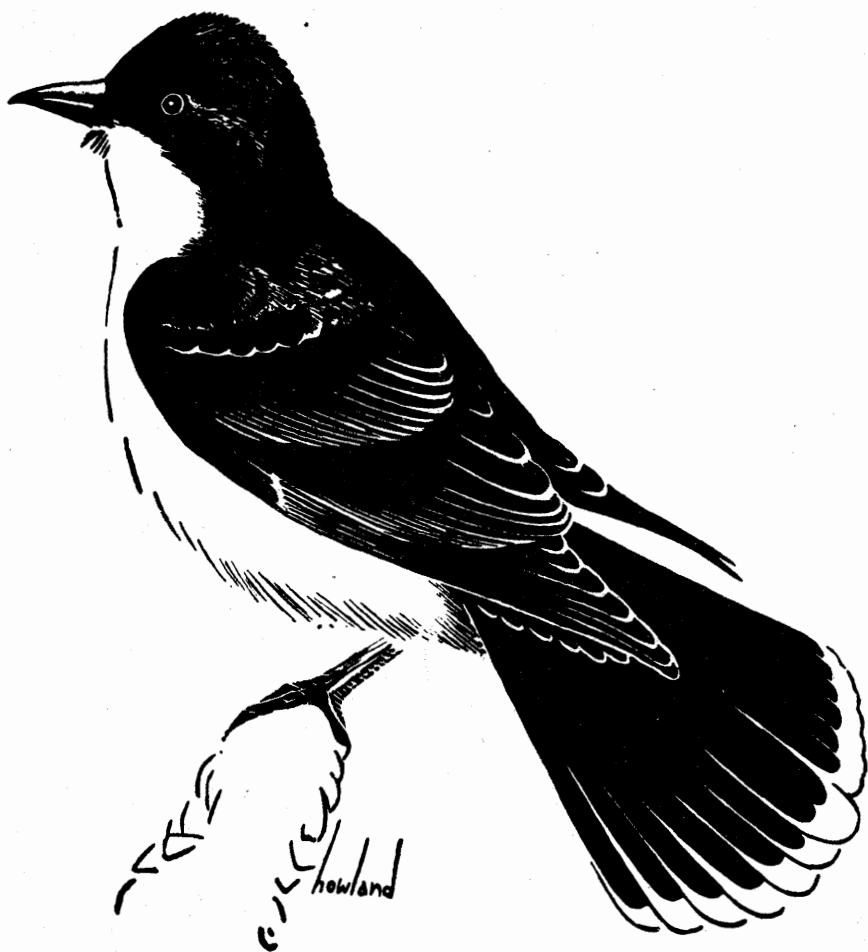


The **KINGBIRD**



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Highlights of the Winter Season

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Great Gray Owl

Depauville, N.Y.

Mike Hopiak, Laboratory of Ornithology, Cornell University

PEOPLE AND GREAT GRAY OWLS

MAXWELL C. WHEAT, JR.

The excitement that greeted some 250 Great Gray Owls that moved down into the Northeast last winter (40 of them in New York State) was accompanied by considerable criticism of the behavior of humans when rare birds show up—especially that of the birders who come by the hundreds. A restless concern in the birding community in recent years erupted with the arrival of the once-in-a-lifetime predators from the thick, dark, northern forests.

It burned across the three-column headline in the *New York Times* of February 12, 1979: "Birds and Environs Reported Harmed by Overzealous Throngs of Watchers." In the story's lead paragraph, reporter Bayard Webster said several ornithologists themselves agreed that the "tremendous growth in the numbers of American bird watchers in the last ten years has meant harm in many cases to both the birds and their habitats"

Webster continued that "Some overzealous bird watchers, in efforts to get a closer look at an avian visitor, have thrown objects at a rare owl to see it fly, played birdsong tapes that confuse birds and disrupt their normal activities, frightened birds by using flash cameras a few feet away from them, and trampled plants and damaged trees, often on private property."

He cited two examples that birders have talked about the last couple of years. One involved a Boreal Owl in Massachusetts. "It was lifted from its roost and had some feathers plucked out by a curious bird watcher," Webster wrote.

The other example involved a Great Gray Owl that was discovered about two years ago on a tree farm in Berkshire, Massachusetts. "It attracted droves of bird watchers who trampled the landowner's tree seedlings, knocked down some wooden fences and cut his barbed-wire fences in their efforts to find the bird. The owner was about to shoot the owl to get rid of the watchers, but the owl moved away in the nick of time."

Undoubtedly as a result of this syndicated article, Robert S. Arbib, Jr., Editor of *American Birds*, received calls from reporters as far away as California asking about the "harm" birders were causing. At this point he felt that this image of birder recklessness was spreading far beyond the bounds of actuality. "We get all the stories about the bad actors like someone pulling out feathers of a Boreal Owl," he

said. But with this year's Great Grays, he pointed out, "Everybody showed a good deal of restraint."

Arbib was talking about congregations of birders and members of the general public at many places where these owls appeared. Incomplete records at this writing indicate that New York State alone had one Great Gray Owl in the Rochester area, two around Oswego, 14 in the Watertown region, 17 in the Capital District, which covers Albany, Schenectady, Rensselaer and Saratoga counties, two north of that including one just off the Northway near the interchange for Plattsburgh, and two on Long Island.

Arbib was backed up by birding leaders and personnel of the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation everywhere in the State, when questioned by this writer. Both birders and members of the general public came off well. "We had no problems," said Senior DEC Wildlife Biologist Walton B. Sabin of Albany County.

Sabin's comment covered even a Great Gray that stationed itself in trees alongside the "Golden Arches" of a McDonald's fast-food store at a shopping center at Clifton Park in Saratoga County. It was checked out by both a DEC game officer and later by a state police patrol. The management of the store took the phone number of a birder to call if trouble arose. No call came in and the bird was reported to have stayed a couple of days.

Probably the worst incident involved a farmer near Depauville in Jefferson County who could not get into his field to spread manure because cars belonging to people watching a Great Gray were parked alongside the road blocking his way. This was reported by Edward "Ted" Smith, Senior Wildlife Biologist in the Watertown DEC office.

"There was at least one whole month of owl fever that affected birders and media alike," said Robert P. Yunick of Schenectady, one of the operators of the Dial-a-Bird telephone reporting service conducted by the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club for the Capital District. With all that, Yunick could say, "I know of no incidents causing ill feelings."

"Even though some birds were on private property," he said, "there was cooperation between viewers and landowners." For example, take the first Great Gray to come close enough to civilization to cause excitement, a bird "overseeing" a construction site at Rotterdam near Schenectady. Permission was obtained from the company for viewers to use its employee parking lot. This lot accommodated the 50 to 100 cars of the people who came for each of the few following days that the owl remained. It was reported to have been

watching the men work for a week before being reported to birders.

"We had no traffic problems. We're far enough away from New York for that," Yunick said. "The only action our club took was to report the sightings with Dial-a-Bird. . . other than for the reporting and verifying of reports that our club undertook, all other activities were conducted by individuals on an individual basis. We did not need traffic directors, negotiators, appeasers or whatever." He was referring to Lloyd Harbor on Long Island where traffic directors and negotiators were enlisted, but no "appeasers."

The Lloyd Harbor owl was discovered by David McNicholas as he drove off for work on the rainy morning of January 8. He saw crows harassing a "Great Horned Owl" in a tree except that there were no ear tufts. McNicholas hurried back home, checked his bird guides, noted the white "mustache" and black "goatee" and phoned his uncle, wildlife photographer Adrian Dignan of Freeport, "How would you like to see a Great Gray Owl?" Dignan immediately called Harry Darrow, a wildlife photographer in Westchester County. Later that morning, both men were on the scene taking the first pictures of this owl. The trek to Lloyd Harbor was on.

It was practically in Mrs. Sallie Ruppert's front yard. A former president of the Huntington Audubon Society, she is known for the bird rehabilitation center she operates at her home. She saw problems as did Thomas H. Davis of Woodhaven, who operates the Metropolitan area's Rare Bird Alert, sponsored by the Linnaean Society of New York and the National Audubon Society.

A look at Lloyd Harbor tells you why. It is located along an eight-mile, two-lane, winding road that runs from a main highway to the north shore on Long Island Sound, curves around a salt marsh and juts back inland into a wooded residential area before ending. Davis and Mrs. Ruppert envisioned a messy traffic snarl.

It is a community of spacious, high-income homes. There could be influential people, maybe even newspaper editors who could deliver plenty of publicity about birders trespassing and trampling their property. "I did not want to see birding hurt in my region," Davis said.

Then there was the safety of the bird itself. After all, at a top size of 33 inches, with a five-foot wing span, the Great Gray is the largest of the owls. Indeed, it even looks heavier than it is because of its unusually thick and fluffy plumage. It actually does not weigh much more than the 24-inch Barred Owl. Add to this conspicuousness the fact that it is a diurnal hunter because there are long periods of day-



*Great Gray Owl Watchers, Lloyd Harbor, N.Y.
January 14, 1979*

Thomas H. Davis

light in much of its natural range. Finally, as people learned this year with many of the owls, this bird does not readily retreat from humans unless some eager photographer inches too close. Even then the bird may only fly off to a nearby tree. It can be a sitting or slow-moving target.

Would crowds as well as media publicity attract someone eager to pull a trigger? Davis even questioned putting the bird on the RBA tape. Finally, he went ahead, but he phoned neighboring bird-report operators asking them not to advertise the bird. There was some irony here. They would all have an abundance of Great Graysto report soon.

Then Davis and Mrs. Ruppert went to the Lloyd Harbor police to advise them of the presence of a large owl that would transform their village into a birding Mecca that weekend. They encouraged the police to be generous with tickets for cars parked along the side of the road and Davis announced this fact on his tape.

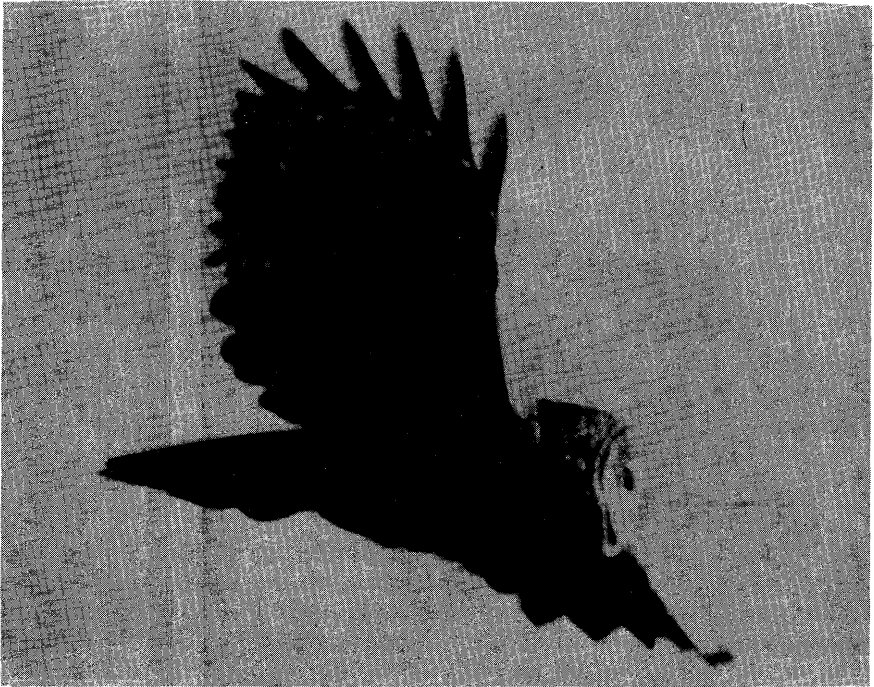
There was a break, as far as parking was concerned, in the two big parks in Lloyd Harbor, Caumsett State Park and Target Rock National Wildlife Refuge. Officials of both offered their parking areas. Mrs. Ruppert and William J. Kolodnicki enlisted a dozen volunteers to direct birding traffic to these parking fields and to operate "bird shuttles," driving people to and from the owl. They did this for three weekends, until the owl moved into the 1,475-acre Caumsett State Park and stayed there. This relieved the pressure. People then could only park there and walk, sometimes a long way, to see it.

The peak weekend for the Huntington club volunteers was the first one, particularly that Saturday when more than 200 persons came, according to Kolodnicki's estimate. There was some concern that day when birders tended to move out onto the salt marsh and trample it as they trained their binoculars and telescopes on a large oak near the edge, where the owl was perched. The only real trouble involved a teen-aged photographer who almost got next to the bird before Mrs. Ruppert yanked him away by the arm.

In the subsequent weeks, there were three traffic jams caused by cars parked opposite each other on both sides of the road. A fire engine could not have gotten through. Only then did police issue considerable numbers of summonses. Otherwise, they seemed reluctant to ticket the birders, Mrs. Ruppert said, although there were times when she and Davis were encouraging them to do so to relieve congestion.

During the early weeks, Davis leaned hard on observer discipline,

saying on one recording, for example, "The owl has been harassed on several occasions, especially by non-birders attracted by newspaper publicity" and "a number of birders from out-of-state descended on the area and blithely trespassed through private property and the adjacent salt marsh." It was these strong messages and the discussion they provoked that led to a *New York Times* article saying that the Rare Bird Alert "has stopped giving the exact location of uncommon birds sighted in local areas." Actually, this only happens when the rarity is on private property or a fragile environmental area, and this has long been the policy.



*Great Gray Owl in flight, Lloyd Harbor, N.Y.
January 1979* *David P. McNicholas*

With the relaxation in tension following the owl's taking up what amounted to permanent winter residence in the state park and the fact that nothing serious was happening to it, Davis in retrospect was able to see the experience positively. "There might have been some trespassing," he said referring to a time when the owl took itself to



*Salt Marsh, Lloyd Harbor, frequented by
Great Gray Owl during early part of stay.
January 1979* *Thomas H. Davis*

some trees on a side street. "The residents might have been temporarily angry. But they were proud that their street had been picked by the owl."

"To judge the impact of the Lloyd Harbor Great Gray Owl fairly, one must take into account the greater number and more widespread network of persons watching birds, the various 'Rare Bird Alert' telephone hotlines, and upgraded news-media coverage than existed even ten years ago," Davis wrote this writer. " 'Rare' birds are being discovered today in places seldom visited a decade ago—Rockland Lake, Portville, and the south end of Tupper Lake, to name a few. The Rare Bird Alerts enable information to be shared rapidly, and the media have begun to give birding intelligent coverage, which stimu-

lates increased public interest in our activity. A further factor was the 'mythological' nature of this bird, an owl, and the rarest and largest one at that.

"As the Editor of the New York Rare Bird Alert, I reacted to the Lloyd Harbor Great Gray Owl quite apprehensively, being well aware of the above factors. I sensed this report would excite as much attention locally as have Ross' Gull, Steller's Eider and others throughout the Northeast. My RBA announcements editorialized at length about exercising good manners and restraint in 'chasing' this bird. Newspaper stories reflected birders' concern for the bird's well-being and in not seeing it disturbed, while fueling public desire to also go and see 'The Owl.' In retrospect, I now believe I was more correct to say too much than too little, that visiting birders proved respectful to the owl and the local residents, and that the owl was not disturbed . . ."

If you could push all the expressions uttered by people seeing these owls into a hollow drum, then let the lid off, the joyous volume would lift the clouds out of the sky. "Oh, my goodness. Oh, oh, isn't that fantastic. Oh, I don't believe it," a woman kept saying on first seeing the Lloyd Harbor owl in a tree. "Magnificent. Really something," said 13 year-old David McWilliams who came one day with the Junior Audubon Club of Samoset Junior High School in Ronkonkoma, N.Y. It was the first wild owl for William Raybold, a new birder from Sellersville, Pennsylvania. He had come with six others in a van operated by Rick Mellon of Morrisville, Pennsylvania, who conducts weekend commercial tours to see rare birds and other wildlife. "I was just delighted. It was on my ten most wanted list," said John Ginaven who came three times from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, before finally seeing it. "When you first see him, you are overwhelmed by his presence," declared Kenneth McDermott of Newburgh, N.Y., President of the Edgar Mearns Bird Club, adding, "I can't believe it. I hate to leave him."

One can imagine the letdown these people would have felt if they had heard that on March 17, more than a month after the owl had last been recorded on February 10, a dead Great Gray Owl was found on the beach at Centerport, two miles from Lloyd Harbor. Mrs. Louise Marshall, who found it, turned it over to Mrs. Ruppert to keep until it could be autopsied. "It's sort of a sad ending," Mrs. Ruppert was quoted as saying in the story in *Newsday*. "He was the bird of the century. We thought he had long since flown north."

After the story appeared, Mrs. Ruppert received a call from Mrs. Ceil Stepanian whose property borders Caumsett State Park. She re-

ported a Great Gray Owl outside her window and that it had been there for days. When Mrs. Ruppert saw it she figured happily it had to be the old owl friend of Caumsett. As of this writing the "old friend" was last seen, in this case by Mrs. Stepanian, on March 28.

Not so fortunate were several of the other owls. They were picked up dead or injured. A number of these were shot. In North Lawrence, St. Lawrence Co., Norman F. Newtown, 59, paid \$27.50 in "civil compromise" after pleading guilty to shooting a Great Gray Owl. He faced a maximum fine of \$250 when he appeared before Town of Brasher Justice Jeremiah Mahoney. According to the newspaper account, the court settled for the lesser fine in hopes that the publicity would discourage Newtown from hunting owls in the future. To this writer it would seem that the modesty of the fine would offer little in the way of a deterrent.

Four or five dead Great Gray Owls had been brought to the DEC wildlife station at Delmar. Pathologist Ward Stone could not remember exactly how many and said he did not have the help to check and that he was too busy with an investigation.

As of this writing, two Great Gray Owls that had been shot seemed to be on the way to being released. One was at the facility of veterinarian Dr. Edward Becker of Guilderland, N.Y., and the other was at the home of Mrs. Marcia Kent, a bird rehabilitator in Berne. Mrs. Kent, who is employed as a dispatcher for the DEC, was making plans to have them relayed in flight cages up to the northern border for release. This would be done by having a conservation officer in one region transport them to a conservation officer in the adjoining region and so on.

Nobody blamed the widespread media publicity (the birds made it on television news programs in Schenectady, for example) for these shootings. In fact, it was generally accepted that the public attention involving the large numbers of people coming to see the birds may well have kept would-be killers from destroying more of them.

In conclusion, a restless question about birder conduct had reassuring answers. The public also earned high marks except for a few unfortunates who do not know how to enjoy life without destroying it. As Robert Arbib summed it up: "Relations between birders and local people were very good. Residents welcomed the birds. In fact, more people had their eyes opened to the wonders of the avian world."

333 Bedell St., Freeport, New York 11520

REPORT OF 1978 FEDERATION SPRING MIGRATION SURVEY

CHERYL BOISE and GORDON M. MEADE

The 1978 spring migration survey participants located a total of 283 species and two warbler hybrids. This total is higher by 12 than last year's survey but is still three short of the 1976 record high of 286. Thirty-two of the surveys were spread over the May 6-21 count period and a pelagic trip on June 3 was also included. Although several groups did not report the number of individuals participating in their counts, it is estimated that well over 600 people took part in the thorough coverage of the state, with a total of 29 groups reporting. The combined survey of the Genesee Ornithological Society and Rochester Birding Association again reported the most species (215). Other groups reporting very high counts were the Buffalo Ornithological Society (199) and the Onondaga Audubon Society (176).

Groups from more southern portions of the state reported an excellent migration of warblers, but migration seemed somewhat delayed in some northern counties. Nevertheless, many organizations continue to add species to their cumulative lists and set new high count totals for their areas. Seven additions were made to the state list which now stands at 310. The first Golden Eagle was reported by the G.O.S.-R.B.A. group which also reported the Sandhill Crane (a species which has shown a remarkable increase in numbers in the eastern part of its range in recent years) and a Thayer's Gull. The pelagic trips turned up new count species in Pomarine Jaeger, Arctic and Royal Terns. Finally, a female Wilson's Plover was seen and photographed on Staten Island, New York City.

As in past years, lingering winter residents added to the migration count total. Tree Sparrows and Fox Sparrows were noted again as was the first White-winged Crossbill since 1975.

Raptors were well reported, with Bald Eagles appearing in two areas and a Peregrine Falcon sighted in the Rochester area. Several other noteworthy sightings were made including a King Rail in Dutchess County, a first for the May count there; two groups reported the Purple Gallinule at Jamaica Bay. The count's second American Golden Plover came from Queens County, and a Hudsonian Godwit was reported for the second time by the Rochester groups. This was

a good year for gull sightings, with two Iceland Gulls appearing (one from Long Island and one from the Rochester area), a Glaucous Gull in the Rochester area, and a surprising Franklin's Gull in Orange County. Both three-toed woodpeckers were located this year. "Misses" included King and Common Eiders, Merlin, Spruce Grouse, Black Rail, Stilt Sandpiper, Red and Northern Phalaropes, Parasitic Jaeger, Gray Jay, Boreal Chickadee, Loggerhead Shrike, Yellow-throated and Kentucky Warblers, Western Meadowlark, Blue Grosbeak, Red Crossbill and Clay-colored Sparrow.

Probably the most significant "miss" was the Loggerhead Shrike, a species which has been disappearing from the state even during the short lifespan of this count, with only five individuals in five years in the entire state, and this year not even one was found. Another species which deserves concern is the Common Nighthawk which was reported on 16 of the 31 non-pelagic counts. This sighting frequency is a slight improvement from 1977 but numbers are still low. Sighting frequency of Vesper Sparrows declined further this year with only 13 of 31 groups reporting the species, and even those were very small numbers of this once common species.

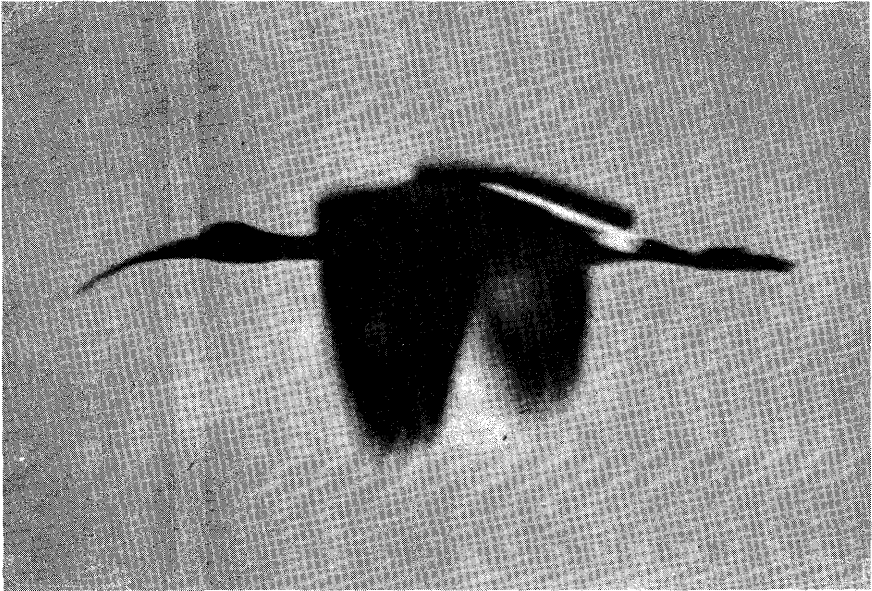
Several compilers commented on the heavy migrant waves, especially of warblers, on the nights of May 12 and 19th. In the Rochester area on May 13th veteran birders felt they had not seen such a flood of warblers in many years—"The trees and shrubs were alive with them." By the next day many had moved on. In Dutchess County there was a similar situation on the 13th.

The spring migration survey can help provide continued monitoring of the changing status of these and other species, including those with expanding ranges such as the Turkey, Mockingbird and House Finch.

Box 81153, College, Alaska 99708
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PHOTOGRAPHS OF NEW YORK STATE RARITIES
31. WHITE IBIS

THOMAS H. DAVIS



Immature White Ibis, Sands Point, Nassau Co., N.Y.
July 20, 1977 *Thomas H. Davis*

The White Ibis (*Eudocimus albus*) is chiefly a Neotropical bird, breeding north to coastal South Carolina, rarely to North Carolina (J. Bull, 1974. *Birds of New York State*. Doubleday/Natural History Press, Garden City, N.Y.). The species has been noted as a wanderer, north to southern Canada and prior to 1977 had been recorded five times in New York State, all from Long Island. Three of the New York records were in the early 1800's, an adult was seen October 25, 1969 at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, Queens Co., and an adult was observed in the company of Snowy Egrets March 29 to early April 1970 at the Oak Beach marsh, Suffolk Co. Another published report of an adult present for "2 days during mid-April" 1970 at Jamaica

Bay Wildlife Refuge lacks substantiation and should be disregarded (see *Kingbird* 20: 158).

In 1977 the species was found nesting in Virginia for the first time (see P. C. Frohring and R. A. Beck, 1978. *American Birds* 32: 126-128). An influx of 2000 immatures into the Battery Island Rookery, Southport, North Carolina in 1968 initiated a northward expansion, and by 1977 1500 pairs of White Ibises were nesting there, with 50 pairs further north near Morehead City. During the 1977 breeding season, adult White Ibises were reported at three Virginia locations but nesting was confirmed only at Fisherman's Island Wildlife Refuge.

Post-breeding dispersal by immature White Ibises was exceptional following the 1977 breeding season. At least one immature reached eastern Massachusetts, and P. A. Buckley *et al.* (*American Birds* 31: 1118) cite the following rough totals for the mid-Atlantic states, all immatures: New York—10, New Jersey—30, Pennsylvania—20, and Delaware—12.

My compilation of New York State White Ibises for 1977 was 11 immatures as follows: July 13-16 Teatown Lake, Westchester Co. (Phil Norman *et al.*); July 19-20 Sands Point, Nassau Co. (Glenn Quinn, Barbara Spencer *et al.*); up to seven birds July 16-August 17 feeding at Mt. Sinai harbor during the day, then flying several miles west to roost at a mixed heron colony at Stony Brook harbor, Suffolk Co. (Julius and Celia Hastings plus dozens of other observers); September 4 Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, Queens Co. (M. and H. Hopkins); and September 11 Montauk Point, Suffolk Co. (Jim Ash). The latter bird flew in off the ocean, circled the Point, then disappeared to the west.

Buckley *et al.* (*loc. cit.*) likened the recent pattern of expansion in the White Ibis to that of Glossy Ibis 20 years ago. He suggested that immature participants in 1977's post-breeding dispersal might return as breeding adults to the northern heron colonies which hosted roosting birds. That would be a pleasant prospect to look forward to!

9446-85 Road, Woodhaven, New York 11421

OBITUARY

S. Leroy Wilcox
October 9, 1899 – August 13, 1978

GILBERT S. RAYNOR

With the death of Roy Wilcox, New York State and particularly Long Island have lost a most experienced, dedicated and productive naturalist, a man admired and respected by his colleagues, an example and teacher to those younger or less experienced, and an effective interpreter of nature to the public. Fortunately, he went painlessly, victim of a sudden final heart attack following several lesser ones in the previous few years. He remained active and enthusiastic to the end, working on numerous projects and serving in many capacities. He is survived by his wife, the former Georgianna Robinson, whom he married in 1922, by two daughters, Janice (Mrs. Robert) Penney and Jean (Mrs. Emory) Tuttle, by a son, David, and by twelve grandchildren.

My association with him began over forty years ago. When he learned, in 1936, that a young fellow living some fifteen miles away was interested in birds, he immediately came to make my acquaintance, and shortly thereafter took me on the first of numerous field trips, a visit to the then unspoiled Hempstead Plains. The purpose of the trip was to determine if the Upland Sandpiper still bred there and, indeed, it did. We observed five or six adults, admired their flight maneuvers, listened to their mellow call notes and found a pair of downy young which were soon caught and banded. The Plains was full of breeding Bobolinks and Grasshopper Sparrows as well as more familiar species. The memories of that trip have not faded yet.

In the year or two that followed, Wilcox introduced me to various aspects of bird-banding such as how to make and use traps and how to weigh and measure captures, to the Christmas Count, to the journals, and to other phases of field ornithology. Although a very busy man, operating a large duck farm with little assistance, he always found time to help and encourage younger naturalists, as he himself had been helped by such men as Roy Latham, J. T. Nichols and Frank Overton.

Facts and figures cannot begin to describe Roy Wilcox's personality and accomplishments but they do serve as a framework in any account of his career. He spent over fifty years in active field work and

bird-banding. He took his first Christmas Count in 1926, and continued through this past winter. He became a bird-bander in 1927 and banded over 132,000 birds in his lifetime, mostly alone, but occasionally with an assistant. He joined the American Ornithologist's Union in 1927 and the Linnaean Society of New York in 1928. He later became a member of numerous other ornithological and natural history organizations, including the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs and both the Eastern and Northeastern Bird-Banding Associations.

He was a charter member of the Moriches Bay Audubon Society and guided the chapter from a small group of novices to the large and effective society it is today. Until his last year, he served continuously as field trip leader and, in this position, instructed, entertained and motivated hundreds of people who followed him on the monthly trips. He was also an active member of the Nature Conservancy and a steadfast supporter of conservation.

His early interests centered on the Osprey and the Common Tern and for many years he banded in the formerly magnificent Osprey colonies on Gardiner's Island and Orient Point. Many years were devoted to a study of the breeding biology of the Piping Plover, during which he banded 1723 individual birds between 1937 and 1957, all on the south shore of Long Island. He captured 1172 adults on their nests and obtained 425 returns of banded birds. The results of this study were published in *The Auk* in 1959. When the American Oystercatcher and later the Willet extended their breeding ranges to Long Island, he shifted his emphasis to these species. The extensive data he gathered have not been published, but one of his outstanding experiences in 1978 was retrapping, for the tenth year, a nesting oystercatcher he had banded as a chick in 1962.

Although a complete bibliography of his writings has not yet been compiled, they were numerous and appeared in many journals including *The Auk*, *The Kingbird*, *Bird-Banding*, *EBBA News*, the publications of the Linnaean Society and others. However, Roy's interests in nature were not confined to birds but extended to all aspects of the environment. He delved deeply into botany and studied insects, fish, mammals and other forms of life with the same intensity he displayed in his ornithological studies. He was an excellent photographer and his numerous slides were often shown to instill an appreciation of nature into diverse audiences.

But Roy was just as active in human affairs as in the world of na-

ture. He was a lifelong member of the Eastport Gospel Church and served as its Treasurer for much of his life. His historical and genealogical studies were pursued with great expenditure of time and effort and culminated with his publication on the history of Eastport and the genealogies contained therein. He was one of the most progressive and successful of the many duck farmers operating on Long Island, his success partially due to the advantages gained from studies of ornithology and game-breeding at Cornell under the late Arthur A. Allen and others. Last, but not least, Roy was a devoted husband and father.

Some of Roy's most evident qualities were his enthusiasm, his persistence, his integrity and his helpfulness to others. No one who came into contact with him could fail to notice his excitement and pleasure at some new discovery. Those who knew him best marvelled at his determination, his commitment to whatever task or goal he had set for himself. Examples are his lifelong studies of shore-birds, his desire to band as many birds as possible, his long years of historical and genealogical research and his unfortunately unfinished study of the natural history of Southampton Town. No one who knew Roy well ever doubted his word. When he made a statement, it was accepted as fact by the skeptical museum scientist as readily as by the beginning birdwatcher. He was, at all times, both a student and a teacher, always striving to learn more about the world around him, never concealing the fact that there were many things he had not yet learned but always eager to pass on the things he had learned to others.

As the final service was being held at the Eastport Cemetery, a Song Sparrow sang its lovely song several times, leaving those assembled there with the feeling that the world of nature was expressing its appreciation of his life even as we were. Although we all mourn his passing and miss his presence, we prefer to be thankful for his long and useful life with its many accomplishments and to remember, with appreciation, the many years he spent among us.

FEDERATION OF NEW YORK STATE BIRD CLUBS, INC.
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING
SEPTEMBER 22-24, 1978 — ROCHESTER, NEW YORK

Host Clubs: Burroughs-Audubon Nature Club, Genesee Ornithological Society,
Rochester Birding Association

Headquarters: Sheraton Airport Hotel

Minutes of the meeting of Council of Delegates—September 22 & 23, 1978.

In the absence of President Stephen Dempsey because of illness, Vice-President Alice Jones called the meeting to order at 2:15 P.M. Delegates from 24 member clubs answered the roll call. Mrs. Jones welcomed the delegates.

Richard Sloss made a motion that only the most important part of the minutes of last year's annual meeting be read for approval. Motion carried. Minutes read and approved. The complete minutes will be published at a later date.

Myrna Hemmerick gave the Membership Committee report. There are 630 paid individual members and 42 member clubs (only one club is delinquent in paying dues). Moraine Audubon Society is no longer functioning as a club. The Yonkers Audubon Society with 133 members was proposed for membership. Motion to accept was made and carried. The membership is now the highest it has ever been. A motion was made and carried to accept the report and to commend Dr. Gordon Meade for his work in increasing the membership. The Membership Committee report was filed with the Secretary.

John Forness read the Treasurer's report. Copies will be sent to all the members. Richard Sloss suggested that the Treasurer's report be sent to the delegates before the annual meeting. He emphasized that the names of the delegates should be sent to the Recording Secretary in advance of the annual meeting. Jerry Smith moved that if the name of the delegate was not known, the material relating to the agenda of the meeting be sent to the permanent representative. Motion passed.

Vice-President Jones commended John Forness for his work as Treasurer. Auditors have found the books in order and have signed the Treasurer's report. The Treasurer's report and the Auditor's report have been filed with the Recording Secretary.

The report of the Bibliography Committee from Sally Hoyt Spofford was read. She expressed appreciation to John Belknap, Allen Benton and Kenneth Parkes for their work on the Committee. She asked members to submit to the members of the Committee information on material relating to New York birds and birding, published in 1977.

Walton B. Sabin read the New York State Waterfowl Count Report. It will be published in the next issue of *The Kingbird*.

Ted Dittrich submitted *The Kingbird* circulation report. Approximately 800 copies are printed. The report was filed with the Recording Secretary.

Ed Reilly read the Breeding Bird Report. He suggested that from now on this report be called the Summer Bird Report and the time for conducting the breeding bird census be revised to cover the month of June. Many interesting questions can be answered by these reports. For instance, does the Yellow-bellied Sapsucker breed throughout the state?

Alice Jones read Stephen Dempsey's President's report.

Executive meetings were held on December 3, 1977, April 8 and July 8, 1978. New members of the Executive Committee are David Freeland, Harriet Marsi, and Mary Ann Sunderlin. Charles Smith is secretary of the Avian Records Committee. Karen Slotnik is the Conservation Chairman. Mrs. Jones expressed appreciation for the work of the Executive Committee.

Robert Arbib reported for the Publications and Research Committee. He urged that we try to increase subscriptions to *The Kingbird* because it is one of the best state journals in the United States or Canada.

Susan Drennan gave a report on the Birding Baedeker for New York State. She needs more write-ups from the Albany and Long Island areas. Robert Arbib is working with Houghton Mifflin of Boston on the possibility of their publishing the Baedeker. Proceeds would be shared by the Federation and Susan Drennan. Future projects may include an Atlas of Breeding Birds, similar to the one published in the British Isles.

The meeting was temporarily adjourned at 3:35 P.M.

The meeting was resumed on September 23rd at 9:15 A.M. Twenty-eight clubs answered the roll call. Gordon Meade gave the Spring Migration Survey report. Thirty clubs and four groups of individuals participated. In 1979 the survey will extend through the first week in June to accommodate the High Peaks Audubon Society because many species do not arrive in the Adirondacks until early in June. This year a total of 283 species and 2 hybrids was recorded. Rochester had the highest number of species (215) and the Ralph T. Waterman Club the most participants (157). Seven new species were found to bring the cumulative 5 year total to 310 species.

Paul DeBenedictis gave the Avian Records Committee report. Report forms will be available, but they are to be used as guidelines only. A model report may be seen in *American Birds*, September 1978. In 1979, *The Kingbird* will have a report from the NYSARC and will list the accepted and unaccepted records.

Gordon Meade urged that clubs send lists of newly-elected officers promptly to the Recording Secretary. Richard Sloss urged that all clubs elect permanent representatives to the Federation.

Mrs. Jones called on Dr. Allen Benton, chairman of the Nominating Committee, to present the list of new officers. He presented the following slate: President, Stephen B. Dempsey; Vice-President, Martin Borko; Corresponding Secretary, Harriet Marsi; Recording Secretary, Dee DeSimone; Treasurer, John W.

Forness. Motion was made and carried that one unanimous ballot be cast for these officers.

A motion was made and carried that Laurie Moon be chairman of the Nominating Committee. The other members would be Ed Reilly and John Gustafson; Allen Benton to be an advisor.

Richard Sloss moved that the Auditing Committee of Donald F. Clark and Irving Cantor be re-elected for next year. Motion carried.

Martin Borko, newly elected as Vice-President for 1979, conducted the rest of the meeting in the absence of Steve Dempsey.

Charles Smith gave a report on the Non-game Fish and Wildlife Conservation Act. Robert Arbib moved that a 200 word summary of the report be sent to the Department of Environmental Conservation. Ed Reilly asked that the complete report be sent to Peter Berle, D.E.C. Commissioner and that member clubs be urged to write to support the program. The Conservation Committee is to work with Charles on a mailing list. A summary will be printed in *New York Birders*.

A motion also was passed to have the Conservation Committee send a statement to our national legislators. John Gustafson pointed out that 100% of the money spent on bird seed is used for the benefit of wildlife. He suggested that the Committee oppose a tax on bird seed.

The 1979 meeting will be arranged by The Naturalists Club of Broome County. The tentative dates are September 21 through 23, 1979.

Neil Moon spoke on the problem of non-profit organizations owning land. Lands now used for conservation purposes are not tax exempt. The law exempts only land used for education. The organizations owning the land have to be recognized as educational organizations, or they will have to pay taxes on the land.

A motion was made and passed that the Conservation Committee prepare a resolution on behalf of the Federation to be sent to the Tax Commissioner and members of the legislature urging that land owned by non-profit organizations and used for conservation purposes be kept tax exempt.

A motion was also made and passed that the Federation support the Buffalo clubs in their effort to save the Times Beach area. Dave Freeland and Robert Andrie are authorized to speak for the Federation.

Robert Arbib was authorized to prepare a resolution expressing appreciation and thanks of all the delegates and clubs attending the meeting to the Rochester host clubs and the individual members of the committee for an excellent annual meeting, to be read at the banquet and a copy filed with the Secretary.

The meeting was adjourned at 11:00 A.M.

Dee F. DeSimone
Recording Secretary

NOTES AND OBSERVATIONS

Gadwall Mating Display: Nowadays, hardly anyone can emulate the leisurely studies that took Audubon throughout eastern North America in search of birds. But in spite of our limited periods of time devoted to bird study, we may make valuable contributions to ornithology. There must be a willingness to put on hold the headlong rush that takes us from county to county, and from state to state. Seeking the broad spectrum of bird life often blinds us to the details, and robs us of the time needed to ferret out the small wonders we may discover. These revelations, of habit or instinct, are so intimate and fleeting they can easily be missed. As in psychology, "everything means something"; and that maxim is relevant to bird study.

The above paragraph in no way deprecates the bird from the distant place, whose appearance stirs laggards and active bird watchers. But the almost mathematical certainty of rare birds being sighted each season should make these unique finds less astonishing. Of course, we all are excited by the alerts, especially when we have been first and can spread the news broadly. Recalling the far place the bird has wandered from, with a little imagination, adds a fillip to any birder's day. A blood-stirring sight helps us on the dull bird watching trips that are numerous between such events.

You may be assured that I had little of the foregoing in mind a few years ago when I recorded the incident that follows.

On a cool clear day, 16 Nov. 1975, I explored Spuyten Duyvil, on the north end of Manhattan. The usual land and water birds were present, as I walked to the end of the peninsula that separates the two coves, just west of the Columbia University boat house. At the end of the peninsula, facing west toward the Hudson River, the mouth of the curved cove held a small flock of ducks. It was a flock of eleven Gadwalls, about fifty yards from me. The count alone was unusual, for the species rarely numbered more than four or five birds in this locale. There were periods when the duck was absent for a year or more. When the bird was present it generally stayed until late April, giving false hopes of breeding. The Gadwalls were seen on occasion to fly toward Jerome Park Reservoir, where they were recorded at times. During the week previous and the week following, two birds were present at Spuyten Duyvil.

As I examined the flock, counting males and females, three birds, two drakes and a duck broke away from the balance of the group. As the female swam slowly toward the Harlem Ship Canal, the males followed at her flanks, nudging her as if to impede her passage. At this point, as the trio held their positions, the two males simultaneously fluffed out their head feathers into feathery balls, while opening their bills wide, revealing bright yellow mouth-linings. At the same time the wing feathers of the primaries and secondaries were compressed vertically, showing off the almost concealed speculum in flashing white, cinnamon

and black. Thus there was the puffy head, the yellow mouth-lining and the exposed colors and patterns of the speculum, presented to the female as a triple stimuli. The entire display lasted less than fifteen seconds. The males then reverted to the modest shape and pattern of the other males, and the three birds swam back to the flock.

When the Gadwall was first found breeding locally at Tobay Pond, Jones Beach, L.I. (1947), the birds were noted in nuptial flights around the pond and over the edge of the ocean. These pursuing flights were typical courting procedures. What other antics and postures were achieved on the ground and in the water, unfortunately were never watched. The land around the pond was not conducive to close observation, and the trips to the area were generally a week apart. No other evidence was sighted except the obvious flights above the nesting grounds. The shoving and nudging the males administer to the females, along with pecking and striking with the bill, preceding copulation, is well-documented. The actions described above appear to be a new, or rarely noted sexual display.

This fortuitous observation might never have been made if I had arrived minutes later, for though the birds were watched for a half an hour after the exhibition, nothing resembling the act was seen.

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WINTER SEASON

THOMAS H. DAVIS

Never before and perhaps never again in our lifetimes will New York birders experience an irruption of Great Gray Owls of the magnitude of this winter's invasion.

In 1974 John Bull (*Birds of New York State*, Doubleday/Natural History Press, Garden City) cited "nearly two dozen occurrences in the state," including two old Long Island specimens. During this winter season over 50 were noted throughout the state, two as far south as Long Island!

The focus of this irruption appeared to be to the southeast, with large numbers of Great Grays reported from western Ontario to New Brunswick, south along the coast to Long Island. Areas lying in the south "shadow" of the Great Lakes reported few owls. In New York, all but two of the Great Grays were reported from Regions 5-8 inclusive. The timing of this invasion was also interesting, with only two reports preceding January 23rd. Following this date, their numbers fairly exploded with new birds being reported throughout February into March. Widespread news media publicity was credited for generating many sightings from non-birders, although many of these reported "Gray Owls" proved to be Barred.

This irruption follows on the heels of a localized Great Gray flight last winter when they moved in large numbers from western Ontario into northern Minnesota. Kim Eckert of Duluth, Minnesota, termed this "spectacular influx . . . the 2nd greatest invasion in the state" (*American Birds* 32: 353-355, 1978). Two stragglers from this irruption reached Ottawa, and the vicinity of Lake Champlain, New York.

Bull (*loc. cit.*) stated that "very few ornithologists have ever seen a live wild Great Gray Owl in New York," 18 of the reports being "specimen records." I would now wager that a majority of currently active New York birders have seen at least one, and some as many as four in one day! None of the New York Great Grays was collected as a scientific specimen, but several lost their lives to a sometimes uncaring public and unfeeling motor vehicles. Many of the owls were described as "starving," ready to accept handouts (literally!) of live mice or dead squirrels.

An explanation of this winter's unprecedented Great Gray Owl flight will hopefully appear somewhere, sometime. It is interesting to note the numbers and distribution of other "northern" predators

this winter. Snowy Owls staged a modest flight but were outnumbered by Great Grays! The Boreal Owl, a rather secretive bird, appeared in December, February, and March at three scattered upstate locales. A Hawk Owl was noted in the Adirondacks, but the Gyrfalcon was lacking. Rough-legged Hawk numbers were unimpressive throughout the state, while Northern Shrike numbers swelled to near unprecedented totals in the southernmost regions. Our other northern visitors, "winter finches," were nearly nonexistent following last winter's excellent flight. A scattering of Bohemian Waxwings appeared in Regions 2, 6 and 8.

Region 10 Christmas Count totals of Tufted Titmice reflected last fall's unprecedented irruption. This was scarcely reflected elsewhere except for several birds at feeders in the eastern Adirondacks. Red-bellied Woodpecker, another southern invader, spread into New York on two fronts: up the Ohio River valley into the Western Tier and up the eastern seaboard into the Hudson River valley. The older Western-Tier population seems well established and healthy, perhaps still spreading further to the St. Lawrence Valley. The unstable New York City-Long Island population, subject to great fluctuations these past few years, now shows signs of establishing itself, numbers of Red-bellieds even wintered in most New York City parks. Yet another southerner, the Boat-tailed Grackle, has spread northward along the coast to central New Jersey in recent years, reflected in a scattering of individuals to Long Island. A *group* of Boat-taileds on western Long Island this winter raises hopes this species will breed in the not too distant future.

Feeder rarities were way below par: Gray Jay (Region 8), Varied Thrush (Regions 4 and 10), Yellow-headed Blackbird (Region 10), and Black-headed Grosbeak (Region 9). A total of 11 other *Pheucticus* grosbeaks were reported as Rose-breasteds, of which a "flock of 6" was deleted for lack of supporting details, and none of the remaining birds was substantiated by photography. A total of only four wintering *Pheucticus* grosbeaks seen by this writer over the years have all been Black-headed, which should not be taken to mean that the Rose-breasted never occurs. Most of this winter's birds were probably correctly identified, yet the separation of these species can be difficult and hybrids do occur. Selective collecting of specimens would serve to clarify their wintering status, while a conscious effort to photograph them would clarify the situation in large part.

Unprecedented seasonal occurrences were registered only in the

state's two southernmost regions: Long-billed Dowitcher, Ruff, Parasitic Jaeger, Western Kingbird, Swainson's Thrush, and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher.

A litany of rarities includes a Black Guillemot in the Finger Lakes Region, one of very few inland reports; a Harlequin Duck in Region 4, well away from its normal Great Lakes-Atlantic Ocean wintering habitat; the previously-reported Lesser Black-backed and California Gulls at Rockland Lake in Region 9; a Burrowing Owl wintering on the prairie-like habitat of JFK International Airport, Long Island, survived winter's worst in a man-made niche, a storm sewer pipe; and a Wheatear made a brief appearance on Staten Island. The BOTS award was unanimously awarded to the Great Gray Owl, the headliner of this report.

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REGION 1 – NIAGARA FRONTIER

VIVIAN MILLS PITZRICK

To appreciate the spring, one needs a bit of winter's chill—but why this excess for three consecutive winters? The season began reasonably enough with near normal December temperatures. Then those praying for a white Christmas overdid it and, along with much of the Southern Tier, were snowbound for the day by a record twenty-two to thirty-six inches. Although brief thaws and a few rains occurred during January, temperatures for the month averaged 4.2° F. (2.3° C.) below normal and precipitation was 2.5 inches (6.4 cm.) above the expected. A four to twenty-one inch snow cover persisted from early January through February, burying food and protecting the mouse and vole population as well as hampering birders. Between the bitter days of February 9th and 20th, temperatures dropped below 0° F. (-17.8° C.) every day except the 15th and broke the five-day record cold spell set in February 1899. In spite of warmer weather the final eight days of the month, bringing the average temperature up to 10° F. (5.6° C.) below normal, it was the coldest February this century except for 1934. Lake Erie reached the freezing point on January 4th, and by February 16th Lake Ontario was 70% ice covered—the most ice ever recorded here—and shortage of food sent waterfowl overland seeking open water. Miserable ice storms, especially during December and January, brought birds to feeders but caused power outages and hazardous road conditions.

Results of the State Waterfowl Census, conducted by the Department of Environmental Conservation January 4th to 19th, showed the fewest birds since

the beginning of the survey in 1949, with nearly 43% less than the previous thirty-year average. The low figures are consistent with the observations of many veteran birders, not just in relation to waterfowl but also as to numbers of birds generally for the season. These findings are surprising in view of the bounty of wild foods, such as grapes, white ash fruit, wild berries and sumac. As mentioned above, snow did bury food, and the scarcity of rabbits, noted during the fall, continued.

Positives for the winter include 1) more than usual Common Loons, a good December flight of Whistling Swans, Canada Geese coming or going *all season*, and an increase in scoter numbers; 2) fair numbers of accipiters, many at feeders; 3) a few more Ruffed Grouse and several small Turkey flocks apparently wintering well; 4) better reports of the Belted Kingfisher from northern parts of the Region and more than usual wintering Common Flickers; 5) Horned Larks doing fairly well; 6) an abundance of Blue Jays and Black-capped Chickadees and a widespread invasion of Red-breasted Nuthatches; 7) the Tufted Titmouse doing better and Mockingbirds holding their own; 8) numerous wintering robins near the Great Lakes, many Cedar Waxwings and a big invasion of the Northern Shrike; 9) an excellent wintering population of Purple Finches and American Goldfinches and continued spread of House Finches; and 10) many White-throated Sparrows present all season.

Winter negatives include 1) very little spring movement in late February; 2) low counts of Black Ducks, Redheads, scaups, Common Goldeneyes, Oldsquaws and Common Mergansers; 3) a very light Rough-legged Hawk flight and scarcity of Red-tailed and Marsh Hawks as well as fewer Am. Kestrels; 4) paucity of pheasants; 5) a poor Snowy Owl year, and near absence of Screech Owls; 6) a thinning population of the Belted Kingfisher in the Southern Tier; 7) no Winter Wrens, very few Carolinas and near absence of Golden-crowned Kinglets; 8) not many Eastern Meadowlarks and Brown-headed Cowbirds; 9) fewer Cardinals; 10) a poor northern finch year with even Evening Grosbeaks less plentiful; and 11) low counts for juncos and Snow Buntings.

Regional rarities rarely were so rare: Goshawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Red Phalarope, Black-headed Gull and Common Raven.

Abbreviations: ACBC—Allegany Co. Bird Club; BOS—Buffalo Ornithological Society; GMA or WMA—Game or Wildlife Management Area; NP or NS—Nature Preserve or Sanctuary; NWR—National Wildlife Refuge; Res—Reservoir; SF or SP—State Forest or Park.

Contributors: Robert Andrie, Esther Becker (EBe), Elizabeth Brooks, Doris Burton, Lou Burton, Donald Clark, Jane Clark, Ed Curtis (Weather Data, Wellsville), David Freeland, Helen Graves, Harland Hale, Matthew Hotchkiss, Sandra Hotchkiss, Doris Hurlburt, Clarence Klingensmith, Erma Larson, Katherine Palmer, Raymond Pitzrick, Vivian Pitzrick, Frances Rew, Ann Scott (ASc), Lillian Simons, James VanScoy, Regina VanScoy; and other helpful Observers: Patricia Andrie, Clarence Beal, Marion Bee, William Burton, Arthur R. Clark, Dorothy Danner, Frances DeGroff, Flora Elderkin, John Forness, Mary Forness (MFr), Marcya Foster, N. Krog, H. Link, Alice McKale, Willard McKale, Fred Meyer ("Bird Notes," *Olean Times Herald*), Mary Saville, Arthur Schaffner, Pauline Schwartz (PSc), Robert Schwartz (RSc), Robert Sundell, Joseph Thill, and Michael Zebehazy.

LOONS—DUCKS: Although scarce in winter for years, this season at least nine Com. Loons stayed on into early Dec., two at Chautauqua L. and seven in the Niagara R. area. Single Red-necked Grebes, helpless on land, were picked up Feb. 14 or 15 at Portville,

Olean, Belmont and Eden. The first two were taken to the Fornesses' rehabilitation center on Haskell Rd. near Cuba and later released on the Allegany R., and the Belmont bird was freed by Doris Burton on the Genesee R. near Belmont, both rivers having suitable open stretches. Reports of Great Blue Herons were scanty with only three birds noted for Dec. and two for Jan. Maxima of the Whistling Swan flight were 500 at Chautauqua L Dec. 3 and 85 over Cheektowaga Dec. 9. Canada Geese were seen regionwide all season with most reports during Jan. and highest count, 200 in Hume Jan. 8. The pair of Canadas at Farmersville Sta. have now spent three years with the Clarks. In general, the duck situation was discouraging and Black Ducks, in particular, were even more scarce than usual, the only reports being: on the Allegany R. from Portville to Vandalia, max 22 Dec. 26 through Feb. 12, and one on the Genesee R., two at Hume Jan. 3 and one at Transit Jan. 14. Other notable duck reports include: Gadwall, one at S. Buffalo Harbor Dec. 13 and five at Goat Is. Dec. 26, 30; Pintail, max 29 at Goat Is. Dec. 30; Green-winged Teal, max seven at Goat Is. Dec. 26, 30, one at Medina Dec. 27-28, and four at Niagara Falls Feb. 25; Am. Wigeon, one at Goat Is. Jan. 28; Wood Duck, one in Hume Jan. 15 (found dead three days later); Redhead, 15 totaled during the season from three Great Lakes areas; Lesser Scaup, max ten on L. Ontario shore Jan. 28; Com. Goldeneye, up to 14 wintering from late Dec. on the Allegany R. and eight from Feb. 5 through the season on the Genesee R.; White-winged Scoter, a max 100 at Ft. Niagara Feb. 24; Surf Scoter, one at Niagara Falls gorge Dec. 2; Ruddy Duck, 65 at Niagara Falls Res. Dec. 9, the only report but a good one; Hooded Merganser, regional max 200 at Mayville Dec. 3 and a single straggler at Dunkirk Harbor Jan. 14; Com. Merganser, no less than 33 feeding on open waters of the Genesee and Allegany Rivers in Scio, Amity, Hume and Portville-Vandalia areas from Jan. 23 through Feb., after the freezing of Lakes Erie and Ontario made fishing poor.

HAWKS—ALCIDS: The only **GOSHAWK** report for the season was one at Amherst Jan. 8-Feb. 18 (DF, Taheri+). The regional total of 16 Sharp-shinned and 20 Cooper's Hawks, usually single birds, was down slightly. Irregular in winter, single Red-shouldered Hawks appeared at Hamburg Dec. 28, at Perrysburg, Jan. 13 and in Eden Feb. 24, but even less common and very late was the **BROAD-WINGED HAWK** at Hamburg Dec. 30 (AM, WM). It was a wretched Rough-legged Hawk flight, numbering but 11 scattered birds, while the only Marsh Hawks reported were single individuals in Holland, Amity and Somerset. Although less than the thousands sometimes concentrating here, the 100 Am. Coots on Chautauqua L. Dec. 3 was the best winter count in four years.

A **RED PHALAROPE** was seen late at Youngstown Dec. 6 (AS) and another, probably the same bird, appeared at Fort Niagara Dec. 9 and 10 (DF, MF, RA+). Highlights from the delightfully exciting larid season, all from Niagara Falls gorge unless otherwise noted, include: Glaucous Gull, no less than seven during Dec.; Iceland Gull, one on Dec. 9 and one at Dunkirk Harbor Feb. 18; Great Black-backed Gull, max 79 on the Niagara R. Jan. 28; **BLACK-HEADED GULL**—very rare here—Dec. 2 (DF); Franklin's Gull, one on Dec. 2 and 3; Bonaparte's Gull, max 17,000 (!) on the Niagara R. Dec. 2 (DF+); and Little Gull, one at Niagara Falls Dec. 9 and four at Fort Niagara Jan. 28.

PIGEONS—WOODPECKERS: With the exception of the Great Horned Owl, owls were almost unreported. Interesting for the season were: Screech Owl, one in Amity Feb. 23 (MH), the only report; Snowy Owl, singles at Times Beach, Blasdell, Buffalo Harbor and Wheatfield; and Short-eared Owl, no less than five at Grand Is. irregularly Jan. 20-Feb. 11 (MF+). The Red-bellied Woodpecker is becoming better established in Lake Plains areas with two being seen at Medina Dec. 28, two at Hamburg Dec. 30 and singles at Derby Jan. 13 and Iroquois NWR Feb. 11. Uncommon in winter were single Red-headed Woodpeckers in Wellsville Jan. 28-30, at Busti Jan. 27 and in Yates Jan. 28. and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at Belmont Dec. 6.

FLYCATCHERS—STARLINGS: Although numbers of Horned Larks were down a bit compared with last winter, there is hope for them in max counts of 75 unidentified sub-

species in Sheldon Feb. 27, 48 *Eremophila alpestris alpestris* on the L. Ontario shore Jan. 28 and at Eden Feb. 28, and 12 *E. a. praticola* in the Somerset-Carlton area Feb. 24. Two COMMON RAVENS were identified at the entrance to Phillips Cr. SF near Alfred Dec. 20 (VP, RP) and one was found here again Jan. 5 (A. Klingensmith *vide* CK). For the season, nine scattered locations reported Tufted Titmice with a total of 15 birds. Belmont, Hume and Spring Brook noted single Carolina Wrens, and one or two Mockingbirds were seen at Orchard Park, Medina and on the L. Ontario shore. Single Gray Catbirds were at Middleport Dec. 1 and at S. Wales Dec. 2-28, and a Brown Thrasher was spotted at Spring Brook Dec. 31. Unusually large numbers of Am. Robins were seen throughout the winter in areas near the Great Lakes and four E. Bluebirds were found at Iroquois NWR Jan. 19 (Olsen). (We hope they made it through the rough weeks ahead of them.) Two E. Bluebirds arr at the Tonawanda Indian Reservation Feb. 24 (MZ). The total regional count of Golden-crowned Kinglets was a sorry 19 from only five locations, but Cedar Waxwings were found in better numbers than usual with max 250 at Holland Dec. 9.

VIREOS-WARBLEDERS: Only one Yellow-rumped Warbler was located for the season, at Buckhorn Is. SP Jan. 11 (Nutting).

WEAVERS-SPARROWS: E. Meadowlarks again were scarce with a total of ten birds noted from two areas, and Brown-headed Cowbird numbers also were low with regional max 20 at Cheektowaga Dec. 1-31. Although Evening Grosbeaks arrived as usual, flocks were smaller than common with max 75 at Limestone Feb. 13, and reported winter banding totals, 116 at Alfred Sta. (EB), 58 at Limestone (RV) and 23 at Farmersville Sta. (DC). House Finches continue to spread, reaching a max 92 in Eggertsville during Feb. (AM, WM) and three finding a new area near the Alfred-Almond school Dec. 3 (EB). The only Com. Redpolls for the season were ten at Stannards in early Jan. (HG) and two in Belmont Feb. 9-12 (Jordan *vide* DB). 14 Pine Siskins were counted from five areas. Notable sparrows include: a half dozen Rufous-sided Towhees wintering at feeders, a Field Sparrow at Beaver Meadow Jan. 6, a White-crowned Sparrow at Belmont Dec. 1-Jan. 1, and a Swamp Sparrow at Wilson Dec. 26. White-throated Sparrows were present in good numbers during Dec. and Jan., with a few reports for Feb., and max 70 birds at Irving Jan. 6. Unusually scarce were Lapland Longspurs with but 28 totaled from four areas, and Snow Buntings, too, were less common with regional max only 300 in Amity Feb. 8.

ADDENDUM: Results of the twelfth annual study of tower casualties from WGR-TV (Wales), WKBW-TV (Colden) and WIVB-TV (Colden) show a total of 359 birds (1397 in 1977) of 51 species (50 in 1977), the largest number, 168 birds, being found Sept. 22, 1978. High counts were: Blackpoll Warbler 44, Ovenbird 36, Swainson's Thrush 35, Red-eyed Vireo 25, Com. Yellowthroat 17, and 16 each of Gray-cheeked Thrush, Yellow-rumped Warbler and Bay-breasted Warbler. The count of individuals for 1978 is far below the 913 bird norm. A. R. Clark, compiler, reports that this year with one bird of each, the Olive-sided Flycatcher is new, the Least Bittern has been found once before, and the Pied-billed Grebe and Yellow-billed Cuckoo are only third records. (*The Prothonotary*, BOS publication, Vol. 44 No. 11, pp. 186 ff.)

Amity Lake, Belmont, New York 14813

REGION 2 - GENESEE

ROBERT SPAHN

Aside from a local feeder survey which reports numbers and variety of birds

stable to increased (after normalization of data for changes in numbers of observers) compared with the past three winters, all indicators pointed to a poor winter season for birding. Numbers of reports were down, as were numbers of species recorded, and, generally, numbers of individuals. In part, this reflects the drop in time spent afield by many observers when rarities are scarce. The local Christmas Bird Counts all tallied the same species count, 71, a new high for the relatively new Silver Lake area, a ten year low for Rochester, and a substantial drop for the Conesus/Hemlock Lakes area.

Once again, weather and its impact on birds and birders was a major influence in the records of this season. December, through Christmas, was very open and relatively mild. Most observers in the field and at feeders reported birds very scarce. For about ten days after the first major snowfall, 19 in. (48 cm.) on Dec. 24-25, there was a flurry of reports of wintering half-hardy species. Following the flush of New Year's listing and the annual waterfowl census the flow tapered off to near zero. From Christmas through late January every weekend saw snow, sleet, or rain. This certainly was a prime cause of the paucity of January reports after the first few days. At first, January's weather seemed torn between reaching for Spring and settling for Winter with alternating rain and snow, warm and cold, though averaging below normal temperatures. As the end of the month neared, Winter won and the daily snow showers gradually increased the general ground coverage. The first 18 days of February brought record cold day after day. Only a warm spell in the last week saved the month from an all time low average temperature status, second to 1934 by only 1° F. Lake Ontario within sight of land near Rochester froze except for a few open leads and outlets where warmed waters entered the lake. At worst, the lake coverage with ice was estimated at greater than 60% overall with the east end entirely frozen. As if this were not enough, freezing birders into their homes, the fantastic invasion of northern owls which failed to reach here pulled all those still active away on expeditions to Regions 5 and 6 or to Amherst Island, Ontario. Except for feeder reports and records to forward to other editors, February provided the least volume of records for many years.

Long-term trends are few this season. Among the most visible are decreases in Ring-necked Pheasants; Carolina Wrens, and locally wintering Red-breasted Mergansers and increases in House Finches, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, and Starlings wintering at the major local roost. Winter finches continue to follow their well-documented two and four year cycles with all virtually absent this year, following the presence of all last winter. In addition, there are several observations which bear noting for weighing against future records, though the nature of the fluctuation, long-term or cyclic, is not obvious: grebes were virtually absent, waterfowl were generally very low—was this "anticipation" of the near total freezing of the region's waters?, raptors were very scarce, gulls were low to absent at usual locations until near the season's end. Mockingbirds were again regularly reported from many widely scattered locations, Am. Robins were everywhere all season, Tree Sparrows were very low, and many half-hardy species were absent or scarce except for their sudden and brief appearance around January 1.

Rarities: Eared Grebe, Mute Swan, Harlequin Duck, Eastern Phoebe, Long-

billied Marsh Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Bohemian Waxwing, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, and Rufous-sided Towhee.

Abbreviations: BB—Braddock Bay State Park; CL—Conesus Lake; D—Durand-Eastman Park; H—Hamlin Beach State Park; IB—Irondequoit Bay; SB—Sodus Bay; and WL—west lakeshore area along Lake Ontario.

Observers: Sally Baumer, Nancy & Warren Boudrie, Carolyn Cass, Julie Claffey, Anne Clarridge, Roger Clark, Bill & Rhea Colzman, Jerry Czech, Mike Davids, Dan & Fritz Davis, Frank & Robert Dobson, Jim & Kay Doris, Art Eisenberg, Joan Esley, June Feder, Arlieen & John Foster, Dick Garnham, Genesee Ornithological Society, Kevin Griffith, Robert & Sandra Hazen, Norm Henderson, Øivind Jensen, Allen & Bea Kemnitzer, Bob & Jane Kesselring, Allan & Sandy Klonick, Steve Lauer, Jim Lenhard, Gerhard Leubner, David & Jane Levy, Walter Listman, Warren Lloyd, Hayward Madden, Peg Magee, Frank & Mary Mattei, Bob & Margaret McKinney, Gordon Meade, Hyde Miller, Ann Miranian, Jane Morris, Frank, Joyce, & Lon Myers, Richard O'Hara, Bernie Olin, Chip Perrigo, Mike & Tom Peter, Pat Reister, Rochester Birding Association, Marge Schmale, Allen Shea, Ann & Ray Shea, Chris Sheldon, Dominic Sherony, Jeanne & Sharon Skelly, Durward & Lillian Skiff, Robert & Susan Spahn, Ann Stear, Helen Steinhauser, Harriet Stride, Dan & Allan Strong, Mary Ann Sunderlin, Bill Symonds, Steve Taylor, David, Mike & Tom Tetlow, Syracuse Group: M. S. Rusk, C. G. Spies, C. G. Spies-Rusk, & E. A. Williams, Ann & Joe Watson, Eleanor Weld, Paul Weld, Kinsley Whittum, Munro Will, Alice Wood, Peter Zachmann, and Katherine Zarick.

LOONS—DUCKS: Loons followed normal patterns with few observed for the season. Peak counts were: Com. Loon: four CL Dec. 23; and four Canandaigua Lake Jan. 28; and Red-throated Loon: one WL Dec. 3. None were reported in February. The story was the same for grebes with isolated singles in the first two months. Notable records included: Red-necked Grebe: SB Jan. 1; EARED GREBE: SB Jan. 1 (M & RM); and Pied-billed Grebe: 10 Finger Lakes Dec. 23 (CBC); and four Canandaigua Lake Jan. 28. Heron records were scarce. By February even the Great Blue Herons had disappeared. A surprise was Am. Bittern: one BB Jan. 24 (NH). Waterfowl were generally notable for scarcity this season after late December. Most eastern species were recorded, often as singles or in very low numbers. Interesting reports include: MUTE SWAN: one imm. Pt. Breeze Dec. 6 (BS); one ad. Pultneyville Jan. 7 (WL, mob); and one ad. SB Feb. 3, 25 (mob), the latter two particularly tame; Whistling Swan: widely scattered records of one to three birds thru the season, one, an imm., retrieved from the ice at Pultneyville Jan. 14, only to die of its leg and wing injuries about ten days later at a rehabilitation center; Mallard: max 1600 Brighton Jan. 7 (CC); Black Duck: max 508 WL Dec. 5; Redhead: 2000+ Canandaigua Lake Jan. 15 (RO); Canvasback: max 178 CL Dec. 23; HARLEQUIN DUCK: one imm. male Lake Ontario, Greece Dec. 17 (RO); Black Scoter: five Webster Dec. 17; and Com. Merganser: max 5000+ Lake Ontario, Rochester Jan. 8.

HAWKS—ALCIDS: Accipiter reports were again typical of recent years. As one local group no longer records them as noteworthy, about one-half to three-quarters of the local records include: 12 Goshawk; 30 Sharp-shinned Hawk; and 23 Cooper's Hawk. Buteos were very scarce, particularly Rough-legged Hawk. Red-shouldered Hawk: one Brighton Dec. 17 (CBC), was an unexpected bonus. Marsh Hawk was virtually absent. Several observers reported Bald Eagle: one BB Dec. 12 (NH); one ad. Lake Ontario, Greece, Dec. 29 (*vide* RS); and one imm. Henrietta Feb. 22 (AE). Turkeys appear to be firmly established with: 24 Letchworth Park Dec. 16 (mob), and many seen there since. Rails were represented by the appearance of Virginia Rail: one Mendon Ponds Feb. 8 (KZ, mob), at a regular spot, but missed earlier; and by Am. Coot: max 275 Canandaigua Lake Jan. 28. Shorebirds too were scarce: Killdeer: four Rochester Dec. 17; Com. Snipe: two Penfield thru; three Genesee River Gorge Dec. 16; one CL Jan. 6; and two Mendon Feb. 11; and Purple Sandpiper: one Webster Dec. 12 (AK). Gulls were present in good numbers thru mid-December, then

dropped dramatically. "White-winged" gulls were few with only 10 Glaucous and two Iceland reported for the season. Great Black-backed Gull numbers were good early and late: 440 Rochester Dec. 17 (CBC); and 350 IB Feb. 25. Other good gull records were: Ring-billed Gull: max 25,482 Rochester (CBC); Bonaparte's Gull: max 2003 Rochester (CBC); and Little Gull: max 14 (13 ad., one imm.) IB & D Dec. 23 (AK), a new regional high; and one D Jan. 14 (CC, mob), late.

PIGEONS—WOODPECKERS: Though we missed the big invasion, owls are the news of this group. The November Snowy Owl invasion dropped to: one to four WL thru Dec. 19; one Kendall Jan. 1; and one IB Jan. 7-9. Other reports included: Barred Owl: one D Jan. 9 (ASH); Long-eared Owl: one Wyoming Valley Dec. 16; and Short-eared Owl: max three Avon thru, a location of usual concentration in recent years. An unusually high winter count was Com. Flicker: 13 Sodus Feb. 15 (WL1, DL, OJ). Among the scarcer winter woodpeckers, Red-headed was not reported at the usual Avon woodlot, but showed: five Leicester Dec. 16; one CL Dec. 23; and four Pt. Breeze Jan. 9; and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was noted: one Penfield Feb. 15-16.

FLYCATCHERS—STARLINGS: As usual, flycatchers were scarce, represented only by a brief visit during the Christmas storm by an **EASTERN PHOEBE**: one Webster Dec. 25 (RS). Carolina Wren continues at a low ebb with only five reports, including the CBC's. Rare in recent winters was **LONG-BILLED MARSH WREN**: one Mt. Morris Dec. 16 (WL1, mob); and one CL Dec. 23 (RC, BS). Mockingbird seems to be recovering with over 30 records for the season. Single wintering half-hardies were: Gray Catbird: Mendon Jan. 1; D Jan. 6; and Mendon Ponds Jan. 18; and Brown Thrasher: H Jan. 1 (MD). Am. Robin was a symbol of the season, everywhere all season. Flocks of 100-200 were periodically reported from widely scattered points in the Region. The usual single Hermit Thrushes were reported wintering with a max three D Jan. 18 (GOS). There was a lone **RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET**: Irondequoit Dec. 17 (DS, KW, RS). Among the flocks of Cedar Waxwings there were scattered reports of **BOHEMIAN WAXWING**: seven H Dec. 31 (F & RD); one Kendall Jan. 1 (RS); one Kendall Jan. 15 (NH); 1-3 H Jan. 8-15 (RC, BS, mob); one Greece Jan. 8 (J & RK); and two Greece Jan. 11-12 (J & RK). The CBC census of the Gates blackbird roost revealed another surge in numbers of Starlings: 800,000 Dec. 17 (JS).

WARBLERS—VIREOS: No reports. For the first time in many years, no Yellow-rumped Warblers were to be found in Mendon Ponds Park. This year the bayberry (myrtle) crop was very poor.

WEAVERS—SPARROWS: Records in this group were low. Wintering blackbirds were far down from usual numbers. A late Eastern Meadowlark was seen: Webster Dec. 26. Finches too were scarce with Evening Grosbeak the only "winter" finch in any numbers and then mostly in the hills south of Rochester. Interesting finch records include: a first regional winter record of **ROSE-BREADED GROSBEAK**: two, one imm. male and one ad. male, Greece Jan. 2-31 (MP, J & RK), erratically at several neighboring feeders, unfortunately never caught by photographers; continued increases in House Finch: max 90 Brighton Dec. 17 (CBC); and Purple Finch: max 100 Cumming Nature Center Feb. 15. Sparrows also were low, particularly Tree Sparrow. There were still interesting reports: **RUFIOUS-SIDED TOWHEE**: one Honeoye Dec. 23 (CBC); two H Dec. 29-Jan. 1 (KG, RS); and one H Jan. 6-12 (MD, MT); Field Sparrow: two Mendon Ponds Dec. 28 (DSh); one Greece Jan. 3-4 (J & RK); one H Dec. 12 (MT); and one Mendon Ponds Jan. 13-thru (mob); and White-crowned Sparrow: two H Dec. 31 (F & RD); and one Webster Jan. (A & BK). White-throated, Swamp, and Song Sparrows started the season in good numbers with a few yet present at season's end. Longspurs and buntings were scarce, too. The Snow Bunting max was 800 Kendall Jan. 26.

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REGION 3 – FINGER LAKES

W. E. BENNING

Winter started mild with little snow. Those who wanted a "white Christmas" got their wish. Christmas dawned with up to fifteen inches of the white stuff on the ground. Winter then set in with dead seriousness. Snow and below average temperatures, including some below zero days continued to January 20. Then the sun disappeared and it was eternally cloudy though mild. February brought the sun back but the temperature plummeted. From the 10th-20th it was below zero every day getting down into the minus twenties. The last week of the month was warmer with southerly breezes. Overall February averaged 11.3 degrees below normal at Ithaca. Cayuga Lake, except for a small area at Milliken Station, froze over but for a few days only.

The common question of the winter was "Where are the birds?" Hawks were rather scarce aside from some Sharp-shinned and Cooper's that took advantage of the concentration of small birds around feeders. Icterids were largely absent, especially after the Christmas snowstorm. Kinglets were very scarce. Some contributors mentioned a scarcity of Black-capped Chickadees, Cardinals, Dark-eyed Juncos and Tree Sparrows.

But there were compensations. This was the winter of the American Robin. Numerous flocks, some up to 100 birds, overwintered in several parts of the Region.

Eastern Bluebirds had their best winter in several years. A total of 80-100 individuals were found wintering in various parts of the Region. Five years ago Col. Morgan Jones, while stationed at the Seneca Army Depot, set up a bluebird box trail on the Depot grounds with considerable success. Since his departure two years ago, others have maintained the boxes. Could it be that the increase in overwintering bluebirds is the result of this effort?

Winter finches were a mixed bag, as usual. Evening Grosbeaks came in excellent numbers; Purple Finches, Common Redpolls and Pine Siskins in small numbers, only one report of Pine Grosbeaks and no crossbills.

The number one rarity of the period, and a first for the Region, has to be the Black Guillemot near Phelps, with the Gray Jay at Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge a close second.

Rarities: Glaucous Gull, Iceland Gull, Black Guillemot, Gray Jay, Water Pipit, Northern Oriole.

Abbreviations: Cay–Cayuga; CC–Christmas Count (Elmira Jan. 1, Geneva Dec. 30, Ithaca Jan. 1, Montezuma Jan. 1, Watkins Glen Dec. 30); Co–County; L–Lake; MNWR–Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge; Sen–Seneca; WFC–Waterfowl Count (Cayuga Lake Jan. 7 and 12, Elmira Jan. 14); * (starred)–details on file.

Contributors and compilers: W. E. Benning; Jack Brubaker (Watkins Glen); Vernon Dewey (MNWR); Bernice Hilfiker; William Howe; Wilfred Howard; Malcolm Lerch (Penn Yan); Dorothy McIroy (Ithaca); Mary Welles (Elmira).

LOONS—DUCKS: Com. Loon: numerous reports thru early Jan. One wintered at the south end of Sen. L. Red-necked Grebe: one Sheldrake Cay L. Feb. 4; two that crash landed were brought to the Laboratory of Ornithology Feb. 19. They were released on open water at Milliken Station. Horned Grebe: found in small numbers only thru the period. Pied-billed Grebe: three on Ithaca CC and three wintered at Watkins Glen. Great Blue Heron: several thru Dec. with one wintering at Elmira. Whistling Swan: one on the west side of Cay L. Jan. 16 and Feb. 7; two flying north over Milliken Station Feb. 22. Canada Goose: on Jan. 7 an estimated 18,000 with their backs covered with snow sat out a snowstorm on Cay L. south of Canoga. The following week many flocks were noted going south over Ithaca. Only a few hundred remained to winter. At Elmira a flock was seen going north on Feb. 13 during the sub-zero spell. Snow Goose: two blue and one white-phase birds were at Canoga Jan. 28; one at Phelps Dec. 6-11. Gadwall: 45 on Sen L. Geneva CC; 31 Cay L. WCC; 12-15 on Sen L. near Dresden during Feb. Pintail: two Cay L. WFC. Green-winged Teal: a single bird on the Elmira CC and WFC. Redhead: 1,200 on Keuka L. until it froze over in Jan.; 977 Cay L. WFC. Ring-necked Duck: one Ithaca CC. Canvasback: 60 Cay L. WFC. Com. Goldeneye: 133 Geneva CC; 150 Cay L. WFC; 100 Dresden during Feb. Oldsquaw: one Aurora Dec. 3. White-winged Scoter: female at Milliken Station Feb. 22. Ruddy Duck: three at Canoga Jan. 29; one at Watkins Glen Feb. 28. Com. Merganser: relatively few reported; maximum 31 Elmira CC.

HAWKS—ALCIDS: Goshawk: reported from Ithaca and Geneva during Dec. Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks: found principally around feeders throughout the winter. Eight Cooper's sighted on four CCs. Red-tailed Hawk: several observers commented on the relative scarcity of this species. Red-shouldered Hawk: only report was one at Ithaca Feb. 16 (R. Fischer *vide* DM). Rough-legged Hawk: light incursion with most reports from the southern part of the Region. Total of seven on the Ithaca and Elmira CCs. Marsh Hawk: one Penn Yan in Dec.; two Geneva CC. Am. Kestrel: lower counts on the Geneva, Ithaca and Montezuma CCs reinforce observers' comments about this bird. The Elmira CC was up. Ring-necked Pheasant: rapidly disappearing; only 19 reported on four CCs. Turkey: two toms at the Tompkins Co. airport in Feb.; a flock at Wellsburg and one at Horseheads. Am. Coot: more wintering each year at Watkins Glen with up to 80 in late Feb.; 112 Ithaca CC. Killdeer: two on Geneva CC; one South Lansing Jan. 7. Common Snipe: one Geneva CC. Am. Woodcock: arrived at Ithaca College Feb. 28. **GLAUCOUS GULL:** a second year bird at Watkins Glen Dec. 15-Feb. 25 (Straths *vide* JB). **ICELAND GULL:** a pure white bird at Myers Jan. 28 (Gooding & Melin) and an adult at Myers Feb. 3 (Guarnaccia & Lewis) both *vide* DM. Great Black-backed Gull: 23 Ithaca CC; up to 50 (high) along with 400 Herring and 50 Ring-billed Gulls at the Waterloo Dump Feb. 15. **BLACK GUILLEMOT:** a winter-plumaged bird seen by four observers on a pond at the Ditmer Boy Scout Camp south of Phelps Dec. 23 (Paris, Pepper, Mathew Trail & Joseph Braun)*.

PIGEONS—WOODPECKERS: Screech Owl: a gray phase bird was at a feeder on Ellis Hollow Road, Ithaca, at 9 A.M. on Feb. 9. Snowy Owl: a bird, probably a female, was seen feeding on a Canada Goose carcass on the ice on Cay L. near Canoga Feb. 13. Short-eared Owl: fewer reports this winter; two at Penn Yan in Dec.; two Geneva CC; one at Lansing Jan. 15 and at Ithaca Jan. 22. Saw-whet Owl: one Ithaca near where they were heard during the spring and summer. Belted Kingfisher: nine found on four CCs. Common Flicker: several observers thought it to be more common this winter; maximum 24 Ithaca CC. Pileated Woodpecker: seven on four CCs. Red-bellied Woodpecker: 61 on three CCs. Red-headed Woodpecker: singles at Clyde, Penn Yan and Second Milo; two at a feeder south of Phelps. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: one wintered at Penn Yan; singles on the Ithaca and Montezuma CCs; a male at Ithaca Jan. 8; singles at Trumansburg, Aurora Feb. 12 and Phelps Feb. 23.

FLYCATCHERS—STARLINGS: Horned Lark: while most observers reported very small numbers, the Geneva CC turned up 457, the second highest total for a count going back to

1901. Blue Jay: while some considered there were fewer, the Ithaca CC hit a high of 553 and four CCs totaled 1105. GRAY JAY: a single bird was well observed by the Refuge personnel at MNWR Feb. 20 (V. Dewey & G. Hocutt). Com. Raven: no reports from the Watkins-Monterey area where the species has been seen in recent years. Black-capped Chickadee: while the Elmira CC was down to 152 the Ithaca CC recorded a high of 1,260. Red-breasted Nuthatch: scarce; maximum five at Lettie Cook Memorial Forest, Union Springs, Nov. 10. Winter Wren: a single report from Penn Yan. Mockingbird: maximum 13 Ithaca CC with several at new locations. Brown Thrasher: one at Phelps Dec. 26-Jan. 2.

Am. Robin: widespread reports of large flocks overwintering; the warm southerly breezes of late Feb. brought out many robins as 100 plus at Penn Yan, 30 Etna Feb. 20, 47 MNWR Feb. 22 and many at Ithaca the same day. Hermit Thrush: one Elmira CC; one Ithaca Jan. 20; an emaciated bird with a broken leg was brought to the Laboratory of Ornithology Feb. 20 but did not survive. Eastern Bluebird: an unusual number of winter reports were received. At Penn Yan six reports of four to eight birds each; at Clyde six on Jan. 1; at Watkins Glen eight on the CC and a few in late Feb.; at Ithaca two on Jan. 7 and four on Jan. 11 and Feb. 5; at Elmira four on Jan. 14; at Seneca Falls six on Jan. 21; six near MNWR in Feb. and 30-35 wintering in the Guyanoga Valley. Kinglets: both species very scarce. One Golden-crowned was found at Ithaca Dec. 5, also one at Phelps Dec. 6 and 13, six on the Ithaca CC and one at Elmira Jan. 28. The Geneva CC turned up three Ruby-crowned. WATER PIPIT: very rarely found in the winter in Region 3 but two were located this year. One was on the beach of Keuka L. near Hammondsport the last week of Dec. and the first week of Jan. (ML). The other, for which a very detailed verification report was submitted, was at Horsheads Jan. 1 (Ostrander & Clements)*. Cedar Waxwing: high numbers in the southern part of the Region. Northern Shrike: a good flight well distributed over the Region. Starling: no large roost located at Ithaca this winter.

VIREOS-WARBLERS: Yellow-rumped Warbler: three Dittmer Dec. 6 and 13; nine Geneva CC; ten Ithaca CC. Com. Yellowthroat: one Montezuma CC.

WEAVERS-SPARROWS: NORTHERN ORIOLE: immature male at Cayuga Heights from Christmas to Jan. 17 (DM). Evening Grosbeak: a big flight year but, as usual, somewhat unevenly distributed over the Region with reports of 100 plus at some feeders. Ithaca CC had a high count of 1,253. Purple Finch: widely distributed in small numbers only but Ithaca CC had a high of 68. House Finch: continues to multiply; Ithaca CC jumped 400% to 453. Pine Grosbeak: four Elmira Jan. 28 only report. Com. Redpoll: 25 Ithaca CC; Elmira CC two; one at Ithaca feeder Feb. 18. Pine Siskin: 40 at Brooktondale feeder in early Dec. and 147 Geneva CC, otherwise scattered reports of a few individuals only. Am. Goldfinch: another good winter for this species with up to 45 at an Ithaca feeder. Crossbills: no reports of either species. Rufous-sided Towhee: two Geneva CC; one Ithaca CC; one at E. Sullivanville feeder all winter; one at Dilger feeder Ithaca Jan. and early Feb.; one Trumansburg early Feb. Tree Sparrow: down in numbers at some feeders and few large roadside flocks seen. Field Sparrow: one Phelps Dec. 22; two Geneva CC; one Elmira CC; six Montezuma CC; one to four at Dondaro feeder Ithaca from late Dec. thru the period. White-crowned Sparrow: one each on the Geneva and Montezuma CCs. White-throated Sparrow: 32 Geneva CC; 97 Ithaca CC; 24 Elmira CC. Swamp Sparrow: three Ithaca CC but none thereafter. Song Sparrow: usual small numbers totaling 97 on four CCs; 12-15 Phelps Feb. 17. Lapland Longspur: two reports of two to four birds at Penn Yan; one Geneva CC; four Lowman Feb. 8; four Seneca Co. Feb. 15. Snow Bunting: widely reported in flocks varying from a few individuals to 500 birds mostly from Seneca and Ontario Cos.

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REGION 4 – SUSQUEHANNA

LESLIE E. BEMONT

December remained mildly wintery, with the ground practically bare, until December 24 when 13 inches of damp, dense snow fell within just a few hours. That proved to be the heaviest single snowfall of the winter by far, even though precipitation during January totalled the highest on record for that month. January, after the first week, seemed to be one long January thaw with much of the precipitation in the form of rain. But in actuality temperatures were below freezing frequently, and enough of the precipitation was snow to maintain a constant, if sloppy, snow cover. Our real winter was concentrated in the second and third weeks of February when temperatures were seldom much above zero and frequently considerably below.

The one obvious bird activity-weather correlation was the movement of Canada Geese a day or so after the heavy Christmas Eve snowfall, presumably because their "grazing" areas had been covered. It seems likely that the spate of stranded grebes in the third week of February were simply north bound birds and were a small sample of a large movement. But they may have been retreating from shrunken open water areas to the north that resulted from the persistent intense cold.

There was a big increase in the number of feeder operators asking where all the birds were and tendency to believe that this meant that it was a bad year for all birds. Actually, on the Binghamton Christmas Count the number of species found was just about the average for the 27 years the count has been run and the number of individuals, dominated, of course, by Starlings, House Sparrows and, this year, Evening Grosbeaks, was the second highest ever, after last year. The discrepancy is apparently because, following several especially good years for variety, simply average is disappointing. But it is also true that the variety of winter finches, where many feeder expectations center, was actually down. There were no redpolls, essentially no siskins and Evening Grosbeaks, although very numerous, seem to become less and less dependent on feeders as the years go by. Non-feeder-frequenting winter finches were also scarce: few Pine Grosbeaks and no crossbills at all.

Icterids were almost entirely absent, after several years of good numbers, but there was one oriole. A group of nine flickers, all in one small area, also seems noteworthy.

On the plus side, titmice, Carolina Wrens and Mockingbirds are still with us, in spite of the past few harsh winters. The wren population may be somewhat precarious, which is in itself quite normal, but titmouse and Mockingbird populations seem quite healthy.

The rarities include a Varied Thrush, although they are coming close to being an annual event. The top rarity of the season was the Harlequin Duck that spent a month at Chenango Forks in very questionable company. This was the first record of the species in the Region in the 26 years records have been kept.

Contributors: Cutler & Jeanette Baldwin; William & David Bartlett (W, DB); Don Belmont; Jean Bennett; Reynolds Bennett; Bruce Bozdos; Ted Buckley; G. Carleton; Alvin & Helen Carpenter (A, HC); Warren & Gail Corderman; Anna & Marilyn Davis (A, MD); Warren & Louise Dean; Mary Dobsinsky; Sadie Dorber (SD); Dolores Elliot; Polly & Earl Getkin (P, EG); Claire Gottschall; John A. Gustafson (JAG); Betty Haverly (BH); Elva Hawken (EH); Lena Hevey; Elma Holway; Jim & Kathy Hoteling; Claude Howard; Babs Hinton; Spencer Hunt; Don Huntington; Albert Inman; Al & Harriet Johnson; Paul Kalka; Eugene Kirch; Jack Knapik (JK); Jo Koenig; Margaret Layton; Jay Lehman (JL); Arthur Levy (AL); Florence Linaberry; John & Janice Mangan; Harriet Marsi; Pete & Dorothy Martin (P, DM); Evelyn & Bud Mead; Mike & Kathy Medovitch; John & Helen New; Mrs. Edward Norwalk; Robert & Rita Pantle; Elsie Patterson; Booth Perkins; Kay Perkins; James Riley (JR); Jeanne & Robert Saunders; Jerry Shannon; Mary Sheffield (MS); James Shurtleff; Jeanne & Charles Spaulding; Jo Tuttle; Elizabeth Washburn (EW); Anne Whitaker; Ruth & Sally White (R, SW); Connie Wilkins; Kathryn Wilson; Tom & Beryl Wilson; Irene & Gerald Wright.

Abbreviations: Bing—Binghamton; BCC—Bing. Christmas Count, Dec. 31, 33 observers; CCC—Cortland Christmas Count Dec. 23, partial; DOCC—Delaware Otsego Christmas Count, Dec. 16, 12 observers; GCC—Greene Christmas Count, Jan. 1, 2 observers (W, DB); WFC—Waterfowl Census.

LOONS—DUCKS: Common Loon: Dec. 2. Candor; two Otsego Lake Dec. 15. Horned Grebe: one Cortland Feb. 19 and one Bing, Feb. 21, both stranded and transported to water. Red-necked Grebe: one Bing, Feb. 17, one Maine Feb. 20 and one Oneonta at about the same time—all stranded and transported to water. Great Blue Heron: one BCC; one Chenango Bridge Dec. 2 and 3; Dec. 30 Owego; one Willseyville Jan. 7. Canada Goose: three DOCC; about 150 Norwich Dec. 25, flying south; about 100 Endwell and 200 Cortland Dec. 26; also two reports from Owego in late Dec. Mallard: 160 CCC; 168 BCC; 104 WFC. Black Duck: ten CCC; 62 BCC; 3 WFC. Redhead: ten CCC; Feb. 19 Chenango Forks; no others. Scaup (sp?): two CCC; one female Otsego Lake Jan. 6 WFC. Common Goldeneye: 18 CCC; only eight on WFC. Bufflehead: one Chenango Forks Feb. 22. HARLEQUIN DUCK: one first-winter male at Chenango Forks with a flock of assorted hybrid barnyard ducks and some possibly wild Mallards—finally identified Feb. 19 (A, MD) although present from about Jan. 20—seen by many other observers and still present at the end of Feb. Common Merganser: two DOCC; three CCC; nine BCC; 86 WFC.

HAWKS—ALCIDS: Turkey Vulture: one between Chenango Forks and Greene Dec. 24 (EH, SD), unusually late. Goshawk: one GCC; Jan. 20 Choconut Center (MS); two sightings of adults Feb. 4 in Oxford-Bowman Lake area, possibly the same bird (JL). Sharp-shinned Hawk: one DOCC; two BCC; seven other reports. Cooper's Hawk: one DOCC; two BCC; one GCC; one frequently at Vestal in Dec. and Feb.; also reported from Owego, Cortland and Homer. Red-tailed Hawk: nine DOCC; three BCC; one GCC; five from Vestal to Greene Dec. 24; also the usual fairly frequent, but scattered, winter reports. Rough-legged Hawk: four DOCC; three GCC; other reports from Owego, Sherburne, Oneonta and Milford. Bald Eagle: one adult Hancock Jan. 13 (BH); two Cannonsville Reservoir Jan. 24 (EH, SD, EW). Marsh Hawk: one BCC; one Truxton Jan. 5; no others. Am. Kestrel: nine DOCC; ten BCC; two GCC; relatively scarce after the first week of Jan. Ruffed Grouse: 11 CCC; five BCC; two GCC; frequency of reports still up compared to the last few years. Ring-necked Pheasant: missed on all three available complete Christmas Counts, for the first time in 27 years on the BCC; regular at one Vestal site after Jan. 7; also scattered reports from Choconut Center, Vestal Center, Owego and Candor. Turkey: two GCC, 27 in the same area two days earlier; 18 Owego Jan. 18; four at Otselic around manure piles Feb. 3; 20 Hinman's Corners, n. of Bing., Feb. 5. Herring Gull: one DOCC; 13 CCC; 11 BCC; 15 Owego Dec. 16; other scattered reports, as usual.

PIGEONS—WOODPECKERS: Rock Dove: 65 DOCC; 573 BCC. Mourning Dove: 35 DOCC; 146 BCC; five GCC. Screech Owl: one BCC; no others. Great Horned Owl: three

DOCC; one CCC; 21 BCC; two GCC. Snowy Owl: one Oceanum, e. of Bing., Jan. 15 (JR), the only one reported. Barred Owl: one DOCC; one BCC; two GCC; two Chenango Bridge Dec. 3; one Oneonta Dec. 10; one Westford, in Otsego Co., Dec. 15; two Vestal Jan. 6. Short-eared Owl: one n. of Johnson City Dec. 18. Saw-whet Owl: one GCC. Belted Kingfisher: two DOCC; eight BCC; none after Jan. 6, except in Tioga Co. Common Flicker: nine BCC all in one small area; one Endwell Dec. 2 (JK); Jan. 22 Owego (P, DM). Pileated Woodpecker: one DOCC; one CCC; two BCC; one GCC; two other reports. Red-headed Woodpecker: one Feb. report Owego. Red-bellied Woodpecker: one at Solon, e. of Cortland, Jan. 10. Hairy Woodpecker: 17 DOCC; 20 BCC; two GCC. Downy Woodpecker: 16 DOCC; 59 BCC; six GCC.

FLYCATCHERS—STARLINGS: Horned Lark: Feb. 19 Owego, the only report. Blue Jay: 262 DOCC; 380 BCC; 40 GCC. Common Crow: 193 DOCC; 623 BCC; 273 GCC. Black-capped Chickadee: 269 DOCC; 476 BCC; 30 GCC. Tufted Titmouse: 15 BCC, only a third of the record high of last year but regular to intermittent reports from Chenango Forks, Chenango Bridge, Vestal, Apalachin and up to three Tioga Co. sites suggest numbers are not really down much; also reported from Vestal Center, Unadilla, McGraw and Homer. White-breasted Nuthatch: 29 DOCC; 53 BCC; two GCC. Red-breasted Nuthatch: one DOCC; two CCC; six BCC; three GCC; also at Owego, Sherburne and Candor. Brown Creeper: two DOCC; four BCC. Carolina Wren: three BCC; two at a feeder in e. Vestal all of Jan. and Feb. Mockingbird: seven BCC; one Freetown, Cortland Co., Dec. 26; reported from two different Tioga Co. sites in Jan.; also at Unadilla. **VARIED THRUSH:** one Greene Jan. 24 (W, DB), stayed only the one day, preventing other observers from seeing it—photos were disappointing, but one does show the prominent eye stripe. Am. Robin: one DOCC; 17 BCC; ten Choconut Center Dec. 23 and one daily at Candor until the end of Dec., then no more until Feb. 22 Chenango Forks. Golden-crowned Kinglet: 13 BCC; 20 GCC. Ruby-crowned Kinglet: Dec. 4 Chenango Forks. Cedar Waxwing: 13 DOCC; six CCC; 109 BCC; one GCC; scattered reports all season, 50 Apalachin Jan. 22, the best count. Northern Shrike: two DOCC; one GCC; eight other reports from Sherburne, Norwich, Oxford, Owego, Whitney Point, Choconut Center, Westford and Cortland. Starling: 534 DOCC; 3864 BCC; 53 GCC.

VIREOS—WARBLERS: none

WEAVERS—SPARROWS: House Sparrow: 387 DOCC; 882 BCC; 100 GCC. Eastern Meadowlark: Jan. 9 Owego, the only winter report. Red-winged Blackbird: two DOCC; none later until Feb. 26 Bing. **NORTHERN ORIOLE:** one Bing, Jan. 23 (AL), good look at about a four foot distance—around feeder but grape arbor with a few dried grapes on it nearby—went to a spot on the ground where a drier vent had melted off snow; presumably the same bird seen a few blocks away Jan. 27 (A, HC). Common Grackle: 12 CCC; one GCC; two Unadilla Dec. 17. Brown-headed Cowbird: one BCC; two Cortland Jan. 3, last date in the period. Cardinal: 21 DOCC; seven CCC; 163 BCC; five GCC. Evening Grosbeak: 427 DOCC; 20 CCC; 1034 BCC, the most ever; 75 GCC; particularly numerous from the second week of Jan. on. Purple Finch: 43 DOCC; 48 BCC; 11 GCC; numbers increased steadily as the winter wore on and seemed to be everywhere during the last three weeks of Feb. House Finch: 14 DOCC; 556 BCC; three GCC; also reported from Owego and Norwich; at Norwich singing and flock dispersal started during the second and third week of Feb. Pine Grosbeak: two BCC; at Stamford, in e. Delaware Co., Jan. 31 and thru Feb.; five Choconut Center Feb. 4; also reported in the Tyner area of Chenango Co. in Jan. Pine Siskin: ten BCC; one Unadilla Jan. 23; Owego Feb; that's all. Am. Goldfinch: 49 DOCC; 131 BCC; 23 GCC; a few almost everywhere but down from previous years. Dark-eyed Junco: 14 DOCC; 228 BCC; 15 GCC. Oregon Junco: one DeRuyter, Madison Co., Jan. 4; one Lockwood at the extreme west of Tioga Co., Jan. 15. Tree Sparrow: 25 DOCC; 431 BCC; 67 GCC. Field Sparrow: one Homer Dec. 23 (JAG); Jan. 11 thru 31 at Apalachin (P, EG); one Sherburne Nature Center feeder (R, SW). White-crowned Sparrow: one Chenango Bridge Dec. 4. White-throated Sparrow: two DOCC; 51 BCC; regular visitors at at least

three Triple Cities and two Owego feeders all winter. Song Sparrow: two DOCC; 41 BCC; heard singing at Unadilla Feb. 21. Snow Bunting: one flock of about 200 in Chenango Co. in Dec.; 75 in Gilbert Lake area, n. of Oneonta, Feb. 3; the only reports.

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REGION 5 – ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

GENE HUGGINS

Winter season in central New York was characterized by less snow by the end of the period than the previous two seasons, 93.4 inches compared to 150 inches in 1978 and 145.3 inches in 1977. However, record sub-zero temperatures from Feb. 10-18 erased any thoughts that we had a mild winter. The snow that accumulated remained on the ground with very little subsequent thawing, and what little open water remained became quickly frozen over by the end of the period.

The consensus, among those who went afield, was that birds were very few. Red-necked Grebes were forced down in different parts of Oneida Co. during February as a result of inclement weather. A great attrition in surface-feeding and diving ducks occurred. Common Mergansers continued to decline as a wintering bird for reasons not fully understood.

Raptors, especially Red-tailed and Rough-legged Hawks, declined in numbers toward the end of the period with the snow staying on the ground and prey becoming harder to obtain. Ruffed Grouse apparently are beginning to show an increase in numbers along the Lake Ontario plain as testified by one observer. Hopefully more observations will continue to verify this. Unfortunately Ring-necked Pheasants are doing the opposite, becoming nonexistent in rural areas. Not only the below freezing temperatures, but the closing of open dumps have hastened the decline in gulls along the Lake Ontario littoral with the exception of the Great Black-backed Gull.

Then came the Great Gray Owls in Oswego to lift the despondent bird-watcher's waning hopes—undoubtedly the first modern regional record for these spectacular birds.

Horned Larks continue to show a decline in the region, possibly a reflection of changing agricultural practices. Am. Robins were found in well-protected places that offered sufficient food throughout the Region, notably in Oswego Co. where they can be hard to find in the winter. Icterids were in the Region at the beginning of the season and then seemed to vanish with the start of the new year. A Rose-breasted Grosbeak made a very late appearance in Chittenango and lingered until Dec. 18th. Winter finches were very scarce, except for the ever-expanding population of House Finches, Evening Grosbeaks and Am. Goldfinches. Swamp and Song Sparrows which are normally present in favored locations during the winter were very hard to find at these same sites toward the end of February. In summation, bird populations were very thin.

Abbreviations: FH—Fair Haven; LOL—Lake Ontario Littoral; OsH—Oswego Harbor; SL—Skaneateles Lake.

Observers: Ben Burtt Feeder Survey (BBFS); Gerald Church (GC); Mr. & Mrs. DeSimone; members of Genesee Ornith. Society; Gene Huggins (GH); Kirkland Christmas Bird Count (KCBC); Bob Long; B. & S. Peebles; Marge S. Rusk (MSR); Fritz G. Scheider (FGS); Skaneateles Christmas Bird Count (SKCBC); Gerald A. Smith (GAS); Christian G. Spies (CGS); MacKenzie Stewart; Mandy Stooks; Syracuse Christmas Bird Count (SYCBC); Elba Van Dresar; Waterfowl Survey.

LOONS—DUCKS: Com. Loon: max. five on Jan. 6-14, SL (Waterfowl Survey); Red-necked Grebe: one on Dec. 18-21, OsH. (GAS), one on Feb. 19, Pompey Twp (CGS); six from Jan. 30-Feb. 28, diff. parts of Oneida Co. (DeSimones); Horned Grebe: max 13 LOL (Waterfowl Survey) Jan. 14; Pied-billed Grebe: one per day till Feb. 3; Double-crested Cormorant: one to two per day till Jan. 20, LOL (FGS, GAS); Great Blue Heron: one to two per day, last Feb. 2, s. Madison Co. (GC); MUTE SWAN: one adult from Feb. 10-18, OsH (mob), probably from Toronto pop.; Whistling Swan: six on Dec. 16 (SYCBC); Canada Goose: max 1,455 on Dec. 2, FH (MSR); Brant: one on Dec. 2, FH (FGS, CGS); Mallard: max 888 on Dec. 16 (SYCBC) to a max 70 on Feb. 28, Brewerton (FGS); Black Duck: max 17 on Dec. 16 (SYCBC) to a max six on Feb. 18, OsH (FGS); Gadwall: max 80 on Dec. 2, FH, last one on Feb. 18-24, OsH (FGS, MSR); Pintail: one to two per day till Feb. 13; Green-winged Teal: one female Dec. 30-Jan. 3, Brewerton (GAS); Am. Wigeon: max 29 on Dec. 2, last one Jan. 14, LOL (FGS); Northern Shoveler: nine from Dec. 9-16, Onon. L. (mob); Wood Duck: one to five per day, last a female Feb. 15 Brewerton (FGS); Redhead: max 54 on Dec. 16 (SYCBC) to two on Feb. 18, OsH (FGS); Ring-necked Duck: max 12 on Dec. 2, last one Jan. 14 LOL (FGS); Canvasback: max 210 on Dec. 2 to a max four on Feb. 28 LOL (FGS, MSR); Greater Scaup: max 800 on Jan. 27 to a max 100 on Feb. 24, LOL (MSR, FGS); Common Goldeneye: max 507 on Jan. 13 to a max 25 on Feb. 24 LOL (FGS, MSR); BARROW'S GOLDENEYE: two adult males, Feb. 15-18 OsH (mob); Bufflehead: max 90 on Feb. 3 to max ten on Feb. 24 OsH (FGS, MSR); Oldsquaw: max 50 on Dec. 24 to max 14 on Feb. 18 LOL (FGS); White-winged Scoter: one to three per day, Dec. 2-Feb. 18 LOL; Surf Scoter: one on Jan. 14-27, LOL; Common Scoter: one to five per day, Dec. 2-17 LOL; Ruddy Duck: max 42 on Dec. 9, last one Jan. 14 LOL; Hooded Merganser: max 30 on Dec. 2 FH to one on Feb. 18 OsH (MSR); Common Merganser: declining as a wintering bird, max 470 on Jan. 27 to 20 on Feb. 24 OsH; Red-breasted Merganser: max 11 on Dec. 2, FH, last one Feb. 18 OsH (FGS).

HAWKS—ALCIDS: Accipiters in low numbers, Goshawk: one on Dec. 16, 20, near Clinton (DeSimones); Sharp-shinned Hawk: one to three per day thru the period, total of nine observed; Cooper's Hawk: one to two per day, total of eight observed; Red-tailed Hawk: 12 to 20 per day thru Dec., Jan., eight to ten per day thru Feb. (GAS); Rough-legged Hawk: eight to 16 per day thru Dec., Jan., four to six per day thru Feb., Schroppel & Hastings Twns. (GAS); Marsh Hawk: a total of five for the Region thru early Dec., none afterwards; Am. Kestrel: max 22 per day on Dec. 16 (SYCBC); Ruffed Grouse: max ten on Dec. 24 LOL (FGS); Ring-necked Pheasant: max 19 on Dec. 16 (SYCBC), a total of 27 for the Region, continued decrease; Am. Coot: max 69 on Dec. 2, FH to a max three on Feb. 24 OsH (MSR); Killdeer: one to four per day early Dec. to mid-Jan.; Common Snipe: one on Dec. 20, DeWitt; Dunlin: a record late date for the Region, one Dec. 24 Nine Mile Pt. (FGS); Glaucous Gull: one to six per day from Dec. 16-Feb. 10 LOL (FGS); Iceland Gull: one to three per day from Jan. 11-Feb. 3, LOL & Oswego R.; Gr. Black-backed Gull: max 389 on Jan. 27, OsH (MSR); Herring Gull: max 5,300 on Feb. 3 to max 75 on Feb. 18 OsH; Ring-billed Gull: max 2000 on Jan. 14 to 70 on Feb. 10 OsH.

PIGEONS—WOODPECKERS: Mourning Dove: max 218 on Dec. 16, (SYCBC); Screech Owl: one to two per day, scarce; Great Horned Owl: one to three per day; Snowy Owl: a total of eight in Onon. & Oswego Cos. GREAT GRAY OWL: two birds Feb. 17 through

the end of period, Edward's Circle, Oswego (mob), 1st modern regional record; Barred Owl: one on Dec. 16, KCBC; no Short-eared Owls; Long-eared Owl: one on Dec. 16, (KCBC); Belted Kingfisher: max eight on Dec. 16 (SYCBC); Red-bellied Woodpecker: max eight on Jan. 1, Howland's Island (MSR), with one reported from Lacona (BBFS); Red-headed Woodpecker: one on Dec. 16 (KCBC) and one in West Winfield Feb. 14; Hairy Woodpecker: max 46 on Dec. 16 (KCBC); max 24 on the SYCBC; Downy Woodpecker: max 80 on Dec. 16 (KCBC), max 69 on the SYCBC.

FLYCATCHERS—STARLINGS: Horned Lark: max 35 on Feb. 28, Clinton (DeSimones), scarce; Blue Jay: max 67 per day on Jan. 27, Sangerfield (GH); Common Crow: max 327 on Dec. 16 (KCBC), no Derby Hill flights in Feb.; Black-capped Chickadee: max 366 on Dec. 16 (SYCBC); Tufted Titmouse: 10 for the Region with a first time pair in Holland Patent Dec. 9 (VanDresar); White-breasted Nuthatch: max 61 on Dec. 16 (KCBC), one to nine per day; Red-breasted Nuthatch: max eight on Dec. 16 (SYCBC), scarce; Brown Creeper: max 19 on Dec. 16 (KCBC); Winter Wren: one on Dec. 16 (MSR), no other wrens; Mockingbird: a total of ten in the Region, one at Pulaski Dec. (BBFS) marks a northward expansion; Am. Robin: unusually common with a max of 300-500 at Rice Creek Bio. Station, Oswego (GAS); Golden-crowned Kinglet: a total of seven for the Region, very scarce; Cedar Waxwing: max 333 on Dec. 16 (KCBC); No. Shrike: one to three per day, moderate flight.

WEAVERS—SPARROWS: Icterids extremely scarce; E. Meadowlark: three on Dec. 16 (KCBC); Red-winged Blackbird: one to two per day up to end of Dec., none afterwards; Rusty Blackbird: a total of three birds for the Region; Common Grackle: a total of four birds for the season up to mid-Dec.; Brown-headed Cowbird: a total of 14 birds up to Jan. 7; Cardinal: max 72 on Dec. 16 (SYCBC); **ROSE-BREADED GROSBEAK:** a single male Nov. 23-Dec. 18, Chittenango (MacKenzie Stewart); Evening Grosbeak: max 123 on Jan. 27 Brookfield (GH); Purple Finch: one to five per day thru the period, very low; House Finch: max 45 on Feb. 21, DeWitt (Bob Long), expanding; Pine Grosbeak: max 50 on Feb. 18, Starr Hill no. Oneida Co. (E. VanDresar) limited to perimeter of Adk's; Common Redpoll: one to two per day in scattered locations, very scarce; Pine Siskin: max 23 Feb. (BBFS), Pulaski, scarce; Am. Goldfinch: max 182 on Dec. 16 (KCBC); Rufous-sided Towhee: three in the Region from feeders at Jamesville, Pt. Pleasant and Clinton; Dark-eyed Junco: max 40 on Dec. 16 (SYCBC) to four on Feb. 7, Oakwood Cem. (MSR); Tree Sparrow: max 160 on Dec. 16 (SYCBC) to five on Feb. 10, Oswego & Scott Sw. (FGS); White-crowned Sparrow: one at a feeder Dec. 18-27, Oneida (B. & S. Peebles); White-throated Sparrow: max 45 on Dec. 16 (SYCBC) to one at the end of the period; Swamp Sparrow: one to two per day till mid-Dec.; Song Sparrow: max 42 on Dec. 16 (SYCBC) to one end of Feb.; Lapland Longspur: one on Dec. 7 LOL (FGS); Snow Bunting: max 200 on Jan. 27, Skyline Drive (E. VanDresar).

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REGION 6 — ST. LAWRENCE

LEE CHAMBERLAINE

Winter of 1978-79 started out on Christmas Eve. Up until that point, Fall carried through with cool temperatures and open waters. January was a wet, windy, snowy month with many false winter storm watches. Heavy squalls did occur in narrow bands across Jefferson and Lewis Counties. Freezing rains made

travel challenging, if not impossible. February was a cold, cold one, with unofficial temperatures of -60° F. at Barnes Corners, -38° F. at Henderson, and Watertown recorded an official -32° F. On February 23, the temperature was $+46^{\circ}$ F. and winter seemed over—at least for a while with the subzero spell broken. Snow depths were below last year's, but Tug Hill sections got their extremes of 50+ inches of snow and Adirondack sections reached 35+ inches.

Birding for the period started out with an excellent Christmas Census in Watertown, with new species and some unusual species. The Massena Christmas Count was also good. January was discouraging when winter finches did not show, raptors dropped and nothing unusual or rare was reported. Then it happened: the Great Gray Owl invasion and birder invasion which continued right through February despite the subzero weather. The increase of outside birders, newspaper coverage, and general interest brought forth other owl records and some excellent field observations. Perhaps, the owl outbreak fostered a keen competitive attitude. Highlights for the period were at least six Bald Eagles wintering along the St. Lawrence River and releases of more Turkeys in the Region in St. Lawrence County. Great Gray Owls—a total of about 28 individuals accounted for, which includes two dead specimens and one rehabilitated individual. Long-eared and Short-eared Owls also showed up, but no Boreal or Hawk Owls, which were visiting our Canadian friends—so close and yet so far away. A Red-bellied Woodpecker was seen and photographed in the Region and may now be added to two previous records, the last being 1968 by Dave Gordon. Mockingbird and House Finch on the Watertown Christmas Census and a few Bohemian Waxwings round out the period. Winter of 1978-79 will be long remembered as the year of the Great Gray Owl invasion. Many life lists added a species that the birder thought would never be obtained without a Canadian trip. Visitors to the Region found the trip worthwhile and provided the Region with excellent information in the way of field notes.

Contributors: Robert Basolt; Stewart Brown; Richard Brouse; Stuart Cameron; Lee Chamberlaine; Frank Clinch; Kenneth Crowell; Tim Dawson; John Franke; Dave Gordon; William Gordon; Dave Hurley; Warren Lloyd; Dot Nagle; John Rogers; Edward Smith; Robert Spahn; Joe VanRiet; Carlton Wakefield; Robert & June Walker; Louis Wallace; and John Wilson.

Abbreviations: MCC—Massena Christmas Count held on December 18, 1978; WCC—Watertown Christmas Count held on December 16, 1978.

LOONS—DUCKS: Horned Grebe: one WCC—late and unusual. Canada Goose: 350 WCC; 134 MCC; two St. Lawrence River Jan. 6—many remained until freeze-up. Mallard: one WCC; 30 MCC. Black Duck: two WCC; 65 MCC; 89 Jan. 6, down to 38 Feb. 24. Gadwall: one MCC. Redhead: three MCC; one the end of Feb. Canvasback: one Massena Hill Jan. 6. Greater Scaup: 4015 WCC; two MCC. Com. Goldeneye: 72 WCC; 297 MCC; 520 on Waterfowl Count Robert Moses Dam Jan. 6; 300 Massena area at end of period. Bufflehead: one male all winter Robert Moses Power Dam. Hooded Merganser: one male diving in No. Branch of Sandy Creek Feb. 19—unusual. Com. Merganser: 20 WCC; 5000 Robert Moses Dam; 553 MCC; 420 Robert Moses Dam, Jan. 6; 94 same Feb. 5; 44 same Feb. 19; 31 same Feb. 24. Red-breasted Merganser: four WCC near Chaumont.

HAWKS—ALCIDS: Goshawk: one MCC; one Stony Point Jan. 29; one Cape Vincent Feb. 3; one West Pierrepont Feb. 4; one Robert Moses Park Feb. 12; one Stony Point Feb. 18; one Henderson Feb. 24—numbers up? Sharp-shinned: none reported. Cooper's: one

Pierrepoint Feb. 5—at feeder. Red-tailed: eight WCC; three MCC; four Feb. 10; not in usual numbers. Rough-legged: seven WCC; two Chaumont Jan. 20; other singles but not in usual numbers—few dark phases. BALD EAGLE: at least six birds wintered along St. Lawrence River primarily between Chippewa Bay and Morrystown. Marsh Hawk: one Henderson Dec. 9—none thereafter. Am. Kestrel: eight WCC; one Jan. 20; one male seen eating a female Evening Grosbeak Henderson Feb. 2—seen again Feb. 5 and found headless grosbeak—other visits to feeder but no visual proof of kill (L. Chamberlaine). Ruffed Grouse: regular all winter—numbers up. Gray Partridge: eight WCC; one covey Snell Lock Area; six Sherwins Bay Jan. 1; seven Henderson Jan. 21—formerly seen at this location; five Woodville Jan. 27; ten Three Mile Bay Feb. 1; six Case Road Feb. 3; ten Depauville Feb. 4; four Pillar Point, four Chaumont and five Depauville all Feb. 10; four Point Peninsula Feb. 25; increasing birds or increasing birders? Turkey: still no proof of reproduction on Fort Drum releases; three male juveniles released near Pleasant Lake Town of Macomb. St. Lawrence Co.—hens were not available for transfer (L. Chamberlaine). Glaucous Gull: five MCC; 13 Jan. 3; 16 Jan. 6; 24 Jan. 14; two Feb. 5; none in the middle of Feb.—all in Massena. Iceland Gull: six MCC; four Jan. 3; eight Jan. 6; one Jan. 14; none in Feb.—all in Massena. Great Black-backed Gull: 14 WCC; 153 MCC; 161 Jan. 3; 206 Jan. 6; 120 Feb. 5; 42 Feb. 19; 32 Feb. 28. Herring Gull: 26 WCC; 404 MCC; 960 Jan. 6 down to one Feb. 28. Ring-billed Gull: 200 WCC; 40 MCC; gone by the middle of Jan.

PIGEONS—WOODPECKERS: Mourning Dove: thru period but in small numbers—six in Henderson all winter; 17 WCC. Screech Owl: one WCC; one MCC. Great Horned Owl: two WCC; two MCC; two Dry Hill, Jan. 20. Snowy Owl: regularly through period—many more than last year; one east of Rodman on Williams Road—Tug Hill Plateau, Dec. 28—not normally seen on Tug Hill—elevation $\pm 870'$ (D. Gordon). Barred Owl: one Pierrepoint Jan. 24 (K. Crowell)—seldom reported at any time of the year. GREAT GRAY OWL: listed by date, location and individual—an overwhelming list of about 28 individuals: first report Robert Moses State Park, Jan. 27-28 (J. VanRiet & B. Bond); one Jan. 28 (F. Clinch & W. Pesold)—probably same individual seen on Feb. 7. One shot at North Lawrence, St. Lawrence Co. Jan. 28 by N. Newton who was eventually fined—specimen was sent to New York State Museum—had been present in area for about two weeks; one Winthrop middle of Jan. (Mr. Stanka & Mrs. Streeter) present about one week; two at Depauville Jan. 30—first in Jefferson Co. (R. Brouse); three Depauville Jan. 31 (R. Walker); one at Depauville Feb. 1 and 2 (mob); four Depauville, Feb. 3 (Warren Lloyd); four Depauville Feb. 4 (F. Scheider & P. DeBenedictis); one Rogers Crossing Road outside Carthage Feb. 4—photograph in Watertown Times (Edward Hadley); two Depauville, Feb. 6—photograph in Times (T. Carrolan); one Snowshoe Road Town of Henderson Feb. 6 (J. Franke); one reported seen Jan. 9 Pierrepoint-South of Co. Route 101 between Plains Road and Howardsville Road (D. Hamelin)—did not realize what it was when he saw it; one Helena Feb. 7 and 8 called in by R. Cornell; three Depauville Feb. 7 (R. Walkers); one reported from Feb. 2 through Feb. 22 Merz Road Castorland Lewis Co.—seen catching mice and pictures taken (C. Wakefield); one Massena Springs Feb. 9 reported by R. Brownell—it could not be located in the afternoon—on Feb. 16 one owl was observed for 25 minutes four miles east by a M. Dempsey as owl caught a mouse—well described; one Louisville Feb. 9; one French Creek near Clayton Feb. 10 (J. Wilson); three Depauville Feb. 10 (R. Walker); one two miles south of Antwerp on Fort Drum—observed for 20 minutes or more Feb. 12 (Dave Hurley). The following reports were gained from Conservation Officers and occurred between late Jan. and Feb. 14: one owl each at Antwerp, Town of LeRay, Canton-Waterman Hill, Rutland-Middle Road, Three Mile Point, Colton and two birds at Cobsville Swamp near Adams; one Snowshoe Road Henderson Feb. 15 (R. Basolt & D. Riedman)—probably Franke's bird of Feb. 6; one Brick Chapel and Post Office Road Town of Canton St. Lawrence Co. Feb. 13 and 15 (J. Montan & W. Gordon); three at Depauville Feb. 17 (Ohio Birders); one Millens Bay Road two miles from Chaumont Feb. 19 (E. Smith); one road kill between Hammond and Oak Point in Town of Hammond St. Lawrence Co.—specimen to State Museum (John Rogers); one near

Fargo Jefferson Co. on Fort Drum, Feb. 28 (Richard Adams); Depauville birds thru with reports in next period. **LONG-EARED OWL**: one near Watertown on Parker Road Dec. 27 and 28 (Tim Dawson); one at dump on Point Peninsula near Three Mile Bay late Feb. (Lloyd Higgins). **SHORT-EARED OWL**: one WCC; one Parker Road Dec. 27 and 28. **Belted Kingfisher**: one Ogdensburg Bridge Jan. 6. **Pileated Woodpecker**: through. **Common Flicker**: one Robert Moses Park Feb. 11 (J. VanRiet). **RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER**: one adult in back yard feeding on cracked corn or sunflower seed in snow near feeder in Henderson Feb. 25—familiar with species—two years in Florida—two pictures taken—total time eight minutes (L. Chamberlaine). A bird seen on Amherst Island in Ontario on Feb. 22—very strong NW winds on that day when observation made—same bird? **Hairy**: 14 WCC; nine MCC; numbers still down in Henderson. **Downy**: 20 WCC; 11 MCC; some improvement in Henderson area.

FLYCATCHERS—STARLINGS: **Horned Lark**: seven WCC; one MCC; 12 Three Mile Point Feb. 17; four, Point Peninsula Feb. 25; numbers way down. **Gray Jay**: "have seen more than last year" South Colton and vicinity (L. Wallace); seldom any reports on this species. **Blue Jay**: 102 WCC; 105 MCC—numbers up? **Common Crow**: stayed late and returned early—more than usual wintered on Lake Ontario Plain. **Black-capped Chickadee**: 106 WCC; 133 MCC. **White-breasted Nuthatch**: 21 WCC; four MCC. **Red-breasted Nuthatch**: two WCC; one Brasher Center Feb. 1. **Brown Creeper**: two WCC no others reported for period. **MOCKINGBIRD**: one WCC at feeder through (D. Nagle). **Am. Robin**: one WCC; two Dry Hill Feb. 11; two all season Robert Moses Park. **BOHEMIAN WAXWING**: one mixed in with flock of Cedar Waxwings Jan. 31 (B. Bond); one Robert Moses Park Feb. 1 (J. Van Riet). **Cedar Waxwings**: 42 WCC; few in February. **Northern Shrike**: two WCC; four MCC; more than last year.

WEAVERS—SPARROWS: **Red-winged Blackbird**: one WCC; two MCC. **Brown-headed Cowbird**: six WCC; one immature Henderson Jan. 14, Feb. 4 and Feb. 18—until last winter (1977-78) five or six always wintered (L. Chamberlaine). **Cardinal**: three WCC; two in Henderson all winter; numbers down. **Evening Grosbeak**: 65 WCC; 474 MCC; daily through; one partial albino Dry Hill Jan. 10 (R. Walkers). **Purple Finch**: eight WCC; daily at feeder Dry Hill since Jan. 17; numbers down. **HOUSE FINCH**: two WCC. **Pine Grosbeak**: one Brasher Center Feb. 3; six Feb. 11; eight Feb. 13 and 14 (J. VanRiet)—only ones reported. **Common Redpoll**: 14 Robert Moses Park Dec. 21; two Dry Hill Feb. 9 and 11; four Dry Hill Feb. 10—very scarce. **Am. Goldfinch**: 36 WCC; 42 MCC; 20 daily Henderson through. **Dark-eyed Junco**: nine WCC; 1 MCC; **Tree Sparrow**: 115 WCC; 36 MCC; six Feb. 4—very scarce. **White-throated Sparrow**: 2 WCC; one Watertown feeder Jan. 22 and 27 and Feb. 25. **Song Sparrow**: one Jan. 27 at feeder. **Snow Bunting**: 172 WCC; 25 MCC; 12 Feb. 11, 8 Feb. 15, 1000 Pt. Peninsula Feb. 25—generally a poor year.

Box 139, Henderson, New York 13650

REGION 7 — ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

THEODORE MACK

This was apparently a reasonable winter for birds in this region. Snow cover was about two-and-a-half to three feet in the Paul Smiths area with less as you neared the more tropical (?) Champlain Valley which seemed to have perhaps six inches on the ground near Plattsburgh much of the time. The chief weather factor for the period was a bitter cold spell lasting about two weeks in February. January had some cold mornings with -25° F. at Paul Smiths on the twelfth, not

unusual for that month. Some temperatures for some of the days from Feb. 8 to the 18th were -23° F., -27° F., -38° F., -36° F., -42° F., -33° F., -38° F., and -45° F. at Paul Smiths. Some days the high in the afternoon was -10° F. Cross-country ski trips on some warmer weekend afternoons didn't prove very profitable birdwise since the mind was preoccupied with keeping on the go and the icicle on the nose was distracting.

In spite of the cold many individual birds were about if not a great many species. There were White-breasted Nuthatches in the hardwoods away from towns. This species would normally be absent in deep forests in the dead of winter. Black-capped Chickadees, Brown Creepers, Golden-crowned Kinglets, Hairy and Downy Woodpeckers were also in generous numbers. The woods were not silent as they can be some winters. My only conjecture about the unusual presence of insectivorous birdlife this winter is that these birds may be favored by cold weather snow. Sticky snow freezes on and covers food. Our snow this year has been cold and easily swept from trees by the winds so that even the evergreens have been rather free of moisture while the hardwoods have been even more exposed to search by avian insect-predators.

Chickadees are opportunists. Each fall the eaves of my house play host to a large population of rather frightening orb-weaving spiders. These creatures gain in size until they lay their egg mass at which time they shrink to non-frightening proportions, or to rephrase it, to a more chickadee bite size. On several sunny January afternoons many sluggish spider ladies were moving about and one was actually half-heartedly working at the main lines of a web-to-be. On these days bands of Black-capped Chickadees patrolled my eaves with individuals hovering as they checked all the roof overhangs as well as the front and back porches and the firewood on the porch. They were seen taking spiders.

This is a difficult season for people to generate much enthusiasm for birding but a few good finds were made. Probably several regions will report Great Gray Owls. One cross-country skier in Michigan saw three of these owls in one afternoon in his state. Our Region had at least one. Essex Center, Vermont, was blessed with a Hawk Owl that stayed several weeks so people could see that there really was such a bird. A Hawk Owl reported in our Region was not so cooperative. The Saranac Lake Christmas Count recorded a Northern Three-toed Woodpecker. Considering the weather and the loss of vacation birders there was quite a bit of activity.

Contributors: Charlcie Delehanty; John David Delehanty; Robert Gillis; Bob Hagar; B. Logan; Ted Mack; Margaret & Bob McKinney; JoAnn Marshall; Charles Mitchell; Ray Payson; Bob Rottner; Bill Rutherford; Pat Taber; Armand Vaillancourt; Maurice Villeneuve; Carl Woodard; Dave Young.

LOONS-DUCKS: Red-necked Grebe is not expected in winter at Paul Smiths. On Feb. 3 two college students cross-country skiing on Osgood Pond found a struggling ice-covered bird in the snow on the pond and brought it to their dorm to thaw out. As seen in the cardboard box, the bird had a rather large, pointed bill, a dark cap, gray neck, white wing patches, and lobed feet. It was released in spunky condition on some open water in the Saranac River. About 300 Canada Geese wintered off Essex. They fed in fields during part of the day. Normally this species does not winter in our Region. One wild Mallard was flushed from the Saranac River on the Christmas count. There usually are some domestic

ones in town. Two Common Goldeneyes were at Tupper Dec. 2 and 9. A female Barrow's Goldeneye was identified by Mike Peterson and Jerry Rosenband on Jan. 9th at Westport. The bird was with female Common Goldeneyes so direct comparison was possible. A male Black Scoter was on Lake Abanake in early Feb. (R Mc) and one was at Westport about the same time. A Hooded Merganser was at Tupper Dec. 14 (CD). Bob Rottner spotted six Common Mergansers on the St. Regis River at Paul Smiths on Feb. 18, the day it was 45 below. The birds were below a small power turbine that provided open water.

HAWKS—ALCIDS: Some people felt there should be more Rough-legged Hawks in Dec. and Jan. in the Champlain Valley. Perhaps some went further south. Quite a few Ruffed Grouse were seen and some were eaten by Goshawks and humans. No Ring-necked Pheasants were reported from inland areas. Releases are not expected to overwinter in the more severe sections. A few Great Black-backed Gulls were along Lake Champlain.

PIGEONS—WOODPECKERS: A Mourning Dove showed up at a Paul Smiths feeder Feb. 25. Perhaps it came from a Gabriel's feeder where several often winter. **HAWK OWL:** a non-birder saw a long-tailed small owl with black around the face and yellow eyes sitting on an exposed perch in daylight at Keene (Tom Gardner). This was Dec. 31. Unfortunately nobody else got to see the bird. A Barred Owl was seen on the Saranac Lake Christmas count. The unusual point is not the species but that any owl would cooperate for the count. **GREAT GRAY OWL:** Charles Mitchell had one at Plattsburgh in his yard. He watched it 20 minutes Feb. 3 at 20 yards. It was large and gray with yellow eyes and prominent facial discs. Belted Kingfisher: one was at McColloms Dec. 8 on Osgood River and JoAnn Marshall spotted one on the St. Regis River at Paul Smiths Feb. 3 and 4. This could have been the same bird. There are lots of records of Pileated Woodpeckers. Both three-toed woodpeckers have been seen. The Saranac Lake Christmas Count was fortunate to have a Northern Three-toed Woodpecker.

FLYCATCHERS—STARLINGS: 60 Blue Jays at Indian Lake Feb. 3 was a high count. Common Ravens were noted at Paul Smiths, Indian Lake, Schroon Lake, and Tupper Lake among other places. 50 Black-capped Chickadees at Indian Lake in early Feb. was a high count. There were at least six Boreal Chickadees on the Elizabethtown Christmas count. Tufted Titmouse reports came from the Keene Valley feeder of F. McMurtrie on Feb. 4, 5, and again in early Feb. from an Elizabethtown feeder (*vide* Peterson). Three Am. Robins ate mountain ash berries in Tupper until they left in mid-Feb. (AV). Bob Hagar saw one Jan. 27 in a Saranac Lake apple tree. It was subsequently seen for about two weeks. Four Cedar Waxwings at Tupper on Dec. 8 were a good find (CD). 15 Starlings at the Tupper dump Dec. 15 were soon forced to leave by winter weather.

WEAVERS—SPARROWS: Red-winged Blackbird: several wintered at Tupper. Common Grackle: two daily at feeder in Tupper Dec. 1-Feb. 28 (CD). Brown-headed Cowbird: all winter at Tupper with a high of 54 on Dec. 22 (CD). One stayed at a Paul Smiths feeder until it was found frozen Dec. 27 (JM). One was at Indian Lake Feb. 3 (M & RMc). Cardinal: DC reports three that survived the winter at Tupper. One female was at her feeder and a pair at CW's feeder. RG had a pair that stayed until the end of Jan. and then disappeared. Purple Finch: a few, five stayed at Tupper from Dec. on. Pine Grosbeak: M and RMc had 200 Feb. 3 at Indian Lake. Bob notes that for Indian Lake and Speculator about 90 percent of Evening Grosbeaks were adult male and 95+ percent of Pine Grosbeaks were not adult males. PT had 100 feedings on ash samaras Feb. 18 at Westport. Common Redpoll was absent from most of the Region. Pine Siskins were scarce in the Champlain Valley but present in good numbers inland. Two Dark-eyed Juncos were at Tupper all winter as were five Tree Sparrows. One of the latter was at Indian Lake Feb. 3 and a few were in the Champlain Valley and at Elizabethtown. White-throated Sparrow: one Dec. 30-Feb. 9 at Tupper (CD). Snow Bunting: over 200 at Westport in Dec. (PT) and two at Tupper Feb. 28 (AV).

Paul Smiths, New York 12970

REGION 8 – HUDSON-MOHAWK

RICHARD P. GUTHRIE

The Hudson-Mohawk Region had all the makings of a "mini-Minnesota" with the sub-zero temperatures, howling winds, brutal wind chill factors, and best of all, Great Gray Owls. The weather started out relatively mildly this season. It was not until Christmas Day when the weather caught up to the season, when up to 18 inches of snow fell in the area. Shortly after, the snow gave way to an early January thaw. Alternating rain and freezing rain dominated the January theme, with most of the inclement weather coming on weekends making it venturesome to step outdoors. Most stations had 100% to 200% above normal precipitation in January. February was devastating with very low temperatures and blustery winds, which, when combined produced brutal wind-chill factors.

Of course, the birding news of the season was the totally unprecedented invasion of Great Gray Owls. News of Great Grays was received from neighboring areas in early January but it was not until Ken Able found an individual in East Berne in the Helderbergs on January 23 that things got rolling here. By mid-February, reports of new or suspected Great Gray Owls were coming into the Dial-a-Bird tape almost daily. Many of the reports turned out to be Bared Owls, while others were convincingly described or verified by experienced birders as Great Grays. Typically, the Great Grays were spotted in an area for only a day or two. A few seemed to reappear in a week or so, while others were never seen again. It is suspected that the owls were more or less stationary, but because of the extensive wooded tracts surrounding them, they disappeared into the woods and escaped observation. Owls in more restricted locations were observed more readily and gave the impression of staying around longer.

Other birding highlights of the season were neighbors of the Great Gray Owls back home. These included the Region's first and second records of Boreal Owl and Gray Jay, Bohemian Waxwing and Pine Grosbeak. One of the Boreal Owls was unfortunately found dead and frozen under a fir tree Feb. 5. The bird was terribly emaciated (weighing only 88.7 grams). This appears to be the State's thirteenth specimen, and now is at the New York State Museum at Albany.

Reports were received with thanks from: Bill Able, Ken Able, Doug Ayres, Arlene & Tom Brown, Steve Browne, Bob Budliger, Burrell Buffington, Jim Bush, Geoffrey Carleton, Lee Chamberlaine, Juanita Cook, Kate Dunham, Barbara & Hugh Gardina, Elizabeth Grace, Richard P. Guthrie, Ron & Carolyn LaForce, E. Mansell, Elsie Powell, Ed Reilly, Walt Sabin, Debbie Shaw, Janet Silvernail and Lester Thomas. Special thanks go to Bob Yunick for gathering and compiling the myriad of Dial-a-Bird records and Great Gray and Boreal Owl data.

LOONS-DUCKS: Great Blue Heron: one Schenectady Christmas Count Dec. 16; one Ft. Plain count week; one thru late Jan., W. Sand Lake, Canada Goose: 666 Chatham CC Dec. 16; 147 is the total of three other counts. Mallard: 439 Chat CC; 386 Troy CC Dec. 30; both counts high. Black Duck: 345 Chat CC; total of four other counts 215; also high. Gadwall: one Troy CC. Pintail: one Troy CC. Wood Duck: one Catskill-Coxsackie CC Dec. 27. Hooded Merganser: 75 Saratoga Lk. Dec. 20; 20 Cohoes Falls Jan. 14; very high numbers and late dates.

HAWKS—ALCIDS: Goshawk: 12 reports thru period incl. five from CC's. Sharp-shinned Hawk: 18 reports incl. eight from three CC's and feeder raiders at six locations thru Jan. Cooper's Hawk: eight reports incl. four from CC's and one each from feeders at Eagle Mills, mid-Dec.; and Glenville, Jan. 13. Red-tailed Hawk: total of six CC's 179—down from 324 last year. Red-shouldered Hawk: one each on four CC's plus two other reports. Rough-legged Hawk: 31 total of CC's, max 13 Cats-Cox CC (low). **BALD EAGLE:** one imm Cats-Cox CC (BB). Marsh Hawk: only two reports. Merlin: two Chat CC (one observed taking a House Sparrow at a feeder [ER]). Am. Kestrel: 88 from five CC's, Ft. Plain had none. Ruffed Grouse: 33 from six CC's compared to 32 from four CC's last year. Bobwhite: 27 from Chat CC—where'd they come from? Ring-necked Pheasant: nine from four CC's. Turkey: 19 Chat CC; also Tom Res and several hill town reports of 10 to 15. Killdeer: one Chat CC. Am. Woodcock: one in Schen count circle during count period. Common Snipe: two Troy CC. Iceland Gull: one each Schen and Troy counts. Great Black-backed Gull: numerous until the ice caught up to them—80 combined total of five counts, max 42 Troy CC. Herring Gull: 303 from five counts; max 171 Cats-Cox. Ring-billed Gull: 623 total of five counts, max 448 from Schen.

PIGEONS—WOODPECKERS: Mourning Dove: continues in good numbers—1692 total of six CC's. Screech Owl: ten reports inc. three taking mice offered to them from a porch in New Balt., late Feb. Great Horned Owl: 29 reports inc. 13 from five CC's—very high, usually 5 to 10 reports. Snowy Owl: seven reports Dec. 1 thru Feb. 18, most individuals were seen one day only. Barred Owl: another impressive tally, 17 from many localities all from mid-Jan. thru late Feb., curiously coincidental with the following species dates. **GREAT GRAY OWL:** 15 records between Jan. 23 and Feb. 28 (plus two in March). Extensive television coverage led to numerous other reports which were either not confirmed or proved to be Barred Owls. One Great Gray was shot and turned over to a vet where at last word it is reportedly doing well and will be released when recovered. Another Great Gray was found dead of unknown causes (not shot) near W. Sand Lake. Still another was reported to have been shot in Rensselaer, but confirmation is lacking. One Great Gray was captured and banded in Colonie on Feb. 25 (RPG). Short-eared Owl: showed up as usual in time for the Cats-Cox CC where two remained thru Feb. 18; one was banded Dec. 27 at Coxsackie Flats (RPG). **BOREAL OWL:** first Regional record—one photographed in a fir tree in a Saratoga Springs yard; another was found dead in a yard in Glenville, Schen Co. on Feb. 5. Saw-whet Owl: one caught on a porch in Charlton Jan. 26. Belted Kingfisher: well represented on five of the six area counts; curiously absent from Chatham count. Com. Flicker: 38 on five CC's; other reports thru Feb. incl. one in Berne. Red-bellied Woodpecker: one Ft. Plain CC Dec. 29. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: one Schen CC and one at Central Bridge feeder thru Jan. 24. Hairy Woodpecker: 112 on six CC's, down from 181 last year. Downy Woodpecker: 309 from counts vs. 356 last year.

FLYCATCHERS—STARLINGS: **GRAY JAY:** one at Niskayuna feeder Dec. 20 (*vide* RPY). Blue Jay: well down from last year; 863 total of six CC's vs 1810 last year. Tufted Titmouse; slight increase in numbers from last year; however is continuing an apparent range expansion into the Adirondack low hills at Jenny Lake, Saratoga County. Three were banded there on Dec. 23; one remained thru Feb. (RPY). White-breasted Nuthatch: sharp decrease from last year, 258 from six CC's compared to 334 last year, and 340 five years ago. Red-breasted Nuthatch: present thru period but not in any great numbers; only 18 reported from five CC's. Winter Wren: no reports. Carolina Wren: one each So. Rens CC and Schen count period. Mockingbird: 115 up from 89 on last year's CC's and 48 five years ago; Ft. Plain again reported one. Gray Catbird: one So. Rens. CC and one mid-Feb. Chatham (KD & EG). Brown Thrasher: one Jan. 11 Altamont feeder. Am. Robin: an amazing 508 from Schen CC and 171 Cats-Cox CC; 148 total of three other CC's; none on Ft. Plain CC. Hermit Thrush: one Schen CC; also one late Feb. Niskayuna. Eastern Bluebird: 12 Chatham CC, up from 7 last year and none five years ago; six Craryville Feb. 5 (BB). **BOHEMIAN WAXWING:** five Dec. 26 thru 31 Cambridge, Washington Co (WS); also one

Catskill Feb. 25 (JB). Cedar Waxwing: a busy year for these, with reports from many places; numbers tapering off toward end of period. Northern Shrike: 23 reports incl. 12 from five CC's.

VIREOS—WARBLERS: Yellow-rumped Warbler: 10 Cox-Athens CC (RB).

WEAVERS—SPARROWS: Eastern Meadowlark: scarce as usual, reported on two CC's. Red-winged Blackbird: surprisingly absent—only one each on three CC's and scant other reports. Northern Oriole: one at Glenville feeder Dec. 23 thru Jan. 23. Rusty Blackbird: two Schen CC. Com. Grackle: numerous in contrast to the Red-winged Blackbird, somewhat the reverse of the usual trend. Cardinal: 480 total of six CC's down from 506 five years ago and 518 last year. Perhaps because of the rather mild winter leading up to the counts, folks weren't feeding birds yet, leading to the lower tally of this and some other species. Evening Grosbeak: considered not a significant flight year by many observers, but an impressive 2848 were counted on the six area CC's. Pine Grosbeak: scattered reports, mostly from the hill towns late Dec. thru Feb. 20. Common Redpoll: only reports were from Col. Co. in early Feb. Rufous-sided Towhee: Chatham Dec. 16 and Jan. 7. Savannah Sparrow: only three reported by two CC's. Dark-eyed Junco: 587 reported on six CC's incl one "Oregon" Junco (EG & KD). Tree Sparrow: numerous comments about scarcity in late Dec. and early Jan. Field Sparrow: four from area CC's incl. one that returned to the Gorman feeder for the Troy count for the fifth consecutive year. White-crowned Sparrow: one each Chatham and Troy CC's; also one Feb. 20 Schoharie. White-throated Sparrow: 375 total of six CC's. Fox Sparrow: feeder reports from Troy (one) and W. Sand Lake (two) mid-Jan. to mid-Feb. Swamp Sparrow: four on CC's plus one Feb. 20 at Schoharie. Song Sparrow: 129 total of six CC's; compare with White-throated. Lapland Longspur: only one each from two CC's. Snow Bunting: 69 Troy CC; flock of 800-1000 Coxsackie mid- Feb.

Visitors are reminded that they may receive or deliver messages of the latest birding news in the Hudson-Mohawk region by telephoning "Dial-a-Bird" at 518-377-9600.

P.O. Box 46, New Baltimore, New York 12124

REGION 9 — DELAWARE-HUDSON

EDWARD D. TREACY

The drought of last fall continued thru Dec. and was not alleviated until the last week of the month when a snowfall of several inches occurred. For the next four weekends some form of precipitation fell, usually starting as snow and ending with an inch or two of rain. Since the rain washed away the snow, the ground remained exposed until Feb. when very cold temperatures prevented melting. By Jan. 25 more than 10.7 inches of precipitation had fallen, breaking the record for the month. Winter temperatures reached their depths the third week of February, when lower than -10° F was reported throughout much of the Region. Most lakes and streams did not freeze until just before the waterfowl count in mid-January, and the thaw took place in the last week of February. By the first week of March, the Hudson was free of ice in its lower reaches, and shallower ponds were beckoning to returning waterfowl—quite different from last year, when ice remained until the second week of April.

Compared with the winter season last year, this one was rather uneventful.

Very few winter finches were reported. Evening Grosbeaks were in good numbers thru December, but then dropped off to scattered flocks. A few Pine Grosbeaks appeared as did one or two redpolls. One White-winged Crossbill and a few siskins were reported—definitely not a finch year. Northern Shrikes were well represented however, continuing their influx of November. Canada Geese were extremely plentiful, and Common Mergansers were in record numbers. Canvasbacks were also very high. Although the resident raptors seemed to be low, there were two reports of Merlin, and two of Osprey; very good finds. The California Gull still frequents Rockland Lake, but is usually hard to find. The Lesser Black-backed Gull also continues to make appearances there once in a while. Even non-birders questioned where the Blue Jays were, with most Christmas counts recording less than half their usual numbers. Juncos and Tree Sparrows were also far below normal. The expected blackbird movements in February did not materialize, and migrants were not reported thru the end of the period.

Contributors and observers cited: Al Brayton, Martin Borko, Tom Burke, Robert F. Deed, Stan DeOrsey, Alice Jones, Ken McDermott, Al Merritt, John C. Orth, Eleanor Pink, Benton Seguin, John Tramontano, Ed Treacy, Otis Waterman.

Abbreviations: The first four letters of each county; BCC—Burroughs Christmas Count, Dec. 23; GSCC—Greenwich-Stamford Christmas Count, Dec. 17; MCC—Mearns Christmas Count, Dec. 16; MC—Marshlands Conservancy, Rye; PL—Playland, Rye; RCC—Rockland Christmas Count, Dec. 17; WCC—Waterman Christmas Count, Dec. 29.

LOONS—DUCKS: RED-NECKED GREBE: one, Rondout Cr. and Hudson R confluence, Jan. 2 (AB). Horned Grebe: 20, Ashokan Dec. 14 (AB). Pied-billed Grebe: one at PL thru Jan. 6. Great Blue Heron: Dec. saw more than 18 at PL with last in mid-Jan. Mute Swan: 28 on MCC was a record high. Only 18 last year. Canada Goose: numbers continue excellent. Down while water was frozen, but returning in record numbers by late Feb. 1,682 on Bronx-Westchester Count in Rye, Dec. 23. Snow Goose: one remained at Rock thru period. One Blue morph at MC Jan. 6. Gadwall: two at Round Pond, Dutch Dec. 17 were unusual. Pintail: a few into Dec. at Mongaup, Rockland L. and Stissing. Blue-winged Teal: three at Washington L, Newburgh, on MCC were new to that count. Wood Duck: more than usual, but still only a few. A female wintered on Rockland L. White-winged Scoter: a male at Cornwall Bay Jan. 23 (BS). Ruddy Duck: one Tomahawk L, Oran on MCC was new for that count. Hooded Merganser: wintered in better than usual numbers. Several in Dutch and Oran where they are rarely found in winter. Common Merganser: wintered in better than average numbers. 234 on RCC was the best count since 1955. More than 150 wintered on Rondout Res. Red-breasted Merganser: 476 at PL Dec. 23. One at Cornwall Bay Dec. 11-12 was far from salt water.

HAWKS—ALCIDS: Turkey Vulture: three in Dutch and one in Harriman Park dur. period. Goshawk: one on BCC, one Pleasant Valley Jan. 24, and two other reports from Dutch dur. Dec. Sharp-shinned Hawk: the usual two or three locally around feeders dur period. Cooper's Hawk: four Dec. records in Dutch, one on BCC and one harassing a Rough-legged at Galeville Airport Jan. 6. Rough-legged Hawk: usual few in the usual wintering places. Max four at Galeville. Bald Eagle: the Sull and Ulst reservoirs continue to be what is probably the best wintering location in the lower 48 states. Four at Rondout and at least ten in the Rio-Mongaup area. The DEC people feel that at least 35 are circulating between reservoirs in the area. Marsh Hawk: four Dec. reports in Dutch, and one at MC Jan. 26. **OSPREY:** one Staatsberg Jan. 12, and two reported on RCC possibly the same bird. **MERLIN:** one Hamptonburg Dec. 30 (KM) and another Jan. 7 at Olive Bridge (Ann Altshuler). Bobwhite: five birds continue to hold on near Stissing. Turkey: fewer than last year in Sull; appeared in new areas of E. Oran and Dutch. Clapper Rail: four at MC Dec. 23; one remained

thru Jan. 27. Sora: one Dutch report Dec. 17. Killdeer: one on WCC was the second in 21 years of that count. Black-bellied Plover: one at PL standing beside a Ruddy Turnstone was a good find on the GSCC. Common Snipe: in better than usual numbers thru Dec. Purple Sandpiper: 55 at PL and 20 more in Rye Dec. 23. Dunlin: one Cornwall Bay on MCC was new to that count. Iceland Gull: one on Ramapo Landfill near Sloatsburg Dec. 30; two at Rondout Res. Feb. 4 reduced to one there Feb. 10. **LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL**: the bird of the fall at Rockland L was there again Jan. 14 (Larry Holland, ET). **CALIFORNIA GULL**: this previously reported bird was last seen on Dec. 17. Bonaparte's Gull: 120 on RCC was fifth time for that count in the last six years. Could the Hudson be getting cleaner?

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: SNOWY OWL: one P'kpsie Dec. 23 (Phil Kavanagh). Short-eared Owl: one on WCC was the first count record. Max 9, Galeville Airport Dec. 12 (H. Weber, C. Davis). Saw-whet Owl: one on MCC at Hamptonburgh was new to that count. Common Flicker: winter numbers down in recent years. Several reported from Dutch, but missed for only the second time in 32 counts on RCC. Red-bellied Woodpecker: continues to hold in usual locations but does not increase. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: one at Rye Jan. 16-18, one near Cornwall Feb. 25.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Horned Lark: reports would indicate better than usual numbers. Blue Jay: numbers down in all areas. Several Christmas Counts reported the worst numbers ever. Common Crow: Alice Jones reports ab. 2500 Dec. 28 at Hudson Valley Roost in Dutch. Although these numbers are down, she suspects another roost has been established nearby. Black-capped Chickadee: generally down in numbers, but 270 on MCC was their highest count since 1963. Tufted Titmouse: most reporters felt numbers were lower. 54 on MCC was the fourth lowest count in 20 years. WCC had a record high of 125. Winter Wren: wintered near WKNY tower in Kingston. Carolina Wren: one continues to use old robin's nest reported last fall. A Gray Squirrel tore it apart, but a few scraps of cloth and yard with a few safety pins had it repaired and still in use at the end of the period. Mockingbird: numbers appear to be leveling off. 94 on WCC. Gray Catbird: one along with a Brown Thrasher was present at MC thru early Jan. Another Brown Thrasher was at Middletown Res. Feb. 14. Am. Robin: numbers good thru period, but far lower than records reported in 1976. WCC reported 98. Eastern Bluebird: 15 on WCC was far above previous high of ten in 1974. Florence Germond's efforts are paying off. That count usually averages two to five. **BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER**: one on RCC on Gene Brown's front porch in Nyack at noon was amazing! Cedar Waxwing: 50 thru Jan. near Pleasant Valley and 25 the same month at Red Oaks Mill. Northern Shrike: the movement indicated last fall materialized with excellent numbers from all areas. Reported on most Christmas Counts. Loggerhead Shrike: one on Purgatory Rd. Hamptonburg on MCC was new to the count. Starling: more than 5000 are in a P'kpsie roost, and 6438 on MCC was their highest in 20 years.

VIREOS-WARBLEDERS: Yellow-rumped Warbler: one Jan. 22 Pleasant Valley; one Dec. 25-26 Verbank. Palm Warbler: one on OCC campus Middletown Dec. 13 was a surprise (JT). Common Yellowthroat: one in good health at MC thru Jan. 7.

WEAVERS-SPARROWS: House Sparrow: 989 on MCC was highest since 1964. Are they making a comeback? Red-winged Blackbird: these along with the grackles did not return in late Feb. as expected. Usual few at feeders in the southern parts thru period. Northern Oriole: one at KM's home in Newburgh. Cardinal: down at all feeders. 18 in the Dover Plains area Dec. 23-30. **BLACK-HEADED GROSBEEK**: one from mid-Dec. thru Jan. at Tarrytown home of M. Schaffner. Evening Grosbeak: numbers exc. in Dec. Far fewer in Jan. and Feb. House Finch: from 20 to 40 at most feeders. Christmas counts were high. MCC reports 174, a 54% increase over last year's high. BCC in the northern part also had 174. Hans Weber was regularly feeding 75 of this species and also 75 Am. Goldfinches at his home in New Paltz. Pine Grosbeak: numbers plentiful in Dutch dur. Feb. Only a few reports elsewhere. Common Redpoll: only report 1 Feb. 10 at Wappinger's Falls (Tom

Storey). Pine Siskin: only a few reported. White-winged Crossbill: one near Washington Lake, Newburgh, Feb. 1 was the only report (BS). Rufous-sided Towhee: reports from 5 different areas. Three on RCC. Savannah Sparrow: one Jan. 28, Croton Pt. Tree Sparrow: numbers down. Most areas have half the usual counts. Field Sparrow: KM had two thru first two weeks of Feb. Fox Sparrow: two on RCC and five on MCC. Song Sparrow: eight at Croton Pt. Jan. 28. Lapland Longspur: one Dec. 26 Hamptonburgh, feeding with a flock of 12 Horned Larks. Snow Bunting: good numbers in Dutch thru period. About 50 wintered at Stewart Airport.

Pellwood Lake, Highland Falls, New York 10928

REGION 10 – MARINE

BARBARA J. SPENCER

The weather was relatively mild through December and January, following a warmer than usual fall. Sparse land bird migration left few birds to winter in the area. Most Christmas counts enjoyed favorable conditions although the Orient count on December 28 proceeded in 28 degree F. weather with almost gale-force winds out of the north. A protracted cold spell began February 7, freezing bays and harbors solid, concentrating lingering waterfowl in the open areas around inlets and displacing others into the ocean. Moderating temperatures during the last week in February moved the ice out gradually. Larger than usual numbers of Red-winged Blackbirds wintered in the area and were singing in early February. Returning migrants were not in evidence through the period.

GREAT GRAY OWL

The event of the season was the finding of a Great Gray Owl in Lloyd Harbor January 8 by David McNicholas, the first Great Gray Owl seen on Long Island since 1902. This bird, perhaps the southernmost individual present in a year marked by a widespread invasion of Great Grays, frequented a lightly wooded fringe along the edge of a salt marsh, and hunted over the marsh and in nearby Caumsett Park. It was seen eating Norway Rats. The responsibility of hosting such a rare and vulnerable species was assumed by the Huntington Audubon Society, coordinated by Sallie Ruppert. Guides, guards, and taxi service were provided to protect the bird and property owners from the encroachments of overzealous observers. The presence of the bird was not announced on the RBA tape until Tom Davis had made arrangements with the local police for parking, and supervision of the traffic generated by visiting birders and non-birders. Hundreds of people visited this fearless and accessible rarity.

The bird was present through February 6 when the bitter weather filled the marsh with ice. A dead Great Gray, picked up on the beach in nearby Centerport on March 12, was presumed to be the Lloyd Neck bird. On March 27, a woman called the Rupperts to report that the owl was alive and well in her backyard; apparently there were at least two Great Grays on Long Island although the possibility exists that the Centerport bird was washed ashore from some other area. The Lloyd Neck bird was last observed on March 28.

The role of the public press was problematic during this event. *Newsday* published, in rapid succession, at least three articles on the bird, arousing the interest of many sightseers who compounded the birding traffic manifold, and brought the bird to the attention of some who did not have the owl's best interests at heart. This coverage seemed excessive to the point of irresponsibility. Remonstrations with reporters about concern for the owl's safety, and for the burdening of the residents with the pressure of so many visitors brought "I just work here" responses. It seems necessary to question the premise that all birding publicity is good for the birds or for birders. An article which appeared at a later date in the *New York Times*, recounting horror stories of birder's transgressions, seemed inappropriately placed, and damaging to the interests of birders in general. An article of this type should appear in specialized publications, not in the public press.

CHRISTMAS COUNT REPORTS

The Montauk Christmas Count, held December 16, tied its all-time high count of 130 species. New to the count was a Parasitic Jaeger. All-time high counts were made for Gannet, Double-crested Cormorant, Green-winged Teal, Canvasback, Ring-necked Duck, Ruddy Duck, Laughing Gull, Mourning Dove, Gray Catbird, and Red-winged Blackbird. Other birds of note were an Orange-crowned Warbler, Red-necked Grebe, European Wigeon, Peregrine Falcon, Little Gull, and Snowy Owl. Species in low numbers included Bobwhite, Blue Jay, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Dark-eyed Junco, and Tree Sparrow. Winter finches were virtually absent. Co-compiler Ben Trimble has provided participants with data from his computer on all of the Montauk counts since the first in 1920. The total number of species seen since that time is 202. From a rather modest start with 38 species the count has grown in number of participants, and in area covered, to reach its present size. The Quogue-Watermill count was also held December 16, and tallied 102 species, their third highest. First for the count were Peregrine Falcon, Red-bellied Woodpecker, and a Rose-breasted Grosbeak at a feeder. Also noteworthy were Blue-winged Teal, Ruffed Grouse, Dovekie, and Snowy Owl. The Captree count was held December 17 with adverse wind conditions. They found 105 species including a Black-headed Gull, a Saw-whet Owl, and a Northern Shrike. A count of 22 Blue Jays was an all-time low. The 26th consecutive Central Suffolk count was held Dec. 26, under favorable conditions. A total of 124 species was recorded, their fourth highest. Two species new to the count were Common Gallinule and Marbled Godwit. Other birds of interest were kittiwake, Little Gull, Red-bellied Woodpecker, and Lark Sparrow. Species found in good numbers included Gannet, Gadwall, Bufflehead, Ring-billed Gull, Tufted Titmouse, White-breasted Nuthatch, Am. Robin (highest ever), and Cedar Waxwing. Species low in numbers included White-winged and Common Scoters, Hooded Merganser, Bobwhite (lowest since 1961), Blue Jay (lowest since 1957), Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, and Starling (lowest since 1961), Red-winged Blackbird, cowbird, Purple Finch, Savannah Sparrow and Tree Sparrow (lowest ever). The Central Suffolk count has recorded a total of 197 species over 26 years.

The Orient count, held December 28, experienced very adverse conditions with almost gale force winds. A total of 93 species were found with numbers

low and no rarities. The Northern Nassau count participants found 102 species. New to the count was an Iceland Gull. Of interest was a Northern Shrike, and a Red-headed Woodpecker; a high count of fourteen Screech Owls reflected early morning work by members of Huntington Audubon. A Starling roost under the viaduct in Roslyn was estimated to contain 10,000 to 15,000 individuals, occupying about half of the available roosting spaces, when Ralph Cioffi made his observations at dusk. Are there other large roosts on Long Island? Southern Nassau also counted on December 30. A total of 120 species was found. New to the count were Turkey and Ruff. Four Northern Shrikes were a new count high. Of interest were ten Western Sandpipers, a Red-necked Grebe, Louisiana Heron, Little Blue Heron, and Long-billed Marsh Wren, a new high number of Tufted Titmouse (55) was reached. Low in number were Shovelers (2) and E. Meadowlark, with only one found.

Positives for the season include: 1) good numbers of waterfowl on the various Christmas counts, 2) an "invasion" of Northern Shrikes, 3) although loons and grebes have seemed scarce to some observers, Montauk's count of 246 Common Loons was the second highest in their history, Red-throated Loons (67) the sixth highest, while the number of Horned Grebes (219) was second only to an amazing 2000 seen in 1957, a year that saw large numbers of loons as well. Many of the previous years reported these birds in single or two digit numbers.

Winter negatives: 1) decreasing numbers of Bobwhites, 2) lack of winter finches, 3) low numbers of Blue Jays, probably attributable to different migration patterns this year, 4) few kinglets, Winter Wrens, and other small birds in many localities. Inspection of long-term Christmas count data shows wide fluctuations in the numbers of wintering birds; trends are very difficult to detect with any confidence.

Rarities include: Barrow's Goldeneye, Burrowing Owl, Great Gray Owl, Varied Thrush, Wheatear, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Boat-tailed Grackle.

Christmas count compilers: Montauk, Robert O. Paxton and Benjamin Trimble; Captree, Frances File and Anthony J. Lauro; Quogue-Watermill, David Larsen; Central Suffolk, Gilbert S. Raynor; Northern Nassau, Herbert Roth; Orient, Paul Stoutenburgh; Southern Nassau, Richard Sloss and Cornelius Ward.

Contributors and observers: Robert Adamo, Jim Ash, Albert M. Bell, Paul A. Buckley, Ralph Cioffi, Arthur P. Cooley, Thomas H. Davis, Stephen B. Dempsey, Frances File, Paul Gillen, Robert Hines, William Kolodnicki, David Larsen, Anthony J. Lauro, Emanuel Levine, Alan Lindberg, Robert O. Paxton, Gilbert S. Raynor, Arthur Richard, Hannah Richard, Barbara J. Spencer, Christian G. Spies, Wade Wander, Neil Ward, and Regina M. VanScoy.

LOONS-DUCKS: Gannets were moving in large numbers along the coast in mid-Dec. with 1200 or more at Montauk on Dec. 16. A Red-necked Grebe wintered in the Montauk area where it was reported by many observers. Another was in Jones Inlet Feb. 22 (BJS). Two immature Little Blue Herons were seen at Tobay Jan. 1 (AJL). A Louisiana Heron Dec. 16 at Jamaica Bay was the latest regional report (W. Reilly), who also saw seven late Glossy Ibis in the same location. Whistling Swans regularly winter at Hook Pond; 13 were there Dec. 2 (GSR), 15 on Dec. 26 (AR, HR). The numbers declined during Jan.; the swans disappeared entirely during the Feb. freeze. Two Whistlers were seen Jan. 6 at Mill Neck where they are not regular (RC). About 50 Snow Geese flying west over the West Pond at Jamaica Bay Feb. 3 may have wintered in the area (PG) as did two or three near Mecox. A

"Eurasian" Green-winged Teal was present during Jan. at Hempstead Lake (RH *et al.*). Up to four European Wigeons were in the Mecox area by Dec. 26, (AR, HR) while another was at Montauk. 500 Northern Shovelers Jan. 4 at Willow Lake, Queens Co. (G. & M. Dremeaux) was a remarkable number. A drake BARROW'S GOLDENEYE was found at Lake Montauk Jan. 10 (GSR), and was also seen Jan. 27 (A. Keith). A drake Harlequin Duck was present to Jan. 8 at Fire Island Inlet, then a pair was seen Feb. 3 through the period (AJL). Two Harlequins were present on Gardiner's Island Dec. 16 (N. Proctor), and a female was at Shinnecock Inlet Jan. 13-20.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Goshawks were widely reported, one wintering in Prospect Park, Brooklyn. Four Sharp-shinned Hawks were seen on the Northern Nassau count, three on Captree, and one each on the Montauk and Central Suffolk counts. No Cooper's Hawks were reported. Red-tailed Hawks wintered in good numbers in the area with a maximum of 31 Dec. 15 on the Staten Island count. A Red-shouldered Hawk wintered at the Muttontown Preserve (AL). Several Peregrine Falcons were present during the period. One wintered at Jamaica Bay (S. Chevalier *et al.*), three were sighted Dec. 16: one on Gardiner's Island (N. Proctor), one on the Quogue-Watermill count, and one was seen at Sand's Point (G. Quinn). Another was found at Sagaponack Jan. 27 (JA), and one at Hempstead Lake Jan. 28 (A. Wollin, SBD). Two Merlins were found on the Central Suffolk count Dec. 26, one on the Captree count Dec. 17, and one on the Montauk count Dec. 16. Clapper Rails seemed scarce this year on eastern Long Island; a Virginia Rail seen at Calverton Jan. 20 was a good find (GSR). A Common Gallinule was present on the Carman's River Jan. 13 (APC), and one was reported on the Central Suffolk count. A late Willet was seen at Jones Beach Dec. 3 (T. Burke). A high count of 40 Greater Yellowlegs was made Jan. 1 at Hempstead Lake. Seven Purple Sandpipers in Glen Cove Jan. 27 were noteworthy (RC). A Short-billed Dowitcher Dec. 8 at Jones Beach, identified by call, was extremely late (PAB). Three Long-billed Dowitchers were at Jones Beach Dec. 8 (PAB), two were at Jamaica Bay Dec. 15 (W. Reilly) and two were present until Jan. 12 at Hempstead Lake; three seen Feb. 2 at Tobay (called "keek" when flushed) appear to be a first Feb. record (GSR, RA). A Ruff found Dec. 16 (EL) at Hempstead Lake stayed through Jan. 28, a first winter record. A Marbled Godwit was at Moriches Inlet Dec. 26, 30 and Jan. 1 (GSR). A light-phased sub-adult Parasitic Jaeger lingered until Dec. 16 at Montauk Point (THD *et al.*). A second year Glaucous Gull was at South Haven Park Jan. 13 (APC), and another was at Shinnecock Inlet Jan. 16 (RA). Iceland Gulls were uncommon this winter. One was at Montauk Jan. 27 (GSR, RA), and an adult was there Feb. 25 (AJL). One in Hempstead Harbor off Glenwood Landing was rare for the north shore (BJS). An individual identified as the *kumlieni* race was at Mastic Jan. 15 (RA), while the *kumlieni* spending its third winter at the restaurant at Jones Beach is now fully adult. Lesser Black-backed Gulls were noted in several locations; an adult was seen at Montauk Point Dec. 26 (AR, HR), a sub-adult Jan. 28 at Jones Beach (AJL), and an adult at Sea Cliff Feb. 24 (BJS). The only Black-headed Gull reported was an adult seen at Captree Dec. 17 by a number of observers. Laughing Gulls were present in unprecedented numbers at Montauk into the middle of December, with 85 counted on Dec. 16; the previous high for the Christmas count was two. Little Gulls were hard to find, with one imm. seen Dec. 16 in Napeague Harbor (AJL), and one on the Central Suffolk count Dec. 26. Alcids went almost unreported, with a murre (sp) seen in flight Dec. 16 at Ditch Plains (T. O'Connor) and a Dovekie, also seen in flight in Shinnecock Inlet the same day.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Screech Owls are undoubtedly more common than the numbers usually reported indicate. One found dead on Fire Island (D. Ford) was the first recorded on the outer beach in years, while a record 14 on the Northern Nassau count represented extra effort made to locate them. Eight to ten reports of Snowy Owls from Dec. 11 through the period may have represented fewer birds as these large owls move about over wide areas. Most unusual was one Jan. 14 on an East River island off 96th Street, Manhattan (E. Mills). A BURROWING OWL present from Dec. 3 to Feb. 1 at JFK Airport (S.

Chevalier, AR, HR) roosted in a storm sewer pipe! The famous Lloyd Neck **GREAT GRAY OWL** was well-observed and photographed by many between Jan. 8 and Feb. 6. Other reports of Great Grays were unconfirmed. Long-eared Owls wintered at Muttontown (AL), Brentwood (FF), and at Jamaica Bay (RA, GSR, DL). Red-bellied Woodpeckers are well distributed throughout the area in small numbers. Ten were reported Dec. 23 on the Bronx-Westchester count, three were in Prospect Park, three in Forest Park, three at Alley Pond Park, three Dec. 3 on the Southern Nassau count, six the same day on the Northern Nassau count, and single individuals reported from various locations on the eastern end of the island where they are fewer in number. A Red-headed Woodpecker wintered in Central Park. Two were found on the Queens count Dec. 16, and one on the Northern Nassau count Dec. 30.

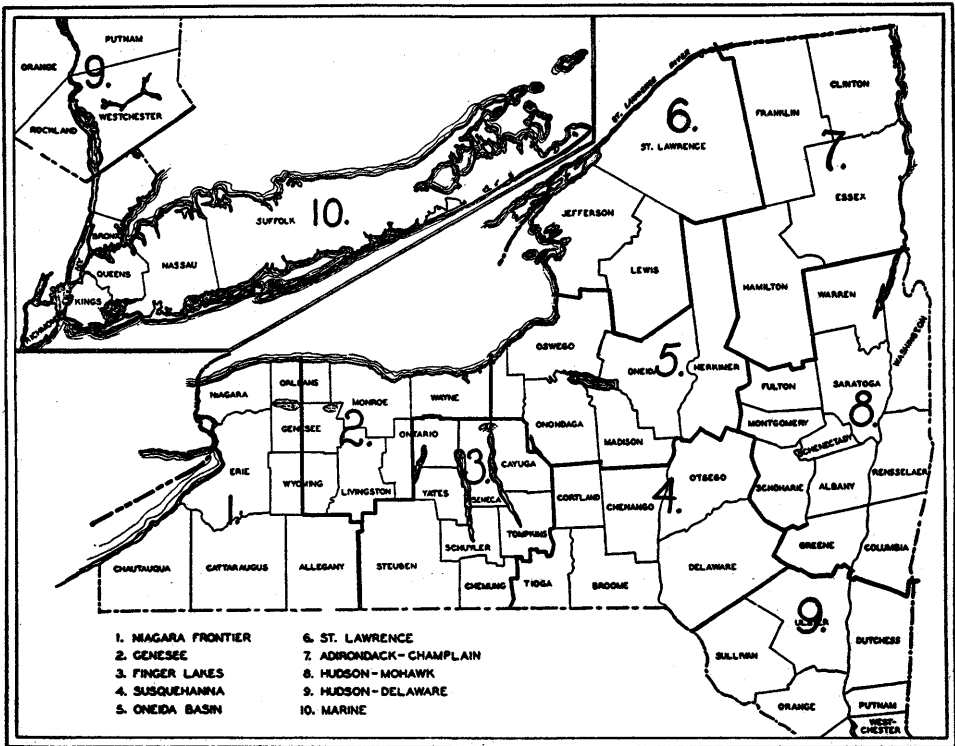
FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: A Western Kingbird was present at Jamaica Bay to Dec. 24, and was seen again Jan. 24 (WW, D. Brandt), "catching insects." 45 Tufted Titmice were found Dec. 16 on the Queens count, twice the previous high. Northern Nassau reported 85 on Dec. 30 below the high of 109 in 1974. These birds are far more common in the wooded areas on the north shore than they are further east. Carolina Wrens seemed low in all areas except on Gardiner's Island where they numbered 66 and did not seem to reflect the effects of recent hard winters. The total number on the Montauk count, 70, tied the previous high. A male **VARIED THRUSH** was seen briefly in Plandome Dec. 8 (O. Dunning), and another, or possibly the same bird, was enjoyed by many at a feeder in Mastic Jan. 3 through Mar. 2 (Mrs. Anderson, AJC). Two Hermit Thrushes were at Jamaica Bay Feb. 9 (GSR), while a Swainson's Thrush there Dec. 29-Jan. 1 may be the first fully documented winter occurrence in our Region (JA, THD). Four, possibly five Eastern Bluebirds were seen in Easthampton Feb. 18 (RA). A **WHEATEAR** was found at Great Kills Park, Staten Island, Dec. 30 (H. Athas). The largest flight of Northern Shrikes in many years produced numerous reports. The wintering population may have exceeded 20 with at least six noted regularly along the Jones Beach strip and the connecting causeways. At least two observers independently saw five in one day (AJL, THD). The season's only Loggerhead Shrike was seen in Far Rockaway Dec. 15 (R. Kelly).

VIREOS-WARBLES: A male Black-and-white Warbler was seen Dec. 8 in Sands Pt. (BJS). An Orange-crowned Warbler was found on Gardiner's Island Dec. 16 (N. Proctor), one was at Jones Beach Dec. 30 (I. Cantor), and another at West Gilgo Jan. 7 (AJL). A late Black-throated Green Warbler was present in Marine Park, Brooklyn Dec. 10 (J. Lamoureux). An Ovenbird was found in Pelham Bay Park Dec. 18 (H. Martin), and a Yellow-breasted Chat was present at a feeder in Blue Point from Nov. through Jan. (AJC).

WEAVERS-SPARROWS: A male **YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD** was seen Jan. 7 at a feeder in Westerly, Staten Island (C. Fallon). Northern Orioles were reported at a feeder in Elwood (R. Benjamin) Jan. 8, and at Montauk Dec. 2 (GSR). Two males and a female **BOAT-TAILED GRACKLES** Dec. 6 in Canarsie (WW) were apparently the same three birds present in Broad Channel Dec. 16-19 (I. Cantor *et al.*). A Rose-breasted Grosbeak was at a feeder in Quogue Dec. 16 for the count, while a tailless male was seen at a feeder in Westerly, Staten Island Jan. 7 (C. Fallon). Evening Grosbeaks were around in scattered numbers, 30 were at a feeder in Hauppauge (FF). Few Pine Siskins were reported; a maximum of 50 were seen at Captree Jan. 7 (AJL). 68 Am. Goldfinches at a feeder in Glen Cove Feb. 23 were a large number (F. McDonough). Three Red Crossbills were reported on the Montauk count, and 18 were at Muttontown Dec. 30 (AL). Pine Grosbeaks and redpolls were unreported. An "Oregon" Junco was present at a feeder in Classen Pt., Bronx, Jan. 8, on and off through the period (R. VanScoy). A Lark Sparrow was seen Dec. 3-4 at Great Kills Park, Staten Island (W. Framm), and a Chipping Sparrow was seen at a feeder in Amityville for a couple of weeks in early Jan. (AJL).

154 Dayton St., Sea Cliff, New York 11579

REPORTING REGIONS



For descriptions of Regions see Kingbird Vol. IV Nos. 1 and 2

REPORTING DEADLINES

Winter Season: December, January, February
 Deadline is March 7

Spring Season: March, April, May
 Deadline is June 7

Summer Season: June, July, August
 Deadline is September 7

Fall Season: September, October, November
 Deadline is December 7

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