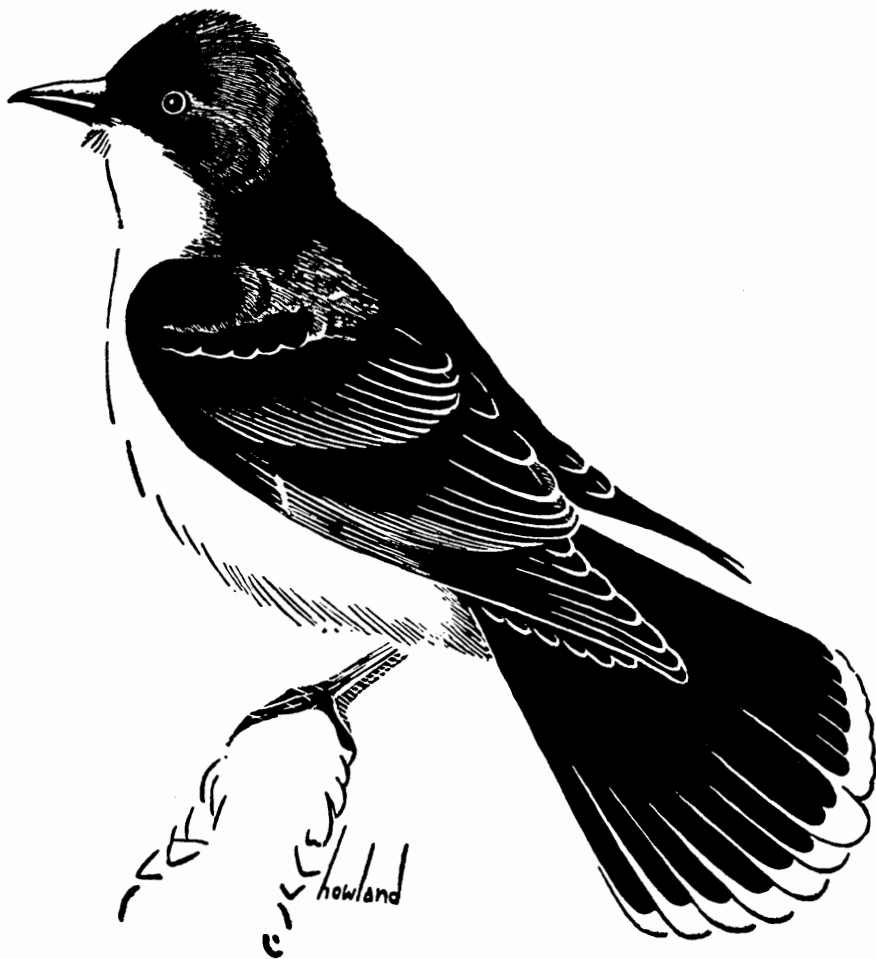


# The **KINGBIRD**



VOL. XXXIX, NO. 2

SPRING • 1989

FEDERATION OF NEW YORK STATE BIRD CLUBS, INC.



# *The* **KINGBIRD**

PUBLICATION OF THE FEDERATION OF NEW YORK STATE BIRD CLUBS, INC

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Vol. XXXIX, No. 2

Spring, 1989

73-130

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## CONTENTS

Wintering Turkey Vultures in Letchworth State Park.....	Douglas K. Bassett	74
The 1988 Fall Shorebird Season at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge.....	Arthur Morris	80
Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, Inc. Annual Meeting .....		96
Notes and Observations Some Comments on Yellow-rumped Warbler Molt.....	Robert P. Yunick	100
Highlights of the Winter Season .....	Robert Spahn	102
Regional Reports.....		106

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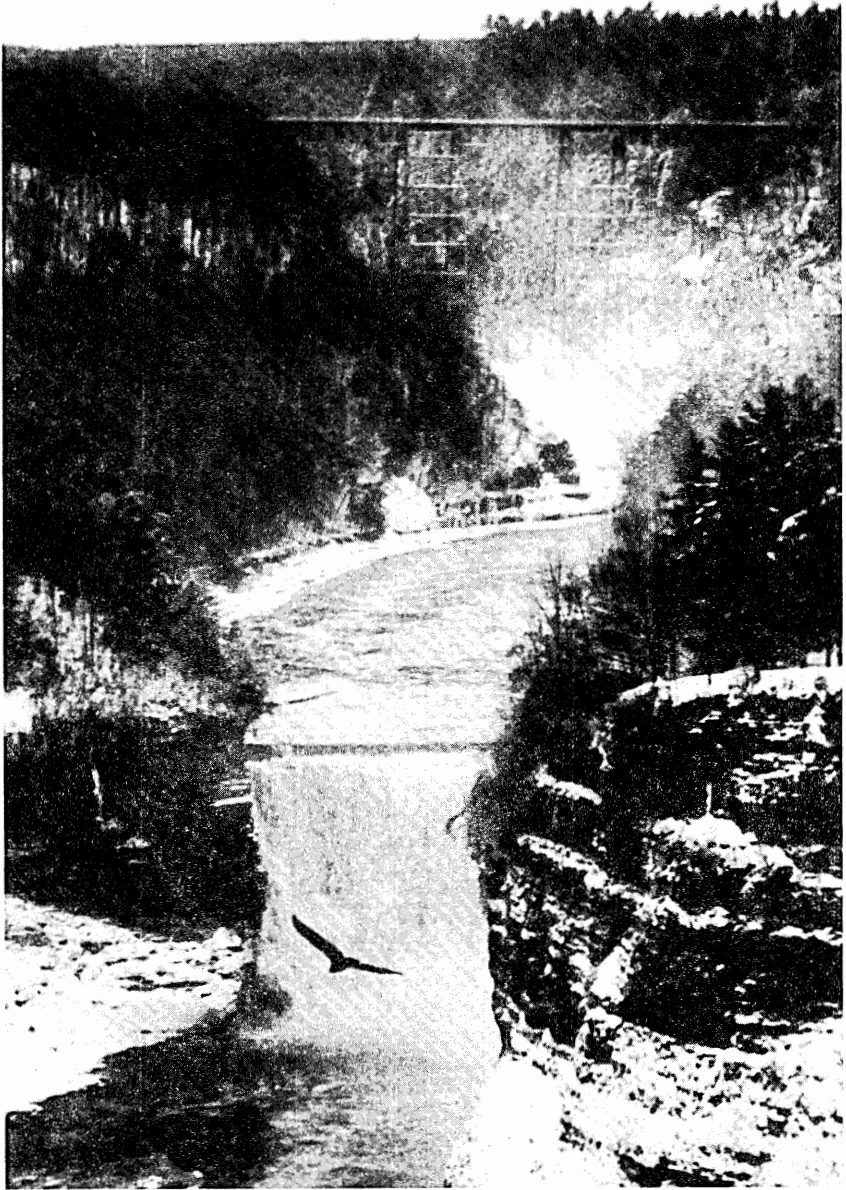
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*Editor* – Paul A. DeBenedictis

*Highlights of the Season*

*Editor* – Robert Spahn

*Circulation Manager* – American Printing & Typesetting Co.



*Turkey Vulture in Letchworth State Park in the Portage Canyon below Middle Falls. 4 Feb, 1988. Photograph by the author.*

## WINTERING TURKEY VULTURES IN LETCWORTH STATE PARK

DOUGLAS K. BASSETT

For at least the second year, several Turkey Vultures have spent the winter at 42° 35' 15" north latitude. Throughout the 1980's there have been sporadic winter sightings of Turkey Vultures in Letchworth State Park during the mild weather of January thaws. There are at least three January records as far north as Monroe County (43° north latitude), all within the last decade. I began wondering how far south these birds might be overwintering, and started paying attention to the location of December sightings.

Typically during the summer, 100-200 vultures use the twenty-two miles of the Genesee River Valley within Letchworth State Park between the villages of Portageville and Mt. Morris in Wyoming and Livingston Counties. I have observed cavity nests in all three of the canyons within the park ("Portage Canyon," the narrowest canyon; "Great Bend Gorge," the deepest; and "Mt. Morris Canyon," the longest). In the last five years, vulture sightings have increased in neighboring north-south valleys. During the summer of 1988, the group using the Oatka Valley in Warsaw contained 40-50 birds compared to 30-35 birds in 1987, 25-30 in 1986, 15-20 in 1985 and 10-15 in 1984. Usually by early November, all of these sites have been vacated.

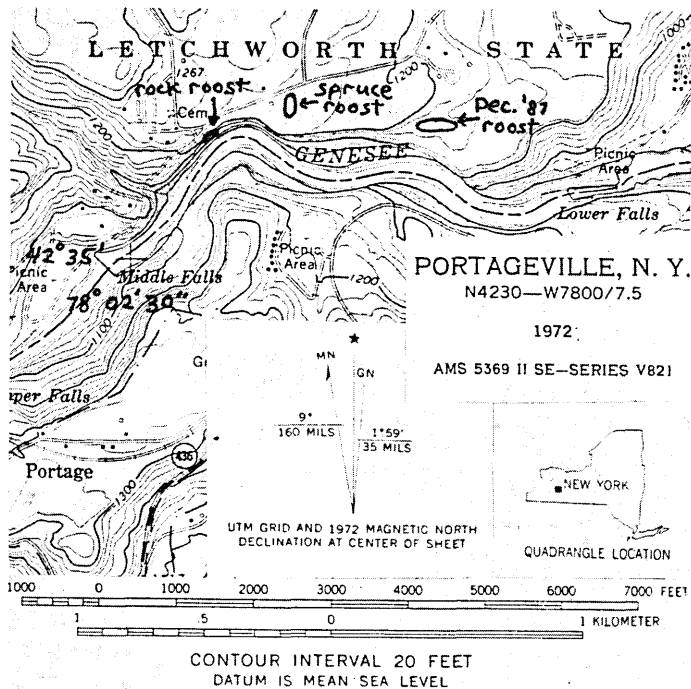
Were the vultures overwintering in the upper reaches of the Genesee River south of the park? Were they traveling here all the way from Pennsylvania during the winter warm spells? Could they be hiding within the park boundaries? In December of 1987, I had a chance to find out. Several vultures were spending their nights in the tops of White Pines (over 100 ft tall) on a shelf north of the Portage Canyon just south of the Administration Building. During the day they usually were seen in the prominent trees below the shelf on the north bank of the canyon. One snowy day late in the month they were in the night-roosting trees around noontime. I lost track of them for a week and then in early January 1988, relocated them three-eighths of a mile to the west in a plantation of Norway Spruce. There was a deer carcass at the south end of the spruce stand and they had cleaned the frozen flesh from the bones within a week. Tracks in the snow indicated fox and crows also had joined the feast.

Over the next two months I strived to make several observations each week to determine how many were here and how they were faring.

During the day, especially in the late afternoon, two to three hours before sunset, they regularly could be found on a vertical rock cliff in the Portage Canyon. This cliff, at 78° 02' 18" west longitude, towers over 300 ft above the river. The Portage Canyon at this narrowest point is 400-600 ft wide and 325 ft deep. The vultures use the upper 40 ft of the cliff which begins 25 ft below the rim of the canyon. On this cliff which faces 137° southeast, the vultures get a good exposure to the sun and are sheltered from the prevailing southwest winds. The irregularly coarse-fractured Nunda Sandstone provides many shelves and outcroppings for vulture-sized footholds. The lowest ledge that they use is heavily whitewashed, suggesting many years of use prior to my first observations. On milder days some of the vultures can be found perching on the ground above the cliff or in some overhanging dead tree snags. During the worst windchill, they seem to hug the cliff, sitting less upright or lying horizontally tight to the rocks. Frequently on sunny days, especially in the morning after leaving their night roost, several can be seen in their "sunning" posture with outstretched wings.

As the time for their daily departure from the cliff approaches, there seems to be an increase in alertness and preening activity. About half of the birds can be recognized as individuals due to feather loss, or when perched, by various head markings. Complete evacuation from the cliff usually takes five to ten minutes and seems to be initiated by no one particular bird. After five to ten minutes of soaring within the canyon and a few hundred feet above, the vultures retire to their night roost in the Norway Spruce. The spruce trees are only one quarter mile east of the vultures' rocky day roost. The whole process of leaving the day roost to settling in the night roost is usually completed within fifteen minutes. This evening show is their most spectacular behavior and is often in concert with the squadrons of 75-100 Rock Doves that have a year-round home in the canyon. This area is known as Inspiration Point, and this aerial show is yet another dimension to the emotional view of the Middle and Upper Falls.

The vultures are usually in their spruce roost forty-five minutes before sunset. This timing varies from two hours to one-half hour before sunset and seems to be earlier on the bleakest days. In the summer, vultures frequently retire after sunset, sometimes by as much as forty minutes to an hour afterward. When the vultures enter their night roost they land in the tops of the trees. Gradually they shift their positions, sometimes from tree to tree but usually to lower branches and positions closer to the trunks, but remaining in the upper fourth of the trees. Typically only three to six trees are used any particular night. Like on



*USGS map showing Turkey Vulture roosts in Letchworth State Park during the winters of 1988 and 1989.*

their rock roost, there does not seem to be any individual ownership of a specific perch other than by the one that gets there first. Once situated, the vultures continue their preening until they are quite settled down by nightfall. Sometimes during this preening period, skiers, or hikers, or people who stop and get out of their car to watch the deer will scare some of the vultures out of the roost. These vultures return, usually after five or more minutes of soaring. In addition to the vultures, the spruce roost is used regularly by crows and red squirrels and occasionally by a Red-tailed Hawk.

The trees in this spruce plantation average about 100 ft in height. The trees were planted in 1912 in block number 18 of an arboretum desired by the park's benefactor, William Pryor Letchworth. Planted in a grid with four foot spacing, the trees have grown tall and slender. Today the trees average fifteen feet apart and have diameters at breast height of eighteen inches. The Norway Spruce most used in the winter of 1988 is the largest tree in the stand and measures 105 ft in height, two feet in

diameter and spreads its branches thirty feet. This tree is located on the leeward side of the stand and is within forty yards of the main park road. The stand as a whole is fifty yards wide and one hundred thirty yards long (1.7 acres).

The vultures usually leave the spruce roost within an hour after sunrise. Some snowy mornings, several birds may linger for another hour or more. Although they usually all leave the roost within fifteen minutes, they generally go their separate ways. Sometimes there is a gathering on the rock roost before the morning dispersal while on other days most of the vultures disperse directly.

Fifteen vultures spent the winter of 1988. Two of these birds were immatures showing red heads but with the tips of their bills blackened in the outer two-thirds. Both birds had lighter edgings on their feathers but one seemed a little duskiest colored. During the winter of 1989, twenty birds were using the same roosts as the previous year. Again, there were two red-headed immatures, with one being more drably feathered. At least three of the adults seemed to be individuals that I could recognize in 1988 by facial markings.

Pooling all the sightings from both years, all the feeding observations have been within three to five miles of the roosts. Deer carcasses, primarily from roadkills, seemed to be the standard menu. Generally, less than half of the birds have been at a dining site at the same time. Rabbit, squirrel, raccoon and woodchuck also have drawn the vultures. During the coldest period and deepest snows the vultures seemed to stay near their roosts and may have gone a week or more without eating.

Sightings of birds in flight have been within the ten to fifteen mile range and generally were oriented along the river. Flight sightings ranged from the Mt. Morris Canyon in Livingston County to south of Wiscoy in Allegany County.

Several dozen observers have seen the vultures during the last two winters. One of the most interesting observations, reported to me by Jane Salminen of Rochester, New York, occurred in the early afternoon of a 40°F. day in the middle of January 1989. Fourteen vultures were seen along the river below their rock roost, several with outstretched wings bathing their backs in the sunlight. Three of the birds were dunking themselves in the river facing upstream and in water up to their necks. One of the birds was completely submerged for several seconds. These birds joined the others on the rocks along the river's rapids and began sunbathing. The fourteen were still at the river's edge at the end of the half-hour observation. I have seen vultures in the river before, but not in

the company of so large a group and not in the winter, nor an individual submerged for so many seconds.

The Turkey Vulture has several favorable factors to assist overwintering in Letchworth State Park: a day roost with a sunny exposure that is protected from the prevailing winds; a nearby night roost in tall, dense trees which serve as a windbreak; a winter concentration of several hundred deer as a potential food source; easy sailing in the regular air currents circulating through the canyon; roosts already situated in prime nesting habitat.

I expect the Turkey Vulture to continue its wintering efforts in the park and foresee future wintering populations that may exceed fifty birds. (I observed more than fifty vultures using the rock roost during the summer of 1988.) Also, I am curious to know if Turkey Vultures have wintered farther north than Letchworth State Park, perhaps somewhere east of Lake Michigan?

*Nature Interpretive Program, 1 Letchworth State Park, Castile, New York  
14427*



## THE 1988 FALL SHOREBIRD SEASON AT JAMAICA BAY WILDLIFE REFUGE

ARTHUR MORRIS

Thirty one species of shorebirds, matching the record low total of 1987, were noted at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, Queens, New York, during the 1988 fall migration. The refuge was visited 60 times between 25 June and 27 November. Every species present was censused at least once a week. Virtually all visits, which averaged three to four hours in duration, overlapped the time of high tide when the greatest number of birds fly into the East Pond to rest, feed, and preen. A majority of these birds disperse to tidal flats throughout Jamaica Bay as the tide recedes.

David Mizrahi joined me this year as co-compiler. Early in the season we counted birds together, reviewed censusing techniques and compared our results for both extrapolated and actual counts. As the season progressed and shorebird numbers grew, we split the workload. Usually, one of us would cover the northern half of the East Pond and the West Pond, while the other would cover the southern half of the East Pond including the Raunt, the South Flats and Headquarter's Cove. Instead of rushing as was necessary when I counted all survey areas myself, each of us was able to proceed more slowly and, therefore, to count more accurately. From October on, most counts were conducted by just one of us.

As in previous years, the refuge was divided into seven survey areas, "A" to "G" (Morris, 1986). Areas "A" to "F" were covered regularly. Census results are presented in Table 1. Area "G" was covered after mid September. Census results from area "G" are presented in Table 2. Species diversity is summarized in Table 3. Arrival dates in 1988, separated by age class, for the most common migrant species are compared with the corresponding arrival dates over the eight years since 1981 in Table 4.

The gate valve at the north end of the East Pond was opened on 24 June. The pond drained quickly. By mid July conditions, for the first time in four years, were perfect for arriving adult migrants. Consequently, numbers were above average for the first half of July. A bloom of filamentous green algae, once again less substantial than the previous year's, was noted. Then it rained and rained. By late July, the water was so high that some veteran observers thought the entire season would be washed out. No mudflats were exposed at the north end of the East Pond, usually the birds' favored haunts in July.

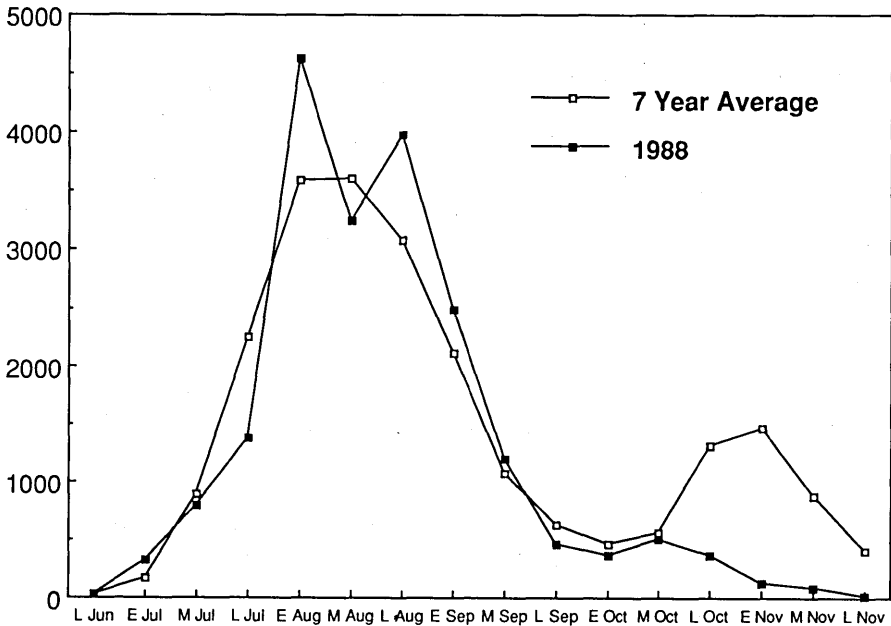


Figure 1. 1988 versus the seven year average.

Even Peep Island, at the Raunt, was underwater. Numbers fell well below the seven-year average (Davis, 1982, 1983, 1984; Morris, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988). The West Pond side (areas E and F) accounted for 35% to 70% of the daily totals during this period. National Park Service personnel reopened the gate valve and by early August the pond almost miraculously had drained to normal low levels. Arrival dates for adults of species which normally arrive in July averaged a week early. Migration of adults peaked in early August at almost 30% above average.

Arrival dates of juveniles also averaged a week early. Juveniles of several species were noted in well above average numbers in August as follows (numbers in parentheses are approximate maxima): Semipalmated (750), Least (100) and Western Sandpiper (50), Short-billed Dowitcher (350), and Lesser Yellowlegs (90). As a result, an uncharacteristic peak for juveniles in late August is apparent on the graph comparing the 1988 migration to the seven year average (Fig. 2).

The percentage of birds frequenting the West Pond side dropped steadily from early August (18%) through month's end (5%).

Shorebird numbers in the early fall were slightly below average. A Peregrine Falcon or a Merlin was noted on most visits. A Peregrine, with raised wings, doing the Louisiana two-step in the mud, was most entertaining, as was the Merlin with a bulging crop that leisurely chased a Semipalmated Sandpiper above the Raunt for more than three minutes before ripping it out of the sky. In September, from 3% to 30% of the birds counted were found on the sandy spit at the southwestern end of the old tern nesting area.

Heavy autumn rains refilled the East Pond prematurely. From late October through late November, daily totals were 85% below the seven year average. In 1987, daily totals for this period also were far below normal, despite perfect conditions at the East Pond. I twice suggested to refuge personnel that the East Pond be drained to provide suitable habitat for the soon-to-arrive flocks of Dunlin. However, the water level in the East Pond is directly tied to the water level in the Big John's Pond because they share the same water table. In an effort to keep enough water in Big John's Pond to protect reintroduced reptiles and amphibians (primarily salamanders) from heron predation and/or dropping temperatures, the flood gate was never reopened.

Shorebird numbers at Area "G", adjacent to the North Railroad Bridge, fluctuated as they had in previous years. A maximum of 550 birds, mostly Dunlin, was noted there on 29 October.

Species diversity (Table 3) was below average for much of the season, in part because four rare, but formerly regularly occurring species, American Avocet, Curlew Sandpiper, Ruff and Red-necked Phalarope, were missed.

## SPECIES ACCOUNTS

**Black-bellied Plover:** Well above average numbers of this species were present through mid September, but numbers were far below normal thereafter. Few juveniles were noted. A new record maximum of 1193 was recorded on 31 August.

**Lesser Golden-Plover:** Only three individuals, a record low number, were noted as this species had its third straight abysmal season at the refuge. These observations are not included in Table 1.

**Semipalmated Plover:** After the record early arrival of a single adult on 28 June, the above average numbers of adults, the bulk of which arrived about a week late, were followed by a fair showing of juveniles.

**Killdeer:** This was a below average season for local nesting birds. Numbers of migrant Killdeer, which pass through the refuge in September and October, were above average.

**American Oystercatcher:** Large flocks of oystercatchers are now a common sight at the refuge. They reflect continuing increases in both local and regional populations which, in turn, foster the northward range expansion that this species is currently undergoing. As in 1987, a pair nested successfully on the sandy spit at the western edge of the South Marsh. Strangely, numbers were far below average in late September and early October. It is most likely that the birds simply chose another roost during this period for reasons unknown.

**Greater Yellowlegs:** Numbers of this species were somewhat below average this season except during October, when several good-sized flocks of first-winter birds were present.

**Lesser Yellowlegs:** This was an average season for adults and a good one for juveniles. In mid August, a worn adult with a bank mussel clamped tightly on the toes of its left foot was present on the South Flats. I saw it several times over a period of ten days. It weakened gradually during this time. Though I never found the bird dead, it seemed likely that this attachment was a fatal one.

**Solitary Sandpiper:** Single birds present on 16, 24 and 31 August are not included in Table 1.

**Willet:** Local and regional populations continue to increase dramatically. A new maximum for this species has been established each year since the survey's inception in 1981. The tradition continued this year when 59 were counted on 21 July.

**Spotted Sandpiper:** This was an average season for this local breeder.

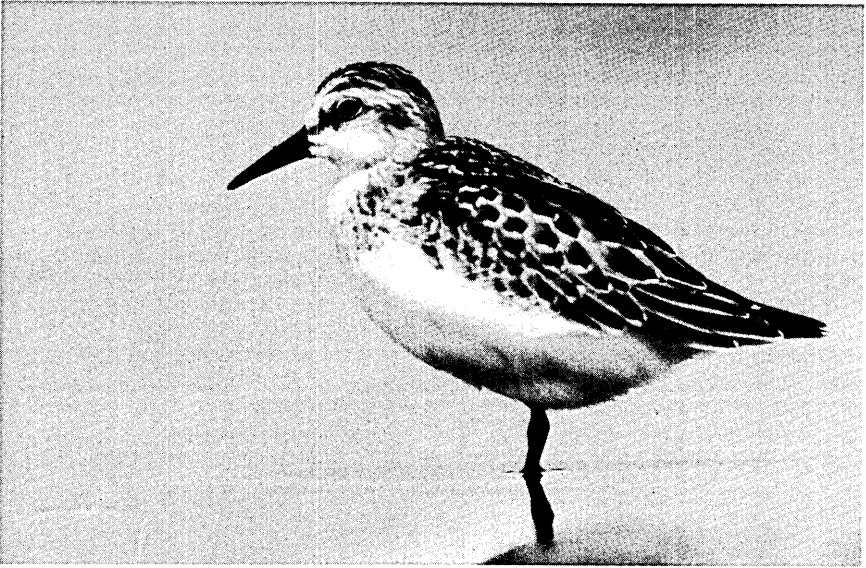
**Upland Sandpiper:** On 28 August, two calling birds flew over the East Pond (Tom Burke, Paul Lehman). Their occurrence is not included in Table 1.

**Whimbrel:** Seven Whimbrel that flew over the refuge on 21 August were the only recorded ones this season. They are not included in Table 1.

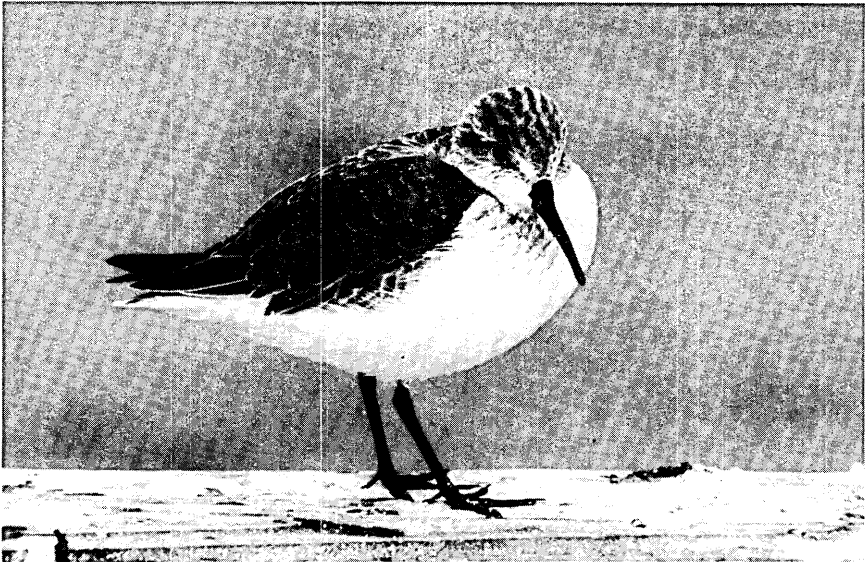
**Hudsonian Godwit:** This was an average season for this species. The only juvenile noted was one present from 10 October to 19 November.

**Marbled Godwit:** This was a good year for Marbled Godwits. Four birds present in early September equaled the maximum established last season.

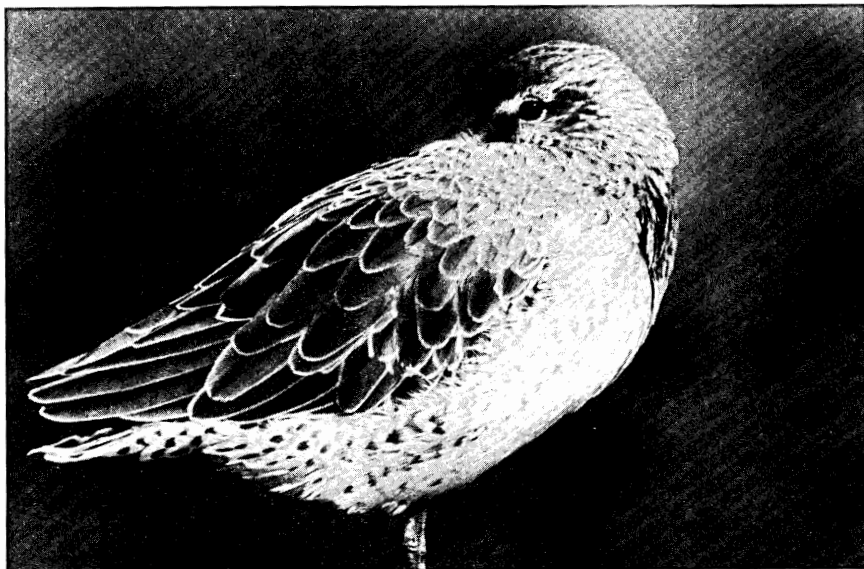
**Ruddy Turnstone:** The adult flight arrived about two weeks late but in above average numbers. As usual, only a few juveniles of this species visited the refuge this fall; most are seen at the Raunt.



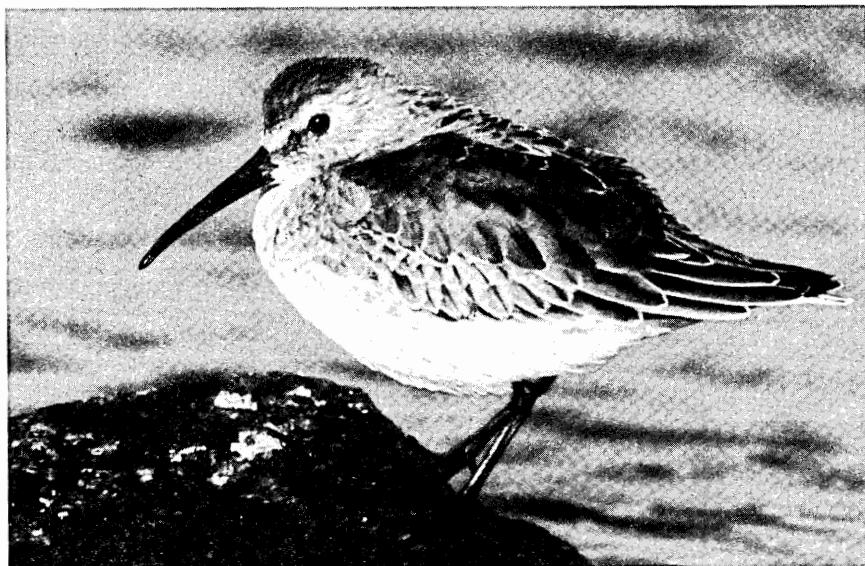
*Figure 2. Juvenile Semipalmated Sandpiper, East Pond, Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, New York, 17 Aug 1988. Photograph by the author.*



*Figure 3. Western Sandpiper in Basic Plumage, Zach's Bay, Long Island, New York, 16 Oct 1988. Photograph by the author.*



*Figure 4. Short-billed Dowitcher in Basic Plumage, Zach's Bay, Long Island, New York. Photograph by the author.*



*Figure 5. Dunlin in Basic Plumage, Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge, New York, 5 Oct 1988. Photograph by the author.*

**Red Knot:** Flocks of this species arrived, in above average numbers, on schedule in early August. Between 25 July and 9 August I noted at least 15 different color-banded Knots. Most sported a green leg-flag indicating that they were banded in the United States. Band data was sent to Brian Harrington at Manomet Bird Observatory. Five of the birds had been banded in Massachusetts. Most of the rest had been banded in southern New Jersey in the spring.

**Sanderling:** Except for a fair showing, including a flock of 112, at the end of August, few Sanderling visited the refuge this season. The virtual disappearance of this species from the East Pond is an indication of its precipitous decline in the Americas over the past 15 years.

**Semipalmated Sandpiper:** Average numbers of adults were followed by an excellent flight of young birds in late August.

**Western Sandpiper:** A record early Western on 8 July was one of only three adults present this season. This poor showing, however, was followed by an unprecedented flight of juveniles. On 28 August, 52 carefully counted birds, all in fresh juvenal plumage, was a new maximum.

**White-rumped Sandpiper:** Except for a small flight in late August, there were few adults at the refuge this season, and juveniles were exceedingly scarce.

**Baird's Sandpiper:** Single juveniles noted on 24 August and 5 September are not included in Table 1.

**Pectoral Sandpiper:** This was an above average season for both adults and juveniles.

**Dunlin:** Incredibly, Dunlin numbers at the East Pond were down more than 95%, due at least in part to the high water levels that covered all mudflats after late October. During October and early November, fair numbers were present at Area "G".

**Stilt Sandpiper:** This was a below average season, and few juveniles were present.

**Buff-breasted Sandpiper:** Four birds on five dates, including one seen daily from 5-11 September, was the best showing ever for this handsome shorebird. The birds frequented the grassy margins of the West Pond where they fed with juvenile Pectoral Sandpipers.

**Short-billed Dowitcher:** Adult migration began with above average numbers present in early July and peaked in early August rather than late July as usual. An excellent flight of several hundred juveniles arrived in late August; their numbers dwindled throughout September.

**Long-billed Dowitcher:** Adults were scarce in July and August, but fair numbers were present in early September. A record early (by 18 days) juvenile was impeccably described on 27 August by a visiting birder with impeccable credentials, Paul Lehman. Twenty-three first-winter birds in their usual haunts at the north end of the East Pond were present from 27 September through 7 October.

**Common Snipe:** One bird, a bit late on 12 November, was the only snipe observed at the refuge this season. It is not included in Table 1.

**American Woodcock:** It was a good year for this secretive local breeder.

**Wilson's Phalarope:** No adults were noted this season. A single bird in fresh juvenal plumage was followed by a good showing of first-winter birds, highlighted by seven on 24 August.

### Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the many observers who helped fill in the gaps in daily counts, especially those who made detailed, legible log entries. Thanks also to Max and Nellie Larsen, Tom Hook, Bob Kurtz, Steve Walter, and Kevin Karlson, who assisted in gathering data for the 1988 count. And very special thanks go to David Mizrahi for becoming co-compiler and making my life a lot easier. He was extremely reliable, proved to be a skilled birder, a tireless worker, and best of all, a good friend. I look forward to his help in the years to come. This survey was done in cooperation with the International Shorebird Surveys, Manomet, Massachusetts.

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**Erratum:** The arrival date for adult Red Knot in 1987 was inadvertently printed as 1 July (*Kingbird* 39(2):93). It should read 28 July. Table 5 in that report reflects the correct date. — *The Editor*.

Table 1. Jamaica Bay National Wildlife Refuge Fall Shorebird Census 1988

Species	June		July												
	25	27	28	29	2	5	8	9	12	14	16	17	19	21	23
Plover, Black-bellied			1			2		3	9	25	5	8	6	17	2
Semipalmated															9
Killdeer	4	7	5	5		9	1	16	23	8	19	3	10	4	2
American Oystercatcher	10	7	8	11	5	19	3	40	23	2	24	20	34	27	32
Yellowlegs, Greater					5	1	4	13	21	23	15	9	41	27	
Lesser				10		4	9	7	24	35	24	23	18	17	2
Willet	12	13	11	12	11	12	1	31	33		17	12	22	59	40
Sandpiper, Spotted		2		4	1		1	1	2		1	3	7	4	2
Godwit, Hudsonian					1	1			1		4	5	4	5	1
Marbled															
Ruddy Turnstone														2	3
Red Knot									1			1	3	54	4
Sanderling															
Sandpiper, Semipalmated						1	8	2	29	25	306	252	456	475	395
Western							1						2		
Sandpiper, Least	1			3		6	8	30	45	80	52	25	46	19	3
White-rumped															
Pectoral											1		2	1	1
Dunlin															
Stilt						1						7	4	1	1
Buff-breasted															
Dowitcher, Short-billed	1			1	5	63	558	406	471	352	248	321	678	654	371
Long-billed															
American Woodcock	2			3	8						1		1		
Phalarope, Wilson's															
Number of species	6	4	4	8	7	11	10	10	11	9	13	13	16	15	15
Daily total	30	29	25	49	36	119	594	549	681	551	717	689	1334	1366	868
Coverage: East Pond				cd		aBCd	ABCd	ABCD	AbcD	AbcD	ABcd	ABCD	ABCD	ABCD	B
West Pond	EF	EF	EF	EF	EF	EF	EF	EF	E	E	E	E	E	E	E

lower case = 0 birds in censused area

Species noted in the Species Accounts as NOT being included in Table 1 ARE included in the number of species and the daily totals.

Table 1 (cont.) Jamaica Bay National Wildlife Refuge Fall Shorebird Census 1988

Species	July		August												
	24	29	30	31	2	5	7	8	12	16	18	21	24	28	31
Plover, Black-bellied	2	4	4	32	82	182	600	403	332	379	579	837	684	885	1193
Semipalmated	35	64	80	95	652	717	800	649	506	364	470	666	410	614	339
Killdeer	2	2	2	1	2	1	2	13	19	19	9	10	17	3	5
American Oystercatcher	29	39	30	28	35	101	6	108	111	147	153	123	71	74	106
Yellowlegs, Greater	34	102	80	53	64	73	20	126	161	161	55	243	226	284	167
Lesser	9	33	30	24	12	12	15	56	74	36	39	52	98	72	15
Willet	15	10	20	15	6	5		10	21	2	3	12	13	7	10
Sandpiper, Spotted	4	5	3	3	1	6	5	2	1	4			2	5	1
Godwit, Hudsonian	2	4	3	3	4	3	1	6	7	3	5	4	4	5	4
Marbled								1	1			1		1	3
Ruddy Turnstone	6	7	10	5	47	112	80	183	36	98	107	113	81	93	48
Red Knot	202	247	350	375	763	996	350	751	44	30	216	367	383	345	67
Sanderling			1	2	4	6		1	2			2	1	23	112
Sandpiper, Semipalmated	529	497	700	395	1772	1757	1500	1866	1735	1151	1020	1188	1256	1243	807
Western							1			8	12	13	33	52	40
Sandpiper, Least	18	5	4	7	15	21	40	20	17	61	62	75	102	86	68
White-rumped							6		1	4	2	14	17	49	27
Pectoral			1	1	1	2	12	11	5	35	9	19	13	27	13
Dunlin															
Stilt	1	2	2	5	6	5	12	10	10	6	6	5	19	14	9
Buff-breasted										1		2			
Dowitcher, Short-billed	514	368	450	363	1005	908	800	651	671	309	372	495	497	472	283
Long-billed		6		5			3	3	2			1	2	3	10
American Woodcock			1		1		2				10		2		
Phalarope, Wilson's			1	1			1		1	3	2	2	7	6	2
Number of species	15	16	19	19	18	17	20	18	21	21	19	23	24	23	23
Daily total	1402	1395	1772	1413	4472	4907	4256	4869	3757	2822	3131	4251	3940	4365	3330
Coverage: East Pond	ABCD	ABCD	BCD	ABCD	ABCD	ABCD	ABCD	ABCD	ABCD	ABCD	ABCD	ABCD	ABCD	ABCD	ABCD
West Pond	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E

Table 1 (cont.) Jamaica Bay National Wildlife Refuge Fall Shorebird Census 1988

Date	September															
	5	8	11	16	18	21	24	27	1	4	7	8	10	15	21	
Plover, Black-bellied	533	561	534	374	286	43	138	361	25		16	25		70	1	
Semipalmated	83	27	28	3	2	1										
Killdeer	2	10	9	7	1	14	1		25	6	17		13	21	6	
American Oystercatcher	31	72	89		21	2	12		5					37		
Yellowlegs, Greater	216	201	220	89	106	61	69	169	320	151	179	191	375	264	160	
Lesser	37	61	39	29	29	3	23	17	9	18	16	13	18	17	15	
Willet	11	14	12	7	10	8	5	5	3	3		3	2	1		
Sandpiper, Spotted		2	1			1									1	
Godwit, Hudsonian	6	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	1	3	1	4	3	4	2	
Marbled	4	4		3	3	2	1	1	1	1						
Ruddy Turnstone	52	20	15	7	8	2	8	7	1							
Red Knot	28	59	60	57	12	8	28	33			8	3		2		
Sanderling		1														
Sandpiper, Semipalmated	1343	981	506	206	189	64	56	37	4		5		10	28		
Western	48	11	7	5	1	1		1	1							
Sandpiper, Least	58	73	93	77	77	25	17	12	4					1	1	
White-rumped	11	5	7	3	4				4	3		1	1	4	2	
Pectoral	19	7	4	5	34	7	14	10	16	2				9	10	
Dunlin	1			2	3		5	22	16	50	36	39	59	37	40	
Stilt	6		2	2	1	2									1	
Buff-breasted	2	1	1													
Dowitcher, Short-billed	187	135	147	52	54	9	24	12	12	7	2	2	1			
Long-billed	1	16	2		2			23	17	12	23		2			
American Woodcock		1							2							
Phalarope, Wilson's	2	1	2		1	1				1						
Number of species	23	23	21	18	21	20	17	15	18	12	10	9	10	13	11	
Daily total	2682	2265	1779	930	845	256	403	711	466	257	303	281	484	495	239	
Coverage: East Pond	ABCD	ABCD	ABCD	ABCD	ABCD	ABCD	ABCD	ABCD	ABCD	ABCD	ABCD	ABCD	ABCD	ABCD	ABCD	
West Pond	E	E	E	E	E	E	Ef	E	E	EF		E	Ef	E		

Table 1 (cont.) Jamaica Bay National Wildlife Refuge Fall Shorebird Census 1988

Species	October		November								
	22	23	29	3	7	11	15	19	22	24	27
Plover, Black-bellied		13	66								
Semipalmated				4							
Killdeer			1	4							
American Oystercatcher		76	106	74	87	71	50	37	22		9
Yellowlegs, Greater	170	371	170	18	27	32	16	5			6
Lesser		15	12	8	1	3	1	1			1
Willet		1									
Sandpiper, Spotted											
Godwit, Hudsonian		3	5	4	2	3	4	2			
Marbled											
Ruddy Turnstone											
Red Knot		1	1								
Sanderling			1								
Sandpiper, Semipalmated		4	1								
Western											
Sandpiper, Least											
White-rumped		2	1	2							
Pectoral		12	3								
Dunlin	80	46	34	7	10	7	8	19			2
Stilt			3								
Buff-breasted											
Dowitcher, Short-billed		1	1		1						
Long-billed	4	7									
American Woodcock											
Phalarope, Wilson's			2								
Number of species	3	13	15	8	6	6	5	5	1	0	4
Daily total	254	552	407	121	128	117	79	64	22	0	18
Coverage: East Pond	BCd	ABCD	ABCD	AbCd	abCd	abCd	abCd	abCd	abcd	abcd	c
West Pond	E	E	E	EF	EF	E	E	E	E	e	Ef

Table 2. Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge 1988 Shorebird Survey. Area "G"

Species	September					October					November								
	11	18	21	22	27	1	5	7	8	10	15	23	29	4	7	11	15	19	24
Plover, Black-bellied	45	150	250	85	3	63	49	108	48	100	31	177	34	10	31	8			
Lesser Golden Semipalmated	31	3		3			1			1		2		1					
Killdeer		1							2										
Yellowlegs, Greater								1											
Ruddy Turnstone	12	8	2	2	1	1	1	4	4	7		3	2	1					
Red Knot		2	8			2	8			1	1					1			
Sanderling		8	1		1	2		2		6	1		10	7	2				
Sandpiper, Semipalmated Least	1			3		1				3		3							
Western White-rumped							2			2		2	2	1					
Dunlin	1					14	90	174	98	350	14	177	502	450	550	35		16	
Dowitcher, Short-billed			2			2													
<b>Number of species</b>	5	6	5	4	3	7	6	6	3	8	4	7	5	6	4	2	0	1	0
<b>Number of individuals</b>	90	172	263	93	5	85	151	291	150	470	47	365	550	470	584	43	0	16	0

Table 3. Species Diversity 1981-1987

	Late Jun & E. July	Late July	Early Aug	Late Aug	Early Sept	Late Sept	Early Oct	Late Oct & Nov
1981	14	25	25	26	26	27	23	21
1982	13	24	25	29	31	30	26	19
1983	12	27	24	26	31	28	22	22
1984	13	25	29	26	28	29	26	21
1985	15	24	25	29	27	30	22	20
1986	14	23	29	29	23	22	16	18
1987	14	22	25	26	27	26	21	24
Average	13.6	24.3	26.0	27.3	27.6	27.4	22.3	20.7
1988	15	22	23	28	26	24	20	23

Note: American Woodcock, which breeds locally, is presumed to be present throughout the season whether observed in a given period or not.

Table 4. Adult and Juvenile Arrival Dates

Species	Adults				Juveniles			
	Span	Years	Mean	1988	Span	Years	Mean	1988
Plover, Black-bellied	late July*			23 Jul	26 Aug - 27 Sep	7	6 Sep	6 Sep
Lesser Golden-Semipalmated	14 Aug - 21 Sep	7	29 Aug	21 Sep	29 Aug - 24 Sep	7	6 Sep	24 Sep
Yellowlegs, Greater	28 Jun - 15 Jul	7	5 Jul	28 Jun	11 Aug - 22 Aug	8	15 Aug	13 Aug
Lesser Turnstone, Ruddy	22 Jun - 30 Jun	7	26 Jun	26 Jun	7 Aug - 25 Aug	6	16 Aug	9 Aug
Knot, Red	24 Jun - 3 Jul	8	29 Jun	29 Jun	25 Jul - 11 Aug	9	5 Aug	5 Aug
Sanderling	19 Jul - 29 Jul	7	21 Jul	21 Jul	12 Aug - 30 Aug	6	22 Aug	18 Aug
Sandpiper, Semipalmated	14 Jul - 28 Jul	7	18 Jul	14 Jul	15 Aug - 29 Aug	7	20 Aug	17 Aug
Western	15 Jul - 29 Jul	7	20 Jul	27 Jul	23 Aug - 30 Aug	5	27 Aug	28 Aug
Least	24 Jun - 12 Jul	8	1 Jul	5 Jul	7 Aug - 19 Aug	7	12 Aug	9 Aug
White-rumped	8 Jul - 24 Jul	7	15 Jul	8 Jul	7 Aug - 30 Aug	6	17 Aug	7 Aug
Pectoral	25 Jun - 9 Jul	7	1 Jul	25 Jun	26 Jul - 10 Aug	7	3 Aug	2 Aug
Dunlin	18 Jul - 7 Aug	7	28 Jul	7 Aug	13 Sep - 16 Oct	8	27 Sep	1 Oct
Sandpiper, Stilt	5 Jul - 20 Jul	7	13 Jul	5 Jul	22 Aug - 9 Sep	7	29 Aug	24 Aug
Dowitcher, Short-billed	5 Jul - 20 Jul	7	13 Jul	5 Jul	5 Sep - 20 Sep	8	12 Sep	11 Sep
Long-billed	17 Jul - 6 Aug	7	22 Jul	29 Jul	26 Jul - 31 Aug	8	17 Aug	18 Aug
					2 Aug - 15 Aug	9	9 Aug	2 Aug
					27 Aug - 8 Oct	7	23 Sep	27 Aug

\* lingering, non-breeding birds may be present throughout July

\*\* only scattered adults before mid September



**FEDERATION OF NEW YORK STATE BIRD CLUBS, INC.**  
**ANNUAL MEETING**  
**Rochester, New York**  
**16-18 September 1988**

President Berna Weissman called the 41st Annual Meeting of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, Inc. to order at the Rochester Marriott Airport Hotel at 2:25 P.M. on Friday, 16 September 1988. The roll call totaled 26 clubs, including the three hosts, Burroughs-Audubon Nature Club, Genesee Ornithological Society, and Rochester Birding Association. The minutes of the 40th Annual Meeting were accepted as published in *The Kingbird*. The President opened her report by announcing that a long time Executive Committee member, Connie Wilkins, had died the previous day following heart surgery. A moment of silence expressed the deep sadness of losing a dear friend.

Berna Weissman's report reflected a successful year for Federation, highlighted by the completion of the Breeding Bird Atlas under the able leadership of Chairman Gordon Meade and Editors Bob Andrie and Janet Carroll. Gordon's essay on the history of the Federation from 1947-1988 had been reprinted as a souvenir program for attendees at this meeting.

Stan Lincoln presented the Treasurer's Report, which was accepted and filed. The Federation continues to enjoy financial good health, as confirmed by his four-year analysis. The Auditing Committee, consisting of Dick Sloss (Chairman) and Irv Cantor, presented a signed document confirming that the financial statements for 1987 represented fairly the activities of the organization: The delegates joined Charlie Smith in commending Stan Lincoln for his efforts as Federation Treasurer.

Dick Sloss and Stan Lincoln accepted the appointments to the Committee on Resolutions, and to present their proposals at the Saturday banquet.

Myrna Hemmerick gave the Membership report. Her records showed 787 members in 1988, representing a net gain of 91. As of the date of the meeting, 35 of the 40 membership clubs had paid their club membership dues. Rockland Audubon Society, which had formerly been a member club and host of an Annual Meeting, was unanimously voted in as a member club. Myrna also reported that Schuyler County Bird Club had been dropped from membership in the past year by vote of the Executive Committee. The President requested that Myrna draft a flyer explaining club membership requirements and that a note of club

membership be included in future issues of *The Kingbird* and *New York Birders*.

Charlie Smith reported that 1989 will be the last year of the three-year Project Bird Watch. There were about 200 participants in the project in 1988, compared with about 400 in 1987.

Max Wheat reported on *New York Birders*. He noted that an anthology of writings from club newsletters was in progress, and reminded the delegates to ensure that their respective clubs include him on their mailing lists. He expressed his gratitude to the various editors who had included his own and others' poems in their newsletters, and encouraged members to write more poems about birds and birding.

Paul DeBenedictis thanked the Regional Editors for *The Kingbird*, and solicited articles on bird findings or new or unusual "hot spots" discovered during the Atlas project. He announced that Seymour Schiff and Al Wollin will be the new Editors for Region 10. Paul also distributed worksheets for each club for further duplication to furnish him with departure dates for birds, which are being published by *The Kingbird*.

Fritz Scheider was unable to attend the meeting, but had sent word that NYSARC was continuing their work on a state checklist, and the 1987 report was near completion.

Harriet Marsi, in her Conservation Committee Report, reported that the proposal from Commissioner Joerling to reclassify the appointment requirements for DEC section heads had been defeated in the State Senate. The Federation's position regarding the request by fishermen on Oneida Lake, based on prior research by Janet Carroll and current research by John Confer, that cormorants be removed from the Protected List has been mailed to Commissioner Joerling. Several other issues are being continually monitored by the Conservation Committee, including the proposal by DEC to divide the game and non-game divisions, Return-A-Gift-To-Wildlife appropriations, the legal battles of the Jay Coalition in Rye, New York, and the impact of water level changes in Montezuma NWR. Harriet expressed her concern that the Federation currently has no reliable information resource on conservational legislative issues coming up in Albany. Carolyn Cass read a statement prepared by Martha Reinhardt and Fred Miller from the Federation of Monroe County Environmentalists regarding the proposed dredging of Irondequoit Bay, and urged the delegates to write to the Commissioner to block the effort. After considerable discussion about the relationship between the Federation and the Audubon Society of New York State, it was voted that the President would contact Ron Dodson to restate the

Federation's request for information about his organization. Friday's meeting was adjourned at 4:40 P.M.

When the delegates reconvened Saturday morning, 17 September, the slate of Federation officers for 1989 was presented by Harriet Marsi, Nominating Committee Chairperson. The slate was unanimously approved.

The insight gained from the morning's field trip to Irondequoit Bay resulted in a resolution to send letters to Commissioner Joerling and to the regional DEC office in Avon to request an environmental impact study before the dredging permit renewal in November, 1988.

Dick Sloss and Irving Cantor were reappointed to the Auditing Committee, and Harriet Marsi, assisted by Manny Levine and Bob Spahn, will comprise the 1989 Nominating Committee.

The resignation of Allen H. Benton from the Bibliography Committee was accepted with the President expressing her gratitude to Allen for his many years of service to the Federation.

Berna Weissman then introduced Norman Stotz of the National Audubon Society, who spoke about the current activities of the organization. Although he foresaw no prospects of reconciliation with Ron Dodson of the Audubon Society of New York State at this time, it was voted unanimously to have the Federation send a letter to Audubon Society of New York State, Inc. and the National Audubon Society to encourage full cooperation between the two organizations. Copies of the letter will be sent to each member club.

Bob Miller and Peter Nye, reporting from the DEC, announced that Return-A-Gift-To-Wildlife had a budget of \$1,700,000 for the 1987 tax year, and that the selection of projects to be funded would take place in October. The DEC is currently embarking on a project to acquire up to 35,000 acres of Montezuma wetlands, in cooperation with several private organizations. Volunteers are sought to participate in the ongoing Endangered Species Project, surveying Bald Eagle and Peregrine Falcon, and in the New York State Waterfowl Survey, which is to be initiated in April, 1989.

The President announced that Don Windsor and Jim Clinton had volunteered to prepare the ten-year index of *The Kingbird*, due in 1990.

Jon Robson, Chairperson for the 1989 Annual Meeting to be held at the Holiday Inn in Auburn 15-17 September 1989, solicited displays and workshop participants.

Saturday's Council of Delegates meetings was adjourned at 11.20 A.M. At the evening banquet, Dick Sloss read a resolution thanking the three host clubs for an outstanding successful Annual Meeting. Paul

DeBenedictis announced that the recipients of the John J. Elliott Award for 1987 were Michele H. Frech and John L. Confer for their article on the Golden-winged Warbler. Bill Reeves presented the recipient of the Lillian C. Stoner Award, Donald Smith of the Lyman Langdon Audubon Society.

The reading of a scroll by the President, to have been presented to Connie Wilkins, who died immediately prior to the meeting, concluded the business portion of the meeting. Dr. Stephen Kress of Cornell University Laboratory of Ornithology concluded the highly successful Annual Meeting with a fascinating program on his work on the Galapagos Islands.

Respectfully submitted,  
Øivind E. Jensen  
*Recording Secretary*

## NOTES & OBSERVATIONS

**Some comments on Yellow-rumped Warbler molt:** When K. C. Parkes (*Kingbird* 35:114-115; 1985) reported the occurrence of a molting Yellow-rumped Warbler (*Dendroica coronata*) on Great Gull Island, a non-breeding location, on 28 August 1983, he compared it to a series of molt data from Canadian specimens in the Carnegie Museum collection. I present here molt data on 14 New York and two New Jersey birds which may help to better establish the temporal context of the Great Gull Island bird within this species' molt scheme.

Data on the 14 New York birds were obtained while banding at Jenny Lake, near Corinth in northern Saratoga County, at an elevation of about 380 m. Yellow-rumped Warblers commonly breed at this location. Two October birds were captured at Island Beach State Park near Seaside Park, New Jersey, where the species occurs very abundantly as a migrant during October and November, and is less numerous as a wintering species. These results are summarized in Table 1, where the estimated Great Gull Island data are inserted between birds 8 and 9.

At Jenny Lake, some of the banded breeding birds have been recaptured one or two years after banding as late as 17 July. Seven females with eggs in their oviducts have been captured between 6 June and 10 July, with 30 June the average date. The exact status of August and September birds is not known, but I believe from these and other observations that birds captured through August are primarily local breeders or birds dispersed from nearby breeding territories whereas most September birds are passing migrants. Small numbers of very newly fledged juveniles were captured 1-10 July, while peak numbers of immatures were banded 11-20 September as presumed migrants.

Compared to most of the late August-early September captures at Jenny Lake, the Great Gull Island bird's state of molt appears retarded. This kind of variability between molting individuals is not uncommon. However, it does seem unusual that this bird, which appeared to be in the vanguard of migration or dispersal, was so behind the molt schedule of individuals from a relatively nearby breeding area about 275 km from Great Gull Island.

The tabulated results suggest that molt in some individuals commences about 5 July. This coincides with the first capture of newly fledged juveniles. I have captured adults as late as 10 July with no indication of molt, and the state of molt of birds 3 and 5 suggest that molt possibly may begin as late as 15 July. Bird 4 and the Great Gull Island bird are in the same approximate state of molt at dates differing by a month. Similarly, birds 4 and 11 differ by about a month. The greatest temporal variation occurs between birds 10 and 16, which differ by about 40 days in the completion of their molt.

*Robert P. Yunick, 1527 Myron Street, Schenectady, New York 12309*

Table 1. Molt data on Yellow-rumped Warblers

Date	Sex	Primaries								Secondaries						Retrices							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	1	2	3	4	5	6	1	2	3	4	5	6	
11 Jul 87	M	1/4	Sh																				
17 Jul 83	M	Sh	Sh																				
22 Jul 88	F	Sh	M																				
28 Jul 87	M	7/8	7/8	3/4	1/2	Sh											1/2	1/3					
4 Aug 77	F	3/4	1/2	M																			
20 Aug 82	U	N	N	N	N	3/4	Sh										N	3/4	3/4	2/3	2/3	Sh	
27 Aug 77	F	N	N	N	N	3/4	3/4	Sh			1/2						N	N	3/4	3/4	2/3	2/3	
28 Aug 77	F	N	N	N	N	N	N	3/4	2/3	2/5	N	N	3/5	Sh			N	N	N	N	N	N	
23 Aug 83	F	3/4	3/4	2/3	1/3												1/3	1/3	1/3	1/3	1/3	1/3	
2 Sep 77	U	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	3/4	2/3	N	N	3/4	1/3	Sh	M	N	N	N	N	N	N	
4 Sep 77	M	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	7/8	3/4	N	3/4	2/3	2/3	1/3	Sh	N	N	N	N	N	N	
5 Sep 77	F	N	N	3/4	2/3	1/3	Sh										1/5	1/5	1/5	1/5	1/5		
10 Sep 77	F	N	N	N	N	N	N	2/3	1/2	1/3	N	3/5	Sh	M			N	N	N	N	N	N	
21 Sep 80	M	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	7/8	1/2	Sh	M	N	N	N	N	N	N	
26 Sep 81	M	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	1/2		N	N	N	N	N	N	
20 Oct 84	F	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	3/4	2/3	2/3	N	N	N	N	N	N	
10/20/84	F	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	N	7/8	N	N	3/4				N	N	N	N	N	N	

Blank space — old feather

Sh — closed sheath

M — feather missing

N — new, fully regrown feather

Fraction — amount of regrowth

\* — Great Gull Island bird

## HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WINTER SEASON

ROBERT SPAHN

As suggested by Paul DeBenedictis, this winter was an eminently "forgettable experience" to nearly all the state's birders, possibly excepting those in Regions 9 and 10. Over most of the state hopes of a winter filled with exciting half-hardy species went unfulfilled. Yet, Christmas Bird Count totals, where noted, generally were average or better and at least a few unusual birds were located in every Region.

The season's weather was relatively uniform over much of the state, warm and dry with little snowfall and only brief cold snaps. The western third to half of the state saw a return to seasonal or worse weather in February, with average or lower temperatures and average or more snowfall in several Regions. At the season's end there was little or no sign of the coming Spring. No really early arrivals were noted. In Region 10, so many half hardy species wintered that for several species which normally arrive during February, it was essentially impossible to distinguish any new arrivals from overwintering birds.

Winter is a season to sort through the rafts of wintering waterfowl and flocks of gulls for rarer visitors, to find meadows overrun with voles and watch the feasting raptors, to observe the flocks of winter finches, and to search out the lingering half hardies. For most of us, nearly all of these activities were futile most of the time. The searches for water birds turned up Common Loon in all Regions and Red-necked Grebe in five Regions, above average for winter. Great Blue Heron was noted overwintering in most Regions, with very high counts in Regions 2, 3 and 4. The only other heron noted was a very late Green-backed Heron in Region 10. Surely several other heron species were present in Region 10 but occur there too regularly to be noteworthy. Waterfowl counts were reasonably good but not outstanding, with a variety of scarcer species buoying CBC totals in most Regions. Those of special positive note included a Greater White-fronted Goose in Region 6, Wood Duck in all Regions reporting with high winter counts in Regions 2 and 3; several good Am. Black Duck totals; above average winter reports for Green-winged Teal, N. Pintail, N. Shoveler, and Gadwall; Common Eider offshore in Region 10; and good scoter counts in Regions 2 and 10. Negatives were centered on unimpressive totals for Canvasback, Redhead, and Greater Scaup. Raptor watchers generally did not find any spectacular concentrations this year. Irruptives were scarce except for Rough-legged Hawk in Regions 1 and 4, but some interesting

observations include wintering Turkey Vulture in Regions 2, 6 and 9; Osprey in Regions 4, 9 and 10; Bald Eagle in all Regions except 6; accipiters, except for N. Goshawk, generally well represented; Red-shouldered Hawk in four Regions, more than in many summers now; Merlin in four Regions; Peregrine Falcon in Regions 2 and 10; and a Gyrfalcon observed by a large party of raptor aficionados and photographed in Region 2. The voles were even relatively safe at night this winter as very few Snowy Owls were reported although they were found in seven Regions. Short-eared Owl concentrations were noted only in Regions 1 and 2. Scanning gull flocks also generally proved unrewarding in most Regions, with only a few white-winged gulls noted outside of Region 1. The only other gulls of note were the Laughing and Common Black-headed in Region 10, the Lesser Black-backed in Regions 1, 3 and 10; and the Black-legged Kittiwake in Region 1. The occurrence of both Iceland and Glaucous Gull in Region 7 is also notable. The search for winter finches and other irruptives was almost totally unsuccessful. Only very small numbers of finches were located in very few locations scattered across the state, best in Region 7. Even Evening Grosbeak was very scarce, the lowest in 20 years in several Regions. Among the other winter visitors, flocking birds, such as Horned Lark, Am. Tree Sparrow, Lapland Longspur, and Snow Bunting were generally scarce; just a single Bohemian Waxwing appeared in Region 1; and N. Shrike, while reported in seven Regions, was present in low numbers only.

Half-hardy species, while not numerous away from the coast, at least added a touch of interest to most Regional reports. First, the species whose northward range expansion many have been following generally had a good winter. Red-bellied Woodpecker, Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, and N. Mockingbird were again noted in good numbers at the northern edges of their ranges, with the interesting note in Steve Eaton's Region 1 report that high titmouse numbers often accompany good beechnut crops. Carolina Wren appeared in 8 of the 9 Regional reports and a total of 110 were found on the Region 10 CBCs. Other species noted for good numbers or in unusually high number of regions included Eastern Phoebe, Tree Swallow, Winter Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Eastern Bluebird, Hermit Thrush, Brown Thrasher, Pine Warbler, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Rusty Blackbird, and Northern Oriole. Species which regularly winter, but which seemed particularly scarce this winter included American Robin, Cedar Waxwing, and Song, Swamp and White-throated Sparrows.



Almost any organized grouping of the season's information leaves out some loose ends, so let's wander back through the checklist and the Regional reports looking for additional interesting tidbits. First, some highs and lows. Wild Turkey continues to prosper, as indicated by counts of over 50 in Regions 1, 2, 3 and 9. It would appear that American Coot bears watching, with very few reports in this open winter. Few shorebirds of any kind were noted; again I assume that the Region 10 editor simply elected not to report the species commonly found along the coast in the winter. Red-headed Woodpecker has disappeared from some of its regular haunts, but was found in Regions 4 and 9 and noted in good numbers in Region 1. Another range expansion success is noted in Region 10, with 103 Boat-tailed Grackles counted at a winter roost. The more interesting observations also include note of the Iroquois NWR Bald Eagles already starting nest work in early February; feeder survey data from Region 1; Montezuma NWR waterfowl peaks from Region 3; good comparative data from Region 4; and some banding notes from Region 7.

In spite of the complaints about a birdless winter in many areas, all Regions managed to locate at least a few birds very rare for the season, several of which are rare in the state at any season. The best included Region 1's Sandhill Crane (a first record for this season), Ruby-throated Hummingbird (which expired 10 Dec) and Bohemian Waxwing; Region 2's Gyrfalcon, Common Barn-Owl, record late Yellow-throated Warbler and Brewer's Blackbird; Region 3's Lesser Black-backed Gull; Region 4's Osprey, E. Phoebe, Savannah Sparrow and N. Oriole; Region 5's Fish Crow and possible Swainson's Thrush; Region 6's Greater White-fronted Goose; Region 7's Glaucous Gull, Wood Thrush (very unusual for both date and location) and Rusty Blackbird; Region 9's Sora, Say's Phoebe, Pine Warbler, Dickcissel and Pine Grosbeak; and Region 10's Western Tanager and Summer Tanager plus the many other species not highlighted there but which are very rare elsewhere in the state. Additional rarities, probably most properly lumped under exotics, include the Trumpeter Swans in Region 1, probably some the birds introduced at Long Point, Ontario; Ruddy Shelduck in Region 7; and the Barnacle Goose and Chilean Flamingo (which succumbed shortly after 17 Dec) in Region 10. The BOTS Award decision this season was a very difficult choice with so many very late birds, but this time I leaned toward absolute rarity and the award falls to the Region 9 Say's Phoebe.

*716 High Tower Way, Webster, New York 14580*

Standard abbreviations: county names are shortened to their first four letters and appear in UPPER CASE; months are shortened to their first three letters; ad — adult; arr — arrival or first of season; CBC — Christmas Bird Count; I — Island; imm — immature; *intro* — see introduction to report; j — juvenile; L — Lake; max — maximum; mob — multiple observers; NWR — National Wildlife Refuge; NYSARC — report to New York State Avian Records Committee; P — Park; Pd — Pond; ph — photographed; Pt — Point; Res — Reservoir; SP — State Park; spm — specimen; subad — subadult; T — Town of; Twn — township; WMA — Wildlife Management Area; y — young.

Late breaking news - the new editor for Region 8 is:

Dr. Ken Able  
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## REGION 1 - NIAGARA FRONTIER

STEPHEN W. EATON

The weather this period was much like 1987-88. December was mild and dry but with some extremes. On 12 December it was  $-9^{\circ}$  in Buffalo,  $-21^{\circ}$  at Jamestown and Amity Lake and  $-23^{\circ}$  at our sugar house near Vandalia in Cattaraugus County. The average temperature for the month, nevertheless, was  $30^{\circ}$  at Buffalo,  $1.8^{\circ}$  above normal. It was sunny with 35 percent of possible sunshine, compared to the norm of 26 percent. Our low water table was not improved as only 2.15 inches of rain (normally 3.42 inches) and 10.8 inches of snow (normally 22.8) fell in Buffalo, 19.75 inches in Jamestown. Eight inches of light snow at Amity Lake on 10 Dec, and considerably more snow fell, as usual, in the snow belt in the lee of Lakes Erie and Ontario. January, according to the *Buffalo News*, was "one long January thaw here in western New York," continuing the trend of recent years. It was the warmest in 36 years and the least snowiest in 45 years at Buffalo. Total precipitation was 1.77 inches as rain (normally 3.02) and 5.4 inches as snowfall (normally 24.8) at Buffalo, 3.5 inches at Jamestown. Seven inches fell at Amity Lake on 6 Jan but soon melted. Temperatures averaged almost  $8^{\circ}$  above average for the month and there was 41 percent of possible sunshine (32 percent is normal). Winds were generally strong at Buffalo, gusting to 60 mph on 8 Jan. These two warm months with little snow appeared to allow more water birds, raptors and shorebirds to attempt to winter and many well stocked feeders helped half-hardy passerines with their attendant raptors.

February was the only winter-like month. The jet stream, which had been flowing north of us, slipped to the south and produced a month with an average temperature of  $22.7^{\circ}$  ( $24.5^{\circ}$  is normal) and 29.6 inches (normally 17.7) of snow at Buffalo, and 15 inches at Jamestown. Six inches of snow on the ground on 7 Feb at Amity Lake and 5 more fell on 27 Feb but the ground was almost bare in between. Lake Erie finally reached  $32^{\circ}$  on 8 Feb and much of it remained free of ice, allowing water birds to survive in a wider area than normally. Often Dunkirk Harbor has about the only open water in our area of the lake.

The open winter increased the observation of many species which normally move further south. Loons, grebes, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Brant, Wood Duck, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Merlin, Northern Flicker, Eastern Bluebird, Hermit Thrush, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow all were reported, some in unusual numbers.

Certainly the most constant question asked was, "where are the winter finches?" Only the American Goldfinch was widespread and common. Three widely scattered reports totaling ten Evening Grosbeak in the whole Region, only two reports totaling four Pine Siskin after their abundance the previous year, and only a few Purple Finch reports typifies the poor cardueline finch show.

The sight of an adult Bald Eagle on the nest at the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge was heartening; perhaps they will nest successfully again this year. A Ruby-throated Hummingbird reported by Bob Sundell to be coming to a feeder last period in Jamestown showed distress on 10 Dec and was netted and taken to a veterinarian, but died the next day of a respiratory problem. Bull (*Birds of N.Y. State*, 1974) records one at Riis Park, Queens County from 26 Nov to 13 Dec 1961, so this is the second latest record, the latest inland. A feeder stocked by Georgiana Gould near South Dayton, Cattaraugus Co., attracted a male and a female plumaged Rose-breasted Grosbeak in January and they were still present at the end of February. Unfortunately details have not yet been submitted.

Allen Benton's feeder survey published in the *Evening Observer*, Dunkirk-Fredonia, New York, showed some interesting trends. He summarized occurrence of 51 species at 93 feeding stations during January. The most interesting reports, not verified by the Buffalo Ornithological Society, were Pine Warbler (at one feeder) and Common Redpoll at eight feeders (species not authenticated by Benton). Flicker, Tufted Titmouse, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow and Common Redpoll were seen at nearly twice as many feeders reported to Allen this year as in January 1988.

**Trumpeter Swan**, a new bird for the Region (and the State), was first spotted 24 Dec in Dunkirk Harbor by Joe Gula, Sr. and Jr. There were two adults marked with patagial tag numbers 86 and 87. They were raised in captivity by their own parents in 1987 and released with six wild caught Trumpeter Swans at Long Point, Ontario, in March 1988 (data courtesy Harry G. Lumsden, Wildlife Research Section, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources). An immature also was reported from the Niagara River at Ft. Erie from 24 to 28 February. The Buffalo Ornithological Society's statisticians thought it best not to accept the species as an official addition to the Regions list of species until and if it becomes better established although they encourage further monitoring of the species (Andrle and Rew, *Prothonotary* 55(1):5; 1989). A wintering **Merlin** along Lake Erie's shore, a late **Sandhill Crane**, and a Bohemian Waxwing round out a rather birdless but eventful period.

Contributors: Allegany County Bird Club, Dan and Eileen Anderson, Robert Andrle, Wavel Barber, Bellerby, Allen Benton, William Bogacki, Betsy Books, Lois Buck, Buffalo Ornithological Society, William Burch, Doris and Lou Burton, Cattaraugus County Bird Club, Kenneth Cohen, Dick Collins, Don and Jane Clark, D'Aloisio, William D'Anna, Joseph DiDomenico, Steve Eaton, Michael Galas, Georgiana Gould, Joe Gula, Sr. and Jr., Thomas Harper, Jamestown Audubon Society, Walter and Harriet Klaubunde, Lake Erie Bird Club, Terry Mahoney, Terry and Judy Mosher, Robert Peterson, Vivian and Raymond Pitzrick, Betsy Potter, Fran Rew, Gerry Rising, Donald Robertson, Olga Rosche, Art Schaffner, David Suggs, Robert Sundell, Joe Thill, Don Tiller, Regina and Jim VanScoy, William Watson, Marie Wendling, Michael Zebehazy.

Abbreviations: ACBC - Allegany Christmas Bird Count, 17 Dec; BCBC - Buffalo Christmas Bird Count, 18 Dec; BISP - Beaver Island SP; BH - Buffalo Harbor, BOS - Buffalo Ornithological Society, CBC - Christmas Bird Count; CCNS - Canadaway Creek Nature Sanctuary; D-FCBC - Dunkirk-Fredonia Christmas Bird Count, 31 Dec; DH - Dunkirk Harbor; INWR - Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge; LBSP - Lakeside Beach SP; LE - Lake Erie; NF - Niagara Falls; NR - Niagara River; SCBC - Scio Christmas Bird Count, 17 Dec; SBCBC - St. Bonaventure Christmas Bird Count, 17 Dec; TBB - Times Beach, Buffalo; TFNP

- Tiff Farm Nature Preserve.

LOONS-DUCKS: Red-throated Loon: one mouth NR 27 Dec, 1 Jan; one DH 24, 25 Feb, two on 27 Feb. Com. Loon: one near Peace Bridge, NR 1-8 Jan, only report. Pied-billed Grebe: three wintered DH. Red-necked Grebe: one mouth NR 11 Feb. Double-crested Cormorant: singles BISP 17 Dec and 29 Jan, BH 24 Jan, rare in winter. Great Blue Heron: seven reports BOS region Jan, max 31 Grand I, NR 20 Feb more than unusual. **Trumpeter Swan**: *intro*. Brant: one BH 3 Dec, one DH 21 Dec-28 Feb. Canada Goose: 1437 BCBC; 100 in beautiful "V" headed SE at 1000 ft, calling, over Ten Mile Rd, Carrollton, 11 Dec, seldom seen migrating so late, if in fact they were. Wood Duck: one-two Cassadaga 7-22 Jan, two Clarence 31 Dec, unusual in winter. Am. Black Duck: two SCBC, 352 BCBC, 70 D-FCBC, 13 Randolph 18 Feb, species on decline. Mallard: 3005 BCBC, most in 60 years. Canvasback: 4736 BCBC, three D-FCBC. Redhead: 94 BCBC, three D-FCBC, last two species severely reduced by drought in west. Greater Scaup: 606 BCBC, 21 D-FCBC. King Eider: one NF 3 Dec-4Feb; one shot by hunter DH 26 Dec (JG Jr & Sr), sixth CHAU record. Com. Goldeneye: 2390 BCBC, 14 F-DCBC. Com. Merganser: 3307 BCBC 18 Dec, increase over counts in 1940's and 1950's; seven males Amity Twn ALLE 29 Jan, continue as permanent resident CATT and ALLE. Red-breasted Merganser: 97 BCBC, low compared to counts of 1950's. Ruddy Duck, one BCBC, third record in 12

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Bald Eagle: *intro*. N. Harrier: one INWR 10, 23 Dec; seven reports lake plain Jan (BOS), six from lake plain and Sheridan Twn CHAU 7-25 Feb. Sharp-shinned Hawk: nine reports Dec, ten reports Jan, five reports Feb (BOS), regular in winter last several years, due to increase in feeders or perhaps another greenhouse effect? Red-shouldered Hawk: one or two Arkwright Dec, two Sheridan Twn 7, 26 Jan, one Ellery Twn CHAU 15 Feb, wintering perhaps due to warming trend of recent years. Rough-legged Hawk: 12 D-FCBC, three BCBC, two SCBC; 12 CHAU and CATT 18 Feb; also reported Java Twn and n and e of Buffalo (BOS), a good flight year. Am. Kestrel: 39 BCBC, 12 D-FCBC; six ACBC, one SBCBC. **Merlin**: ad female Pt Gratiot, L Erie 19, 31 Dec (RP); one Dunkirk 28 Feb (JG, Sr & Jr.), very rare in winter. Ruffed Grouse: six ACBC, six SBCBC, four D-FCBC, populations up. Wild Turkey: 176 D-FCBC, high, 64 ACBC, 30 SBCBC, populations sharply up. Am. Coot: max 50 DH 1 Dec-14 Jan, one BH 27 Dec-2 Jan, local in open winters. **Sandhill Crane**: two INWR 15-22 Dec (DT, mob). Killdeer: one Alfred Twn 3 Dec, one NF 4 Jan, one Goat I, NR 18-21 Jan. Purple Sandpiper: three NF 6 Dec-7 Jan, max nine Goat I, NR 20 Feb. Dunlin: one DH 1-6 Dec. Com. Snipe: one Towerville 28 Jan. Little Gull: max six mouth NR 27 Jan, max four DH 29 Dec. Bonaparte's Gull, 4500 mouth NR 9 Jan, 7700 D-FCBC. Ring-billed Gull: about 15,000 DH 28 Feb. Iceland Gull: 10 reports NR after 3 Dec (BOS), one to two NR Jan-Feb. Lesser Black-backed Gull: one Adam Beck Hydro, NR 4 Dec, two 26 Jan. Glaucous Gull: arr Adam Beck Hydro 4 Dec, ten reports NR 2-28 Jan, three Feb. Black-legged Kittiwake: one NR 3 Dec.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Rock Dove: 2049 BCBC, most in 60 years. Mourning Dove: 520 BCBC, 275 D-FCBC, 270 SCBC, 50 SBCBC, becoming even more a feeder bird; 78% of 93 persons reporting to Allen Benton in the Dunkirk-Fredonia area reported feeding this species. Snowy Owl, one DH 8 Dec, one Wheatfield Twn NIAG 8 Dec, one BH 24 Dec, 11 Feb, seven reports from lake plain area Jan, one LaSalle P, Buffalo, 4 Feb. Long-eared Owl, max six Porter Twn NIAG 1 Jan. Short-eared Owl: two Stockton Twn 31 Dec, five Porter Twn NIAG 1 Jan, 7 Feb, max seven Alexander Twn 4, 14 Feb, two Wheatfield Twn NIAG 5 Feb, one Java Twn 10 Feb. N. Saw-whet Owl: one Wilson Twn 22 Jan, recent roadkill. Ruby-throated Hummingbird: *intro*. Red-headed Woodpecker: one FNBP 26 Dec, four LBSP 29 Jan, two LBSP 20 Feb, two Porter Twn CHAU 25 Feb. Red-bellied Woodpecker: four reports lake plain Dec (BOS), max four INWR 21 Jan, 18 Feb, six other reports lake plain (BOS); five BCBC, most in 60 years, 16 ACBC, two D-FCBC, one SBCBC, increasing in valleys and on lake plain. N. Flicker, 18 BCBC, nine D-FCBC, two ACBC, two SBCBC, another species wintering in greater numbers.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Horned Lark: 200 Ridgeway Twn 21 Jan. Com. Raven: one Carrollton Twn 8 Dec. Tufted Titmouse: four Amity L ALLE through most of period, four Carrollton Jan-Feb, three other reports Jan and one other Feb (BOS), two BCBC, two D-FCBC, two SBCBC, 14 SCBC., most in about 20 years, a good year for this bird in S. Tier; seem to increase on a good beechnut year; Allen Benton reported them at 13% of his feeders (7% in 1988), *intro*. Red-breasted Nuthatch: nine BCBC, five SBCBC, max 11 Ward Twn ALLE 21 Jan. Carolina Wren: three BCBC, one Pt Gratiot, L Erie, 1,28 Jan, one CCNS 1, 28 Jan, only reports. Winter Wren: one TFNP 21 Jan, only report. Golden-crowned Kinglet: 15 BCBC, ten D-FCBC; 11 SCBC, 13 SBCBC., good numbers following slump in 1976-77. E. Bluebird: one Eden Twn 31 Dec, three Kennedy 28 Jan, one Amity L 21 Jan, 2, 7 Feb, three Lewiston 11, 20 Feb, *intro*. Hermit Thrush: one Pt Gratiot, L Erie, 4 Dec, one Sheridan Twn 31 Dec, one LESP 31 Dec, none after, *intro*. Am. Robin: 140 BCBC, five D-FCBC, eight SCBC, one SBCBC, max 165 Porter Twn NIAG 25 Feb, *intro*. Gray Catbird: one TFNP 12 Jan. N. Mockingbird: one Alfred Twn 1 Dec-15 Feb, one Amity Twn ALLE 17 Dec, four other reports NR and lake plain Dec, 12 reports lake plains Jan, five reports Feb (BOS), rebounding well. Brown Thrasher: one TFNP 24 Dec, 1 Jan, 22 Feb, one Tonawanda Twn 7-21 Jan, 3-28 Feb. Bohemian Waxwing: one INWR 28 Jan.(DE). Cedar Waxwing: max 160 Amity L 13 Feb. N. Shrike: three reports Dec, six reports Jan, one Feb (BOS).

VIREOS-WARBLED: Yellow-rumped Warbler: one LESP 30 Dec, max five LESP 16, 22 Jan; one Portland Twn 22 Jan. Pine Warbler: *intro*.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: N. Cardinal: 279 BCBC, highest in 60 years; 69 D-FCBC; 77 SCBC; 32 SBCBC, second highest since 1976, recovering well from slump 1976-77. Rose-breasted Grosbeak: *intro*. Rufous-sided Towhee: one Sheridan Twn 31 Dec, one Darien 31 Dec-28 Feb. Am. Tree Sparrow: 451 BCBC, 183 D-FCBC, 114 SCBC, 21 SBCBC. Chipping Sparrow: one Darien Twn 4 Dec. Field Sparrow: three TBB 24 Dec. Swamp Sparrow: singles Pomfret Twn CHAU 26, 31 Dec, INWR 10 Jan, TFNP 21, 22 Jan, Lewiston Twn 11 Feb, inconspicuous winterer. White-crowned Sparrow: one Pomfret Twn CHAU 22 Jan, one Ridgeway Twn 28 Jan. Lapland Longspur: max five Shelby Twn, three other reports Ontario Lake Plain, usually with Snow Buntings. Brown-headed Cowbird: max 1000 Tonawanda Twn, an unfortunate number. Purple Finch: one Darien 15-31 Dec, one Scio 31 Dec, five reports from BOS region Jan, three in Feb. Com. Redpoll: *intro*. Pine Siskin: *intro*. Evening Grosbeak: *intro*.

*Ten Mile Road, Allegany, NY 14706*

## REGION 2 - GENESEE

KEVIN C. GRIFFITH

If winter weather is not one of your favorite things, this winter was for you! The highlight for me was the fact that I didn't have to shovel my driveway very often. The bulk of the season was mild and lacking in snow. December's temperatures averaged 0.4° above normal but the real story was the snowfall, which was nearly 15 inches below normal. Total precipitation was less than half of the normal amount at 1.11". January continued the trend. The average temperature of 30.3° was a whopping 6.7° above normal, while the precipitation reading of 1.18 inches was 1.12 inches below normal. Snowfall remained below average with only 15 inches compared to the norm of 23. In February winter returned. The average temperature of 22.5° was 1.9° below normal, while

the precipitation of 1.55 inches was 0.77 inches below normal. Snowfall, though, was 8.3 inches above average at 30.6 inches.

How did this affect birding? This wasn't a great season. There were two major highlights, but the consensus for the season was not terribly positive. Normal wintering species were in short supply. Many comments were made about the lack of activity at feeders. Certainly the availability of wild food had something to do with that, yet some species just plain weren't here or weren't here in large enough numbers to become noticeable. You would have thought that the mild winter would have produced more non-wintering individuals, but this seemed not to be the case. There were few on the three Regional Christmas Bird Counts.

The seasonal highlights consisted of two birds. The first was a **Yellow-throated Warbler** found by Bob Ambrose and Ilene Montan along the shores of Conesus Lake on the Little Lakes Christmas Count on 26 Dec. The bird was seen frequenting a suet feeder. It stayed around for a couple of days and was seen and photographed by other observers. The second highlight was a juvenile gray morph **Gyr Falcon** found in the Lima area by Jeff Dodge, Jeff Bouton, Bob Oswald and some other observers on 31 Dec. The bird was first spotted in a field and was observed there for a while before it flew off. It was relocated on a utility pole, where it was photographed and studied again. After one more period of observation in a tree, the bird flew off and was not relocated again. This seems to be typical of past Regional observations of this species.

The Christmas Bird Counts turned up no major surprises besides the Yellow-throated Warbler. The Letchworth-Silver Lakes count tallied 54 species and no real rarities. The Rochester Count totaled 84 species, which was about average for recent years. The most unusual bird was a Chipping Sparrow, which has been reported in only three previous years. Red-tailed Hawks and House Finches reached new high count totals. The Little Lakes Count ended with 77 species which is about the ten year average. An encouraging result was its 548 Am. Black Ducks, over 200 birds above the ten year average. Maybe this dwindling species is going to hang on.

There were a few pluses for the season. It was safe to say that waterfowl totals were generally good. Wintering Wood Ducks were once again a highlight. The lake ducks like Oldsquaw and scoters also seemed to be on the up side. The usual totals of Common Goldeneye worked the lakeshore. Some observers commented that Red-breasted Mergansers seemed to overwinter in larger numbers than in recent years. Canada Geese continued to increase, and a fair number of wintering flocks were on Lake Ontario. King Eider once again put in an appearance. Little Gulls tarried in the Region longer than usual. The mild conditions may have had something to do with this. Short-eared Owls once again had a good winter. The traditional sites were well populated and some new locations were found, providing us with a good winter total. The Genesee River near the lake served as a wintering spot for up to 18 Great Blue Herons 21-28 Jan. We always seem to have a few, but this many is a very good number. The reports of Turkey Vulture during the season continues a recent trend. There weren't as many this year, but Turkey Vultures have only recently begun to

winter in the Region. Rounding out the plus column was Eastern Bluebird. Good winter totals were recorded south of Rochester along the Genesee River Plain. The increase in bluebird trails seems to be helping.

Unfortunately the negative side was well represented this season. It seemed to be much easier to point out the birds that weren't seen than it was to comment on those that were reported. Other than Red-tailed Hawks and Am. Kestrels, hawk totals were fair at best. Rough-legged Hawks were scarce and unpredictable. Gulls were poor in variety for a good portion of the season. Both white-winged gulls had arrived by the end of the season. We usually have some late tarrying shorebirds, but this year was a washout. Snowy Owl numbers were poor. Quite possibly we have become spoiled by lots of individuals in recent years. This year we only had an unpredictable bird at the Rochester airport all season and a single sighting at Irondequoit Bay on 20 Feb. A number of passerines were reported in reduced numbers. Yellow-rumped Warblers apparently decided not to winter in the Region in expected numbers. The sparrows, notably Am. Tree and White-throated, were difficult to find in any numbers. Snow Buntings and Lapland Longspurs were scarce until late in the season. Winter finches - where were they? Evening Grosbeak and Pine Siskin were virtually nonexistent in the Region. The crossbills were represented by only a couple of individuals, and Pine Grosbeak went unreported. The winter 1988-89 was mediocre!

Contributors: Tom Allison, Scott Adamson, Bob Ambrose, Doug Bassett, John Boettcher, Pat Borek, Jeff Bouton, Steve Carlson, Carolyn Cass, Julie Claffey, Tomma Lisa Clark, Anne Clarridge, Gary Costanza, Jerry Czech, Mike Davids, John and Arlieen Foster, Dick Garnham, Ralph and Mary Gerner, Kevin Griffith, Harriet Hamilton, Diane Henderson, Herb and Polly Keating, Brian Keelan, Bob and Jane Kesselring, Wayne Klockner, Ken Laarson, Warrne Lloyd, Bob Marcotte, Robert McKinney, Nancy Miller, Ilene Montana, Dan Niven, Richard O'Hara, Robert Oswald, Tom Painting, Thomas Penner, Bill and Betty Powell, Mary and Arliss Ransom, Martha Reinhardt, Patty Reister, Dominic Sherony, Jeanne and Sharon Skelly, Robert and Susan Spahn, Cathy and Kristin Spahn, Evan Speck, Paul and Jeff Spindler, Char Straubing, Mary Ann Sunderlin, William Symonds, Charlene Talbot, Dave Tetlow, Don and Donna Traver, Chris White.

Abbreviations: CL - Conesus Lake; DE - Durand-Eastman Park and adjacent offshore waters; EL - East Lakeshore; IB - Irondequoit Bay; LSLCBC - Letchworth-Silver Lake Christmas Bird Count 17 Dec; LLCBC - Little Lakes Christmas Bird Count 26 Dec; RCBC - Rochester Christmas Bird Count 18 Dec; SB - Sodus Bay.

LOONS-DUCKS: Red-throated Loon: one Webster 1 Jan, only report. Com. Loon: max four LLCBC. Red-necked Grebe: one SB 14-15 Jan, late. Double-crested Cormorant: one SB 9 Dec, only report. Great Blue Heron: *intro*. Tundra Swan: max 30 CL 2 Jan. Canada Goose: max 1200 CL 1 Feb. Wood Duck: max 42 Penfield 15 Jan. N. Pintail: max three RCBC. N. Shoveler: max two CL 26 Dec. Gadwall: max 15 IB 28 Jan. Am. Wigeon: one Penfield 19 Jan. Ring-necked Duck: one CL 1-15 Jan, only report. King Eider: imm male IB 27-31 Dec (BC,JC). Oldsquaw: max 1592 EL 15 Jan. Black Scoter: one-four Greece 9-10 Jan, late. Hooded Merganser: max 17 LLCBC.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Turkey Vulture: singles Webster 4 Dec (JCz), Turning Point Park 7 Jan (JS,JC1), Parma 23 Jan (B&JK); max 20 Letchworth SP during Feb. Bald Eagle: ad CL 22-24 Dec; 4th yr bird Webster 31 Dec. Red-shouldered Hawk: one Hunt all Feb (M & AR). Merlin: one Caledonia 24 Jan (FD, B&JK). Peregrine Falcon: one Mumford 1 Dec (GC). **Gyr Falcon**: *intro*. Virginia Rail: one Brighton 31 Dec (MC,CC); one Mendon Ponds 31 Dec



(MD,CC); two locations in the same day. Killdeer: one Greece 5 Jan, only report. Com. Snipe: one Brockport 5 Feb, one Chili 19-27 Feb. Little Gull: max 15 DE 31 Dec. Iceland Gull: 2nd yr bird 22-28 Feb; ad Charlotte 25 Feb. Glaucous Gull: 2nd winter bird Greece 8-14 Jan, imm Charlotte 18 Feb, one IB 26 Feb.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: **Com. Barn-Owl**: one Richmond 23 Feb (WC), scarce in the Region at any time. **Snowy Owl**: *intro*. Long-eared Owl: max five LLCBC. Red-bellied Woodpecker: max 91 RCBC. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: one LLCBC, only report. Downy Woodpecker: max 195 RCBC. Hairy Woodpecker: max 55 RCBC. Northern Flicker: max 21 RCBC.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Horned Lark: max 236 LSLCBC. Red-breasted Nuthatch: max 26 LLCBC. Carolina Wren: three reports. Winter Wren: one Greece 18 Dec, one DE 5 Jan. Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 26 LLCBC 26 Dec. Hermit Thrush: two Parma 18 Dec. Gray Catbird: one Greece 18 Dec, two Hemlock 26 Dec. Brown Thrasher: one Webster 7 Dec, one Greece 18 Dec, unusual in winter. N. Shrike: max four RCBC 18 Dec.

WARBLERS-VIREOS: Yellow-rumped Warbler: max two RCBC. **Yellow-throated Warbler**: *intro*.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: Rufous-sided Towhee: one Webster 1 Jan, only report. Chipping Sparrow: one Greece 18 Dec, see *intro*. Field Sparrow: max three Greece 18 Dec. Swamp Sparrow: max 30 RCBC. White-throated Sparrow: max 101 RCBC. White-crowned Sparrow: one RCBC, imm Hamlin 12 Feb. Snow Bunting: max 700 Kendall 1-28 Feb. Rusty Blackbird: max nine Warsaw 17 Dec. Brewer's Blackbird: male Manitou 8 Feb (RO'H), first winter record? Com. Redpoll: two CL 26 Dec, scarce. Pine Siskin: max seven Webster 27 Feb.

61 Grandview Lane, Rochester, NY 14612

## REGION 3 — FINGER LAKES

C. K. MELIN

The winter of 1989 was warmer and drier than normal. During December, Ithaca received only one inch of precipitation, the fifth least in 80 years of weather data. After a light snow on 2-3 Dec, winter really settled in with colder temperatures from 8-14 Dec. The period from 11 to 13 Dec became really cold as arctic air lowered temperatures to below zero. Ithaca set a new record low of -19°F on 12 Dec, the coldest December day since 1917 and the coldest temperature ever so early in the season. Temperatures were more seasonal for the remainder of December, including a warm, moist front on 23 Dec which caused a mix of sleet, freezing rain, and rain. By mid January, the winter "thaw" was underway and continued into February. It turned out to be the warmest January since 1967 on a statewide basis. The only time during the month when temperatures dipped below seasonal levels was the period from 3 to 7 Jan, when a cold air mass settled over the state. Precipitation in the Region for January occurred in scattered amounts with no significant accumulations.

At Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, waterfowl numbers for the season peaked in December, and the mild winter resulted in many lingering through the remainder of the winter. Refuge staff report maximum waterfowl numbers on 6 Dec, with 20 Snow Goose, 36,000 Canada Goose, 69,000 Mallard, 7,000

Black Duck, 750 Wood Duck, 80 Ring-necked Duck, 330 Hooded Merganser, and 250 Common Merganser. Wintering gull populations at the Refuge peaked in January. The maxima were: 3900 Ring-billed Gull, 2078 Herring Gull, and 70 Great Black-backed Gull. Three Bald Eagles were present all Season, as were Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, and as many as 83 Great Blue Herons.

The mild winter and absence of deep snow seems to have dispersed flocks of land birds, making it more difficult to find them. Flocking birds which seemed scarcer than usual included Golden-crowned Kinglet, Blue Jay, Horned Lark, Snow Bunting, American Tree Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, and Song Sparrow. Evening Grosbeak and Purple Finch were especially scarce, and there were no Oldsquaw or scoters, although Common Loon was plentiful. Two to five Common Loons were present on every major lake in the Region all season. Perhaps the weather never became severe enough, the waterways frozen enough, or the snows deep enough to concentrate these winter residents at the expected locations or at feeding stations.

The following species were present, as expected, all season throughout the Region: Great Blue Heron, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks, American Kestrel, Barred Owl, Belted Kingfisher, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, Northern Flicker, Red-breasted and White-breasted Nuthatch and Brown Creeper.

The relatively mild, snowless season made for some interesting Christmas Bird Counts in the Region. Gulls and waterfowl were present in unusually high numbers. There were many reports of half-hardy species such as Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Rusty and Red-winged Blackbirds, Northern Mockingbird, and Carolina Wren. A total of 18 Carolina Wren was present in the Region. There were numbers of large resident species including Great Horned Owl, Pileated Woodpecker, Ruffed Grouse, and Wild Turkey. Birds associated with agriculture, including American Crow, Mourning Dove, and Red-tailed Hawk, were present throughout the Region in record high numbers. The single irruptive species present was Rough-legged Hawk, but there were virtually no winter finches. Unusual species for area bird counts were Red-throated Loon, Brant, Winter Wren, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Long-eared Owl, and Northern Bobwhite. A single **phalarope** (either Wilson's or Red [*probably the latter* — Ed.]) was present near Watkins Glen during the count period, but could not be found on the day of the count. A report has been forwarded to NYSARC for review. Highlights for the season were Red-throated Loon, Lesser Black-backed Gull, phalarope sp, and Winter Wren.

Contributors: J. Brubaker, G. Butcher, Cayuga Bird Club, Chemung County Audubon Society, D. Clements, John & Sue Gregoire, T. Gingrich, B. Hilfiker, D. Mclroy, Onondaga Audubon Society, Schuyler County Bird Club, Scott & Sally Sutcliffe.

Abbreviations: CL - Cayuga Lake; CV - Chemung Valley; MNWR - Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge; QCM - Queen Catherine Marsh; WG - Watkins Glen.

LOONS-DUCKS: **Red-throated Loon**: one Ithaca CBC, first in 27 years; one CL 29 Jan Elm Beach. Com. Loon: *intro*; max five Ithaca CBC. Red-necked Grebe: one WG 4 Jan; one Sheldrake 14 Jan. Great Blue Heron: *intro*. Tundra Swan: four CL 14 Jan. Brant: one CV CBC. Canada Goose: *intro*. Wood Duck: *intro*. Am Black Duck: *intro*; 32 WG 31 Dec; 734 Sheldrake 14 Jan. Mallard: *intro*. N. Pintail: max nine Aurora CBC. Gadwall: max 32

Aurora CBC. Redhead: max 4000 Canandaigua L Jan, scarce elsewhere. Ring-necked Duck: *intro*. Scaup species: max 2100 Aurora CBC. Com. Goldeneye: present in small numbers throughout; ten WG CBC, 30 Ithaca CBC. Hooded Merganser: *intro*; 77 Waneta L 10 Dec. Com. Merganser: *intro*; 191 Waneta L 10 Dec. Red-breasted Merganser: very scarce, but present throughout.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Bald Eagle: *intro*; one Ithaca 11 Dec. N. Harrier: *intro*. N. Goshawk: scarce; one Burdett all Season, three WG CBC. Red-shouldered Hawk: none. Rough-legged Hawk: *intro*. Ruffed Grouse: max nine Ithaca CBC. N. Bobwhite: six CV CBC, unexpected. Wild Turkey: max 50 CV CBC, Big Flats. Phalarope species: *intro*. Ring-billed Gull: *intro*; 1200 Ithaca CBC. Herring Gull: *intro*; 700 Ithaca CBC. Iceland Gull: one Ithaca 11 Dec Stewart Park. **Lesser Black-backed Gull**: ad Stewart P Ithaca after 5 Feb (McIlroy). Great Black-backed Gull: *intro*; 13 Watkins Glen 18 Dec, 48 Ithaca CBC, 64 Aurora CBC.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Mourning Dove: max 756 Ithaca CBC. E. Screech-Owl: six Ithaca CBC, five CV CBC, two WGCC. Snowy Owl: one Dryden 6 Jan, one Fayette Jan, only reports. Long-eared Owl: one Fiertes Bird Sanctuary on Ithaca CBC, one Aurora CBC, one heard only Burdett 2 Jan. Short-eared Owl: two Waterloo Dec; present Hayt's Corners Jan-Feb, max 16; one Burdett 20 Feb. N. Saw-whet Owl: single report, one downtown Ithaca 25 Feb (*vide* McIlroy). Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: one Phelps all Season; one CV CBC; no other reports. Pileated Woodpecker: max 14 Ithaca CBC.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Horned Lark: widespread but few flocks; max 161 Montezuma CBC. Am. Crow: max 1693 Ithaca CBC, record high count. Fish Crow: max three Ithaca CBC. Com. Raven: none. Black-capped Chickadee: max 1780 Ithaca CBC. Tufted Titmouse: 128 Ithaca CBC, 14 Aurora CBC, eight Montezuma CBC. Red-breasted Nuthatch: present all season throughout; max 23 Ithaca CBC. White-breasted Nuthatch: max 194 Ithaca CBC. Brown Creeper: max 19 Ithaca CBC. Carolina Wren: *intro*. Winter Wren: one Ithaca CBC (Hog Hole), one CV CBC, one QCM 1 Jan. Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 44 Ithaca CBC. E. Bluebird: present all season in areas near the lakeshores. American Robin: max 63 Montezuma CBC. N. Mockingbird: max 25 Ithaca CBC. Cedar Waxwing: observed feeding on Bittersweet and Common Buckthorn; max 252 Ithaca CBC. N. Shrike: two Montezuma CBC, one CV CBC, only reports.

VIREOS-WARBLEDERS: Yellow-rumped Warbler: one Ledyard Road, Aurora, 28 Jan. Com. Yellowthroat: one QCM 16 Dec.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: N. Cardinal: increasing throughout the Region; max 328 Ithaca CBC. Am. Tree Sparrow: *intro*. White-throated Sparrow: *intro*. Song Sparrow: *intro*. Swamp Sparrow: one QCM 16 Dec. Snow Bunting: max 2000 Mt. Pleasant February. Purple Finch: *intro*. Com. Redpoll: sole report, five Ithaca CBC. Pine Siskin: sole report, ten Ithaca CBC. Evening Grosbeak: *intro*.

CORRECTION: In the Region 3 Fall Report, Paul Novak was incorrectly listed as a recipient of the Federation's Stoner Award. Paul writes that he was a recipient of the Laboratory of Ornithology's Benning Award for students in ornithology.

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## REGION 4 - SUSQUEHANNA

JAY G. LEHMAN

This winter at Binghamton was relatively mild and open, with little snow. This low snowfall is consistent with the below average snowfall of the last nine years. For example, total snowfall for January and February, normally the

months with the most snow, was only 22.1 inches compared to the average of 48.6 inches. There were only two periods of extended cold weather. From 9 to 18 Dec mean daily temperatures were below normal. A record low of -11°F, the second lowest December temperature at Binghamton, was recorded on 12 Dec. The second cold period from 4 Feb to the end of the month, during which 17 of the 26 days had below average mean daily temperatures, was nearly normal for this region. This cold spell apparently was caused by a bubble of freezing Alaskan air which broke away and drifted south. However, most of this season was quite mild. From 20 Dec to 3 February there were thirty five days with above average mean daily temperatures. Record high temperatures of 53°F and 58°F were recorded on 21 Dec and 1 Feb, respectively, and on 28 Jan 45°F tied the previous high for that date. January, normally one of our coldest months, was particularly warm with 18 of 31 days having above average temperatures. This season was quite dry, and each month had below average precipitation. Total precipitation for the period was 4.64 inches, 3.15 inches below normal.

Perhaps due to the mild winter, birding was boring. Long-time editor of this report, Les Bemont, summarized the situation best. "I can't remember a winter when no one complained about a lack of birds. And true enough there have been ups and downs, but I always felt that in spite of the complaints there were birds to be found. This time around I'm joining the complainers! ...I have never been through such a dead winter bird-wise. Crows, chickadees, Downies, starlings, and House Sparrows were the only regulars. House Finches usually do thin out around my place in the winter, but they disappeared entirely this year. Same for Blue Jays, with one or two exceptions. Winter finches? ZILCH!

That at least, I expect, is general. The rest I suppose could be local..." My own observations are in agreement. At my feeder in Norwich it was a very poor year for House Finches. Oh well, I saved money on oil sunflower seeds! Others noted the monotony. Mary Dobinsky in her January field report wondered "Why am I bothering?... If birding continues as dull as January, I may not send a February report."

To find something to say about this season, I compared the totals for certain species from Regional Christmas Bird Counts for the past fourteen years. Consequently you will find in the species account the phrase ...in 14 CBC's. Hope you enjoy the comparisons. Relatively high numbers of some species were present during the Count period. These are Great Blue Heron, Canada Goose, Ring-necked Duck, Cooper's, Sharp-shinned, Red-tailed, and Rough-legged Hawks, Northern Harrier, and E. Screech-Owl. Presumably, this was due to the mild weather and open conditions. Similarly, high numbers of Tufted Titmouse, Carolina Wren, Red-bellied Woodpecker, and N. Mockingbird were present during the Count period as well as during January and February, especially in Chenango County where they are less common. Tufted Titmouse was reported for the first time near South Otselic by Dave Messineo, while Carolina Wren and Red-bellied Woodpecker were present at several northern locations through the period.

Although some species on Christmas Bird Counts were reported in higher than usual numbers, the numbers of species reported were generally near or

below the fourteen-year average. However, the number of species was above average at Cortland, due to more waterfowl, and at Owego (Tioga), at least partly due to more party hours in the field. Since party hours on most of the Christmas Bird Counts have not varied a great deal, low species numbers may be due to the cold period in December, which may have caused some half-hardy species to leave.

Despite the gloomy comments so far, there were a few bright spots in the field reports received. Fifteen species of waterfowl is the second highest list in eleven years. Common Loon and Pied-billed Grebe were reported for the fifth time in eleven winters. Wood Duck and Bufflehead were seen for the fourth and fifth time, respectively, in eleven years, while Green-winged Teal, and Greater and Lesser Scaup were observed for the third time in eleven years. There were relatively high numbers of Bald Eagles reported at Cannonsville Reservoir from 28 Dec to 28 Jan. On 22 Jan the Chenango Bird Club saw more eagles (14) than there were birders on the field trip! A possible explanation in addition to the open water was a large herring die-off reported in the *Binghamton Press & Sun-Bulletin* of 23 Apr. Perhaps, this also contributed to the presence of **Osprey**, for which there were two separate reports in Delaware County, apparently at Cannonsville Reservoir, as late as 1 Feb. An additional report in Greene on 7 Feb may be due to early migration induced by the mild weather. None of these reports included details, but despite that omission, the Ospreys were included due to the number of separate reports and the mild conditions.

The mild weather apparently caused a number of species to either stay late or return earlier than usual. Eastern Meadowlark and Rusty Blackbird, which were seen for the fifth season in eleven, Eastern Bluebird, and American Robin returned earlier than usual. A Northern Oriole, which appeared in late November and reported in the fall season, stayed at Juanita Angle's feeder in South Oxford through 1 Dec. There were relatively high numbers of Brown-headed Cowbirds through the period. Red-headed Woodpecker was observed for the sixth year in eleven. An **Eastern Phoebe** roosted in Dianne Johnson's barn in Spencer all through the period. She saw the bird through Thanksgiving and accidentally discovered it in the barn the week after Christmas while she was putting away Christmas decorations. At the time of this writing, the bird was singing away, apparently none the worse for its experience. A **Savannah Sparrow**, only the second report in eleven years, was first seen on 7 Feb by Fred Von Mechow at Rogers Environmental Center. It arrived at a feeder during a snow storm and was seen occasionally through the period. Chipping Sparrow was seen for the sixth time in eleven seasons. However, we missed Swamp Sparrow for the fifth time in eleven seasons, probably due to bad luck and the cold weather in mid-December during the Sherburne Christmas Count on which they are usually seen.

The downside of a mild winter was the dearth of winter species. Few Northern Shrikes and no Snowy Owls were seen. Les Bemont was right about winter finches. There were no crossbills or Pine Grosbeaks, and very few redpolls, Pine Siskins, and Evening Grosbeaks arrived here this year.

There were 83 species reported, which is average for the past eleven years.

Osprey, Eastern Phoebe, Northern Oriole, and Savannah Sparrow are rarities.

Observers: J. Angle, R. & J. Barnes, D. & J. Bell, L. Bemont (LBe), R. Bennett, L. Bingley, G. Blood, B. Bozdos, M. Clark, C. Covey, S. Carey, G. Curran, M. Davis (MDv), M. Dobinsky, S. Dorber, C. Eastwood, M. Ferranti, E. & P. Getkin, M. & A. Gregory, J. Gustafson, G. Kirch, N. Kirch, M. Layton, J. Lehman, R. Leonard, F. Linaberry, H. Marsi, A. Mason, B. & D. McLean, D. Messineo, S. Moran, E. Munk, C. Norte, S. O'Connell, B. Perkins, M. Petuh, H. Pierce, J. Ponzio, M. Porter, M. Russell, B. Toner, J. Sedlacek, K. Scott, S. Stedwell, B. Toner, F. Von Mechow, E. Washburn, D. Windsor, Irene Wright.

Abbreviations: BCBC - Binghamton Christmas Bird Count 31 Dec; CCBC - Cortland Christmas Bird Count 17 Dec; CRes - Cannonsville Reservoir; JCity - Johnson City; OPM - Oneonta, Portlandville, Milford; OCBC - Oneonta Christmas Bird Count 17 Dec; REEC - Rogers Environmental Education Center; SCBC - Sherburne Christmas Bird Count 17 Dec; TCBC - Tioga (Owego) Christmas Bird Count 1 Jan.

LOONS-DUCKS: Com. Loon: last two CCBC. Pied-billed Grebe: last Norwich 4 Dec (DW). Great Blue Heron: 17 on five CBC's, highest in 14 CBC's; regular reports Southern Tier Jan decreasing to two reports Feb, high for mid-winter. Canada Goose: 307 on two CBC's, second highest in 14 CBC's; max 1000± REEC occasionally through the period (CC). Wood Duck: only one TIOG Dec (RB), unusual. Green-winged Teal: one Otsego L 24 Dec (MD); four CRes 14 Jan (SD,GC), high. Am. Black Duck: mid winter max 164 CRes 14 Jan (SD,GC). Mallard: mid winter max 134 CRes 14 Jan (SD,GC). Redhead: 20 CCBC, high. Ring-necked Duck: 30 CCBC, most in 14 CBC's. Greater Scaup: max 10 CCBC, first in 14 CCBC's; last CRes 29 Dec. Lesser Scaup: four CCBC, third in 14 CBC's. Com. Goldeneye: max 50 CCBC; mid winter max 24 Susquehanna R Binghamton to Owego 15-18 Jan. Bufflehead: max three OCBC, second in 14 CBC's. Hooded Merganser: two CCBC; five CRes 22 Dec (HP), high. Com. Merganser: mid winter max 32 Binghamton-Barton 14-18 Jan.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Bald Eagle: *intro*. Osprey: *intro*. N. Harrier: one SCBC; max 5 TCBC, more than usual. Sharp-shinned Hawk: nine on three CBC's, highest in 14 CBC's; singles at three sites occasionally Dec-Jan. Cooper's Hawk: nine on four CBC's, highest in 14 CBC's; otherwise singles three sites. N. Goshawk: only one SCBC. Red-tailed Hawk: max 27 TCBC, second highest in 14 CBC's; about fourteen reports in Jan, winter peak. Rough-legged Hawk: 12 TCBC, most in 14 TCBC's; two to six reports/month; last Norwich 25 Feb (DW). Am. Kestrel: max six reports/month Jan; one Solon 26 Feb (BT), only Feb report. Ring-necked Pheasant: one Norwich 10 Dec (GB *fide* DW); two CCBC; one OCBC, high. Ruffed Grouse: four to six reports/month. Wild Turkey: max 66 Harpersfield 10 Jan (AM); only one report in Feb. Ring-billed Gull: max 30 Otsego L 6 Dec (MD); last two Chenango Valley SP 11 Feb (MP,NK). Herring Gull: max 81 CCBC, highest there and second highest for all CBC's in 14 years. Great Black-backed Gull: three CCBC, seventh time in 14 CCBC's.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Mourning Dove: 457 TCBC, second highest CBC report in 14 CBCs; otherwise widely reported in lower numbers than last year. E. Screech-Owl: five on three CBC's, second highest in 14 CBC's; one Spencer Dec-Feb; two others TIOG Feb, good report. Great Horned Owl: 13 on three CBC's, rather low; three to four other reports/month. Barred Owl: only singles TIOG & CORT Feb. Belted Kingfisher: one to five reports/month. Red-headed Woodpecker: only one TCBC; third report in 14 CBC's. Red-bellied Woodpecker: nine on three CBC's, second highest in 14 CBC's; regular at TIOG, REEC and Symrna. Downy Woodpecker: at 12 to 15 sites/month. Hairy Woodpecker: at six to 11 sites/month. N. Flicker: five on three CBC's, average; one Oneonta 17 Feb (MD), early migrant? Pileated Woodpecker: 12 on four CBC's, second highest in 14 CBC's; two other reports/month at six sites, scarce.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: *E. Phoebe*: *intro*. Horned Lark: seven on two CBC's; max 50 Sherburne 26 Feb (DW), low. Blue Jay: at five to ten sites/month; max 30 OPM 23 Jan (MD). Am. Crow: max 150 S New Berlin 10 Dec (DW,CE). Black-capped Chickadee: max 25/day Dec decreasing to nine/day Feb. Tufted Titmouse: 114 on five CBC's, highest in 14 CBC's; at up to 14 sites/month Feb, very high and still increasing; *intro*. Red-breasted Nuthatch: only two to three reports/month, scarce. White-breasted Nuthatch: at five to 16 sites/month. Brown Creeper: 32 on five CBC's, highest in 14 CBC's; at seven sites Dec, five sites Jan-Feb. Carolina Wren: nine on three CBC's, second highest in 14 CBC's; at six sites Dec, three sites Jan and five sites Feb, very high! Golden-crowned Kinglet: 40 on four CBC's, fourth highest in 14 CBC's; at only two other sites Dec and one site Feb, low. Ruby-crowned Kinglet: several at two sites BROO until 13 Dec; only one TCBC. E. Bluebird: arr six Vestal 17 Feb (RL), early. Am. Robin: three SCBC; singles Vestal 20 Dec & Hamden 22 Dec, high; arr TIOG 14 Feb (RB). N. Mockingbird: 13/three CBC's, third highest in 14 CBC's; at two to three other sites/month. Cedar Waxwing: 63 on four CBC's; arr one Norwich 28 Feb (JL), low. N. Shrike: only one Norwich 14 Jan (DW,CE).

VIREOS-WARBLEDERS: Yellow-rumped Warbler: only one Cortland 10 Dec (CN).

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: N. Cardinal: 156 TCBC, second highest in 14 TCBC's; otherwise widely reported in moderate numbers. Am. Tree Sparrow: 445 on five CBC's, low; at up to 14 sites/month Jan, max eight, low. Chipping Sparrow: only one TCBC, unusual. Field Sparrow: only three TCBC. *Savannah Sparrow*: *intro*. Song Sparrow: 19 on four CBC's; one to two sites Jan-Feb, rather low. White-throated Sparrow: five on two CBC's; one to two occasionally at two sites Jan-Feb, rather low. White-crowned Sparrow: imm Port Dickinson 17-19 Dec (BP); one Delancey 7 Jan (MP). Dark-eyed Junco: 711 on five CBC's, high; at up to 11 sites/month, max six. Snow Bunting: 187 on four CBC's, about average; max 100 Norwich 22 Jan (DW,CE); last 30 Sherburne 26 Feb (DW). Red-winged Blackbird: two OCBC, slightly low; arr one Delhi 25 Feb (MC). E. Meadowlark: only one McGraw 1 Jan (BT). Rusty Blackbird: only three Endwell 26 Feb (ML). Com. Grackle: only TIOG Jan (RB). Brown-headed Cowbird: at five sites Dec, max four; at three sites Jan; max six Cincinnatus L 19 Feb (JL,DW,CE), very high. N. Oriole: Purple Finch: at up to six sites Dec, max four OCBC; at two to three sites Jan-Feb, max 15 Norwich 25 Feb (JL), high. House Finch: max 154 JCity 4 Feb (MP). Com. Redpoll: one feeder report CHEN Jan. Pine Siskin: only one SCBC. Am. Goldfinch: 456 on five CBC's, average; at up to 15 sites/month Jan; max 12. Evening Grosbeak: only 45 on three CBC's; only three other sites Dec; max 60 Pharsalia Truck Trail 16 Dec (CC); at only two sites Jan-Feb; last 27 REEC 26 Feb (DW), very low.

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## REGION 5 — ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

PAUL A. DEBENEDICTIS

All in all, the winter 1988-89 was a forgettable experience. The first full week of both December and January was very cold, but the remainder of each month was warmer than normal. February at first seemed to follow the same pattern but remained seasonably cold. All three months were quite dry. The winter's snowfall total was nearly 25 inches below average at Syracuse, falling mostly as dry lake-effect snow, and the total precipitation was about 5 inches below average, raising great concern about doubt during the coming spring and summer. Wild fruits, which had appeared plentiful during the fall, were scarce

by late December.

It was a winter to anticipate half-hardy species, but following the lackluster fall migration and the cold of early December, this expectation really didn't materialize. This winter fulfilled the promised lack of irruptives and winter finches suggested by previous fall, and wintering sparrows were also relatively scarce. Most icterids had vanished by Christmas Bird Count time, and only reappeared as expected in the milder weather at the very end of February.

Many waterbirds that sometimes spend the winter here were quite scarce, notably Pied-billed Grebe and Wood Duck. This appears to be less a result of the lack of open water as it was due to low water levels and the freezing of the sheltered coves where these species survive cold snaps. On the other hand, those birds found during the early winter generally stayed put and had a relatively easy winter. We accumulated unusual wintering records for Red-throated Loon, Double-crested Cormorant, Green-winged Teal, Northern Shoveler and Black and Surf Scoters. It was a mediocre season for white-winged gulls, but Great Black-backed Gull numbers on the Oswego River were impressive. There were no great rarities among the waterbirds, and this was the first winter in many years that King Eider was not found on Lake Ontario.

Wintering raptors were most numerous in Oneida County. Rough-legged Hawk was very sparse elsewhere, wintering owls almost absent and none of the five Northern Shrike reported was persistent. Two well documented **Merlins** are unprecedented in the winter season.

Landbirds gave a strange mix. With few sparrows and no finches save House Finch and the occasional American Goldfinch, there really wasn't much to watch besides Rock Dove, Mourning Dove, European Starling and House Sparrow. Birds were concentrated at feeders. Carolina Wren (including one from the Adirondacks) and mockingbirds were well reported on Christmas Bird Counts and most persisted through the winter. Most observers thought American Crows were exceptionally numerous though few counts were reported. Fish Crows returned to the Utica area again this winter. Robert Post reports a thrush rescued from the cat of Milton Smith in Marcy which was identified as a Swainson's Thrush by its buffy eye-ring, darkly spotted buffy breast and "uniform olive-brown" back (a description that does not quite eliminate Hermit Thrush). The bird was released in Holland Patent but was not seen subsequently. Slightly less unusual were December reports of Rose-breasted Grosbeak and Northern Oriole from the same area. Most of the half hardy species disappeared by early January, and no vagrant landbirds were reported.

A total of 112 species and one hybrid was reported this season. The only rarities were the unseasonal records mentioned above. It is with great sadness that I must report the passing of F. G. Scheider on 19 May following a serious illness. His invaluable contributions to the ornithology of this Region will be missed in these pages. It is almost impossible for any birder in Region 5 to be afield without being reminded of the many days we have shared birding with Fritz.

Contributors: Dorothy Crumb, Paul DeBenedictis, Robert L. Evans, John Hanyak, Gene Huggins, Gary N. Lee, Robert L. Long, Sheila McCombie, Belle Peebles, Robert E. Post, Bill



Purcell, Margaret S. Rusk, Gerald A. Smith, Magdalena Stooks, Gary Webb

Abbreviations: BBFS - Ben Burt feeder survey; DH - Derby Hill, Oswego Co.; NPT - northern Pompey township; SPd - Sandy Pond, Oswego Co.

LOONS-DUCKS: Red-throated Loon: one Noyes Sanctuary 1 Jan; one Oswego Harbor after 15 Jan. Com. Loon: last reported early Jan. Pied-billed Grebe: two Fulton to 15 Jan. Horned Grebe: max 100 Noyes Sanctuary 1 Jan, few thereafter. Double-crested Cormorant: at least three Oswego Harbor all winter. Great Blue Heron: at outlet Big Moose to 16 Dec; one Old Forge during Jan "thaw." **Snow Goose**: blue morph Otisco L 1 Jan (REP), third Regional winter record. Wood Duck: three on waterfowl census and one Phoenix 12 Feb only reports. Green-winged Teal: at least nine Syracuse all winter. Am. Black Duck: three outlet Moss L to 22 Jan. N. Pintail: one or two Syracuse all winter. N. Shoveler: one Manlius seen Dec and Feb only. Gadwall: reported irregularly Onondaga L, Brewerton. Am. Wigeon: none overwintered. Canvasback: last Oswego 22 Jan, only two or three reported. Redhead: a few to mid Jan. Black Scoter: one Oswego 25 Feb (MSR), very rare in winter. Surf Scoter: two Oswego 14-25 Feb, unusual in winter. Hooded Merganser: max 80 Otisco L 7 Dec; six Baldwinsville only persistent group. Ruddy Duck: 29 Beaver L 4 Dec, none after 1 Jan.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Bald Eagle: ad Noyes Sanctuary 1 Jan; pair Old Forge all winter; imm SPd 3 Dec; imm Phoenix during Jan. N. Goshawk: two reports. Rough-legged Hawk: max 15 Rome in Jan. **Merlin**: one N Syracuse mid Dec (F.G. Scheider, J Thurber); imm Oswego 22 Jan (GAS), first Regional winter records. Am. Coot: two overwintered Oswego. Wild Turkey: hen McCauley Mt 21 Dec far north. Killdeer: one overwintered Carpenter's Brook near Martisco. Com. Snipe: last Syracuse CBC. Bonaparte's Gull: last LOL 5 Dec. Herring Gull: last Old Forge 10 Dec. Iceland Gull: max four OSWE mid Feb. Glaucous Gull: max three OSWE mid Feb. Black-legged Kittiwake: one DH 4 Dec rather late (BP).

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Snowy Owl: two Syracuse Airport mid Jan, one persistent; one near Rome early Feb. Short-eared Owl: one Dewit 6 Jan; two near Vernon Jan-Feb. N. Saw-whet Owl: Lime Kiln L 27 Feb. Belted Kingfisher: persisted Old Forge to 7 Jan. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: one near Skaneateles 3 Jan, late.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLING: Am. Crow: overwintered Old Forge. **Fish Crow**: Oriskany Dump 22 Jan (DWC, mob), probably regular there now. Black-capped Chickadee: set record highs Syr CBC, BBFS, perhaps reflecting the scarcity of natural foods. Carolina Wren: one Fourth L in Adirondacks after 15 Jan (fide GNL); *intro*. Winter Wren: only report Petrie Rd, Old Forge!, 10 Feb (GNL). E. Bluebird: last six Beaver L 7 Jan. **Swainson's Thrush**: *intro*. Hermit Thrush: last Syr CBC. Am. Robin: persisted Old Forge to 6 Jan; arr Syracuse about 23 Feb. N. Mockingbird: *intro*. Cedar Waxwing: scarce, little fruit anywhere. N. Shrike: *intro*.

VIREOS-WARBLES: Yellow-rumped Warbler: one Howland's Island GMA 1 Jan (MSR).

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: Rose-breasted Grosbeak: female Prospect 10 Dec (Joyce Collingsworth *fide* RLP). Rufous-sided Towhee: one Hannibal 20 Feb (BP), probably overwintered locally. Fox Sparrow: one BBFS Syracuse only report. White-throated Sparrow: very scarce, even at feeders, 1/4 1974-84 mean on BBFS. Dark-eyed Junco: not as scarce as White-throated Sparrow. Lapland Longspur: one Pratt's Falls 4 Feb, only report. Snow Bunting: max 600 NPT mid Jan. Red-winged Blackbird: arr ca 23 Feb. E. Meadowlark: one NPT 8 Feb. Rusty Blackbird: none overwintered. Com. Grackle: only CBC reports; one Old Forge to 21 Dec. Brown-headed Cowbird: only CBC reports. N. Oriole: one Holland Patent 10 Dec (Elba van Dressar *fide* RLP). Purple Finch: very scarce to mid Feb, then steady increase, max 50+. Pine Grosbeak: one Sand Creek Jan & Feb BBFS; none Old Forge. White-winged Crossbill: a few Old Forge area only. Com. Redpoll: no verified reports. Pine Siskin: two Erieville 4 Dec; one Marcellus mid Jan; one Holland Patent 23 Feb (Elba van Dressar *fide* RLP); a few Old Forge area. Evening Grosbeak:

regularly found Old Forge area only, a few on CBCs, not this low on BBFS since 1966.

Corrigenda: *Kingbird* 38(3):185 — Solitary Vireo: arr 20 Apr; 38(3):208 — Am. Kestrel (in Table): last 21 May; 38(3):209 — Semipalmated Plover: max 31. Pectoral Sandpiper; max 55 Phoenix 22 Apr, last 33 there 30 Apr; 38(4):268 — Philadelphia Vireo: delete 9 Jun report.

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## REGION 6 - ST. LAWRENCE

KENNETH L. CROWELL

This was a generally mild winter, with temperatures throughout most of St. Lawrence and Jefferson Counties a degree or two above normal and precipitation 30% lower than normal. December was unusually dry; January temperatures were almost six degrees above normal, whereas December and February were slightly colder than normal. Snow accumulation was less than a foot in most of the region, with the exception of the Tug Hill and southern St. Lawrence County. The weather was extremely variable — cold snaps alternated with thaws, rain and ice.

While the birding during this mild winter was correspondingly bland, this can not have been cause and effect. There was a good local cone crop and fair to good vole populations. But were conditions also favorable to the north? Was this a good cone and lemming year? Open water allowed waterfowl to be dispersed, and Bruce DiLabio found gull numbers down at Moses-Saunders Dam. Raptors were also sparse, though all three accipiters were reported. There was only a sprinkling of Rough-legged Hawk and a few Snowy Owl, Short-eared Owl and Northern Shrike. Horned Lark was reported in small numbers throughout the period, and Snow Bunting were few and far between. Winter finches were scarce, but most species were reported.

Significant birds out of season included single Wood Duck and **American Coot** on the Thousand Islands CBC, a Turkey Vulture in Louisville on 7 Dec, eight **Rusty Blackbird** in Louisville after 2 Jan, and one well described first-year White-crowned Sparrow in Massena on 26 Dec and 10 Feb, the last three were all reported by Marilyn Badger. The Massena CBC turned up a record four Northern Flicker; elsewhere there were several Great Blue Heron, two Belted Kingfisher, the usual Am. Robin, one Eastern Meadowlark, more Brown-headed Cowbird than usual and two Song Sparrow. Two Red-bellied Woodpecker were sighted, and Northern Cardinal is cropping up widely in rural areas of St. Lawrence Co., but again no Tufted Titmouse were reported. More American Crow and European Starling than usual overwintered. Numbers of Ruffed Grouse, Downy and Hairy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Brown Creeper and Golden-crowned Kinglet also were up.

The Massena CBC reported a **Greater White-fronted Goose** at the Reynold's Plant in Massena on 27 Dec, but it was not there 3 Jan. A probable **Great Gray Owl** was reported in mid February. In total there were 79 species reported,

including 24 water birds, 14 raptors, 31 passerines and 10 others. Uncredited reports from the Moses-Saunders and Massena areas are from Bruce DiLabio.

Contributors: Marilyn Badger, Richard Brouse, Lee Chamberlaine, Ken Crowell, Bruce DiLabio, Jim Farquhar, John Green, Lee Harper, H. & R. Kriescher, Peter O'Shea, Bob Wakefield and Brian Watson.

Abbreviations: HP - Hawkin's Pt, Massena; MCBC - Massena-Cornwall CBC; MSD - Moses-Saunders Dam; PR - Perch River WMA; RP - waterfowl roost above Reynold's Plant, Massena; TICBC - Thousand Islands CBC; SLR - St. Lawrence River.

LOONS-DUCKS: **Greater White-fronted Goose:** *intro.* Snow Goose (white phase): one TICBC. Wood Duck: *intro.* Am. Black Duck: max 42 HP 19 Feb. Canvasback: male RP 12 and 19 Feb. Redhead: one 29 Jan. Greater Scaup: 27 Dec to end of period, max 18 RP. Com. Goldeneye: from 85 RP on 21 Dec to 1500 19 Feb. Barrow's Goldeneye: max three ad males RP 19 Feb. Bufflehead: max three males RP 19 Feb. Hooded Merganser: one to two entire period. Com. Merganser: 170 at RP 23 Jan, max there 5000 on 9 Jan, much fewer than usual.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Turkey Vulture: *intro.* Bald Eagle: 14 (seven ad, seven imm) on SLR by DEC aerial survey 17 Feb (BF,LBC); ad male MSD 19 and 24 Feb. N. Harrier: one E. Hounslow 2 Feb. N. Goshawk: one MCBC and one Lorraine 18 Jan, only reports. Sharp-shinned Hawk: two Louisville 20 Feb. Cooper's Hawk: one 11 Jan, one taking Mourning Doves at feeder 17 Feb, both Watertown. N. Goshawk: singles Massena 5 Dec, TICBC, Pitcairn early Jan. Red-shouldered Hawk: one Louisville 9 Jan. Rough-legged Hawk: max 13 TICBC; two Pierrepont 5 Dec and a very dark bird 28-29 Feb. Am. Kestrel: singles reported through period. Gray Partridge: five near MSD 4 Jan. Wild Turkey: widespread, including near Carry Falls Reservoir, T Colton and Oswegatchie Inlet, T Fine. **Com. Black-headed Gull:** ad in winter plumage early Dec and 8 Jan (BDiL). Ring-billed Gull: max 125 first-year on 8 Jan. Herring Gull: max 75 on 21 Dec. Iceland Gull: max seven on 23 Jan and 19 Feb. Glaucous Gull: max 14 on 21 Dec. Great Black-backed Gull: max 400 on 21 Dec. Black-legged Kittiwake: a few ad 21 Dec (BDiL).

DOVES-WOODPECKERS: Snowy Owl: one in Massena, only one near Pt Peninsula is unusual, one in Lewis Co. for most of period. Barred Owl: one calling Fine 26 Feb. **Great Gray Owl:** seen twice perched in daytime in old field in Parishville mid Feb (H & RK). Short-eared Owl: four Ashland Flats WMA, T Lyme. N. Saw-whet Owl: one PR 17 Jan only report. Red-bellied Woodpecker: ad male Henderson for entire period; one near Woodville 14 Jan.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLING: Horned Lark: ten Pierrepont 31 Dec, unusually early. Golden-crowned Kinglet: 18 Louisville 31 Dec; on both CBC's. Cedar Waxwing: a few reports, max 33 feeding on sumac and juniper fruits Stony Pt 18 Dec. N. Shrike: very few, total of eight including CBCs.

VIREOS-WARBLEDERS: none.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: White-crowned Sparrow: *intro.* Dark-eyed Junco: three Massena 15 Feb and two Louisville 18 Feb indicated winter population. Lapland Longspur: three TICBC. Snow Bunting: max 110 Louisville 29 Dec. E. Meadowlark: one Stony Pt 14 Jan. Rusty Blackbird: *intro.* Pine Grosbeak: one Massena 25 Feb, only report. Purple Finch: arr Henderson 19 Feb. House Finch: 60-80 per day in JEFF. White-winged Crossbill: five in white spruce near HP 12 Jan, a few Morley mid Feb. Com. Redpoll: 13 TICBC and 20 Louisville 16 Feb only reports. Pine Siskin: arr Louisville 16 Feb, max 25 Massena 22 Feb. Am. Goldfinch: at feeders near Fine in Jan is unusual. Evening Grosbeak: generally scarce or absent.

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## REGION 7 - ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

JOHN M. C. PETERSON

More clues to the puzzle of wintering geese, the return of an Old World duck, Arctic gulls, a tantalizing glimpse, and a shortage of Evening Grosbeaks at lower elevations marked the winter of 1988-98. Given the generally mild conditions, with no major snowfalls to push birds into feeders, many felt that this was another "birdless" winter, yet much like last year variety and numbers proved to be high on local Christmas Bird Counts. The Elizabethtown CBC found 42 species, just one shy of a record, and established a new 16-year record of 3,588 individuals. Across the region, there were 84 species reported.

Birds and birders enjoyed a fairly temperate season, with an Eastern Chipmunk still out at Elizabethtown on 3 Dec. On 11 Dec, however, Saranac Lake was the coldest spot in the nation at a frigid -27°F. By the time of the Saranac Lake CBC on New Year's Eve, there were only 6-11 inches of snow in the Adirondacks, and most of the Champlain Valley was bare. The new year began with Newcomb -21°F on 6 Jan, yet the month ended with Plattsburgh a balmy 46°F on 30 Jan, and monthly temperatures were 5.2% warmer than average (and after averaging 6% warmer last winter, as well). The still bare Champlain Valley received only 6.6" monthly snowfall, while there were 11" on the ground at Newcomb and 20" at Inlet. February had just 1.06" precipitation and 8.5" of snowfall at lower elevations. A cold spell on 17 Feb sent thermometers plunging to -22°F at Ray Brook, -23°F at Newcomb, and -30°F at Saranac Lake. Yet the month was 1.6°F warmer than average, and by 27 Feb the Eastern Chipmunk was back out at Elizabethtown. For the first time in memory, NYS Waterfowl Counters ambled along the bare sands of the lakeshore in shirtsleeves; if this is the Greenhouse Effect, we can learn to stand it.

One blue morph Snow Goose and two yellow-collared Canada Geese were picked out of the flock of almost a thousand geese at Westport during the 17 Dec Ferrisburg CBC. One male collared in North Carolina in Jan 1984 had subsequently turned up in Maryland (Oct-Dec '84), New York (Mar '85), and Delaware (Jan '87). The other male, collared in New Jersey in Jan 1987, had its collar number reported from Delaware in Feb '88. Canada Geese continued feeding in corn stubble near Westport even after Champlain froze over.

Bob Hagar and Ted Mack again provided Clinton County coverage of the recently established Champlain Islands, VT/NY, CBC on 18 Dec. They were rewarded with the return of the Ruddy Shelduck found 20 Dec 1987 on last year's count at Monty Bay.

"White-winged" gulls are scarce in this region, so it was doubly joyous to have Jeff Carleton spot an imm Iceland Gull at Westport on Valentine's Day, just after Bob and Charlotte Ladwig noted the first-winter Glaucous Gull on Whallon's Bay on 25 Jan.

During the course of the 17 Dec Ferrisburg CBC, Ted Mack, Keith Murphy, and Mike Peterson visited a Crater Club camp just south of Essex, where this editor

resided and banded during the mid 1970s. The brushy yard just above Lake Champlain was alive with robins, waxwings, and numerous feeder birds at midday. One plain bird, seen by all observers at point-blank range through a 15x spotting scope, showed a grayish-tan thrushlike head with eye ring giving a blank expression. Upon reflection, Mack was comfortably satisfied that it was a Townsend's Solitaire, a bird that he alone of the party knew well from the West. The bird was neither seen again, nor included in the Ferrisburg CBC totals; details will not be submitted to NYSARC. Bull (*Birds of New York State* 1974) lists two downstate specimen records in November and March.

Evening Grosbeaks seemed most abundant at middle elevations, around 2,000 feet. The Ferrisburg CBC (ca. 100 ft el.) found just 17 grosbeaks, all on the New York side and none in Vermont. The Elizabethtown CBC (ca. 1,000 ft el.) had a relatively low 94 grosbeaks. Only the Saranac Lake CBC (ca. 2,000 ft el.) could find as many as 682, which was still far from a record for that count. The attraction in the Sara-Placid region was undoubtedly the good spruce cone crop. There were no reports from higher elevations (3,000' High Peaks), where winter observations are scarce in any case.

The ubiquitous finch was American Goldfinch. Other finch species appeared in mixed numbers. Siskins were mixed with goldfinches at many feeders, but numbers were greatly reduced after last winter's remarkable invasion, as might be expected.

A total of 111 individuals of six species were banded near Elizabethtown between 25 Jan-16 Feb, with 59 Black-capped Chickadees outnumbering the winter finches. Combined with the record 974 Black-capped Chickadees tallied on the Elizabethtown CBC, it appears that this was an invasion year.

Contributors: Geoffrey Carleton, Bruce Craig, Sean Duffy, Greg Furness, Robert Hagar, Marie Kuhnen, Charlotte & Robert Ladwig, Gary Lee, Sue Liepmann, Theodore Mack, Gary McChesney, James Meritt, Sue Millar, Keith Murphy, John Peterson, Barbara Sweatt.

Abbreviations: CICBC - Champlain Islands Christmas Bird Count; ECBC - Elizabethtown Christmas Bird Count; FCBC - Ferrisburg Christmas Bird Count; SLCBC - Saranac Lake Christmas Bird Count.

LOONS-DUCKS: Com. Loon: three FCBC only report. Horned Grebe: max 22 FCBC. Snow (Blue) Goose: *intro*. Canada Goose: *intro*. Wood Duck: two drakes Ausable R seen from canoe on SLCBC. Mallard: record 355 ECBC. N. Pintail: two drakes New York State Waterfowl Count unusual. Ruddy Shelduck: *intro*.

HAWK-ALCIDS: Bald Eagle: n L George 5 Dec (BC); imm Rock Harbor ESSE 17 Dec (SL); ad Westport 6 Jan (MK); ad Essex 4 Feb (BS), suggests 3-4 birds. N. Harrier: new to ECBC. Wild Turkey: continued HAMI records include Moose R Dec-Jan, Inlet feeder Feb, seven at Wells deer feeder (GL). Am. Coot: Westport 14 Jan and 14 Feb, extremely late. Iceland Gull: *intro*. **Glaucous Gull:** *intro*.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Mourning Dove: 104 ECBC a new record. Belted Kingfisher: one ECBC, three SLCBC notably late. Three-toed Woodpecker: s of Sagamore L at head of Benedict and Sumner Creeks (GM), always a good find. Black-backed Woodpecker: max three Chubb R ESSE 27 Dec (SD); also in HAMI at Helldiver Pd, Moose R, and s of Sagamore L (GL). N. Flicker: one FCBC, two ECBC notably late.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Horned Lark: Inlet dump 7 Dec (GL) a most unexpected locale; 140 CICBC CLIN more expected, but good numbers. Gray Jay: one wintered Lawrence feeder, McMaster Rd FRAN (SD), two SLCBC, seven FRAN 14 Jan (JM), several

Moose R and s Sagamore L, a good showing. Com. Raven: regular in Port Henry rockcuts bordering L Champlain Dec, one FCBC, max four each ECBC and SLCBC, pairs at nest sites Eagle Nest Pd and Mt Tom HAMI by end of period. Black-capped Chickadee: *intro*. Tufted Titmouse: Inlet feeder (GL) since 7 Jan a surprise. Carolina Wren: Moriah 31 Jan (GC) the only report, but not unexpected in light of at least seven in Quebec during the winter. Townsend's Solitaire: *intro*. **Wood Thrush**: one in a spring area near Inlet 7 Dec, extremely late, if correct (GL). Am. Robin: widespread, with reports of 18 FCBC, six ECBC, Moose R 12 Dec, Adk Loj 28 Jan. N. Mockingbird: new to ECBC. Brown Thrasher: new to ECBC. Cedar Waxwing: 47 FCBC, *intro*.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: White-throated Sparrow: two FCBC, one ECBC, one SLCBC a solid showing. Lapland Longspur: five CICBC a good number. Snow Bunting: max 300 Christian Rd ESSE 12 Feb. Red-winged Blackbird: two CICBC unusual in winter. **Rusty Blackbird**: new to SLCBC. Com. Grackle: two SLCBC, most unusual in Adirondacks in winter. Pine Grosbeak: max five SLCBC. Purple Finch: max nine SLCBC. House Finch: max 253 ECBC. Red Crossbill: max two Elizabethtown 16 Feb. White-winged Crossbill: max 20 FRAN 14 Jan. Com. Redpoll: max one FCBC. Pine Siskin: max 83 SLCBC. Am. Goldfinch: max 341 ECBC. Evening Grosbeak: *intro*.

*Discovery Farm, RD 1, Elizabethtown, NY 12932*

[There is no Region 8 report because we have no Editor for Region 8.]

## REGION 9 - DELAWARE-HUDSON

HELEN MANSON

Those of us who anticipated good winter birding were in most cases disappointed. December temperatures were normal and the only measurable snows came in mid month, resulting in only 1/2 inch of precipitation. January arrived with three inches of snow which only lasted about two days. There was no more precipitation to speak of for the rest of the month. February was a bit warmer than normal with an average temperature of 28°. Heavy rains did little to dispel the drought conditions. Some of the inland ponds and lakes had open leads kept free of ice by the many wintering Canada Geese, thus providing areas for a variety of ducks.

An invasion of winter finches did not materialize. The lack of snow made it very difficult to find longspurs and Horned Larks. The open winter provided good food sources and kept the birds well dispersed. Multiflora rose and other wild fruits were abundant this open winter. However, feeders were well populated with common visitors. There were a few exceptions that saved the winter. Bald Eagles wintered along the Hudson River and offered good views for all who took the time to look for them. Some also wintered at Rio, Neversink, and Rondout Reservoirs. Waterfowl continued to use the river, dodging the many ice floes and sometimes resting on them. It was possible to see good numbers of Canvasback and Common Merganser. The **Say's Phoebe** found on the afternoon of the Eastern Orange County Christmas Bird Count on

17 Dec put Kaisertown Road and Montgomery on the map. The bird, in excellent plumage, flew into a patch of weeds giving Marty Borko and John Tramontano an excellent view. Both had seen the bird in the west and made a quick identification. It was observed by many until 8 January. A female **Dickcissel** was spotted 29 Jan by Lewis Dumont and Edward Treacy. The bird perched on a multiflora rose bush in the Town of Warwick and was well observed. It remained through the next day.

Contributors: Barbara Butler, Frank Brown, Judy and Floyd Cook, Thelma Haight, Will Karsch, Jim and Mary Key, Helen Manson, Barbara Michelin, Eleanor Pink, Selden Spencer, Czecher Terhune, John P. Tramontano, Edward Treacy, Chet Vincent, Marion VanWagner, Otis Waterman, Joe Weise.

Abbreviations: BCBC - John Burroughs Natural History Society Christmas Bird Count 17 Dec; PCBC - Putnam County Christmas Bird Count 31 Dec; OCBC - Orange County Christmas Bird Count 17 Dec; SCAS - Sullivan County Audubon Society; SCBC - Sullivan County Christmas Bird Count 31 Dec; WBC - Ralph T. Waterman Bird Club; WCBC - Ralph T. Waterman Bird Club Christmas Bird Count 17 Dec.

LOONS-DUCKS: Com. Loon: one Hunns L 2 Dec (EP), one PCBC. Pied-billed Grebe: PCBC, one 17 Dec EMBC. Horned Grebe: one PCBC. Red-necked Grebe: one Cornwall Bay 3 Jan. Double-crested Cormorant: one Peekskill 4 Feb (ET), one 14 Jan (JMK). Great Blue Heron: one to three DUTC entire period; two Ora 17 Dec. Mute Swan: max 65 PCBC mostly in the Hudson R, a few in inland ponds in areas kept open by the many wintering Canada Geese. Snow Goose: flock of 27 wintered in DUTC, two Ora 17 Dec. Brant: imm Monroe Pd 26 Feb. Canada Goose: 5000 wintered in Hudson Valley. Wood Duck: one Vassar Farm 27 Dec, one Kays Pd Jan and Feb. Green-winged Teal: four PCBC. Am. Black Duck: max 100, good numbers on all CBCs. Mallard: 100s wintered in Hudson R, inland ponds and streams. N Pintail: max nine 27 Sylvan L Feb (BM). Gadwall: two OCBC, five Wappingers L 9 Dec. Am. Wigeon: one 6 Dec (MVW), one Fishkill Cemetery 30 Jan, two Salt Pt 31 Jan, three Greenwood L. Canvasback: max 700 Hudson R entire period. Ring-necked Duck: 111 Abels L Dec, smaller flocks in other ponds and Hudson R. Greater Scaup: one PCBC, one WBC 14 Jan. Com. Goldeneye: 20 PCBC, 15 Bashakill 22 Feb, eight Hudson R 25 Feb (OTW). Bufflehead: two WCBC. Hooded Merganser: three Wappingers L 9 Dec, 11 PCBC, eight Walkill R 6 Feb (ET). Com. Merganser: max 468 Hudson R Jan. Ruddy Duck: one PCBC.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Turkey Vulture: four over Bellvale 31 Jan, one Middletown 5 Dec (JPT), arr Hudson Valley mid Feb. Osprey: one Neversink R 18 Jan (WK). Bald Eagle: max seven Hudson R north to Tivoli, five Rio Res, three Delaware R, two ad and one imm feeding on deer carcass Neversink R 29 Dec, three ad Bashakill. N Harrier: one BCBC, max six Galesville Airport, one Ryder P 27 Feb (MVW); only three E Ora OCBC, half the normal number (JPT). Sharp-shinned Hawk: reported in high numbers on all counts. Cooper's Hawk: one at feeder Cornwall 5 Feb, one BCBC, two WCBC, one 3 Jan (SCAS). N. Goshawk: one PCBC, one Cruger I 26 Feb, one 28 Jan (CV). Red-shouldered Hawk: one PCBC, one BCBC, one Wappingers Falls (OTW), one SCBC. Red-tailed Hawk: seems fairly abundant most areas, max 76 SCBC. Rough-legged Hawk: no invasion; one WCBC, two Jan DUTC, one Galesville Airport. Golden Eagle: ad wintered in SULL (Peter Nye, DEC). Am. Kestrel: very low in DUTC, one or two noted, four BCBC, 17 OCBC, excellent wintering numbers (JPT). Ring-necked Pheasant: two PCBC, four SCBC, six WCBC, three BCBC; max five Feb WBC. Ruffed Grouse: 15 PCBC, two Cary Arboretum 25 Feb (MVW). Wild Turkey: increasing range, max 72 BCBC. Sora: one BCBC, one Humpo Marsh mid Feb (SS). Am. Coot: twelve PCBC. Killdeer: one each PCBC, WCBC, BCBC. Com. Snipe: wintered near a warm spring (JPT). one Millerton 2 Jan, one Dover Palins 8 Feb. Am. Woodcock: one PCBC. Herring Gull: max 163 PCBC. Iceland Gull: one Cornwall Bay

OCBC, one Rondout Res Jan, both first year birds. Great Black-backed Gull: plentiful in the Hudson R, max 50 WBC.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Mourning Dove: continue in good numbers. Barn Owl: one OCBC. E. Screech-Owl: six PCBC, five WCBC, one OCBC. Great Horned Owl: few reports of calling Jan and Feb, no nesting noted. Snowy Owl: one Kerley's Corners Rd, Red Hook early Dec (Jeff Jones) for only a few hours, videotaped, only confirmed report. Banded Owl: two PUTN, three DUTC. Short-eared Owl: max seven Galesville Airport, two wintered near Montgomery. N. Saw-whet Owl: one found dead Grahamsville 26 Dec, only report. Belted Kingfisher: good winter population. Red-headed Woodpecker: one occasionally VanWagner Rd (CT). Red-bellied Woodpecker: 33 OCBC; several were noted in new locations SULL. N. Flicker: good winter population. Pileated Woodpecker: 19 WCBC, high count.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: E. Phoebe: one Verbank 22 Jan and 6 Feb. **Say's Phoebe:** *intro.* Horned Lark: max 200 Red Hook 11 Feb. Blue Jay: fairly high counts on all CBCs. Am. Crow: 8000 Middletown roost through mid Jan. Fish Crow: two New Hamburg, one Beacon 14 Jan. Com. Raven: two feeding on deer carcass Neversink R 31 Dec; two at Claryville engaged in courtship display 26 Feb (SCAS). Black-capped Chickadee: reported in good numbers both at feeders and in the field. Tufted Titmouse: max 168 PCBC. Red-breasted Nuthatch: max ten SCBC. White-breasted Nuthatch: well reported. Brown Creeper: surprisingly numerous on most CBCs, none in Feb DUTC. Carolina Wren: max 17 PCBC. Winter Wren: three WCBC, six PCBC. Golden-crowned Kinglet: close to 100 PCBC, six Cary Arboretum 18 Feb (BB). Ruby-crowned Kinglet: one BCBC, six PCBC. two OCBC; one Rock Hill 26 Dec and four early Jan, two early Feb. E. Bluebird: good winter population. Hermit Thrush: five PCBC, two OCBC, one WCBC, one Rock Hill 26 Dec, 3 and 8 Jan (SCAS). Am. Robin: fewer wintered than usual, 87 BCBC, 20 Vassar Farm in Feb. Gray Catbird: two Dec DUTC, two PCBC. Cedar Waxwing: max 150 DUTC Feb, 88 BCBC.

VIREOS-WARBLEDERS: Yellow-rumped Warbler: one Pleasant Valley 7 Dec (MVW), one Rombout Rd 28 Jan (CV), four PCBC. **Pine Warbler:** one Westbrookville feeder 15 Jan (SCAS).

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: **Dickcissel:** *intro.* Rufous-sided Towhee: one Jan (EP), one Vassar Farm 9 Jan (JMK), one overwintered Cornwall (EMBC), one Wawarsing through Feb (SCAS). Am. Tree Sparrow: seemed abundant. Field Sparrow: max ten WCBC, few throughout period. Savannah Sparrow: one WCBC. Fox Sparrow: two at feeder SULL Dec, one WCBC. Song Sparrow: high counts on all CBCs, ten Feb, singing all month some areas. Swamp Sparrow: seven PCBC, one Vassar Farm 27 Jan, two SCBC, 13 OCBC is record winter max. White-throated Sparrow: good winter population, high CBC counts. White-crowned Sparrow: three 27 Jan, two Red Hook 4 Feb, one Verbank 6-22 Jan and 19 Feb, one Vassar Farm 20 Jan. Dark-eyed Junco: abundant. Lapland Longspur: four Red Hook 7 Jan (HM), one BCBC, very hard to find due to lack of snow. Red-winged Blackbird: up to 50 wintered in Red Hook, arr ten Verbank 23 Feb. E. Meadowlark: four PUTN 28 Jan, seven on 30 Jan (FB), one OCBC. Rusty Blackbird: one PCBC, two 10-16 Dec Stissing, one VanWagner Rd 17 Dec, one WCBC, 11 BCBC. Com. Grackle: 50 wintered in Red Hook, five 23 Feb with Red-wings Verbank. Brown-headed Cowbird: flocks of 1-200 at some farm areas. **Pine Grosbeak:** 16 Grahamsville 10 Feb (JW), only report. Purple Finch: two at feeder 17 Feb (ET), three OCBC, six BCBC, 15 Stissing Feb (TH), scarce elsewhere. Com. Redpoll: unconfirmed report Humpo Marsh (SS). Pine Siskin: ten SCBC, one at feeder Moores Mills 2 Dec, one Baird SP 10 Dec, ten Monticello early Jan, very scarce. Am. Goldfinch: good numbers. Evening Grosbeak: lowest numbers since 1981 SULL, max 14 DeBruce (JFC); ten Salt Pt Jan, only seen once.

*Moores Mills, RD 4, Pleasant Valley, NY 12569*



## REGION 10 - MARINE

SEYMOUR SCHIFF & ALVIN WOLLIN

A description of the "winter" weather follows. The temperature in New York City reached 60°F. on 8 Dec. This was followed by the first arctic air of the season, which brought the temperature below the freezing mark and eventually to 5°F on 12 Dec. The remainder of the month was more seasonable, but it returned to 60°F on 29 Dec. At the end of the month it was back below freezing. This diversity resulted in an average temperature of 35.9° against the norm of 36.2°. Rainfall for the month was 1.14 inches; normal is 3.81. Included in these New York city records was the mere light dusting of snow on 15 Dec, but which brought eleven inches of snow to eastern Long Island. Just a normal month in the Region. The daily highs during January gradually moved up to 61° on 24 Jan before dropping again. But a week later February began with a 5° increase to the previous daily high for the date, when an unprecedented 67° was recorded in Central Park. As to rain/snow, the bulk of the winter storms roared up the coast and surged out to sea when they reached New Jersey. This resulted in little snow and a potential water shortage for the Region due to lack of precipitation both here and upstate.

This mild weather, particularly in the early part of the season resulted in more sightings than usual of a number of birds normally found during milder periods. These included Wood Ducks, Tree Swallows and Chipping Sparrows. The season was notable for an almost complete lack of both northern birds and winter finches. Probably the best bird of the winter was a stray migrant which arrived just after the end of the Fall period. On 3 Dec Tony Lauro reported a displaced **Western Tanager** which showed up at Fire Island State Park. It stayed a few days in the shelter of an *Eleagnus* (Russian Olive) grove feeding on the berries with robins, a Northern Oriole and a Solitary Vireo. Most lucky observers who came to see it were also rewarded with a view of a Western Kingbird on the nearby Cedar Beach golf course.

The one special bird most contributors reported, from Staten Island to Montauk and throughout this winter season, was the Peregrine Falcon. These reports cannot be attributed to just a few birds moving around. The Region is seeing a significant increase in the winter population. In addition, Cooper's Hawk and N. Goshawks, less common among the wintering hawks, were more widely reported this season.

Almost all of the rarer birds normally seen during the winter (as few as half a dozen birds staying in the Region but seen every year) were reported on one or more of the Region's Christmas Bird Counts. These included Eurasian Wigeon, Common and King Eider, Harlequin Duck, Little, Common Black-headed, Iceland and Lesser Black-backed Gull, Snowy Owl, Pine Warbler, Common Yellowthroat and Rusty Blackbird. The Central Suffolk Christmas Count reported twelve birds of prey, six hawks and six owls, and the various Suffolk Co. counts reported a total of 25 Eastern Bluebirds. None of the the

Christmas counts reported particularly large numbers of scoters and many birders believe that scoter numbers are down considerably in recent years. However, the Amagansett to Montauk Point Waterfowl Census on 14 Jan found over 20,000, half of them Surf Scoters. More than the usual number of phoebes also turned up during the warm month of Dec.

For the most part little exciting happened during the period after the Christmas counts. The usual early February migrants failed to be sufficiently noticeable to be mentioned by our contributors. However, observers continue to comment on the increase and spread of birds into the Region from other areas. Among those species mentioned are Red-bellied Woodpecker, Tufted Titmouse and Carolina Wren. Others like the Great Cormorant, which has become rather widespread at present, are just reported without comment. On 7 Feb Arthur Morris and Elaine Belsky carefully counted Boat-tailed Grackles at the Howard Beach roost. The total was a high of 103, including 14 adult males.

Christopher McKeever reported on the final moments of the Chilean Flamingo. It was last seen alive 17 Dec, and duly reported on the Quogue Christmas count. The body was found thereafter and was to be conveyed to the American Museum of Natural History in New York. Conjecture on cause of death, either lead poisoning or the cold weather freezing the bottoms on which it fed; an autopsy had not been completed as of this report. Finally, it is the responsibility of the Regional editor to decide what is and what is not a bona fide record to include in each submission. This period's dilemma was a Barnacle Goose which wintered on the north shore of Long Island this winter. No bands were seen. Is it a European bird or an escape? A difficult question! In this particular case we report it here and leave it to the experts to evaluate.

Contributors: Bob Adamo, Thomas W. Burke, James Clinton, Sr., Henry F. Flamm, Paul H. Gillen, Dave Kunstler, Anthony J. Lauro, Christopher K. McKeever, Peter Martin, Arthur Morris, Michael O'Brien, Herbert H. Roth, John J. Ruscica, John S. (Jack) Ruscica, Harriet Sato, Seymour Schiff, Lore J. Schore, Steve Walter, Alvin Wollin.

Abbreviations: APP - Alley Pond Park; CSCBC - Central Suffolk Christmas Bird Count 27 Dec; CP - Central Park; JBCh - Jones Beach; LI - Long Island; MPt - Montauk Point; QCBC - Queens Christmas Bird Count 17 Dec; RMSP - Robert Moses State Park; ShIn - Shinnecock Inlet; SHP - South Haven Park; SNCBC - Southern Nassau Christmas Bird Count 2 Jan; WEJB - west end Jones Beach.

LOONS-DUCKS: Red-necked Grebe: a few scattered reports, mostly from Christmas counts. Green-backed Heron: one Twin Lakes Preserve, Wantagh 26 Dec (PM). Tundra Swan: two Hook Pd, E Hampton 3 Dec (JJR). Snow Goose: 2-300 JBWS during Jan, 25 Hook Pd, E Hampton 18 Jan (AD,PG), blue morph Caumsett SP 23 Feb. Barnacle Goose: *intro*. Wood Duck: *intro*. Tufted Duck: one CP 29 Jan (Brenda Renshaw). Com. Eider: five MPt 11 Dec, two MPt 13 Feb (PG). King Eider: one to two MPt entire period. Harlequin Duck: two WEJB 5 Dec, six ShIn 14 Jan, eleven Ditch Plains 26 Feb (PG). Eurasian Wigeon: singles widely distributed.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Osprey: one Connetquot R SP 22 Jan (PM). Bald Eagle: imm JBCh 11 Jan (HR,HS,LS). Cooper's Hawk: *intro*. N. Goshawk: *intro*, one wintered CP. Red-shouldered Hawk: one wintered Hempstead L SP (mob). Peregrine Falcon: *intro*. Wild Turkey: 70 Montauk CBC 17 Dec. Clapper Rail: on SNCBC. Virginia Rail: eight MPt 17 Dec, one MPt 26 Feb (PG). Semipalmated Plover: on QCBC. Lesser Yellowlegs: on SNCBC. Laughing Gull: on QCBC. Little Gull: one WEJB 12 Dec (PM), one ShIn. Com. Black-headed Gull: on SNCBC, ShIn 22 Jan (PG), 25 Jan (HR,HS,LS), one Pt Lookout 8 Feb (PM).

Iceland Gull: two wintered MPt. Glaucous Gull: singles MPt 17 Dec, East River 31 Jan, MPt 19 Feb.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Snowy Owl: one Hampton Bays LI 29 Dec (PG), still there 4 Feb (JJR).

FLYCATCHERS-STARLING: E. Phoebe: one APP 19 Dec (Art Wagner, Sam Yaeger), three CSCBC. W. Kingbird: *intro*. Carolina Wren: 110 Orient CBC 31 Dec. Winter Wren: SHP 7 Jan (JSR). E. Bluebird: *intro*. N. Shrike: two CSCBC.

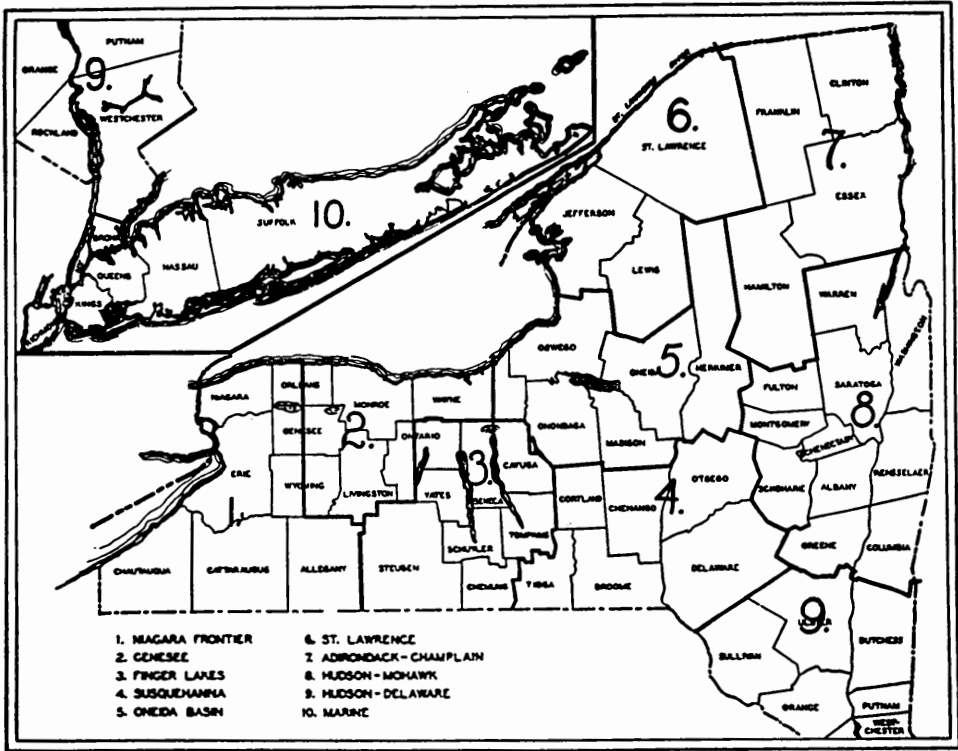
VIREOS-WARBLERS: Solitary Vireo: *intro*. Orange-crowned Warbler: John F. Kennedy Wildlife Sanctuary, Tobay 3 Dec (PM), one Northern Nassau CBC. Pine Warbler: one wintered MPt. Palm Warbler: several CBC reports, one MPt 14 Jan (JJR). Yellow-breasted Chat: one RMSP 4 Dec, one MPt 29 Dec.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: Summer Tanager: one Oldfield LI at feeder to 4 Dec. **Western Tanager**: *intro*. Dickcissel: one Whitestone feeder 7 Jan, one Brooklyn feeder 28 Feb. Lapland Longspur: one wintered at JBCh Coast Guard Station, seven SNCBC 2 Jan, eight St Charles Cemetery 22 Jan. Boat-tailed Grackle: *intro*. N. Oriole: one RMSP 3-18 Dec, two Montauk CBC 17 Dec, one QCBC. White-winged Crossbill: one SNCBC. Evening Grosbeak: SNCBC, six SHP 6 Jan (JSR), APP 10 Jan (Sam Yeaton, Art Wagner).

EXOTICS: Chilean Flamingo: *intro*.

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## REPORTING REGIONS



For descriptions of Regions see Kingbird Vol. XXXVII No. 1, p. 9-10.

### 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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