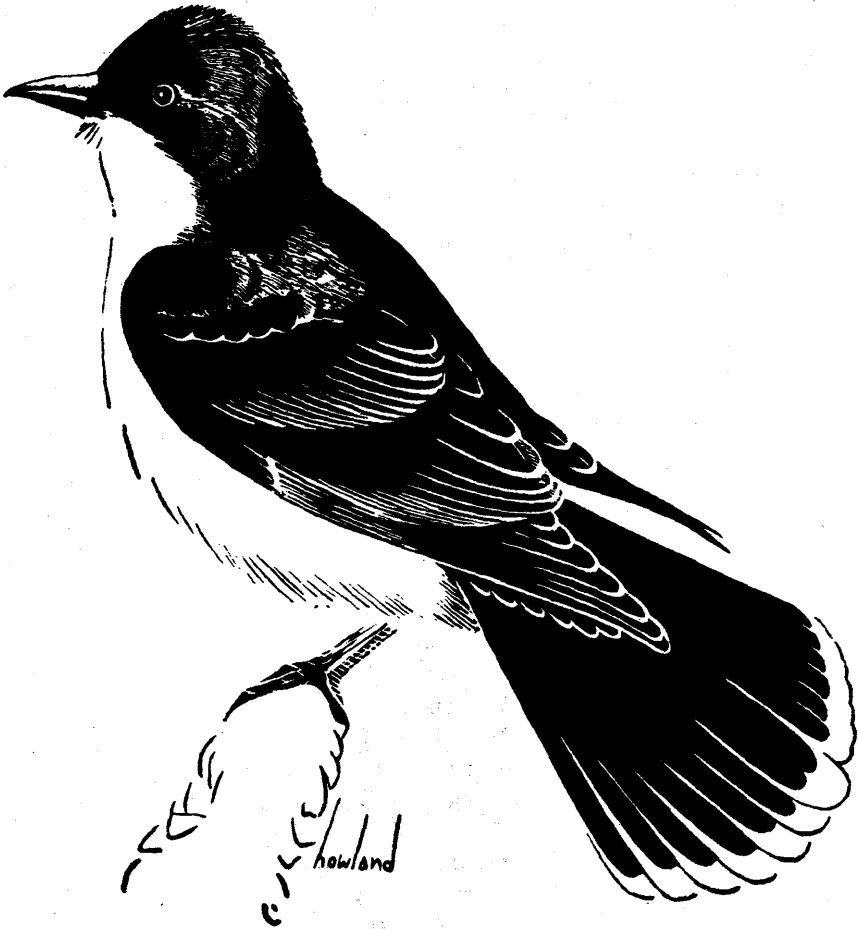


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YELLOW-BILLED LOON IN OSWEGO HARBOR. SECOND STATE RECORD. FIRST LIVE SIGHTING!

Gerard Phillips

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ABSTRACT — A first winter Yellow-billed Loon (*Gavia adamsii*) was seen on 21 December 1997 in Oswego harbor, NY. Although this is the second state record, it is the first live sighting. Circumstances surrounding the discovery are given, along with a detailed field description, and a photograph. The first NY record pertains to a bill found on Long Island in 1930.

INTRODUCTION

A first winter Yellow-billed Loon (*Gavia adamsii*) was seen on 21 December 1997 in Oswego harbor. This was the first official live sighting of this species in New York State and was only the second state record, the first being based on a specimen. Mary Alice Koenke, Sue Boettger, Bill Gruenbaum and I were counting birds along the Oswego River as part of the annual Oswego-Fulton Christmas Bird Count (CBC). While positioned beside Cahill's restaurant on the west side of the river, Sue spotted a loon four tenths of a mile downstream just within the harbor. It was approximately 0830 hours and it snowed heavily. Mary Alice, Bill, and Sue loosely debated the bird's identity, their opinions swayed between Common and Red-throated loon which struck me as odd, given that these species are generally not confused. When I looked at the bird I immediately thought it was a juvenile Common Loon but I was struck by its unusually pale appearance. I made mental note to recheck the bird once at the Marine Museum, our next stop about 0.4 mile away. Meanwhile, I was happy to conclude, as the others did, that the bird was a Common Loon.

At the museum, Sue spotted the loon again. While she and the others continued counting I was eager to observe it at closer range. The moment I had the bird in my scope the small voice at the back of my mind began to shout. The bird was indeed extremely pale and I glimpsed some yellow on the bill as it dove. I announced that it was "a really good candidate for Yellow-billed Loon". (I had previous experience with a basic adult in Ireland 1986.) With the attention of the others now on the bird, I suggested we check the exact coloration of its culmen and start taking other field-notes. At approximately that time (0900 hours) our views of the loon were blocked when a freighter docked right where we stood! It was decided at that juncture that it would be best to alert other birders about the bird.

Awaiting the arrival of others we positioned ourselves on the east side of the river at the Oswego Port Authority. It was approx. 0930 hours; snow had stopped falling and the Loon was resting just 50 m from shore in calm water.

Through 30x60 magnification the views were stunning, the bird was unequivocally a very beautiful first winter Yellow-billed Loon! See Figure 1.

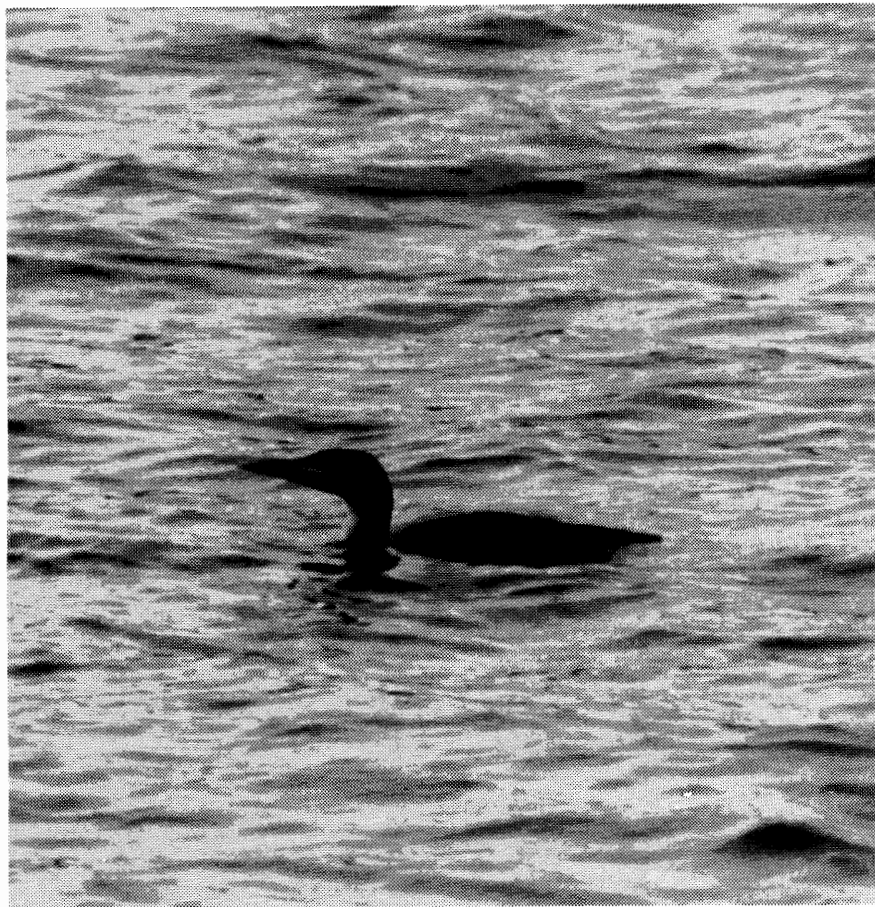


Figure 1. Yellow-billed Loon. Photographed on 29 December 1997 in Oswego harbor, NY, by Tim Capone (Syracuse, NY) using a Nikon 6006 camera with a Sigma 400 mm APO lens, at 1/125 speed F5.6 exposure, on Fuji Sensa 100 ASA film. This is the same photo that appeared in Weiner 1998.

Fortunately the loon remained faithful to the harbor from 21 December till 6 January 1998. Many observers (mob) from all over NY and as far as Michigan and Washington, DC saw the bird. In fact, it had gained celebrity status as an item of regional news on television and in the newspaper (Weiner 1998). By 6 January however, severe silting from the Oswego River forced most diving birds away from the harbor. There were two subsequent sightings, 12 January and the last which was 22 January 1998 (Mary Alice and mob).

GENERAL IMPRESSION

At all times structure/size appeared most like and larger than a Common Loon. Plumage was notably pale brown, lacking sharp black and white contrasts on the head and neck. Bill was long, heavy and pale (yellow), especially toward the tip. While not actively feeding/diving it habitually held its head up tilted like a Red-throated Loon or a cormorant, as is typical for this species. At such times it also showed a large "bump" on its forehead, perhaps more pronounced than on a Common Loon. Wide whitish fringing on the scapulars enhanced the paleness of the bird, especially at close range. A whitish flank patch was often visible.

DESCRIPTION

Upper parts: bump on forehead from behind, while head up tilted, was like a huge cyst! Head and neck were washed variously brown. A wide whitish area separated the dark eye from a paler crown. A subtle dark smudge was present behind the auricular on side of head. Hind neck was patterned with buffish areas each side of the nape and by darker line in the middle that connected the crown to the brown collar at base of the neck. Mantle was grayish-brown, closely striped with buffish-gray feather fringes. Scapulars were brown showing wide buffish-gray fringes that formed a distinct pattern of bold wavy lines across the "back". Primaries, rump, and tail were darker brown than the rest of the upper parts.

Under parts: cheeks, chin, throat and foreneck buff-white blended with upper parts. Thin dark mustachial stripe ran across the cheeks from the bill. Feathering on face at lower mandible was dark brown. (Shadow on the chin and throat could result in an appearance further suggesting a juvenile Red-throated Loon when distant.) Lower neck and breast were pure white. Neat brownish-gray 'zebra lines' on breast sides became gray patches once distant. Flanks were brown with a whitish "thigh" patch frequently visible.

Bare Parts

Bill: large, powerful bill appeared longer/heavier than that of the Common Loon. Dark narial feathers could be mistaken as bill color. Culmen was proximally a pale bluish-gray underneath white (like a healing bruised fingernail)

blending to yellow distally. Tip of culmen (for at least an inch or more) was bright yellowish-blond. Lower mandible was also entirely pale, bluish-gray proximally becoming yellow distally. Tomia pale throughout. Bill in itself did not look strikingly retrousse (turned up) but could suggest this when head was held high. The color was sometimes surprisingly difficult to discern (distances greater than 50m in bad light); the yellow tip was best judged frontally as it condensed and "flashed" against the bird's head.

Legs: tibia and toes were dark pinkish-gray, with webbing bright grayish-pink. (Observed while bird was preening.)

Eyes: iris was liver colored but generally looked black.

DISCUSSION

The Yellow-billed Loon breeds in northern Siberia, northern Alaska, and Arctic Canada, wintering along the Alaskan Coast. It is rare but annual from Washington down to California (North 1994). And is casual to the Great Lakes (Kaufman 1990).

The first New York record stems from a specimen picked up on eastern Long Island sometime "early" 1930 (Bull 1964). The specimen was severely decomposed and was identified by bill alone, which was apparently broken off from the skull. The (lower) mandible aided the identification without reference of/to the maxilla or culmen. The description is "ivory white, darkened only at the gonydeal angle and irregularly basad" AMNH skeletal collection 4005 (Zimmer 1947).

Since the 1980s there have been almost continuous confirmed sightings of Yellow-billed Loon from the interior United States (for example, Janzen 1998). The likely explanation for these is perhaps the increase in observer awareness (North 1994). A recent report came from Maryland (Anon 1998). NYSARC has had no official sightings of Yellow-billed Loon on record (J. Lowe, personal communication).

In the past birders might simply have been afraid or reluctant to put their reputation at stake by claiming such sightings (R. Spahn personal communication). Two factors traditionally have troubled NY State birders regarding the single state record Yellow-billed Loon. No one could say with certainty how long or from where the Long Island specimen had drifted. Also, there was a legacy of almost seven successive decades with zero sightings to fathom. It is not surprising that few if any NY birders kept this species in mind, let alone purposely/routinely searched for it, when encountering loons in freezing winter weather!

CONCLUSION

Now, for the first time, there is proof positive that the species actually can and does occur here. The list of birders better equipped and versed with what to look for is growing. Although, many potential areas are still under birded! The

question now is where, rather than when or if, the next confirmed sighting will be. Perhaps it will occur before 2065! The number of records can only increase with time. What will not change however is the status of Yellow-billed Loon as an undisputed state rarity. This article serves to document the first confirmed live sighting in New York State. Birders wishing to know more about the identification of Yellow-billed Loon are urged to acquire at least one, if not all, of the excellent treatments available today. For convenience some are listed under further reading below. For an expansive bibliography, see North (1994).

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This article is dedicated to everyone who saw, or hoped to see, the bird. Special thanks to Bill Purcell at the Syracuse Rare Bird Alert for frequent updates. I am grateful to the following people who helped get this article rolling: Joseph Adamson, Stephen Davis, Stephen Kelling, Mary Alice Koeneke, Emanuel Levine, James Lowe, Robert Paxton, and Robert Spahn. Last, but not least, my wife, Maryanne, for her support.

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TREE SWALLOWS RAISE BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD NESTLING

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ABSTRACT — Brown-headed Cowbirds (*Molothrus ater*) have been reported to parasitize Tree Swallows (*Tachycineta bicolor*) only a handful of times. Here I report the first record that Tree Swallows are capable of raising a cowbird nestling at a rate comparable to the developmental rate of successfully fledged parasitic nestlings in other host nests. This result is in contrast with the specific findings of Mills (1988) but supports his suggestion that cavity nesting alone may not explain the absence of cowbird parasitism of Tree Swallows.

INTRODUCTION

The Brown-headed Cowbird (*Molothrus ater*) is a generalist brood parasite, known to be raised successfully by over 140 species of birds in North America (Lowther 1993). A typical cowbird host is an open cup nesting small passerine that feeds an insect based diet to its young (Friedmann 1963, Lowther 1993). Even though they provide an insect based diet to their young (Friedmann 1963, Petit 1991), most common cavity nesting passerines (e.g. chickadees, swallows, etc.) are rarely parasitized by cowbirds.

Observations about cowbird parasitism of Tree Swallows (*Tachycineta bicolor*) have been reported only a handful of times (Friedmann 1963). Cavity nesting alone does not explain mechanistically the apparent lack of parasitism across the ranges of cowbirds and swallows because some Tree Swallow nests have indeed received cowbird eggs (Friedman 1963). In addition, standard size bluebird/swallow nest boxes do not prevent the cowbird's access to the nest: the opening of such a box is wide enough (~3.5 cm) to allow free passage for an adult female cowbird (personal observation). Finally, other cavity nesters, such as the Prothonotary Warbler (*Protonotaria citrea*), are frequently parasitized by cowbirds (Petit 1991), and Eastern Bluebirds (*Sialia sialis*) and Carolina Wrens (*Thryothorus ludovicianus*) are known to fledge cowbird nestlings successfully (Woodward 1983).

To investigate whether Tree Swallows could serve as hosts for cowbirds, Mills (1988) artificially parasitized 15 Tree Swallow nests. Because cowbirds had a relatively high survival rate in artificially parasitized nests of the closely related Barn Swallow (*Hirundo rustica*) (Eastzer and others 1980), Mills was surprised to find that none of seven cowbird hatchlings survived to fledging.

Here I report that Tree Swallows are capable of raising a nestling cowbird to fledging.

OBSERVATIONS

On 30 June 1997, a Cedar Waxwing (*Bombycilla cedrorum*, a rejecter species, *sensu* Rothstein 1976), was found incubating one cowbird and three waxwing eggs in a nest at the Cornell Experimental Ponds (CEP), Ithaca, NY. I removed the cowbird egg and within 20 minutes I placed it into an incubator (39°C, 70-80% humidity), as part of a hand raising study. On 3 July, by 09:00 EST the cowbird had hatched and I fed it a small amount of moistened puppy chow. It was then placed into a Tree Swallow nest box at the CEP swallow colony (Winkler 1993) and checked on a daily basis. The nest box was occupied by a second-year female and her mate, and it contained 4 eggs, which had been incubated for a about 11-12 days. This is similar to the incubation period of cowbird eggs in other host nests (Lowther 1993, personal observation). The cowbird nestling was accepted and apparently fed by the swallows, developing at a comparable rate to cowbird nestlings raised by other, common hosts of cowbirds (Figure 1). Only three of the four swallow eggs hatched, two on 5 July and one on 6 July (2 and 3 days after the cowbird, respectively), and the swallow nestlings' subsequent growth rate was similar to that of others at the CEP colony (P. Allen and D. Winkler, personal communication). The fourth egg remained clear with a large air sac and was probably infertile. On 14 July, when I opened the side panel of the nest box, the 11 day old cowbird was positioned near the front of the box and was trying to escape from my hand by jumping toward the opening of the box. I banded the cowbird nestling with a U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and a color band. On 15 July, by 09:15 only three swallow nestlings were present in the box, suggesting that the cowbird fledged from the nest. I did not find any signs of the banded fledgling cowbird during the next two days in the study area and all food items on 11 subsequent feeding visits by the parent swallows in the proximity of the nest box on 15 July were delivered to the swallow nestlings remaining in the nest box.

DISCUSSION

The cowbird developed at a rate comparable to those raised by more typical cowbird hosts and it was likely to have fledged from the nest at 11 days of age. This is similar to the average fledgling age for cowbirds raised by other, common hosts (Lowther 1993). It was unlikely that the cowbird nestling was depredated or died while still in the swallow nest because the nest boxes in the study area are protected by conical metal aluminum sheets ("predator guards") and because neither were there any cowbird remains in or near the nest, nor were

the other nestlings injured or dead. Nonetheless, it is likely that once fledged, the cowbird did not survive because I did not see the host swallows feeding it.

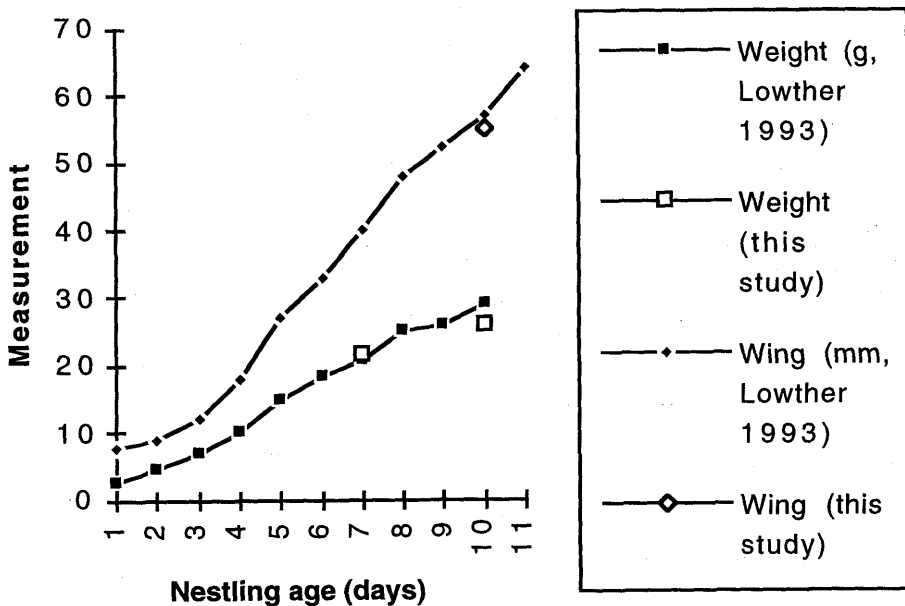


Figure 1. Comparisons of weight and flattened wing measurements of cowbird nestlings raised by common hosts (Lowther 1993) and Tree Swallows (this study).

The cowbird in this study was incubated and hatched outside the swallow nest and was placed into the nest box 2-3 days prior to the hatching of three Tree Swallow nest mates. It had also been fed a small amount of food by the observer prior to its placement into the nest box. These circumstances may have provided an advantage that the parasitic nestlings in the Mills (1988) study did not have because the latter were incubated by swallows and hatched only 0-1 day prior to their four host nest mates. Possibly weather conditions, which are known to have a great impact on swallow foraging and survival (McCarty 1995), were also more favorable in Ithaca in 1997 than those experienced by cowbirds in the Mills study in Ontario in 1988, although nestling mortality of cowbirds in Mills' study was not associated with weather related nestling mortality of swallows (Mills 1988). Furthermore, the observation that a cowbird can survive to

fledging in a Tree Swallow nest suggests that nutritional content of food and intrabrood competition, at least in the one nest that I studied, do not necessarily prohibit the development of the parasitic nestling in the nest of this potential host.

There could be several reasons why Brown-headed Cowbirds do not parasitize Tree Swallows. First, historically cowbirds and Tree Swallows were likely to occupy different habitats (Lowther 1993) and cowbirds may not have evolved to recognize Tree Swallows as potential hosts. Thus, previous records of female cowbirds investigating swallow boxes and parasitizing them are due to recognition errors. Alternatively, some cowbirds may recognize Tree Swallows as potential hosts but nest defense in swallow colonies (Winkler 1992) is so efficient that it keeps the parasites out of their nests. Finally, because of the costs of lowered hatching and fledging success (Mills 1988) and potentially lowered post-fledging survival (Friedmann 1963), cowbirds, which had laid their eggs in nests of Tree Swallows rather than in nests of other hosts, may have been selected against. To determine whether the lack of parasitism of Tree Swallows by cowbirds is adaptive for the parasite itself, further research should attempt to contrast the quality of Tree Swallows as hosts, integrated across the nest-searching, incubation, nestling, and fledgling stages of the parasite with similarly calculated indices of host quality of sympatric and frequently parasitized species.

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NESTING LEAST BITTERNS AT THE TONAWANDA/IROQUOIS/OAK ORCHARD WETLAND COMPLEX

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ABSTRACT — Least bitterns (*Ixobrychus exilis*) have been proposed for listing as threatened in New York State since January 1994. Because of their secretive nature they are hard to survey and confirmation of nesting is difficult. Two nests were located at the Tonawanda/Iroquois/Oak Orchard wetland complex, Genessee and Orleans counties, in 1996. Each nest was composed of narrow-leaf cattail (*Typha angustifolia*) and was suspended over water at a height of 15–25 cm. Both nests contained 6 eggs. It was the first observation of nests there in 38 years.

INTRODUCTION

The Least Bittern is a secretive marsh bird of the heron family Ardeidae. Although it looks similar to the American bittern (*Botaurus lentiginosus*), it is much smaller and can readily slip through dense stands of emergent vegetation. Because of its small size and secretive nature, it has adapted a strategy of slipping silently away to avoid detection. Observation of the species is, therefore, difficult.

The American bittern frequently nests in grassy upland areas near wetlands (Bent 1926, Middleton 1949). The Least Bittern however, typically nests over water in emergent vegetation such as cattail (*Typha*), bulrush (*Scirpus*) or bur-reed (*Sparganium*) (Anistowicz 1981, Bent 1926, Kushlan 1973, Murchison 1893). On rare instances Least Bittern nests have been found in atypical situations. Roberts (1936) reported a nest in weeds on the ground. Other nests were discovered in *Phragmites* (Bent 1926), *Salix* (Baker 1940), and on bog or drift (Cooke 1881) and (Chapman 1900).

The desire to nest over water appears to be very important. Weller (1961) believed that the incidents of Least Bitterns nesting over land, as reported by Trautman (1940), Saunders (1926), and Roberts (1936) is a result of water level declines. He considers the drop in the numbers of nesting Least Bitterns at two Iowa lakes to be a result of low water levels. In 1958, 5 nests and numerous sightings of adults and juveniles were reported. In 1959, water levels were so low that there was little water at the base of emergent vegetation. Despite a greater intensity of field work in 1959, no nests or young were found and only 1 adult was reported at each lake.

Kushlan (1973) reported on a "colony" of Least Bittern nests. Eleven nests were located in a 260 square meter stand of saw grass (*Mariscus jamaicensis*). He suspects that the high density was a result of the severe drought in 1970–71.

That particular stand was one of a few parts of southern Florida wetlands where standing water remained through the drought. Kushlan suggests that the bitterns converged on the area because of the availability of food and remained there to breed the following season.

The Tonawanda/Iroquois/Oak Orchard wetland complex (hereafter referred to as the complex) is a 7,963 hectare (19,668 acres) area situated about halfway between Buffalo and Rochester in the counties of Genessee and Orleans. It is composed of two state Wildlife Management Areas, Tonawanda and Oak Orchard, that sandwich the federal National Wildlife Refuge. The area consists mostly of freshwater emergent marshes with the state areas containing 682 hectares (1,685 acres) of emergent vegetation. Other habitats include flooded timber, uplands with both cool and warm season grasses, and a small portion in deciduous forests. The state properties are managed by the Department of Environmental Conservation (DEC) to maximize waterfowl production, in part through water level control in an extensive dike system.

FIELD OBSERVATIONS

On 22 May 1996, Sonny Knowlton, a Wildlife Technician for the DEC, observed a Least Bittern land in a very small marsh on the Tonawanda Wildlife Management Area. The next day a very thorough foot search of the isolated pool revealed a nest containing 3 eggs. Least bitterns are known to approach and depart from their nests on foot (Ehrlich and others 1988). Another Least Bittern nest was discovered 10 June by DEC staff in Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge's Cayuga pool, approximately 0.8 mile northeast of the first nest. An adult flew off the nest as I approached, allowing me to get within about 7 meters before retreating.

The two nests were the first confirmed direct observation of nests of the species at the complex in 38 years by DEC or federal staff. The last known nest was discovered in 1958 by Odmund (Odie) Olson, a biological technician for the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge. The nest was found in the cattails of Beaver Marsh and contained 4 eggs (Olson, personal communication, 1996). The New York State Breeding Bird Atlas recorded the complex as a site of confirmed breeding in 1982 as a result of an observation of a fledged bird (Smith 1988).

NESTS

The nests at the complex were nearly identical in composition, materials, and placement. Both were composed of dead narrow-leaf cattail leaves and both were woven into the standing cattails so that they were suspended about 15–25 cm above the water. The typical height range is 15–60 cm (Allen 1915, Bales 1911, Bent 1926, Murchison 1893, Pearson 1909, Provost 1947, Weller 1961). Anistowicz (1981) reported a nest at 70 cm.

The depth of the water at nest sites ranges from 7 to 105 cm (Aniskowicz 1981, Weller 1961). Murchison (1893) reported the deeper the water, the better. At the complex, the first nest was in a small marsh with a water depth of 30-45 cm. The second nest was in a very large marsh with a water depth of 100-110 cm.

The nests themselves were more of a platform than a bowl (Weller 1961), composed entirely of narrow-leaf cattail, the predominant vegetation in the area in which they were constructed. Weller considers the use of old vegetation from the previous season almost vital as a foundation for a nest. In the absence of old vegetation, when spring water levels are high, Least Bitterns may not select such sites, favoring instead sections providing old growth. Material is laid down in a radial pattern and appears to be rather flimsy. The nests have been compared to dove nests except that they are larger and deeper (Murchison 1893). All of the materials are likely collected from the immediate vicinity, probably within a matter of a meter (Weller 1961). Bent (1926) reported that sticks were used to construct a nest built in rushes. Weller observed the use of willow sticks, gathered at the site. Nests in saw grass were constructed entirely of spikerush (*Eleocharis cellulosa*) that was interspersed among the saw grass (Kushlan 1973).

EGGS

When the first nest was discovered 23 May it contained 3 eggs and eventually grew to a total of 6. The average clutch contains 4-5 eggs (Anistowicz 1981, Murchison 1893, Weller 1961). The second nest contained 6 eggs. Weller (1961) noted that most 6 clutch nests are reported from northern states. Incubation has been reported to be between 17 and 20 days (Allen 1915, Baker 1940, Ehrlich and others 1988, Trautman 1940, Weller 1961). An inspection 21 days after the discovery of the nest revealed that some of the eggs had hatched. Eventually, all did. The second nest was not revisited after its discovery.

NEST DEFENSE

On 12 June, I was surprised to find an adult bird on the first nest. It refused to leave despite the fact that I was within a meter of the nest and was making eye contact. The bird was identified as the male, based on plumage.

The bird's first response to my advancement was the initiation of the freeze pose with the neck fully elongated toward the sky. The body remained low and fully covered the nest's contents. In the peculiar way that bitterns do, the eyes remained fixed directly on me while the bill remained pointing up. When I closed the distance to about a half a meter, the male changed his tactics. Sinking low on the nest, he swelled his feathers and partially spread his wings until he appeared nearly twice the size he was a moment before. His body effectively shielded the nest so that I was unable to examine it's contents. His head and

neck were drawn back tight like a compressed spring ready to thrust the bill forward should I continue the confrontation. He rhythmically swayed his body slowly side to side.

I carried a wooden yard stick with me to take measurements and to bend the vegetation back with as little disturbance as possible. I reached toward the bird with the stick hoping he would fly off the nest. Instead he pecked at the stick a couple of times and remained on the nest.

I realized that I was not going to be able to subtly persuade him to leave for a few moments. His nest defense was remarkable. I fully believe that if I were wearing leather gloves I would have been able to lift him off the nest with my hands. Instead I attempted to use the wide side of the yard stick to gently lift him high enough to examine his brood. He allowed me to slide the yard stick down his breast and lift him up. He tried to slide to one side or the other to slip past the yard stick and get back on the eggs. Eventually, I was able to elevate him high enough to determine that some of the eggs had hatched. The offspring were covered with a very soft, beige colored down that matched the breast feather coloration of the adult.

In contrast to the shy, elusive, timid nature of the small herons, bittern nest defense is very commendable. Allen (1915) described a Least Bittern nest investigation in which the female assumed the "reed-posture" on the back side of the nest while he counted the eggs, unaware for a moment that she was even there. Allen attempted to reach for the bird. "My hands came within 12 inches of it before it melted away over the back of the nest." Allen also described a "third-posture" that the female assumes on the nest after she realizes she has been seen. He described, in excellent detail, the exact situation I encountered when trying to examine the chicks. Allen states that such "fierce devotion" applies only to the female, claiming that the male demonstrates courage and devotion to a lesser degree. Murchison (1893) claimed to have picked up an American Bittern off her nest during such a display and was nearly able to repeat the feat at another nest.

CHICKS

The last trip to the nest was made on 17 June. The chicks were very alert and cautious. Two of the chicks had climbed out of the nest and were visible climbing through the vegetation behind it. Three young remained on the platform. There was a large difference in the sizes between the siblings. Each of them rose up and assumed the freeze posture to the best of their ability, although the smallest chick appeared only to be able to raise it's head and neck. The young were quite aggressive. They hissed, swayed and lunged at me snapping their bills. The bitterns were about five days old and pin feathers were already apparent. There was no sign of the adults.

At the same time and within 50 meters of the Least Bittern nest, I was monitoring an American Bittern nest. An adult was on the nest each time it was

visited. The bird always flushed into the air when I got within about 3 meters. The retreat was always the same whether there were eggs in the nest or young. I found the Least Bittern chicks to be far more aggressive than their larger cousins. Despite being about double the size of the Least Bitterns, the American Bittern chicks were more bark than bite. They hissed louder, but I was able to easily reach into the nest and remove one for examination. The bird was quite docile in my hands and actually seemed to like being held. The chick's outrageously proportioned feet and legs were very warm to the touch. I did not examine a Least Bittern chick because of the resistance I received.

During all stages of nesting the nest itself remained clean. I had expected it to become soiled with feces. Such was not the case. The nest remained intact throughout its use and for a length of time after its abandonment. The same can be said for the American Bittern nest. Weller also noted that many Least Bittern nests remain exceptionally clean. He proposed that the fecal matter flows over the nest material and through the holes in the nest because of its fluid nature.

POPULATION

The exact size of the Least Bittern population at the complex can only be roughly estimated. In 1996 Least Bitterns were surveyed as part of the Marsh Monitoring Program (MMP), which is run by the Long Point Bird Observatory in Ontario, Canada. Two different broadcast tapes were used to solicit responses from nesting bitterns; the MMP tape and a copy of a calling Least Bittern produced by Cornell University's Lab of Ornithology. The tapes were played at stations established as part of the MMP and at other areas that appeared to be suitable habitat. Out of eight surveys conducted by the DEC and one by a federal biologist, only two responses from Least Bitterns were recorded. Each survey consisted of a minimum of seven survey points.

Studies have shown that responses to broadcast tapes by Least Bitterns are low (Gibbs and Melvin 1993, Swift and others 1988). Gibbs and Melvin determined that the Least Bitterns comprised only 4% of the responses of water birds to broadcast calls of various marsh bird species. They also stated that at least three visits were required to a marsh before being able to claim use or disuse of the area by Least Bitterns within a 90% certainty.

The surveys and nests discovered in 1996 cannot be used to accurately estimate the population of Least Bitterns at the complex. Visual observations conclude that the birds are indeed widespread and probably occupy every large emergent marsh in the combined three areas. Swift and others (1988) determined that only 16% of the responses he recorded were observed or heard prior to the playing of the tape. In a rough estimation based on Swift's determination and my own observations, I would estimate that there were at least 22 pairs of Least Bitterns at the complex.

MARSH WREN

One component that may be a limiting factor in the success of Least Bitterns is the size of the Marsh Wren (*Cistothorus palustris*) population. Marsh Wrens reportedly stab eggs of Least Bitterns (Bent 1926, Ehrlich and others 1988). Allen (1915) reported that Marsh Wrens brought about an alarm reaction in the bitterns. He states that the uneasiness was particularly noticeable when the bird was away from its nest. At the sight or sound of a wren the bittern "would hasten back with such signs of alarm that one could not but think that it recognized the wren as its arch-enemy". Marsh Wrens are very abundant at the complex and data should be collected as to the density of the Marsh Wren population around each Least Bittern nest.

MANAGEMENT RECOMMENDATIONS

Far greater work is required to accurately determine the population size of the Least Bitterns at the complex. Although their response to call-tapes is low, more surveys should be conducted. Gibbs and Melvin (1993) found that call-tape surveys improved detection of Least Bitterns more than 500% over passive observation. The surveys need to coincide with peak periods of bittern activity. Mid May through late June was found by Gibbs and Melvin (1993) to be the period of greatest response to tapes. They also discovered the time of day to be relevant, the hours between 8:00 and 10:00 am being the most responsive.

Foot searches through apparently suitable habitat on a weekly basis during the nesting period would be needed to attempt to locate all Least Bittern nests. Unfortunately, such an effort is usually not feasible because it is too labor intensive.

Water levels should be maintained so that some of the stalks and dead foliage of the previous season's emergent vegetation remains above the water level. Most bittern nests are started in the old stalks and are largely constructed of old vegetation.

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Male Least Bittern in nest defense.

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**GUIDELINES OF THE
NEW YORK STATE AVIAN RECORDS COMMITTEE
A COMMITTEE OF THE
FEDERATION OF NEW YORK STATE BIRD CLUBS**

By the Ad Hoc Committee: Emanuel Levine, Valerie M. Freer,
Mary Alice Koencke, Berna B. Lincoln, William B. Reeves, Linda Parr

I. Introduction

The Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, recognizing the proliferation of sight reports of birds in New York State, the increasing dependence on such records due to legal and ethical restrictions on collecting, and the need for documentation and evaluation of such reports, in 1977 established a Committee to perform this evaluation to be known as the New York State Avian Records Committee (NYSARC). A "report" as used in these guidelines refers to an observation submitted voluntarily to the Committee which if accepted is then referred to as a "record." Non-acceptance does not preclude publication, anywhere, anytime.

II. Duties and Responsibilities. NYSARC will

- A. Establish procedures for submitting reports to NYSARC.
- B. Publish a list of species or types of reports which are desired or not desired once per year in either *The Kingbird* or *New York Birders*.
- C. Prepare reports of its proceedings and publish the results of its work annually in *The Kingbird*, including rejected reports, without identifying the observers of those reports not accepted.
- D. Maintain the official list of species of birds known to occur or have occurred (in the case of extinct species) in New York State. The list will be made available to Federation members through the Publications Committee of the FNYSBC.

III. Composition

- A. A member of NYSARC must be an individual member of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs.
- B. NYSARC will consist of five members appointed by the President of the Federation with consideration of geographical representation though not rigidly so.
- C. The President will appoint a Chair from the five members.
- D. The term of office will be five years.
- E. Should a vacancy occur the President shall fill such vacancy within 60 days.
- F. The Chair will appoint a non-voting Secretary.

IV. Chair

The Chair will perform the functions usually associated with such office, and will report to the Federation Board of Directors once per year. This report will document the activities of NYSARC for that year, and at the discretion of the Chairman, may be the same as the report prepared annually for appearance in *The Kingbird*.

V. Members

- A. Each member will separately study the reports received by NYSARC and submit an opinion as to their acceptability. Members will assist the Chair in preparation of NYSARC reports.
- B. Members will clearly indicate their reasons for acceptance or rejection of each report. Opinions should be frank, unbiased, and professional, based on the member's best judgement. Such opinions will be confidential and not be made public at any time.
- C. Members' opinions will not be discussed with other members until the report has been reviewed by all members of NYSARC. Members may, however, consult other persons who may have special knowledge of the species or individual bird in question.
- D. Members will not render opinions on their own submitted reports. These will be evaluated by the remainder of the members.

VI. Procedures

- A. The Secretary may assign numbers to each report to replace the observers' names so that each report will be anonymous and thus judged on its intrinsic merits alone.
- B. Submitted reports will be stamped with the date received and receipt will be acknowledged by the Secretary in writing to the observer within seven working days.
- C. Reports should be submitted on standard forms, made available to clubs and individuals. While submission of each report in standard form is encouraged, it is not required. Details of reports should be submitted on one or more 8 1/2 x 11 inch pages, with no more than one report per page. If available, photographs should be submitted with reports. Photographs should include as much technical data as possible. If reports are substantiated by tape recording(s) and/or specimen(s), they should indicate where such evidence is deposited. Photographs and/or sound recordings are intended to supplement, not replace, a written report. After a reasonable length of time has transpired after the evaluation of the report has been completed, the Secretary will transfer the file to the Federation archives at Cornell University. Access to these records may be granted

only by the President of the Federation or the Chairman of NYSARC and then only after receiving a written request stating reasons for such access.

D. Evaluation of reports

1. All reports shall be circulated no later than four months after submission.
2. Reports substantiated by specimens or tape recordings should be verified by at least one NYSARC member or designate. Primary concern for such will be adequacy of identification and documentation as a specimen, photograph, video or recording taken in New York State.
3. A "report" becomes a "record" if all NYSARC members, or all but one NYSARC member, accept it. If a majority for whatever reasons does not accept the report, it is then rejected. However, if the rejection is by a vote of 3 to 2, and not 4 to 1 or 5 to 0, then the report will be recirculated within four months to all members along with all comments made on its first review. Then a second vote will be taken. If the report is again rejected, this vote is final unless a member of NYSARC requests that the Secretary circulate the report a third time, at which time the ultimate vote will be taken. All reports remain pending until a decision is reached, and pending reports will be identified as such in the annual report of the Chair to the Federation Board of Directors.
5. Decisions of individual members will be confidential within NYSARC. The Chair will report decisions of NYSARC as a whole.
6. The Secretary will advise the observer(s) as promptly as possible of the acceptance or non-acceptance of a report through the use of a simple printed form letter. For the benefit of the observer whose report has been rejected, the form will carry the advice, "If you wish to learn the specific reason(s) for the non-acceptance of this report, please contact the Chair of NYSARC in writing." The name and address of the then current Chair will be included.
7. No species may be added to the New York State checklist as the result of a single observer report without an unequivocal photograph, video, sound recording, or specimen.
8. No species may be added to the New York State checklist without the unanimous approval of the NYSARC.
9. Records of NYSARC proceedings will be maintained in a standard form to be established by its membership.

VII. Committee Rules

- A. These guidelines may be amended by the Board of Directors of the Federation at their discretion.
- B. The Federation welcomes and encourages the formation of local record committees by its member clubs to review reports of local interest. However, all persons are encouraged to submit their individual reports to NYSARC.

VIII. Meetings

NYSARC shall meet physically as a body at least once a year.

IX. New York State Record Boundaries

We follow national and state boundaries inland and on the Great Lakes, and extend present legal marine boundaries outward to the 1000 fathom line (approximately 100 miles offshore). The south (west) boundary extends from the Ambrose Lightship along the Separation Zone of the Ambrose-Hudson Canyon Traffic Lane to the 1000 fathom line; the north (east) boundary extends at an angle of 150 degrees (from true north) from a point midway between the east end of Fisher's Island and Watch Hill, R.I., to the 1000 fathom line (Reference: Coast and Geodetic Survey Chart 1108; Approaches to New York). The Hudson Sea Canyon (proper) lies just within the south boundary and Block Canyon is within the north boundary; Cox's Ledge is in Rhode Island waters.

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CORRECTIONS

In: The New *Checklist of the Birds of New York State. The Kingbird* 1998 Mar; 48(1): 2-15. Correction locations are underlined.

- . On page 3, line 2 from the top should be:
American Golden-Plover has been changed from *dominicus* to *dominica*.
- . On page 3, line 4 from the bottom should be:
In the Family Tyrannidae ...
- . On page 8, line 12 from the bottom should be:
White-rumped Sandpiper *C. fuscicollis*

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FEDERATION OF NEW YORK STATE BIRD CLUBS, INC.
50TH ANNUAL MEETING
LAKE PLACID, NY 12 – 14 SEPTEMBER 1997

Scott J. Stoner
6 Knob Hill Rd, Loudonville NY 12211

At 9:04 AM, Saturday 13 September 1997, President Bob Budliger called to order the meeting of the Council of Delegates at the 50th Annual Meeting of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, hosted by the High Peaks Audubon Society in Lake Placid.

A roll call of member clubs conducted by the Recording Secretary showed that 34 out of a possible 124 authorized delegates were present; an additional 37 were represented by proxy. This exceeded the minimum and thus constituted a quorum. A total of 30 out of 40 member clubs were represented.

The minutes of the 49th Annual Meeting were published in *The Kingbird* [1997 Jun;47(2):102-109]. A motion to accept the minutes was made by William Reeves, seconded by Gail Seamons, and approved.

Barbara Butler agreed to craft resolutions to be read at the evening banquet. Bob Budliger submitted the following President's Report:

PRESIDENT'S REPORT, 1997

As I complete my term of office as your President, I take this opportunity to reflect upon the experience. First, it has been an honor and privilege to serve the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs and be associated with the many fine, dedicated volunteers that work tirelessly for birds, birders, and birding in this state. I admire greatly the work you do to promote bird conservation through awareness, education, and habitat protection.

We have made great progress in several areas this past year, but there are some challenges yet ahead.

A few of our accomplishments:

The completed manuscript of *Bull's Birds of New York State* has been submitted to Cornell University Press. Thanks to all the contributors and the enormously time consuming work of Manny Levine, Stan and Berna Lincoln, and the sage advice of Dick Sloss.

A comprehensive schedule of field trips was conducted with a variety of member clubs hosting. The Federation-dominated Technical Committee of the Important Bird Areas program met twice and recommended a couple of dozen sites for designation.

The Conservation Committee is operating and has commented on several important bird conservation issues such as Galeville airport and Delaware Bay horseshoe crab harvest.

The Federation was named as one of the members of an advisory committee required in newly passed state legislation that establishes Bird Conservation Areas. The Federation is now recognized by the state legislature as an important and credible organization.

A great deal of useful and productive dialogue resulted in amendments to our bylaws that will clarify governance and bring us into compliance with state law. An expanded Board of Directors will offer more opportunity for service and participation.

A few challenges ahead:

An Awards Committee needs to be reconstituted and awards must be better defined, promoted, and administered.

We will begin a revision of the Breeding Bird Atlas which will need volunteers and money.

An expanded Board of Directors, while broadening representation, brings with it the challenge of recruiting dedicated volunteers from all our member clubs and among our individual members. I urge each of you to seriously consider serving in this rewarding activity.

We need to expand our membership base and provide more member services.

NYSARC needs review and probably modification to make it more "user-friendly".

TREASURER'S REPORT

Berna Lincoln then presented the Treasurer's Report, distributing a detailed 1996 Annual Financial Report to each club, noting that the major expenses were the Federation's two publications, *The Kingbird* and *New York Birders*.

As of 31 December 1996, total assets of the Federation were \$88,920.54 and total liabilities were \$3,565.65.

Specific fund balances were:

Award Funds

John J. Elliott	\$1,327.83
Lillian C. Stoner	\$2,429.31
Member Clubs	\$5,000.00
General Memorial Fund	\$29,478.07
Atlas 2000 Fund	\$4,282.05
<i>Bull's Birds of NYS</i> Book Fund	\$5,778.96
Life Member Fund	\$18,189.50
General Operating Fund	\$17,870.17
TOTAL FUND BALANCES	\$85,354.89

In the General Operating Fund, income was \$20,422.14 and expenses \$18,234.43, with an excess of income over expenses of \$2,187.71.

A motion was made by Charlie Smith to accept the report; it was seconded by Jane Graves, and approved.

Richard Sloss reported for the Auditing Committee, which was comprised of Irving Cantor, Norm Stotz, and Richard Sloss. The Committee's report stated: "We have examined the financial statements of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs, Inc. for the year ended 31 December 1996, and we report that they are presented fairly in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles."

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

David Junkin, Committee Chair, encouraged people to spread the word about Federation membership by word of mouth and by distribution of membership brochures, and asked clubs to share their membership lists.

PUBLICATIONS COMMITTEE.

Regarding *The Kingbird*, editor Don Windsor sought feedback, particularly on the Regional reports. Both he and Regional reports editor, Bob Spahn, would be available to receive comments throughout the entire meeting.

Phyllis Jones, editor of *New York Birders*, reported that the October issue is in preparation and should be sent to the printer during the third week in September. She explained that the four issues produced annually include features such as the County List form followed by the List Report compiled and edited by Stan and Berna Lincoln, and a regular column entitled "With Birds and Birders" by Maxwell C. Wheat, Jr. Features also include announcements of Federation Field Trips organized by Valerie Freer, and an occasional column "Places to Watch" by John Askildsen, that highlights important birding sites across the state. Newsletters of member clubs are an important source of articles for the newsletter. She encouraged the submission of articles on members, member clubs and birds in NY State.

Committee chair Manny Levine thanked Phyllis and Don for their fine work, and noted that Don has only one year remaining as editor. *The Kingbird* Regional reports will change from running text to a single species per line format and will switch to the new classification as per the AOU 41st Supplement.

Manny reported that the book, *Bull's Birds of New York State*, has been copy edited and he thanked all who participated.

Bob Budliger added that two years ago, when he became president, he faced a situation where neither *The Kingbird* nor *New York Birders* had an editor. Both of these gaps were ably solved by Manny, who found good people to replace the good people who had preceded them. Manny, and Stan and Berna Lincoln all put in long hours for the book and are to be commended for their efforts.

CONSERVATION COMMITTEE

In her report, Committee Chair Mary Alice Koeneke noted the following action had been conducted:

-- Represented the Federation at the dedication of Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge as the first Important Bird Area (IBA) for NYS in October 1996 and at the dedication of Derby Hill as an IBA in May 1997.

-- Sent memo of support by Bob Budliger on behalf of the Federation for the state Important Bird Areas bill introduced by Assemblyman Engelbright; the bill is now law.

-- Sent letters on behalf of the Federation regarding:

- support of the moratorium and proposed regulations for horseshoe crab harvest proposed in NJ.
- Galeville Airport.
- Support of concern over seabird mortality in fishing nets and lines.
- Support of Hunter Mountain open space preservations.
- A mailing to member clubs to enlist support as coalition members for the Teaming With Wildlife (TWW) Initiative. Encouraged letter writing by members to Governor Pataki to support TWW in NY.

-- Reported in *New York Birders* on a variety of issues.

Current issues include the monitoring of the Double-crested Cormorant issue for Lake Ontario and Oneida Lake, continued monitoring of TWW and monitoring of Representative Miller's proposed Endangered Species Act bill (HR 2351).

Mary Alice pointed out that all member clubs can take advantage of support from the Federation on bird related conservation issues.

FIELD TRIP COMMITTEE

Field Trip Committee Chair Valerie Freer noted that this has been a new initiative, and that Bill Lee will be taking it on for the next two years.

Federation Field Trips

The first Federation trip in 1997 was on 25 Jan to Montauk Point followed by an 8 Feb trip to Fort Edward. We had an outing in conjunction with the Lake Ontario Migratory Bird Festival on 3-4 May, and two trips on the weekend of June 7-8: a Saturday trip to Whiteface Mountain to see and hear Bicknell's Thrush, and a Sunday excursion to Saratoga National Historical Park. An August trip for shorebirds visited Jamaica Bay, and in late fall we are scheduled to visit the hawkwatch at Franklin Mountain and Long Island for wintering waterfowl, making a total of 7 trips in 1997.

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

Chair Charles R. Smith reported that the primary activity of the Research Committee is monitoring of the state's breeding bird populations through the

statewide Breeding Bird Survey (BBS), which is coordinated by the Chair of the committee, with assistance from over 80 volunteers. The BBS now is under the authority of the Inventory and Monitoring Section of the Biological Resources Division of the U. S. Geological Survey. There are 112 BBS Routes randomly distributed across New York State.

At the beginning of 1997, there were 22 BBS Routes unassigned. Thirteen unassigned routes were accepted by volunteer observers during 1997, leaving only 9 routes currently unassigned for 1998. During 1997, Gerald Rising was especially helpful in finding volunteers to help with coverage for western NY. With 92% of routes assigned, we now have potential for the best coverage of our NY BBS Routes since 1990. The locations of those routes currently unassigned for 1998 were shown on the map printed on the back of the handout. Charlie discussed the qualifications and asked volunteers to contact him at: Charles R. Smith, Department of Natural Resources, Fernow Hall, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853-3001 (phone: 607-255-3219 or e-mail: crs6@cornell.edu).

Excellent summaries of BBS information, including color range maps for breeding bird species, can be found at: <http://www.im.nbs.gov/bbs/bbsnew.html>.

An evaluation of long-term BBS population trends from 1966 through 1996 reveals the following patterns for the breeding birds of New York State:

Declines for all 128 breeding bird species surveyed adequately by BBS methods within New York State are less (31.2%) than would be expected by chance alone (33%), when compared with increasing species and species for which no change can be detected.

Most breeding bird species populations in New York State (68.8%) either are not changing detectably or are increasing in abundance.

More breeding bird species that use successional habitats (meadows and shrublands) are declining (45%) than are species that use mature forests and woodlands (32.5%) – reflective of national trends.

Among "neotropical migrants" (56 species), most species either are showing no detectable changes in populations or are increasing (71.5%) – also reflective of national trends.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Bob Budliger reported on plans for upcoming Annual Meetings. Bill Lee is serving as liaison for future meetings. The 1998 meeting is in the Rochester area, 25-27 September, at the Airport Marriott in Greece. For 1999, he has a letter from Chemung Valley offering to host the meeting in Elmira. The year 2000 will be hosted by the Eaton Birding Society in Geneva. In 2001 it will be hosted by Onondaga Audubon at a site to be determined.

Scott Stoner announced the availability of a set of guidelines on hosting a Federation Annual meeting, prepared by the Hudson-Mohawk Bird Club.

ELECTIONS

As published in *NY Birders*, the following candidates were presented by the Nominating Committee:

President: Valerie Freer
Vice President: Mary Alice Koeneke
Treasurer: Berna B. Lincoln
Recording Secretary: Linda Parr
Corresponding Secretary: William B. Reeves

All the above persons were elected to their specified office for the 1997 - 1998 term.

GRANTS

Charlie Smith announced grants awarded to member clubs. An award of \$50.00 was made to the Chemung Valley Audubon Society for printing expenses for a "Checklist of Birds of the Chemung Valley." An award of \$100.00 was made to the High Peaks Audubon Society for the recruitment and training of birders for avian research. Specifically, they plan to conduct an introductory birding workshop to train people to identify and appreciate birds, consisting of five classroom and three field sessions. The newly trained birders would be encouraged to participate in field research including the next Atlas project, breeding bird surveys, and Christmas Counts, etc.

AWARDS

Bob Budliger highlighted the continued need for a single, combined Awards Committee. John Confer noted that there has been a drop in the number of candidates for the Lillian C. Stoner Award. There used to be three to five nominations each year; only twice in the past 10 years has there been more than one. He is concerned about the lack of participation in the Federation by high school and college students. There was only one nominee this year, who is totally deserving.

Charlie Rouse reported that the Elon Howard Eaton Award is going to Paul DeBenedictis, he will receive a certificate plus \$300.00. Regarding the John J. Elliott Award, Don Windsor stressed the readability of the article and the integration of new and old information. Bob Budliger announced that the Gordon M. Meade Award would not be presented this year.

ARCHIVES COMMITTEE

Archivist Phyllis Jones reported that the Archive of the Federation was established at the Carl A. Kroch Library of Cornell University in 1993 and is augmented periodically with materials collected and indexed by the Archivist of the Federation. A recent shipment of documents included the papers of several recent past presidents. Papers of Winston A. Brockner, president of the Federation from 1950-1951, have greatly enhanced the collection. A recent

addition is a copy of the new *Bull's Birds of New York* on disk and the letter of transmittal to the publisher Cornell University Press.

Loma Knight is currently the curator for non-Cornell materials at the Kroch Library.

BIBLIOGRAPHY COMMITTEE

Committee Chair Phyllis Jones reported that the members are Barbara Butler, Valerie Freer, Phyllis Jones, Walton Sabin, and Donald Windsor. The committee is currently searching for citations of publications on NYS ornithology which appeared in 1996. This bibliography will be completed for publication in the December 1997 issue of *The Kingbird* [47(4): 273-281]. Phyllis asked that anyone who has access to ornithological journals and who wishes to participate in the work of this committee to contact her at: 9 Hallock Road, Pond Eddy NY 12750; 914-557-6591; email: pjonessgcompuserve.com.

BYLAWS COMMITTEE

In the report of the Bylaws Committee, Scott Stoner read the document sent out on 8 August 1997 and explained the technical correction thereto. Bob Budliger described the recent history of the issue of bylaws and the extent of discussion in the Executive Committee and input from member clubs. He said that enfranchisement of individual members was too fundamental a change to make. He had spoken with attorneys including the NYS Attorney General's Office and determined that we are an organization of organizations and that to comply with the law we need a board of directors that is duly elected. The current sticking point is that we have an executive committee with up to 10 appointed members.

The proposed bylaws changes will bring us into compliance with state law and shift the governance from the Council of Delegates to a board of directors. The Council of Delegates will represent the membership and convene to elect officers and to revise the bylaws. Bob described the proposed expansion of the board of directors to 11 and the designation of a true executive committee of three. He noted that revision of the board of directors to more than 11 would require a change in the Certificate of Incorporation.

A motion was made by Jane Graves to accept the whole package, seconded by Bob Long. The motion passed with the abstention of 2 votes from Saw Mill River Audubon and 5 votes from New York City Audubon.

NY STATE DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL CONSERVATION

Bob Miller gave the report from DEC, noting that he is now part of the Wildlife Diversity Team. Key points of the report are as follows:

- Management decisions should be made on the best data.
- Funding for Return a Gift to Wildlife may be reduced by other tax checkoffs.

- Teaming With Wildlife, a federal initiative to place an excise tax on outdoor equipment, enjoys widespread support but needs more.
- Two endangered species, Peregrine Falcon and Bald Eagle had record numbers of young this year. The peregrines had 34 territorial pairs, 30 breeding pairs and 49 young, while the eagles had 35 territorial pairs, 28 breeding pairs and 43 young.
- Black Tern work continues in DEC Region 6. Alan Benton added that a survey for this species will be done in 1998.
- The New York State endangered species list is still in the process of being promulgated. The Black Tern is proposed as an endangered species.
- The Federation's waterfowl count survey data is being used by DEC.
- DEC had distributed a brochure on its wildlife observation program. There are approximately 150 wildlife management areas in NYS. A wildlife viewing guide has gone to Falcon Press, expected publication in fall or winter [This book is now in print].
- Double-crested Cormorants have received lots of publicity. Their population has greatly increased over the last 20 years all across North America including the Great Lakes. Little Galloo Island in Lake Ontario has gone from 22 pairs in 1972 to 7500 pairs in June 1997, to be the single largest colony in North America. Changes that are blamed on the cormorants are really due to lowered productivity. DEC is keeping them off some other islands in Lake Ontario and has changed fish stocking procedures. When they conflict with endangered species, DEC is keeping the cormorant population down by destroying nests. Bob explained that it is important to get good information out to the public. Fisher persons complain that migrating birds eat fish in Oneida Lake and want DEC to do something about it. DEC is seriously considering this.
- Concerning the Laughing Gulls at John F. Kennedy International Airport, there was a shooting program this year. DEC is working for a solution to move the colony away from the runway.

ELECTION OF AUDITING AND NOMINATING COMMITTEES

A motion by Charles Smith to elect Norm Stotz, Irving Cantor, and Richard Sloss to the Auditing Committee was seconded by Jeff Ryan and approved.

For the last few years the Nominating Committee has been the three most recent past presidents of the Federation, chaired by the immediate past president. There was expression of concern about having two members from the same club. It was suggested that the committee consist of Bob Budliger as chair, Stan Lincoln, and Charles Smith. Bill Lee will chair the Field Trip Committee and serve as liaison to future annual meetings. Stan Lincoln commented that it is not always best to have only ex-presidents on the committee and declined the nomination with thanks. Dick Sloss added that the practice of having ex-presidents serve began because they are so familiar with people who could serve

as potential candidates. Valerie Freer recommended someone from either western NY or Long Island serve on the committee. Charlie Smith made a motion to have the president and two members of the Nominating Committee have the authority to select the third member; this motion was approved.

At the banquet that evening, Valerie Freer noted that Gale Seamons was selected as the third member of the committee. Bob Budliger noted that there are now 5 officers and 6 additional members of the board to nominate, and committed to balance nominations by geography, gender and large and small clubs. He encouraged people to consider serving on an expanded board of directors.

From the Resolutions Committee, a resolution to thank the host club will be presented at the banquet.

NEW PRESIDENT'S COMMENTS

There being no other business, Bob Budliger then turned the floor over to newly elected President Valerie Freer for comments. She commended Berna Lincoln for her County Listing report. In 1996, 87 people participated, up from previous years. Berna encouraged participation.

Valerie thanked the Council for the confidence in her and looks forward to serving. She outlined some ideas for growth and accomplishment:

- The Federation should be of service to the member clubs.
- The county listings should be continued as a project to promote birding.
- The Federation will develop a speakers bureau.
- To get libraries to subscribe to *The Kingbird*, clubs could adopt a local college library or local nature center library and purchase a three year subscription for them for \$45.00.
- Shirley Shaw was charged with attracting young people for the next annual meeting. The critical need to make the Federation more accessible to young people was stressed.
- A Federation site on the World Wide Web will be developed by Kevin McGowan assisted by Barbara Butler. [This site is now active. <http://birds.cornell.edu/fnysbc/>]
- A Finance Committee chaired by Bill Reeves, with members Berna Lincoln, Valerie Freer, and Herb Roth will develop a budget.
- Efforts are being continued to improve NYSARC.
- Stan Lincoln will write a history of the Federation for the next annual meeting.
- It is time to once again undertake a new breeding bird Atlas. Charlie Smith will chair a committee to start organizing the Atlas procedures.

Dorothy Crumb sadly reported that Ferd LaFrance died recently; he was the finder of Ferd's Bog. A boardwalk is being built there; materials will eventually be dropped in by helicopter after a wetlands permit is obtained from DEC. There was a resolution to send the LaFrance family a letter of condolence.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion to adjourn was made, seconded, and approved. The meeting was adjourned at 11:33 AM.

BANQUET

At the Banquet the evening of 13 September, awards were presented as follows:

Charles Smith presented **Research** Awards to the Chemung Valley Audubon Society and the High Peaks Audubon Society, as described above in the minutes of the Council of Delegates meeting.

John Confer presented the **Lillian C. Stoner** Award to Les Murray for a study of chickadee nests.

Don Windsor presented the **John J. Elliott** Award for the best paper in *The Kingbird* in 1996 to Valerie Freer and Joan Visconti for their study of population trends of 17 species of feeder birds over a period of 13 winters [*Kingbird* 1996 March;46(1):4-12].

The **Elon H. Eaton** Award was presented by Charles Rouse to Paul DeBenedictis. This award was accepted by Dorothy Crumb who updated us on his health and requested that we send cards and notes to Paul.

The featured speaker was David M. Bird, Professor at McGill University. His topic was "Technology and Birds".

Resolutions were read by Barbara Butler regarding Ferdinand LaFrance and to the host club, High Peaks Audubon.

Respectively submitted,
Scott J. Stoner, Recording Secretary

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HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WINTER SEASON 1997-98

WILLIE D'ANNA

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If nothing else, the winter 97-98 will long be remembered for its mildness. Thanks to a media blitz, every above average warm day since last fall is now credited to El Niño, the Pacific Ocean current that has such a powerful influence on the weather in North America. While this weather making phenomenon has little to do with daily fluctuations, its effect on a season can be dramatic. This season, El Niño helped to produce what was likely the warmest winter on record in the state. December was only 2 to 3 degrees above normal and with above average snow in most Regions, it felt like a typical New York winter was on the way. However, January was about 8 degrees above normal in most Regions and February up to 9.5 degrees above. These remarkable deviations from the norm kept most Regions generally snow free, providing mild open conditions for birds and a long list of half-hardies. The state was not entirely unscathed by winter as the "Great Ice Storm of 98" hit hard in Regions 6 and 7. John Peterson's Region 7 account of this event is a must read.

After the strong movement noted last season, it is not surprising that every Region recorded most if not all of the winter finches. What is interesting is that many of the Regions were disappointed by their showing. No, I am not suggesting that these colorful winter ornaments were unwelcome, only that expectations were higher than the numbers seen. I cannot help but wonder if the internet is partly to blame. Birders could read on the "net" about masses of these birds a short distance away in Pennsylvania being seen practically at that instant. Knowing that this was an invasion year prompted thoughts that they would soon be everywhere, leading to a letdown when they did not show. Of course it was never so obvious as during an El Niño winter that what drives these birds south is food, not weather. The poor cone crop in many Regions kept the two crossbills, arguably the most sought after species in this group, from lingering. Sy Schiff and Al Wollin's Region 10 account provides additional insight on this subject. Hopes and expectations aside, it really was a good season. Common Redpolls were numerous and widespread with Hoary Redpolls accompanying them in Regions 1 through 8. White-winged Crossbills were in unprecedented numbers in Region 7 and made it all the way to Region 10 with some sizeable flocks. Red Crossbills set a record on one Region 7 CBC but in other Regions were found in small groups only. Pine Grosbeaks were in good but not great numbers in the northern Regions 6 and 7, with only dribs and drabs making it to other locations. Evening Grosbeaks showed in well above average numbers for recent winters. Pine Siskins, while cited as scarce in most Regions, produced some sizeable early season flocks in Region 9.

It was an outstanding winter for half-hardies, perhaps not surprising with the mild temperatures and limited snow cover. However, those same conditions can disperse birds, making them difficult to locate. This year, the sheer numbers of half-hardies along with a strong effort by birders to find them, especially in Region 2, overwhelmed the birds' attempts to stay hidden, at least in most Regions. While the species in the following group are regular in winter in New York, their widespread occurrence this winter was remarkable: Turkey Vulture in nine Regions (mid winter in four), Brant in seven, Ruddy Duck in six, Killdeer in eight (mid winter in four), Yellow-bellied Sapsucker in seven, Eastern Phoebe in four, Gray Catbird in six, Yellow-rumped Warbler in all ten Regions, Common Yellowthroat in five, and Fox Sparrow in five. A few of the rarer half-hardies included Common Moorhen in an incredible three Regions (2,5, and 6); Orange-crowned Warbler in Regions 9, 10 and over wintering in northern Region 6(!); Black-crowned Night-Heron in Regions 1 and 5; Savannah Sparrow in Regions 2 and 6; Lincoln's Sparrow in Regions 8 and 10; American Pipit in Regions 2 and 4; Sora, Pomarine and Parasitic jaegers in Region 2; and Osprey in Region 7. As usual, with a coastal influence, some of the most astounding finds occurred in Regions 9 and 10: in Region 9 – Nashville and Black-throated Green warblers, Rose-breasted Grosbeak (over-wintered) and Baltimore Oriole; in Region 10 – Piping Plover, over wintering *Empidonax* flycatcher and White-eyed Vireo, Blue-headed Vireo, House Wren, Black-throated Blue, Palm, Prairie, and Black and white warblers, Ovenbird, and Yellow-breasted Chat. Wow!

Some miscellaneous notes on birds on the increase: Merlin, formerly extremely rare in winter, now regular and found in five Regions; Common Raven and Wild Turkey spreading and filling in even more niches; Mute Swans with a sharp increase in Regions 2 and 5; Great Cormorants were thought to have leveled out, but this winter they were reported "well inland" in Region 9, one continuing from fall in Region 5, and a remarkable three in Region 2. Declining species are much more difficult to document. Even still, Ring-necked Pheasants were noted again as becoming scarce.

Impressive counts (or estimates) were made for Horned Grebe (300+), Redhead (8000 – state record?), Greater Scaup (15,000), and Yellow-rumped Warbler (250) in Region 2; Snow Goose (1206) in Region 3; Lapland Longspur (300 on a CBC) in Region 4; Tundra Swan (125 – possible Regional record), Rough-legged Hawk (75), Glaucous Gull (44), and Great Black-backed Gull (1580) in Region 6; White-winged Crossbill (446 on a CBC) in Region 7; Snow Goose (4000+) and Common Redpoll (1411 on a CBC) in Region 8; Ruddy Duck (2500) and Razorbill (104 on a CBC) in Region 10.

With approximately 11 Trumpeter Swans in Region 2 this winter, five in Region 3, and the early return of the breeding pair in Region 6, it appears this species may be (re?) established in the area. However, there are continued reports that the young of Trumpeters breeding on private property in Wayne

County are being released into the wild. Are these birds banded? Is this legal? In any case, as I understand it, in order for NYSARC to add this species to the official checklist, it must be shown to have established a viable self-sustaining population and that the birds which occur in the state are from that population. At this point, records submitted to, and reviewed by NYSARC, are insufficient to make that determination. Trumpeter Swans are breeding successfully in the wild in Ontario as well as in Region 6. Whether these constitute a viable population or whether they are being augmented by additional stocking, as has been reported, requires more research. Not only Ontario, but Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio, and South Dakota have Trumpeter Swan restoration programs as well (Anderson and others 1996). If you do see a Trumpeter Swan in New York, you should note the color and markings of any wing tags, neck collars, or bands in your NYSARC report.

In the rarities-of-less-complex-status department, Barrow's Goldeneye was found in six Regions (2, 3, 5, 6, 9, and 10) and Golden Eagle in four (4, 5, 8 and 9). Some of the best rarities by Region were Mew Gull, and two California Gulls (including one not on the Niagara River) in Region 1; Great Cormorant, Franklin's and California gulls, and "Oregon" Junco in Region 2; Eared Grebe, and California Gull in Region 3; Tundra Swan in Region 4; Great Cormorant, and Golden Eagle in Region 5; Harlequin Duck and a dark-morph Red-tailed Hawk in Region 7; Eared Grebe, Greater White-fronted Goose, Eurasian Wigeon, and Varied Thrush in Region 9; Greater White-fronted Goose, "Black" Brant, Purple Gallinule (later died), Northern Fulmar, Common Murre, Dovekie, Black Guillemot, Atlantic Puffin, Western Kingbird, and Clay-colored Sparrow in Region 10. My selection of the Bird of the Season is made difficult by some of the exceptional half-hardies noted earlier. And while there are very few records of "Black" Brant and Purple Gallinule, I have to go with a first state record of a live Yellow-billed Loon, found in Region 5, which remained for over two weeks.

LITERATURE CITED

Anderson LJ, Lumsden HG, Ranta WB. 1996. Trumpeter Swans in the Kenora District of Ontario. *Ontario Birds* 14(3): 105-110.

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Standard abbreviations: Regional rarities appear in *bold italics*; county names are shortened to their first four letters and appear in UPPER CASE letters; months are shortened to their first three letters. **In species accounts:** number of individuals omitted implies that one individual was reported; ! — details seen by Regional Editor; ad — adult; Alt — Alternate plumage; Am. — American; arr — arrival or first of season; BBS — Breeding Bird Survey; CBC — Christmas Bird Count; CO — confirmed nesting; Com. — Common; E. — Eastern; FL — fledgling; FY — adult feeding young; I — Island; imm — immature; *intro* — see introduction to report; juv — juvenile; L — Lake; max — maximum; mob — multiple observers; N. — Northern; NYSDEC — New York State Department of Environmental Conservation; 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; W. — Western; WMA — Wildlife Management Area; y — young.

REPORTING DEADLINES

Winter Season: December, January, February

Deadline is 7 March

Spring Season: March, April, May

Deadline is 7 June

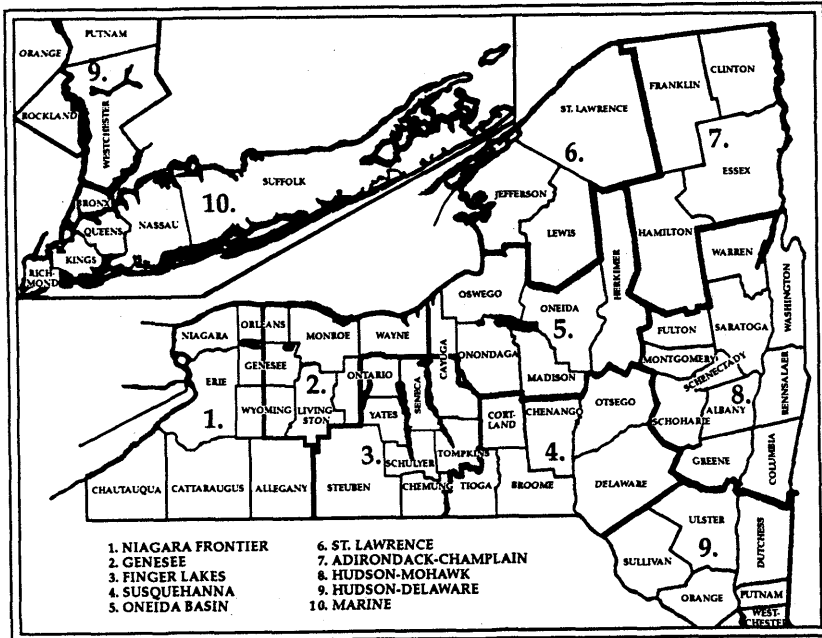
Summer Season: June, July, August

Deadline is 7 September

Fall Season: September, October, November

Deadline is 7 December

REPORTING REGIONS



Regional boundaries coincide with county lines, *except* at:

Region 1-Region 2 in Orleans, Genesee and Wyoming Counties: the boundary is NY Route 98 from Pt. Breeze to Batavia, NY Route 63 from Batavia to Pavilion, and NY Route 19 from Pavilion to the Allegany County line.

Region 2-Region 3 in Ontario County: the boundary is Mud Creek to NY Route 64, NY Route 64 from Bristol Center to S. Bristol Springs, and Route 21 from S. Bristol Springs to the Yates County line.

Region 3-Region 5 in Cayuga County: the boundary is NY Route 31.

REGION 1 - NIAGARA FRONTIER

Dick Miga

38 Elm St, Fredonia NY 14063-1937

I would like to begin this first report by complimenting my predecessor Willie D'Anna for the tremendous job he has done as Editor for this Region. I will attempt to continue his efforts.

Weather conditions for the period from December through February were unquestionably influenced by the Pacific heating phenomenon meteorologists term El Niño. The split jet stream locking all the cold air in Canada really set in. Virtually no lake effects events occurred after mid December, with most of the synoptic storms being rain. While season snows were still fair, the snow drought from mid January to the end of February was amazing.

Monthly specifics are as follows: December turned into a relatively mild and open month throughout western New York. While snowfall was close to normal, most of it fell in three events. A lake effect storm from the 5th to the 7th with strong westerly winds was centered over Chautauqua County, with over two feet falling from Sherman to Lake Chautauqua and up to a foot falling in southern Erie County, but nothing in Buffalo. The other two events were largely synoptic. One, on the 10th, brought 8 to 12 inches in the western Southern Tier and from 4 to 7 inches into the Buffalo area during the late afternoon. The other, on the 29th to 30th, brought around 3 to 5 inches to the Buffalo region. None of the snows lasted, melting off quite quickly.

The month's average temperature was 31.8°F, a couple of degrees above normal, and the precipitation total of rain and snowfall water content came in at 2.97 inches, almost an inch below normal.

January was a very mild and wet month across the western region. The big story of the month was the unprecedented rainstorm of 2.5 to 4.5 inches of rain in a 48 hour period from the 7th to the 9th. Widespread flooding occurred throughout the Region. This was the same system that brought the disastrous ice storm to the Adirondack and Canadian regions. Snow amounts were well below normal. During mid month an upper level jet stream brought heavy snows from Niagara County eastward. Six to 8 inches fell north of Buffalo and 6 to 10 inches across Allegany and Cattaraugus counties. At month's end Lake Erie was still free of ice, only the 9th time in 70 years. January was the warmest in eight years and the sixth warmest in 55 years of record keeping at the Buffalo airport weather station. It was also the seventh wettest January of the century, with 5.61 inches of precipitation - more than double the norm, most in the form of rain.

The final month of this report, February, can best be summed up by Stephen E. McLaughlin, chief meteorologist for the local office of the National Weather Service. He states: " Winter was virtually absent on the Niagara Frontier during the month, as the Region was treated to its warmest and most snow-free February in history." To continue, "the Region is nearing the end of its warmest winter in

66 years.” The month’s average temperature was 34.1°F. The old record of 33.8°F was set in February 1984. Precipitation for the month was a near normal 2.28 inches, almost all of it rain. Lake Erie temperatures held at 35 degrees, the warmest readings this late in the winter since the first records in 1927.

While the 1996-97 winter was also relatively mild, it was not influenced by any unusual system such as the one we experienced this year. However the low number of birds reported from feeders last year seemed to be repeated once again this year.

The winter period was one of a few rarities and much frustration. While irruptive finches were reported from Central New York and Southwestern Pennsylvania, Region 1 did not produce the numbers that were reported from those areas. There were isolated records of the Fringillidae throughout the Region, but nothing to rival our neighbors. Many believed that our poor food crop may have contributed to the low numbers.

An examination of the ten CBCs in this Region, compiled by Jim Landau, identified 9 highs and 10 lows relative to the past nine years. Among the rarities was a first for the count of Mew Gull reported and properly verified by Bob Sundell in the Jamestown CBC. Listed among the highs for the period were: Pied-billed Grebe, Green-winged Teal, Northern Pintail, Canvasback, Ring-necked Duck, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Hermit Thrush, Cedar Waxwing, and Red Crossbill, the latter making it’s first appearance in nine years.

Species recorded as lows were: Common Goldeneye, Common Merganser*, American Coot, Brown Creeper, American Robin, White-crowned Sparrow, Common Grackle**, Brown-headed Cowbird**, House Finch**, and House Sparrow. A double asterisk indicates that the bird has had three consecutive years of low counts and a single asterisk means one prior low count in the last three. Again, the interpretation of the data may not be significant or it could signal a Regional population decline.

The 113 species recorded equaled the nine-year average, and, while the number of birds observed – 145,528 – was below the average of 155,234, it was the highest count produced since the 1991-92 year. A most promising statistic was the increase in observers to 227, which is the highest participation since the 1992-93 year.

As mentioned, Region 1 escaped many of the weather factors which disrupted lives and property in other parts of the country. The unusually mild conditions impacted the avian population in both positive and negative ways. The unusual ice free conditions of Lakes Erie and Ontario, as well as many inland waterways, brought different birding conditions from normal. While the usually *Anatidae* abundance in the Dunkirk Harbor was lower than the past, the open conditions of Lake Ontario resulted in reports of record numbers of White-winged Scoters, Greater Scaup and other divers in large wintering concentrations, unfortunately for this report most often to the west of our Region. These are supported by the growing population of zebra mussels. Reports of later than usual waterbirds seemed to be the issue of the period. Two

Brant, rarely seen after mid November, were reported on Lake Ontario at Olcott Beach in the Town of Newfane in Niagara County on 18 January by Peter Yoerg and Barbara Henderson. This was only the fourth January record in the past 12 years. Peter and Barbara also reported 3 Red-throated Loons, adults in basic plumage, near that area on the same date. This is a record high count for this study area for the month of January. Red-throated Loons continued to be reported and verified from Lake Ontario through the month of February. While the Niagara River is renowned for gulls, occasionally the Dunkirk Harbor produces a rarity. A report of a California Gull observed in the Dunkirk Harbor on 6 January by Allen Benton and yours truly is only the second record for Chautauqua County. Documentation is pending on this bird. Another California Gull was reported and documented for the third consecutive month from the Niagara River by Gordon Bellerby on 2 January. On 18 January Willie D'Anna reported 20 Iceland Gulls in the Niagara River, a record high number for this area.

In general, February arrival dates, while especially early compared to previous years, were still within previous documented dates in the records for this Region. One exception was the sighting by Willie D'Anna of a pair of Wood Ducks flying over the Village of Olcott in the town of Newfane In Niagara County on 16 February. Early Turkey Vultures were reported by Richard and Dorothy Rosche over the Town of Cheektowaga in Erie County on 25 February. A record of particular interest was the sighting of a Lesser Black-backed Gull, subspecies *Larus fuscus graellsii*, in an unplowed cornfield in the Town of Yates on the border of Niagara and Orleans Counties on 22 February. This is only the second record for this Region of this gull in a cultivated field habitat.

Snowy Owls irrupted in modest proportions in Region 1, with one female found by a number of observers from December thru the season in the Wyoming County Town of Sheldon. Other sightings noted thru the winter period were sporadic, with reports of single appearances on Grand Island, the City of Buffalo, and in the Town of Java in Wyoming county.

As already reported with the CBC data, the finch irruption here paled in comparison with our neighbors to the east and west of Region 1. To add insult to injury, Cornell University, in an article in *Birdsope*, Vol. 12, No. 2 entitled *A Flurry of Finches*, stated that: "when it comes to finches, the United States has experienced, during the winter of 1997 and 1998, a finch invasion of monumental proportions." Here, the significant reports submitted included several counts of 300+ Common Redpolls, up to 73 Evening Grosbeaks, a peak of 65 White-winged Crossbills, but only two reports of Pine Grosbeak. The highlight of the finch season for this area consisted of a sighting of a Hoary Redpoll.

Contributors: Robert Andrie, Gordon Bellerby, Allen Benton, Robert Brock, Elizabeth Brooks, Bruce Chilton, Willie D'Anna, Dean DiTommaso, Kurt Fox, Walt Franklin, Tom Harper, Barbara Henderson, Paul Hess, Audrey Horbett,

William Horne, Dave Junkin, Brendan Klick, Lynne Landon, Marie Maustellar, Dick Miga, John Milton, Mike Morgante, David Neveu, Tom O'Donnell, Susan O'Donnell, Michael Pitzrick, Vivian Pitzrick, Betsy Potter, Frances Rew, Gerald Rising, Donald Roberson, Richard Rosche, Dorothy Rosche, Olga Rosche, Bert Schweigert, Gail Seamans, Jack Skalicky, David Suggs (Buffalo RBA), Debra Suggs, Joe Thill (plus weather data), John Thill, Anne Vogt, William Watson, Larry Wilson, Jim Wojewodzki, Peter Yoerg.

Abbreviations: ASP - Allegany State Park, CATT; BISP - Beaver Island State Park, Grand Island, ERIE; BWWTP - Batavia Waste Water Treatment Plant, GENE; BuSP - Buckhorn Island State Park, Grand Island; CaL - Cassadaga Lake, CHAU: CBCs - ten combined Christmas Bird counts, 20 Dec - 4 Jan; BRBA - Buffalo Rare bird Alert; CWMA - Conewango Wildlife Management Area, CATT; CSG - Countryside Sand and Gravel Pits, T Dayton, CATT; DH - Dunkirk Harbor, City of Dunkirk; FMCSF - Four Mile Creek State Park, NIAG; FNSP - Fort Niagara State Park, NIAG; GHSP - Golden Hills State Park, NIAG; GI - Goat Island - Niagara Falls; GSF - Greenwood State Forest, ALLE; INWR - Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge, GENE/ORLE; NF - Niagara Falls; NPP - Niagara Power Project on Niagara River, Town of Lewiston; NR - Niagara River; OOWMA - Oak Orchard Wildlife Management Area, GENE; Tiff NP - Tiff Nature Preserve, Buffalo; TWMA - Tonawanda Wildlife Management Area - NIAG/GENE; WB - Woodlawn Beach, ERIE.

LOONS - DUCKS

Red-throated Loon: 1 T Porter 28 Dec; 3 FMSCP 28 Dec; 3 Olcott 18 Jan (PY!); 1,2 various Lake Ontario sightings 15, 16, 22, 28 Feb (mob).
Com. Loon: 1 CaL 3 Dec; 2 FNSP 7 Jan.
Pied-billed Grebe: total 40 CBC's 20 Dec - 4 Jan; 5 DH 12 Jan; 9 DH 10 Feb.
Horned Grebe: 8 max GHSF 8 Jan; 57 Shadigee T Yates ORLE 22 Feb; various other sites thru.
Red-necked Grebe: arr 1 Olcott NIAG 28 Feb.
Double-crested Cormorant: 14 DH 1 Jan (CBC's); 16 DH 8 Feb.
Great Blue Heron: 19 NR 17 Dec; 25 NR 28 Jan.
Black-crowned Night-Heron: 1 Buffalo 16 Dec; 2 NF 8 Jan; 1 Motor Island NR 26 Feb.
Turkey Vulture: arr 2 T Cheektowaga ERIE 25 Feb (RR,DR).
Snow Goose: arr 2 INWR 27 Feb.
Canada Goose: 1000-2000 DH Jan thru (DM).
Brant: 2 Olcott 18 Jan (PY!).

Tundra Swan: 23 BSP 25 Jan; 1-30 at many locations 1-28 Feb.
Wood Duck: arr 2 T Olcott NIAG 16 Feb (WD).
Gadwall: arr 2 Tiff NP 24 Feb.
Am. Wigeon: 2,3 INWR & OOWMA 28 Feb.
N. Shoveler: arr 1 OOWMA 28 Feb.
N. Pintail: 2 BWWTP GENE 11 Jan.
Green-winged Teal: arr 2 INWR 28 Feb.
Canvasback: total 14548 CBC's; 3700 GI 10 Jan.
Ring-Necked Duck: 1,4 BWWTP GENE 4,11 Jan.
Greater Scaup: 5500 WB 9 Dec.
Harlequin Duck: 1 Olcott NIAG 17 Jan (WD); 1 Bird Island Pier Buffalo 3 Feb (PY,BH).
White-winged Scoter: max 160 Barker NIAG 28 Jan; 500 T Wilson & Olcott NIAG 16 Feb.
Oldsquaw: 2580 NR 25 Feb.
Hooded Merganser: 17 BISP 3 Dec; 1 WB 9 Dec.

Ruddy Duck: 2 CaL 3 Dec; 1 DH thru Jan, Feb (DM), appeared injured; 6,7 LaSalle Park Buffalo 12,18 Jan (BA,MM).

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: 1 T Lewiston NIAG 6 Dec; 3 ad, 8 imm Allegany SP; 1 ad T Salamanca CATT 11 Jan; 1 imm ASP 25 Jan.
Rough-legged Hawk: 1 T Charlotte CHAU 3 Dec; 2 T Boston ERIE 15 Dec; 5 T Leon CATT 31 Jan; 1 Otto CATT 26 Feb.
Peregrine Falcon: 1 Buffalo 18,25 Jan; 1 various locations and dates thru Feb.
Ruffed Grouse: 2 GSF ALLE 2 Feb.
Am. Coot: 40 DH thru.
Purple Sandpiper: 3,4,2 GI 6,7,16 (mob) Dec; 2 NF 21 Dec; 6,2 GI 25,28 Jan; max 6 GI 14 Feb.
Dunlin: 1 GI 21 Dec; 1 GI 17 Jan (BA).
Little Gull: 2 T Lewiston NIAG 6 Dec; 1 various sites 1,10,11 Jan; 6 Lewiston T NIAG 28 Feb.
Bonaparte's Gull: max 4540 NR 9 Jan. (GB !); 1 DH 6 Jan (AB,RM).
MEW GULL: 1 Jamestown CBC (Bob Sundell)
Iceland Gull: 4 NR 7,17 Dec; 20,17,12 NR 18,24,28 Jan (mob); 6 NR 22 Feb
CALIFORNIA GULL: 1 NR 2 Jan Lesser Black-backed Gull: total 7 CBC'S; 1 T Yates NIAG/ORLE 22 Feb (MM!).
Glaucous Gull: 1-4 NF 7,13, 28 Dec; max 4 NF 1-31 Jan; 1 Silver Creek Feb thru (mob).
Great Black-backed Gull: 950 NF 14 Dec.

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

Snowy Owl: arr GI 18 Dec; 1 T Sheldon WYOM 21 Dec; 1 C Buffalo 24 Dec; 1 various sites Jan thru.
Long-eared Owl: 3 T Porter NIAG 28 Dec.
Short-eared Owl: 4 T Shelby ORLE 31 Jan.
N. Saw-whet Owl: arr 1 Wilson-Tuscarora SP NIAG 28 Feb (BP).
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: 1 Lewiston NIAG 28 Dec; 3 ASP 17 Jan (BS), high count for area and time.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: 1 T Holland ERIE 20 Dec; 1 various sites thru Jan; 1 Dunkirk Airport T Sheridan CHAU 20 Feb.

Com. Raven: 1 T Java WYOM 3 Dec; 2,2 T Ward ALLE 10,17 Dec; 1 Amity Lake 13,17,19 Dec; 1 Catt SP 21 Dec.
Horned Lark: *Eremophila p. praticola* 18 T Somerset NIAG 29 Jan (FR, AH).
Winter Wren: 1 FMCSF 28 Dec; 1 BISP 5,31 Jan.
E. Bluebird: 2 T Lewiston NIAG 13 Dec; 5 T Pomfret CHAU 15 Dec; 2 T Stockton CHAU 15 Dec; 3-6 var 24 Jan.
Hermit Thrush: total 4 CBC'S.
Am. Robin: 200 T Porter NIAG 24 Jan.
Gray Catbird: 1 BISP 5 Dec; 1 BISP 5,12,16-18 Jan.
N. Mockingbird: 4 DK 3 Jan.

WARBLERS

Yellow-rumped Warbler: 7 T Porter NIAG 28 Dec; 2 BISP 5,12,31 Jan; 2 BISP,FNSP 6,22 Feb.

TANAGERS - WEAVERS

Fox Sparrow: 1 Buffalo 2 Dec, late.
Swamp Sparrow: 1 BISP 5,25 Jan; 2 T Lancaster ERIE 31 Jan.
White-crowned Sparrow: 1 T Porter NIAG 28 Dec.
Lapland Longspur: 20 T Somerset NIAG 19 Jan.
Snow Bunting: 42 T Porter NIAG 7 Dec; 350 T Somerset NIAG 19-29 Jan; 400 T Leon CATT 31 Jan; 1002 Freedom T CATT 7 Feb.
Red-winged Blackbird: 21 at feeder T Lancaster ERIE 14-27 Jan; arr 40 NF 11 Feb.
E. Meadowlark: 1 TWMA 31 Jan.
Com. Grackle: arr 1 NF 11 Feb.
Brown-headed Cowbird: 10 T Tonawanda ERIE 18 Dec; 9 T Tonawanda 28 Jan.
Pine Grosbeak: 6 T Yates ORLE 21 Jan; 2 f T Evans ERIE 29 Jan, both RBA reports.
Purple Finch: 4 f T Wilson NIAG 1-31 Jan.
Red Crossbill: 2 GHSP 14 Dec; 1 ASP 25 Jan.
White-winged Crossbill: max 65 Houghton ALLE 7 Jan; 1,2,1 T Ward ALLE 9,17,19 Dec; 2-7 various sites 11-26 Jan.
Com. Redpoll: max 325 AR 27 Dec; 300 T Yates ORLE 29 Jan (FR,AH); 300 T Newfane NIAG 1 Feb (WD).
HOARY REDPOLL: 1 T Newfane NIAG 1 Feb (WD!,NYSARC).

Pine Siskin: max 8 Amity Lake ALLE 11
Jan; 4 T Colden ERIE 2-25 Dec; 1-6 various
sites 15-28 Feb.

Evening Grosbeak: total 129 CBC's 20
Dec to 4 Jan; 73 T West Almond ALLE 4
Jan (PY,BH); 31 Amity Lake CATT 11 Jan;
Remelm2463@aol.com

25 T Eagle WYOM 5 Feb; 12 T Machias
ALLE 25 Feb.

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REGION 2 - GENESEE

KEVIN C. GRIFFITH

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I guess you would have to say that it was one of the more interesting winters. The early part of the season gave us a hint of some wintry weather and winter species, but the bulk of the season turned out to be anything but wintry. December was a warm month with an average temperature of 31.2°F . This was 2.1 degrees above normal. But the real story for December was the snowfall. By the end of the month 26.5 inches had fallen. This represented a total that was about 5 inches above normal. Combined with the November snows, it was the largest amount of snow ever recorded by the end of December. Some of the heavier snows fell south of the city, but snowfall for the month was generally widespread. Overall precipitation was at 2.88 inches, which was a scant 0.15 inches above normal. As birding went, it was a pretty decent month. The lakewatch continued into the month and produced some good waterfowl totals as well as gull reports. Birding near the lake on the whole was good during the month. One of the interesting things for December was the appearance of decent numbers of winter finches. Conditions were not great for the three area Christmas Bird counts, but the Rochester count inched ever closer to that "100-species" mark with 99 tallied. This included a first-for-the-count Common Raven spotted by Robert McKinney.

January was a warm month. The average temperature of 31.6°F was a whopping 8 degrees above normal. Along with that came 5.63 inches of precipitation for the 2nd wettest January in the 1900's. It was nearly 4 inches above normal. Snow cover still existed in some spots and the smaller bodies of

water remained ice covered during the period. None of these things stopped the now annual efforts of the "Big January" listers. Many hours were spent in the field by observers trying to amass a good list of species for the month. When all was said and done, a total of 141 species was tallied for the month. Mike Davids and Dave Tetlow found 140 species in a combined effort. The location of half-hardies combined with a good total of wintering species helped in reaching this mark.

The annual New York State Waterfowl Census was conducted between the 10th and 18th of January. It was not a stellar count but was about average for recent years. The rains had swollen many of the rivers, and the Genesee was pouring silt laden water into the lake. This may have tended to scatter some waterfowl species and to push them farther out into the lake. It also produced flooded fields everywhere to disperse the puddle ducks away from their normal sites of winter concentration.

The vole population (*Microtus* species) was quite healthy this year. The lack of heavy snow cover also made them more susceptible to predation. Still, raptor totals were not that impressive. The lack of really consistent snow cover served to spread the landbirds out also. There were plenty of open fields, so weed seed availability was good and kept the sparrows and redpolls scattered. The winter finches were scattered at the few sites with decent cone crops. All of the winter finch species were found, but in small numbers.

February continued the warm trend, with an average temperature of 32.6°F. This was again 8 degrees above normal. The warmest day was on the 10th, when the thermometer reached 53°F. Precipitation was 2.34 inches, which was a scant 0.24 inches above normal. Snowfall was only 9.1 inches. Normal snowfall for the month is 22.8 inches. Good coverage kept the species total up and provided a decent monthly total in a month when reports are often scarce. The warm trend did bring a smattering of early migrants, but waterfowl totals were poor. Bonaparte's and Little gulls remained into the month. This is generally not the case, but very good totals of particularly the latter were counted. Irruptive species and half-hardies were relatively scarce.

Loons were evident throughout the season. Red-throated Loons continued to be observed in greater numbers than usual. All the expected grebe species were accounted for, with Red-necked Grebe remaining in the Region throughout.

Double-crested Cormorants have been wintering in recent years, but the arrival of an immature Great Cormorant, discovered at Irondequoit Bay in January, was a real highlight. The bird was seen by many observers and was present through the end of the period. To make matters even more interesting, an adult was observed by William Symonds at Hamlin Beach and a second immature bird joined the one at Irondequoit Bay.

The waterfowl picture was also interesting, with the arrival of three Trumpeter Swans at Irondequoit Bay. One of the birds was wing-tagged,

allowing for tracing its origin. The bird was tagged at Wye Marsh on the southeast corner of Georgian Bay in Ontario, Canada. It was a product of the Canadian recovery project for that species. The appearance of four more south of Sodus Bay is suspected to be from the breeding efforts of a Wayne County private preserve. On the negative side was the unprecedented numbers of Mute Swans. Irondequoit Bay and Braddock Bay played host to large numbers for most of the season. Ducks in general were average to low, with most species located but with lackluster totals. Highlights included King Eider reports and multiple Barrow's Goldeneye sightings.

The raptor numbers for the season were on the low side. Cooper's Hawk sightings were decent, but that was about it for the season. Rough-legged Hawks were generally scarce. Red-shouldered Hawk in winter is always a good find. Merlin has become a rare but regular winter visitor.

The usual rails were found in January at traditional locations, but the Common Moorhen was a very rare find for this season.

A winter jaeger was also a good find. This season was generally good for gulls. As previously mentioned, it was a good season for Little and Bonaparte's gulls. Rarities reported were Franklin's, California and Lesser Black-backed gulls. White-winged gulls were scarcer this year with few reports.

Only one Snowy Owl was consistently reported, from Irondequoit Bay, and Short-eared Owls were seen in the usual spots. Bergen Swamp was the location of a N. Saw-whet report in January along with Long-eared Owl. The usual Red-headed Woodpecker haunt near Avon was nearly void of this diminishing species. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was once again reported but not with the usual sites of regular appearance in recent years.

The passerine picture was mixed. On the plus side was Common Raven, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, and the fairly large number of Yellow-rumped Warblers at the fish hatchery in Caledonia. On the down side were sparrow numbers in general. The usual species were located but totals were poor. Chipping, Field, Savannah and Fox sparrows were reported but were scarce. Snow Buntings were found in some locations but not in high numbers. Longspurs were tough to find.

Blackbirds continued to occupy their roost at Mendon Ponds Park. Eastern Meadowlarks again wintered in the Retsoff area. Included in this year's observations were Rusty Blackbirds.

Winter finches never really lived up to the expectations enkindled by the fall flight. Perhaps they continued southward and will return on their way back north. Pine Grosbeaks were reported regularly from Webster Park and both crossbills were seen there and elsewhere from time to time. Purple Finches continued to be very scarce. Common Redpolls preferred the fields and were not evident at feeding stations. There were a few scattered reports of Hoary Redpoll. Pine Siskin and Evening Grosbeak numbers were poor this season.

Even with the minuses, we would still have to say that it turned out to be a pretty decent winter season. December's species total was 127 species followed by 141 and 111 for January and February, respectively. All three totals were significantly above their 10-year averages.

Abbreviations: BS - Bergen Swamp, BB - Braddock Bay, C - Caledonia, CH - Charlotte (Ontario Beach), CL - Conesus Lake, DE - Durand-Eastman Park, G - Greece, HB - Hamlin Beach, H - Holley, IB - Irondequoit Bay, L - Lima, LW - Letchworth State Park, L/SLCBC - Letchworth/Silver Lake Christmas Bird Count, MP - Mendon Ponds, NR - Nations Road (Avon), P - Perinton, RCBC - Rochester Christmas Bird Count, S - Sodus, SB - Sodus Bay, TP - Turning Point Park, WL - West Lakeshore, WP - Webster Park.

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LOONS-DUCKS

Red-throated Loon: max 461 HB 3 Dec.

Horned Grebe: max 300+ WL 12 Jan.

Red-necked Grebe: max 26 HB 11 Feb.

GREAT CORMORANT: 1 imm IB 24-31 Jan, 1-28 Feb (BE,RMa,RS); 1 ad HB 8 Feb (WS).

Double-crested Cormorant: max 2 IB 11-31 Jan.

Great Blue Heron max 12 Genesee River 11 Jan.

Turkey Vulture: 1 H 6 Dec, uncommon in winter; max 24 LW 2 Jan.

Snow Goose: 1 G 18-21 Dec; 1 BB 2 Jan; unusual in winter; max 500 Genesee Flats 21 Feb.

Brant: 1-2 IB 18 Dec, 1-28 Feb; 1 LW 15 Feb, unusual in winter.

Mute Swan: max 75 RCBC 21 Dec.

TRUMPETER SWAN: max 4 S 12 Jan; at least 7 other individuals reported in Region in Jan; see *intro* for origins.

Tundra Swan: arr 7 IB 15 Feb.

Wood Duck: arr 1 HB 27 Feb.

Gadwall: max 63 IB 11 Jan, good winter count.

N. Shoveler: max 11 G 21 Dec.

N. Pintail: arr 4 HB 11 Feb.

Green-winged Teal: max 2 MP 3 Jan.

Redhead: max 8000 CL 29 Jan.

Ring-necked Duck: max 112 CL 19 Dec.

Greater Scaup: max 15,000 G 21 Dec.

King Eider: max 5 HB 3 Dec; total of 13 individuals HB 1-20 Dec; 1 fem IB 1 Jan; 1 subad m HB 3 Feb male; 1 subad m DE 9 Feb; 1 imm m CH 22 Feb.

Harlequin Duck: 1 HB 12 Dec (WS), uncommon.

White-winged Scoter: max 8631 HB 9 Dec.

Oldsquaw: total 11,661 HB 1-20 Dec; max 5000+ DE 9 Feb.

Common Goldeneye X Hooded

Merganser: 1 SB 8 Feb (DS,MT).

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE: 1 G 1 Jan (R,S&CS), imm male; 2 imm m SB 2 Jan (DT,MD); 1 f SB 22,28 Jan (D&DT,BE).
Hooded Merganser: max 203 CL 21 Dec.
Ruddy Duck: 1 CL 21 Feb, scarce this winter.

HAWKS-ALCIDS

N. Goshawk: arr 1 BB 28 Feb.
Red-shouldered Hawk: 1 Dalton 21 Jan (DT), uncommon in winter.
Merlin: 4 reports Jan thru.
Virginia Rail: 1 MP 3,19 Jan.
Sora: 2 MP 30 Jan.
Com. Moorhen: 1 C 17,23 (DT), very unusual in winter.
Am. Coot: max 1000 CL 2 Feb.
Killdeer: 1 HB 13 Dec; 1 C 17 Jan; 1 G 18 Jan; unusual in winter.
Am. Woodcock: arr 2 W 28 Feb.
Dunlin: last 1 BB 26 Dec (P&JS), late.
Com. Snipe: 1 MP 26 Jan, uncommon.
phalarope species: 1 G 21 Dec (DT).
Pomarine Jaeger: 1 HB 1 Dec; 1 HB 16 Dec; uncommon in Dec; 1 HB 18 Feb (WS), unusual.
Parasitic Jaeger: 1 HB 3 Dec; max 2 HB 4 Dec; 1 HB 18 Dec; unusual in Dec.
jaeger species: 1 Point Breeze 31 Jan (DT,MD).
FRANKLIN'S GULL: 1 CH 12 Jan (RMa,DT), record late.
Little Gull: total 33 HB 1-20 Dec; max 19 CH-DE 26 Feb.
Bonaparte's Gull: total 17,391 HB 1-20 Dec.
CALIFORNIA GULL: 1 ad DE 12 Dec (RMa); 1 ad CH 6,10 Jan (DT,KG).
Iceland Gull: max 5 IB 17 Jan.
THAYER'S GULL: 1 P 19,31 Dec (DSh); 1 ad HB 3 Feb (WS).
Lesser Black-backed Gull: 1 HB 14 Dec (ML); 1 CL 18 Dec (KF); 1 P 18 Dec (DSh); 1 IB 11 Jan (MD,DT); 1 CH 18 Jan (DT).
Glaucous Gull: arr 1-2 P 19,20 Dec.
Black-legged Kittiwake: last 2 HB 16 Dec.

DOVES-WOODPECKERS

Short-eared Owl: max 12-15 Lima 1-31 Dec.
N. Saw-whet Owl: 1 BS 3 Jan, only report.

Red-headed Woodpecker: 1 G 17 Jan, only report.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: 1 L 20-31 Dec, 1-2 Jan; 2 TP 2 Jan; 1 G 18 Jan, good total for season.

FLYCATCHERS-WAXWINGS

Com. Raven: 1 Penfield 21 Dec, new location; 2 Canadice 27 Dec; max 4 Springwater 10 Jan (DT); 1 Canadice 30 Jan (BE), good seasonal total.
Marsh Wren: 1 BB 26 Dec, 1-2 MP 19,30 Jan, uncommon in winter.
Ruby-crowned Kinglet: 1 SB 18 Jan, uncommon in winter.
Hermit Thrush: max 3 DE 3 Dec.
Gray Catbird: 1 MP 21 Dec; max 2 MP 21 Jan; 1 Webster 22 Jan; 1 MP 6 Feb.
Brown Thrasher: 1 Clarkson 20-28 Jan, only report.
European Starling: est 200,000 T of Richmond 27 Dec.
Am. Pipit: 1 IB 21 Dec, late.
Bohemian Waxwing: 1-2 var 1-19 Dec; one WP 1 Jan.

WARBLERS

Yellow-rumped Warbler: max 250 C 17 Jan (DT), unusually high total for Jan.
Com. Yellowthroat: 1 L/SLCBC 20 Dec; 2 BB 21 Dec, unusual in winter.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS

Chipping Sparrow: 1 Avon 17,21 Jan; 2 Rochester 1 Feb, unusual in winter.
Field Sparrow: 1 CL 27 Dec; 3 reports in Jan, uncommon.
Savannah Sparrow: NR 12-13 Dec, 30-31 Jan, .
Fox Sparrow: 2 Dalton 29 Jan, uncommon.
Dark-eyed "Oregon" Junco: 1-2 Henrietta 1,17,25 Jan.
Snow Bunting: max 660 Avon 25 Jan.
E. Meadowlark: max 8 Retsof 17 Jan.
Brown-headed Cowbird: max 40 MP 3 Jan.
Pine Grosbeak: 1-19 WP throughout the season.
White-winged Crossbill: max 40 sev 1 Jan.
Hoary Redpoll: max 2 Hamlin 3 Jan (KG,JB); 1 Livonia 10 Jan (MD,DT); 1 Hamlin 22 Jan (PS).

REGION 3 - FINGER LAKES

BILL OSTRANDER

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Long-range forecasts for the northeast predicted a winter of mild temperatures, courtesy of El Niño. The predictions were entirely accurate. Temperatures in Ithaca averaged 29.9°F in December, 29.9°F in January, and 30.4°F in February, 2.3, 8.4, and 7.8 degrees above normal, respectively. The temperature never dropped below zero during the entire season. Single digit readings were reached on only six occasions, and only once was the high temperature on those days below 20°F. The one exception was New Year's Day when the winter's low was 0°F and its lowest high was 14°F. That, of course, was the day that most of the Region's birders were conducting Christmas Bird Counts. While temperatures were above normal, snowfall was twice the normal in December, well below normal in January, and very close to normal in February. Snow depth was one inch or more on 53 days during the season, 7 days fewer than normal.

The greatest consequence of the mild temperatures was very little freezing of bodies of water, at least in the southern half of the Region. Even small ponds were open for most of the season. In spite of the availability of habitat, Mallard and American Black Duck numbers on Christmas Bird Counts and the Federation Waterfowl Count were down from last year. This, however, may be the result of these dabblers having more places in which to hide from the counters. Early spring fever was most apparent among the blackbirds, with the first migrant Red-winged Blackbirds, Common Grackles, and Brown-headed Cowbirds all appearing in Chemung Co. the second week of February. An Eastern Phoebe showed up there, as well, more than a month earlier than last year's first in the Region.

Mild temperatures did not result in an abundance of lingerers, but one each of Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Hermit Thrush, Gray Catbird, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, Eastern Towhee and Chipping Sparrow enjoyed a relatively easy winter.

Goose migration got underway with several relatively small flocks of Canada Geese passing over Dutch Hill, 21 February. Thousands were seen over several locations in the region on 27-28 February. The burgeoning population of Snow Geese was much in evidence on 28 February as well. My wife and I counted more than a thousand from our front yard in Big Flats, as did Dave Russell, who was observing from nearby Lowe Pond. Dave also picked out a flock of 100 Brant. Both Brant and Snow Geese are rare sights in the Chemung Valley in spring.

Winter finches continued to invade the Region, all species being reported. Nevertheless, the reports were not numerous, except for Common Redpoll. Small numbers regularly visited feeders and large flocks, especially in the Towns

of Catlin and Big Flats in Chemung Co., foraged in fields. The largest flock, about 250 birds, was feasting in a field of sunflowers.

Christmas Bird Count highlights included Elmira's first CBC Bald Eagle, Ithaca's second Brant, and Corning's first ever Christmas Bird Count, with highs established for every species observed. Elmira also established record highs for Wood Duck, Mallard, and Red-tailed Hawk, and a record low for House Sparrow. Ithaca established record highs for Cooper's Hawk and Common Raven.

George Kloppel submitted a highly detailed report of an Eared Grebe in Aurora Bay, 22 February. John Gregoire and Dave Russell both submitted detailed reports of California Gull in Watkins Glen and Elmira, respectively. This was likely the same bird since a large number of gulls commute daily from Seneca Lake to the Lowman Landfill south of Elmira. The Upstate New York Birds internet listserv was awash with inquiries about this bird. It is to be complimented for the detailed reports posted and cautionary notes about the difficulties of California Gull identification. Dave has submitted his report to NYSARC for evaluation.

Other highlights included an accommodating Barrow's Goldeneye for several days in Geneva, several Iceland Gulls in the Cayuga Lake Basin, Glaucous Gull(s) in Seneca Co., Snowy Owl at the Mucklands, and Hoary Redpoll in the McGowan's backyard.

Contributors: Paula Amols, Carol Anderson, Ryan Bakelaar, Gladys Birdsall, Andy Boehm, Steve Bonta, John Bower, Cayuga Bird Club, Chemung Valley Audubon, Rich Clements, Linda Clougherty, John Confer, Steve Cooper, Michael Czarnecki, Karl David, Stephen Davies, Nancy Dickinson, Harry Ellsworth, Bill Evans, Katherine Feldman, Christina Fenn, John Glase, David Gooding, Jay Greenberg, John Greenly, John Gregoire, Robert Groseck, Meena Haribal, Niall Hatch, George Houghton, Stefan Hames, Chris Hymes, Anne Kendall, George Kloppel, Jon Kloppel, Greg Larnard, David McDermitt, Kevin & Jay McGowan, Marie McRae, John Morris, Tom Nix, Joan & Bill Ostrander, Sandy Podulka, Bill Purcell, Ken Rosenberg, Charles Rouse, David Russell, Catherine Sandell, Glenda Sarver, Matt Sarver, Marty Schlab, David Smith, Sally & Scott Sutcliffe, Mary Jane Thomas, Gil Weakland.

Abbreviations: AuBa - Aurora Bay CAYU; BiFl - Big Flats; BFSP - Buttermilk Falls State Park TOMP; CaL - Cayuga Lake; CCBC - Corning Christmas Bird Count, 1 Jan; Chem - Town of Chemung CHEM; CLWC - Cayuga Lake Waterfowl Count, 24 Jan; CVWC - Chemung Valley Waterfowl Count, 14 Jan; Dryd - Dryden; DuHi - Dutch Hill CHEM; ECBC - Elmira Christmas Bird Count, 27 Dec; ElDa - Elmira Dam; Elmi - Elmira; Hect - Hector SCHU; HHP - Harris Hill Park; HHSF - Hamond Hill State Forest TOMP; Hors - Horseheads; ICBC - Ithaca Christmas Bird Count, 1 Jan; Itha - Ithaca; Lans - Lansing; LoPd - Lowe Pond CHEM; MCBC - Montezuma Christmas Bird Count, 1 Jan; Muck - Mucklands SENE; MyPt - Myer's Point TOMP; SeFa - Seneca Falls; SeL - Seneca Lake; Shel - Sheldrake; SLSP - Seneca Lake State

Park; StP - Stewart Park TOMP; SuDa - Sullivanville Dam CHEM; Summ - Summerhill CAYU; TaFo - Tanglewood Forest CHEM; Vete - Veteran; ViMa - Village Marina SCHU; WeDa - West Danby.

LOONS-DUCKS

Com. Loon: ICBC; 5 CLWC; 5 Ovid 20 Feb (JK).
Pied-billed Grebe: 5 ICBC; MCBC; 7 CLWC; 2 ViMa (J&BO).
Horned Grebe: 2 CLWC; 2 Shel 20 Feb (JK); 2 AuBa 22 Feb (GK).
EARED GREBE: AuBa 22 Feb (GK!).
Double-crested Cormorant: MyPt 16 Feb (SD).
Great Blue Heron: 6 ECBC; 4 ICBC; 26 MCBC; 2 Mark Twain State Park 13 Dec (CVAS).
Turkey Vulture: arr 2 Hect 27 Feb (ND); 2 Lans 28 Feb (CF).
Snow Goose: MCBC; arr WeDa 20 Feb (GK); max 1206 BiFl 28 Feb (J&BO).
Canada Goose: 223 ECBC; 9720 ICBC; 2422 MCBC; 52,641 CLWC; arr DuHi 21 Feb (J&BO).
BRANT: ICBC; max 100 LoPd 28 Feb (DR).
Mute Swan: 2 MCBC; 3 CLWC.
Tundra Swan: 26 MCBC; max 60 Muck SENE 20 Feb (JK).
Trumpeter Swan: 5 MCBC.
Wood Duck: CCBC; 3 ECBC; CLWC.
Gadwall: 10 ICBC; 3 MCBC; max 30 CaL 20 Feb (AK).
Am. Wigeon: max 4 SeL 14 Feb (J&BO).
Am. Black Duck: 36 CCBC; 7 ECBC; 43 ICBC; 172 MCBC; 861 CLWC; max 1000 CaL 18 Jan (TN).
Mallard: 116 CCBC; 416 ECBC; 904 ICBC; 243 MCBC; 1895 CLWC; 172 22 Feb LoPd.
N. Pintail: 12 MCBC; 2 SeL 14 Feb (mob).
Green-winged Teal: ECBC; The Center At Horseheads 10 Jan (DR); CVWC; CLWC.
Canvasback: 208 ICBC.
Redhead: 250 ICBC; 838 CLWC; 50 Union Springs.
Ring-necked Duck: 5 CLWC.
scaup (Sp): 125 CLWC.
Greater Scaup: 6 ICBC; 33 CLWC; 9 CaL 13 Jan (SD).
Lesser Scaup: 9 ICBC; 68 CLWC.

Bufflehead: 84 CLWC; 17 CIP 14 Feb (J&BO).
Com. Goldeneye: 3 ICBC; 2 MCBC; 390 CLWC; 24 SLSP 23 Feb (CR).
BARROW'S GOLDENEYE: SLSP after 21 Feb (CR, mob).
Hooded Merganser: CCBC; ECBC; ICBC; 5 CVWC; 2 Chemung R 8 Feb (BO).
Com. Merganser: 3 CCBC; 15 ICBC; 49 MCBC; 155 CLWC; 21 CVWC; 14 STEU 27 Dec.
Red-breasted Merganser: 4 CLWC; 2 Shel 20 Feb (JK); 2 Wyer's Point SENE (JK).

HAWKS-ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: ECBC; MNWR 20 Feb (AK).
N. Harrier: CCBC; ECBC; 9 MCBC; max 6 SeFa 18 Feb (CA); 6 SeFa 20 Feb (AK).
Sharp-shinned Hawk: 3 CCBC; ECBC; 7 ICBC; 5 MCBC.
Cooper's Hawk: 3 CCBC; 4 ECBC; 8 ICBC; 2 MCBC.
N. Goshawk: Summ 16 Feb (JMo); Seneca Falls Airport SENE 22 Jan; Varick 22 Jan.
Red-tailed Hawk: 13 CCBC; 48 ECBC; 92 ICBC; 41 MCBC; 14 Chem 24 Jan.
Rough-legged Hawk: 3 CCBC; 3 ECBC; 7 ICBC; MCBC; 2 Catlin 7 Feb (J&BO); 2 Vete 7 Feb (DR).
Am. Kestrel: 2 ECBC; 5 MCBC.
Merlin: CCBC; 26 Feb BiFl (BO).
Ring-necked Pheasant: max 3 SeFa 20 Feb (AK); Vete 10 Jan; SeFa 18 Feb (AA).
Ruffed Grouse: 2 CCBC; 5 ECBC; 1 ICBC; 2 Vete 21 Feb.
Wild Turkey: 4 CCBC; 10 ECBC; 65 ICBC; 52 Itha 21 Feb (LC).
Am. Coot: 12 ICBC; 2 MCBC; 438 CLWC; 27 ViMa 14 Feb (J&BO).
Killdeer: MyPt 28 Dec (BE); arr Hors 27 Feb (BO).
Am. Woodcock: arr 22 Feb Hect (ND); max 4 Broo 23 Feb (SP).
Ring-billed Gull: 41 CCBC; 413 ECBC; 618 ICBC; 421 MCBC; 105 EIDA 26 Feb (BO).
CALIFORNIA GULL: SeL 11 Feb (JGreg!); EIDA 21 Feb (DR!,NYSARC).

Herring Gull: 5 CCBC; 55 ECBC; 178 ICBC; 1774 MCBC; 84 EIDa 26 Feb (BO).
Iceland Gull: max 3 Seneca Meadows Landfill SENE 3 Jan (K&JM); Seneca Canal SENE 1 Jan (CS); VanCleaf Lale SENE 10-12 Jan (CR); 2 StP 15 Feb (KR).
Lesser Black-backed Gull: StP 15 Feb (KR); StP 16 Feb (SD).
Glaucous Gull: Cayuga Marsh SENE 15 Feb (MH); 21 Feb CaL SENE.
Great Black-backed Gull: CCBC; ECBC; 27 ICBC; 136 MCBC; 6 ViMa 14 Feb (J&BO).

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS

Rock Dove: 577 CCBC; 641 ECBC; 1047 ICBC; 183 MCBC; 111 Corn 17 Jan (BO).
Mourning Dove: 118 CCBC; 662 ECBC; 482 ICBC; 170 MCBC; 30 25 Dec (J&BO).
E. Screech-Owl: 8 ECBC; 6 ICBC; 3 Rorick's Glen 7 Feb.
Great Horned Owl: 6 CCBC; 9 ECBC; 10 ICBC; 2 BiFl 3 Dec (BO).
Snowy Owl: MCBC; Muck 3 Jan (K&JM).
Barrred Owl: Southport 17 Feb.
Long-eared Owl: CAYU 3 Jan (K&JM); HHSF 18 Feb (GK).
Short-eared Owl: ICBC; max 6 SeFa (RB); 6 Vete 18 Feb (GL&BO).
N. Saw-whet Owl: max 2 SeFa 21 Feb (K&JM); roadkill Dryd 10 Dec (BE); Newf 15 Feb (GK); SaWo 19 Feb (BE); Lans 19 Feb (GB).
Belted Kingfisher: 5 ECBC; 2 ICBC; MCBC.
Red-headed Woodpecker: ad TFSP 13 Feb (NH); imm after 17 Feb Covert (CH).
Red-bellied Woodpecker: 7 CCBC; 11 ECBC; 58 ICBC; 14 MCBC.
YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER: Hect 22 Feb (ND).
Downy Woodpecker: 30 CCBC; 47 ECBC; 208 ICBC; 27 MCBC; max 3 BiFl 28 Feb (J&BO).
Hairy Woodpecker: 6 CCBC; 11 ECBC; 62 ICBC; 5 MCBC.
N. Flicker: 2 CCBC; 9 ECBC; 12 ICBC; 1 MCBC; arr 4 LoPd 16 Feb (GW).
Pileated Woodpecker: 3 CCBC; 6 ECBC; 20 ICBC; 1 MCBC; max 2 MyPt 20 Feb (JK); 2 HHP (RC).

FLYCATCHERS-WAXWINGS

E. Phoebe: arr LoPd 16 Feb (GW); LoPd 28 Feb.
N. Shrike: Park Station CHEM 20 Dec (BO).
Blue Jay: 209 CCBC; 190 ECBC; 400 ICBC; 34 MCBC; 7 BiFl 11 Jan (BO).
Am. Crow: 723 CCBC; 739 ECBC; 2039 ICBC; 2861 MCBC; 105 DuHi 1 Feb.
Fish Crow: 11 ICBC; HHP 5 Feb; TaFo 15 Feb (mob).
Com. Raven: CCBC; ECBC; 3 ICBC; max 5 STEU 24 Jan.
Horned Lark: 15 CCBC; ECBC; 95 ICBC; 305 MCBC; 100 Vete 31 Jan.
Black-capped Chickadee: 291 CCBC; 386 ECBC; 1338 ICBC; 132 MCBC; 19 Gleason Audubon Wildlife Sanctuary STEU 8 Feb.
Tufted Titmouse: 40 CCBC; 49 ECBC; 150 ICBC; 10 MCBC.
Red-breasted Nuthatch: 5 CCBC; 17 ECBC; 55 ICBC; 2 MCBC; 6 TaFo 15 Feb (J&BO).
White-breasted Nuthatch: 52 CCBC; 46 ECBC; 128 ICBC; 23 MCBC.
Brown Creeper: 5 CCBC; 4 ECBC; 7 ICBC; 6 MCBC; max 4 TaFo 2 Dec (J&BO).
Carolina Wren: ECBC; 7 ICBC; Elmi 14 Dec; Lindley (BO); Itha 23 Feb (AK); HHP 28 Feb (RC).
Winter Wren: ICBC; BFSP 7 Dec (JB).
Golden-crowned Kinglet: 5 CCBC; 10 ECBC; 11 ICBC; max 5 Summ 17 Jan (SD&KF).
E. Bluebird: 11 ECBC; 20 ICBC; MCBC; max 9 BFSP 7 Dec (JB).
HERMIT THRUSH: ICBC.
Am. Robin: 2 ICBC; 162 MCBC; arr 6 MyPt 16 Feb (SD).
GRAY CATBIRD: ICBC.
N. Mockingbird: 8 ECBC; 2 ICBC; MCBC.
European Starling: 465 CCBC; 2636 ECBC; 4262 ICBC; 1630 MCBC; max 450 Erwin STEU 14 Feb (J&BO).
Cedar Waxwing: 50 CCBC; 130 ECBC; 132 ICBC; 17 MCBC; 63 SuDa 24 Jan (BO).

WARBLERS

Yellow-rumped Warbler: ICBC.
COMMON YELLOWTHROAT: 1 ICBC.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS

EASTERN TOWHEE: ECBC; Clements Farm CHEM 20 Dec - 21 Feb (RC).
Am. Tree Sparrow: 299 CCBC; 156 ECBC; 675 ICBC; 410 MCBC; 30 BiFl 24 Feb (BO).
Chipping Sparrow: Itha 18 Dec (SD).
Song Sparrow: 15 CCBC; 12 ECBC; 9 MCBC; 4 LoPd 28 Feb.
Swamp Sparrow: ICBC; MCBC; Mill Street Pond CHEM 17 Jan.
White-throated Sparrow: 4 CCBC; 6 ECBC; 105 ICBC; 14 MCBC; 7 BiFl 6 Dec (BO).
Dark-eyed Junco: 350 CCBC; 223 ECBC; 462 ICBC; 101 MCBC; 15 BiFl 14 Dec (BO).
Lapland Longspur: 2 ICBC; MCBC.
Snow Bunting: 494 ICBC; 55 MCBC; 400-500 Dryd 19 Jan (GB).
N. Cardinal: 100 CCBC; 99 ECBC; 269 ICBC; 49 MCBC; max 11 BiFl 3 Feb (BO).
Red-winged Blackbird: 36 MCBC; arr Hors 9 Feb; max 357 Hors 27 Feb (BO).
E. Meadowlark: 3 Lans 3 Jan (GB); 3 Vete 24 Jan - 7 Feb (BO&DR).
Com. Grackle: arr Chem 11Feb; max 230 27 Feb (BO).
Brown-headed Cowbird: 2 ICBC; 3 MCBC; arr Chem 13 Feb; max 45Vete 18 Feb (GL&BO).

Pine Grosbeak: max 10 Summerhill 17 Jan (SD&KF); 2 CoUn 18 Feb (NH); WeDa 27 Feb (GK).
Purple Finch: 5 ICBC.
House Finch: 67 CCBC; 170 ECBC; 600 ICBC; 157 MCBC; 37 BiFl 4 Jan (BO).
Red Crossbill: CCBC; ECBC; max 2 SaWo 20 Feb (CH).
White-winged Crossbill: max 13 HHP 25 Feb; 8 Elmi 27 Jan; 3 Summ 22 Feb; 6 Elmi 23 Feb.
Com. Redpoll: 59 CCBC; 31 ECBC; 254 ICBC; 7 MCBC; 250 ECRA 22 Jan (SC); 40 Newf 24 Jan (JGI); 100 ECRA 24 Jan; 140 Catl 4 Feb (SC); 70 Vete 7 Feb; 90 Catl 15 Feb (SC).
HOARY REDPOLL: TOMP 2 Feb (J&KM).
Pine Siskin: 8 ECBC; ICBC; Etna 20 Feb (CH).
Am. Goldfinch: 62 CCBC; 88 ECBC; 376 ICBC; 83 MCBC; 8 SuDa 24 Jan (BO).
Evening Grosbeak: 17 CCBC; ECBC; 84 ICBC; 31 Summ 22 Feb (GK).
House Sparrow: 116 CCBC; 153 ECBC; 860 ICBC; 327 MCBC; 24 BiFl 11 Jan (BO).

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REGION 4 - SUSQUEHANNA

MARY DOBINSKY

7 Spencer Drive, Oneonta NY 13820

It was a mild, open winter for the second year in a row. At Cooperstown where temperature records date back to 1854, it was listed as one of the ten warmest winters of record. December's average daily temperature of 27.7°F was only two degrees above normal. The January average of 30.6°F, however, was 10 degrees over normal, and in February the daily mean exceeded the average by 8 degrees. Precipitation totals for the period varied in different areas of the Region, but they were generally near normal for December and February and much higher in January. However, because of the warm temperatures, much of the precipitation fell as rain and sleet rather than as snow. There were only two heavy snow storms, one 30 and 31 December and the other on 24 February. Subsequent sun and rain quickly melted most of the snow accumulation from both storms. Consequently there was little snow cover all season. However, after months of very low water levels in the rivers and streams, the early January thaw, abetted by heavy rains, quickly swelled river and creek depths to flood stage. Unfortunately, this coincided with the annual Federation Waterfowl Count, causing lower tallies of most ducks. Bob Saunders, covering the Binghamton to Bainbridge section of the Susquehanna River, explained, "Most years the river has been mostly frozen and we found birds in open places. This year the river was all open, very high and flowing very fast. We found nothing in the river itself. Most of our birds were seen in fields which had standing water."

Scant snow cover was evidently a boon for hawks. Many observers commented on high numbers of Red-tailed Hawks all winter, including an early breeding pair on a telephone pole at CORT 20 February. Good counts were also noted for Northern Harrier and both Bald and Golden eagles. Owls also found good hunting. In addition to the good numbers of the more common species, a N. Saw-whet Owl spent February near a CHEN birder's home and two Regionally rare Short-eared Owls drew many area birders to BROO 9 to 11 February.

The poor supply of wild foods noted in the fall had already caused the exodus of most half-hardies. However, determined survivors found food. The total of 1101 Wild Turkeys tallied on the four Christmas Bird Counts was second only to the record count of 1995. Three Yellow-rumped Warblers were still around for the Binghamton Christmas Bird Count on 28 December, and Cedar Waxwings were reported in sizable flocks all season despite the scarcity of wild fruits.

The most rare winter visitors were two record-late American Pipits spotted at Upper Lisle BROO 2 January by Harriet Marsi and Gail Kirch. A Regionally rare Tundra Swan was at Cooperstown 11 January on the Federation Waterfowl Count. Very exciting were the record numbers of Lapland Longspur: 300 on the

Binghamton Christmas Bird Count and 150 on the Sherburne Count; two a season is the usual report, if seen at all. A big invasion of Common Redpoll and good numbers of White-winged Crossbill and Pine Grosbeak highlighted the winter finch season.

January and February's unusually high temperatures evidently triggered some record early arrivals in advance of spring. They included two Green-winged Teal and Northern Pintail at Boland Pond 10 February, N. Shoveler there 28 February, and four Turkey Vultures at Goodyear Lake 28 February. Early landbirds included American Woodcock at Binghamton 20 February, a tie for record early. Scarce this winter were Northern Shrike, Golden-crowned Kinglet, American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, Purple Finch, Pine Siskin, and American Goldfinch.

Observers: Derek Alcott, Cutler & Jeannette Baldwin, Les Bemont, Bruce Bozdos, Eleanor Carson, John Davis, Mary Dobinsky, Sadie Dorber, Dolores Elliott, Bob Grosek, Steve Hall, Elva Hawken, Sara Kinch, Gail Kirch, Art & Ruth Levy, Harriet Marsi, Andy Mason, Evelyn Mead, Bruce Milavec, Bob Miller, Bob and Ruth Pantle, Marie Petuh, Tom Salo, Bob Saunders, Joe Sedlacek, Julie Smith, Eric Sullivan, Gary & Louise Sweet, Bill Toner, Chris Vredenburg, Fred von Mechow, Don Weber, Nancy Weissflog, Don Windsor, Irene Wright, Jane Young,

Abbreviations: ATP - Aqua Terra Park, Binghamton; BCBC - Binghamton Christmas Bird Count, 28 Dec; BPd - Boland Pd, BROO; BFlats - Burlington Flats; CCBC - Sherburne Christmas Bird Count, 20 Dec; CFk - Chenango Forks; CVSP - Chenango Valley state Park; DOCBC - Oneonta Christmas Bird Count, 20 Dec; FWC - Federation Waterfowl Count; FHNC - Finch Hollow Nature Center; FMHW - Franklin Mt. Hawkwatch; JCy - Johnson City; OtsL - Otsego Lake; SUNYNP - State University Nature Preserve; TCBC - TIOG Christmas Count, 4 Jan; WB - West Burlington; WPR - Whitney Pt. Reservoir.

LOONS - WATERFOWL

Pied-billed Grebe: River Rd Endwell 17 Jan (SK), often missed.

Horned Grebe: TCBC, only seventh report in last 20 winters.

Great Blue Heron: max 19 on 3 CBC's, excellent counts each month.

Turkey Vulture: arr 4 Gyl 28 Feb, early.

Snow Goose: flock TIOG Feb (Dwb), missed some winters.

Canada Goose: 1600 on CBC's; 1900 on FWC's; good counts late Feb.

Mute Swan: max 3 BCBC.

Tundra Swan: FWC at Cooperstown 11 Jan, first winter report since 1985.

Am. Wigeon: 3 Endwell 12 Dec (ES), only report.

Am. Black Duck: max 84 FWC; 35 on CBC's; BPd Feb max 48, low counts but better than last year.

Mallard: max 737 on CBC's, low count but averages totals of last 3 years.

N. Shoveler: BPd 28 Feb (ES), record early arrival.

N. Pintail: BPd 10 Feb thru, max 3, missed some winters.

Green-winged Teal: CCBC; 2 females 10 Feb thru, often missed.

Oldsquaw: WPR 2 Dec (ES), first winter since Dec 1984.

Com. Goldeneye: 15 on FWC; TIOG Dec, scarce.

Hooded Merganser: 8 Chenango River 11 and 21 Dec, max 8; 3 TCBC; 7 FWC; 4 Binghamton 28 Feb, scarce.

Com. Merganser: max 400 WPR 2 Dec; 196 CBC's; 104 FWC; 200 WPR 28 Feb, good numbers.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Osprey: TIOG early Jan, often missed.

Bald Eagle: imm ChF 12 Dec (T&NT); CVSP 14 Jan; max 12 DELA 25 Jan (TBC eagle trip); 5 DELA 31 Jan (DOAS eagle trip).

N. Harrier: BFlats 28 Dec(NW); TIOG thru; Jefferson 6 Jan (AM); Lisle 12 Jan (MP), "on ground eating"; 2 Lisle 10, 11 Feb; 2 CinL 19 Feb, good numbers.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: six BROO reports Dec max 3; two reports each Jan, Feb, average.

Cooper's Hawk: 8 on 3 CBC's; 2 - 4 per month, near average.

N. Goshawk: imm TIOG Dec, Jan; Triangle 8, 17 Feb, missed last winter.

Red-shouldered Hawk: BCBC; 4 reports Binghamton area Jan, possibly same bird, rarely seen before 1995.

Red-tailed Hawk: 86 on 4 CBC's; 5 Riley Road CORT 20 Feb including pair copulating on telephone pole (BI); flight of 6 BRQO flying north within 10 minutes 23 Feb (MP).

Rough-legged Hawk: 15 on 2 CBC's; 12 other reports Dec, max 2; 10 reports Jan, max 4, average; scarce Feb.

Golden Eagle: imm OTSE 10 Dec (SH), "hunting at junction Routes 205 and 80"; imm CHEN south of Oxford 27 Jan (A&RL fide Dw), "being harassed by Red-tailed Hawk"; distance between sites raises possibility same eagle was seen.

Am. Kestrel: 3 on CBC's; five singles Jan, Feb; average.

Ring-necked Pheasant: max 5 Castle Creek 1 Jan (BG); 4 on CBC's; 3 others, average.

Ruffed Grouse: 25 on 4 CBC's, high count.

Wild Turkey: max 1101 on 4 CBC's, 2d only to record high of 1995.

Am. Coot: OtsL thru; max 75 FWC 11 Jan.

Killdeer: arr Bpd 27 Feb.

Am. Woodcock: 2 males ATP 20 Feb (T&NT), ties record early arrival date of 1979.

Ring-billed Gull: max 95 FWC; 30 WPR 11 Jan; 15 imm GyL 29 Jan.

Herring Gull: max 28 BCBC.

Great Black-backed Gull: Rockbottom Dam Binghamton 27, 31 Dec; 1, 12 Jan, uncommon.

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

Mourning Dove: 1508 on CBC's, high counts widespread thru.

E. Screech-Owl: WB 16 Dec; 3 on CBC's; CVSP 22 Feb; TIOG, good numbers.

Great Horned Owl: 2 McGraw 17 Jan; 12 on 3 CBC's; Jefferson 6 Jan; Triangle 1, 9 Feb; 2 ATP 6, 20 Feb; T Preston 22 Feb; TIOG, very good numbers.

Barred Owl: 2 CCBC; CHEN 7, 19 Feb; BROO 22 Feb, missed some winters.

Short-eared Owl: 2 T Lisle BROO 9, 10, 11 Feb (mob), first winter in at least 20 years.

N. Saw-whet Owl: T Preston thru Feb (and beyond), (EH); third consecutive winter, previously rare.

Belted Kingfisher: max 11 BCBC; 2 CVSP; 3 TIOG sites 21 Jan (SK).

Red-bellied Woodpecker: 2 CVSP 6 Dec; 11 on 2 CBC's; TIOG thru, not as widespread.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: 3 on DOCBC, not every winter.

Downy Woodpecker: 180 on CBC's, average.

Hairy Woodpecker: 63 on CBC's.

N. Flicker: max 5 BCBC; 3 TIOG 21 Jan; 1 BROO and 2 TIOG reports Feb, good count.

Pileated Woodpecker: 10 on 4 CBC's plus many widespread reports thru Dec.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: CCBC; Willet 10 Jan (ES); Cooperstown 20 Jan (JD), scarce.

Blue Jay: fewer than usual.

Am. Crow: 3430 on CBC's, near average.

Fish Crow: single thru Dec Chenango R Binghamton; two there 11 Feb (ES), "area of previous sightings".

Com. Raven: 3 (one bird missing a primary feather) FMHW 1 Sep to 24 Dec (CV); TIOG Dec (DWb); 2 Jefferson 6 Feb (AM), steady presence.

Horned Lark: 35 CCBC, only report, scarce.

Black-capped Chickadee: 2059 on 4 CBC's, above average.
Tufted Titmouse: excellent numbers, widespread thru.
Red-breasted Nuthatch: 33 on CBC's, an off year.
Brown Creeper: 26 on CBCs, average.
Carolina Wren: 11 on BCBC; TIOG Jan, still scarce.
Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 8 CVSP 4 Dec; 12 on CBC's; only 3 Jan reports, max 2, scarce.
E. Bluebird: max 8 on 3 CBC's; 8 TIOG 21 Jan, below average.
Am. Robin: 3 FHNC 27 Jan; only one on CBC's; 3 to 4 singles Jan., Feb; lowest count since 1987.
N. Mockingbird: Bainbridge 15 Dec; 5 on CBC's; singles BROO/ TIOG Jan, scarce.
Am. Pipit: 2 Upper Lisle 2 Jan (HM, GK), first winter in 20 years of reports.
Cedar Waxwing: 132 on 2 CBC; 80 SUNYNP 3 Jan; 73 Rogers Environmental Recreation Center 1 Feb, high counts.

WARBLERS

Yellow-rumped Warbler: 3 on BCBC, only 4th winter report since 1982.

TANAGERS - WEAVERS

Am. Tree Sparrow: 332 on 4 CBC's, average.
Chipping Sparrow: Oneonta 2,3 Dec (IW).
Field Sparrow: 3 CCBC.
Fox Sparrow: TIOG Dec (DWb); DOCBC, only 4th winter since 1983
White-throated Sparrow: 20 CBC's; 10 JCy yard 24 Feb; 8 there 10 Dec "heavy snow days" (MP), good counts.

White-crowned Sparrow: TCBC, first since 1992.
Song Sparrow: 14 on CBC's, scarce.
Dark-eyed Junco: 592 on CBC's, average.
Lapland Longspur: 300 on BCBC 28 Dec; 150 on CCBC 20 Dec and again 21 Dec when rechecked by count co-compilers; record numbers; only five other winter reports since 1981, previous record 79 on 1989 CCBC.
Snow Bunting: max 187 on CCBC; high counts widespread; last 5 OTSE 28 Feb.
N. Cardinal: 221 on CBC's; many feeders thru; max 8 JCy 24 Feb; singing from 1 Feb.
Red-winged Blackbird: Norwich 13, 14 Dec; arr 2 each BROO, OTSE 11 Feb; 65 OTSE 13 Feb (BM), very early arrivals.
Com. Grackle: max 12 Oneonta 12 Jan (IW); singles on two CBC's; arr 3 OTSE 12 Feb, early.
Brown-headed Cowbird: four on CBC's; TIOG Jan, Feb; 7 Norwich 28 Feb.
Pine Grosbeak: 20 on CCBC; 2 OTSE 29 Jan (BMv), near average but none last year.
Purple Finch: 13 on CBC's; only 3 other singles thru, scarce.
White-winged Crossbill: BROO 24, 25 Jan; 3 Jefferson 17 Feb.
Com. Redpoll: 573 on CBC's; good counts Jan, increasing Feb, best year since 1994.
Pine Siskin: a few singles, very scarce.
Am. Goldfinch: 488 on CBC's; scarce at feeders after early Dec.
Evening Grosbeak: good counts DOCBC; regular at one feeder area each CHEN and DELA, very limited areas.

The next report will be Mary Dobinsky's last. She has done an excellent job as Region 4 editor since the fall issue of 1990. We will miss her and thank her for such diligent service.

Unfortunately, we do not have a replacement. If you are interested, please contact Bob Spahn (716 671-5690) or me (607 336-4628). This situation is **urgent**. Without an editor, Region 4 reports will not get published. Sure, it is a lot of work, but it is an opportunity to make an important contribution to New York State birding. DA Windsor.

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REGION 5 - ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

MARY ALICE KOENEKE

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BILL PURCELL

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The El Niño weather pattern which formed in the Pacific Ocean in late 1997 held its power for the entire winter providing Central New York with a relatively mild winter. El Niño's influence shifted the jet stream which kept the cold arctic air bottled up in Canada. December had an average temperature of 30.7°F, 2.4 degrees above normal, with a high of 52° F and a low of zero°F. A total of 47.8 inches of snow fell, which was 21 inches above normal. Much of that fell on 30 December. Just over 4 inches of precipitation fell during the month. January's average temperature was 29.9 degrees° F, which was 7.5°F above normal. The high was 59°F and the low was -9°F. Precipitation of 4.77 inches was 2.43 inches above average, but snowfall of 31.8 inches was only 2.2 inches above average. The mild weather continued through February with an average temperature of 31.3°F, 7.3°F above normal, with a high of 48°F and a low of 5°F. Snowfall in February was 14.7 inches, which was 11.5 inches below normal, and precipitation was 3.14 inches, 0.99 inches above normal.

By far, the highlight of the season was a **Yellow-billed Loon** found in Oswego Harbor on 21 December during the Oswego Christmas Count. Sue Boettger noted the loon in the lower Oswego River and identification was made by Gerard Phillips. The bird was seen nearly every day until heavy rains and a thaw over 7-8 January melted the snow cover. The snow melt caused the Oswego River to rise to flood stage which brought considerable silt downstream and into Oswego harbor. Many birds, including the loon moved out looking for clearer water for feeding. The **Great Cormorant** originally found in November, also continued to be present in Oswego Harbor. Its presence became more sporadic and it left about the same time as the loon, likely due to the same conditions. Barrow's Goldeneye, never a regular in the Region was present in numbers and consistency as to nearly qualify for classification as an invasion. Three separate males were reported, two of them with persistent frequency.

Areas usually open such as Oswego harbor, Onondaga Lake, and the warm water discharge at Nine Mile Point had lower waterfowl concentrations than usual. Little Sodus Bay remained partially open for most of the season and large stretches of the Oswego and Seneca Rivers were open for much of the winter. In the highlands of southern Herkimer County the Unadilla River only froze several times for a couple of days at a time.

There were first winter records of Black-crowned Night-Heron and Common Moorhen. The night-heron was in a drainage ditch in a restricted area of the Air

National Guard Base in Syracuse while the moorhen was seen daily on the old Erie Canal into mid-December.

Turkey Vultures were not reported from Onondaga County where winter reports have originated for the past couple of years. The February reports were most likely early migrants. Numbers of accipiters were good, as were numbers of Red-tailed Hawks and American Kestrels. Rough-Legged Hawks were much more common east of Oneida Lake than west of the lake, most likely due to prey populations but less farming and creeping development may also be a factor west of the lake. A Golden Eagle was found in the extreme southeastern portion of the Region where there has often been little coverage. A Merlin spent the winter roosting in a Syracuse park.

Wintering gulls were present in good variety, nine species being reported. The common species were seen in smaller numbers than most winters. Gulls did not begin to arrive in large numbers until mid January, and numbers peaked by the end of the month when counts rapidly dwindled. Highlights were several Thayer's Gulls, a Lesser Black-backed Gull, and an immature Black-legged Kittiwake. The latter bird was reported from the Oswego Harbor area for 8 days.

Resident owl species, Great Horned Owl, Barred Owl and Eastern Screech-Owl, were well reported in the Region during the period. Only one Snowy Owl was reported from the Lake Ontario shoreline, but two were reported from an upland agricultural area of Herkimer County during the latter half of the winter season.

Half-hardy species were not reported more often despite the milder winter weather. Possible reasons include the heavy snow in late December which moved them out of the region, the lack of abundant food, and/or the abundance of open ground which kept them dispersed. Several observers reported American Tree Sparrow numbers to be barely average and Dark-eyed Juncos to be low in comparison to other years.

Pine Grosbeaks were found on the Tug Hill, Adirondack foothills, and the Lake Ontario shoreline. Despite a small cone crop both crossbill species were also noted in the Region. However, it was definitely the year for Common Redpolls, and, as always in such years, one hopes for Hoary Redpolls among them. In January, Gerard Phillips found a field of unharvested sunflowers in Bethel just north of the Cayuga County line in Oswego County. A great natural food source, the field attracted hundreds of Common Redpolls and American Goldfinches as well as at least four Hoary Redpolls. These were identifiable as the *exilipes* subspecies as they perched and preened in the trees surrounding the field. Notable when discussing winter finches was the near absence of Pine Siskin and Purple Finch for the entire season and the general lack of finches in the southern highlands of Onondaga and Madison counties where they are found most years.

The season total was 129 species, an excellent year. Highlights include **Yellow-billed Loon, Great Cormorant, Black-crowned Night-Heron, Brant,**

Barrow's Goldeneye, Golden Eagle, Common Moorhen, Thayer's Gull, Kittiwake, Bohemian Waxwing and Hoary Redpoll. Only one report each of Pine Siskin and Purple Finch was disappointing but overall there was little that could be considered negative for the season.

Contributors: Sue Adair, Bob Asanoma, Sue Boettger, Joseph Brin, Bernie Carr, David Cesari, Lee Chamberlaine, Roger Daigle, Dorothy Crumb, Bill Gruenbaum, Gene Huggins, Mary Alice Koeneke, Andy Leahy, Gary Lee, Cathy Mason, David Nash, Matt Perry, Gerard Phillips, Bill Purcell, John Rogers, Marge Rusk, Mickey Scilingo, Tony Shrimpton, Maureen Staloff, Judy Thurber, Ken Zoller.

Abbreviations: Bville - Baldwinsville, BLNC - Beaver Lake Nature Center, CM - Clay Marsh, DH - Derby Hill, FH - Fair Haven, Little Sodus Bay and vicinity, LOL - Lake Ontario Littoral, NH - New Hartford, OneiL - Oneida Lake, OnonL - Onondaga Lake, SSSP - Selkirk Shores State Park. StM - Saint Mary's Cemetery, Dewitt, SVB - Sylvan and Verona Beach, Syr - Syracuse, WP - Woodman Pond.

LOONS-DUCKS

Red-throated Loon: 2 Oswego thru 8 Feb.

Com. Loon: max 6 OnonL 20 Dec; up to 4 Oswego thru season.

YELLOW-BILLED LOON: 1 Oswego regular 21 Dec to 6 Jan and last 18 Jan, first NYS record of a live bird (SB, BG, MAK, GP, mob).

Pied-billed Grebe: last FH 4 Jan.

Horned Grebe: max 7 DH 1 Feb; 1

Hinckley Res 21 Jan, normally frozen.

Red-necked Grebe: 1 LOL 11 Jan, only report.

GREAT CORMORANT: 1 Oswego to 6 Jan (mob).

Double-crested Cormorant: max 12 Oswego R and Harbor 1 Jan; 2 Oswego thru season.

Great Blue Heron: one Old Forge thru Dec; 1 wintered OnonL.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON: 1 imm N Syr 10 Dec (BC), first Regional winter record.

Turkey Vulture: singles Scriba 17 & 28 Feb.

Snow Goose: 1 Oswego 29 Dec; arr 8 Schroepfel 28 Feb.

Brant: 2 FH 19 Dec with 1 remaining to 1 Feb, record late.

Mute Swan: sharp increase in winter reports, max 11 OnonL 31 Jan; also 7

Dempster Beach LOL during Jan; 3 WP 18 Jan; 2 Leland Pd to 10 Feb; 2 FH Jan.

Tundra Swan: almost wintered with last 10 OnonL 5 Feb; arr 15 Biddlecum 21-26 Feb.

Wood Duck: max 5 Syr 20 Dec; last Bville 31 Jan.

Gadwall: max 23 FH 16 Dec; 12 FH 4 Jan.

Am. Wigeon: max 6 WP 8 Dec; last 3 WP 14 Dec.

Am. Black Duck: max 100 WP 8 Dec; 70 OnonL 31 Jan.

Mallard: max 270 Manlius and 200 WP 14 Dec; low winter concentrations.

N. Pintail: last 1 FH 26 Dec; arr widespread 27 Feb; max 100 Biddlecum 28 Feb.

Green-winged Teal: max 5 Syr 20 Dec; last Bville 11 Jan.

Canvasback: max 16 FH 1 Feb.

Redhead: max 780 FH 1 Feb.

Ring-necked Duck: max 4 FH 2 Feb.

Greater Scaup: max 850 FH 2 Feb; other sites no more than 40 per day.

Lesser Scaup: max 6 FH 2 Feb.

White-winged Scoter: max 9 DH 19 Jan.

Oldsquaw: max 63 Oswego 3 Dec.

Bufflehead: max 55 FH 28 Feb; daily max of 15-30 Oswego, lower than usual.

Com. Goldeneye: max 2500 Sandy Pond 11 Jan.

Barrow's Goldeneye: single males FH from 12 Dec (GP); Brewerton from 11 Jan (JR); Oswego 25 Jan to 12 Feb (BA, DN).
Hooded Merganser: max 30 DL 8 Dec; last 15 there 14 Dec; one Oswego Jan-Feb; 2 FH 18 Jan, only reports after freeze-up.
Com. Merganser: max 4500 Cross L 9 Dec.
Red-breasted Merganser: max 21 Oswego 8 Feb, low numbers.
Ruddy Duck: last 4 WP 14 Dec; 2 Oswego 28 Jan, late.

HAWKS-ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: consistent winter reports of 2 ad & 1 imm Salmon R; ad & imm Oswego R and OnonL; ad & imm Eagle Bay - Big Moose; several sightings of 1-2 adults Cato area.
N. Harrier: 5 scattered winter reports; arr 1 Verona 27 Feb.
Sharp-shinned Hawk: 23 reports of singles.
Cooper's Hawk: 24 reports for season; max 5 OSWE 1 Feb.
N. Goshawk: singles, NH 12 Dec; Oswego 28 Jan; Hastings 7 Feb; Bridgewater 28 Feb; several sightings of an imm SSSP Jan-Feb; an average season.
Red-shouldered Hawk: arr 1 imm DH 27 Feb.
Red-tailed Hawk: max 12 Verona 4 Feb; 1 albino Oriskany Falls 19 Feb.
Rough-legged Hawk: max 13 Verona 4 Feb; 6 Fairfield 22 Feb; scarce w of Oneil.
GOLDEN EAGLE: 1 imm Van Hornesville 7 Feb, second Regional winter record (CM!).
Am. Kestrel: 7 per day S OSWE.
Merlin: fem roosting Onondaga Park Syr thru season; 1 Liverpool Jan-Feb; 1 N Syr 6 Dec; 1 Fabius 6 Dec.
Peregrine Falcon: 1 Oswego 6 & 24 Jan.
Ring-necked Pheasant: 8 reports of 13 individuals for the season.
Ruffed Grouse: max 3 several locations; total 20 from 10 reports.
Wild Turkey: max 125 Fairfield 16 Feb; fewer reports than recent years due to open winter.
COM. MOORHEN: one Erie Canal Fayetteville to 12 Dec (TS, RD); first winter record.

Am. Coot: max 20 WP 2 Dec; 6 still present 25 Jan; 2-3 wintered each of OnonL, FH and Oswego.
Killdeer: no winter reports; arr DH 27 Feb.
Bonaparte's Gull: max 33 Oneil 5 Dec; last Oswego 21 Dec.
Ring-billed Gull: max 4700 Oswego 17 Jan.
Herring Gull: max 1700 Oswego 17 Jan.
Thayer's Gull: 1st Bas Oswego 26 Dec (Mike O'Brien *vide* Bill Evans, NYSARC); 1st Bas Oswego 25 Jan; 2d Bas Bvile 28 Jan (BP, both NYSARC).
Iceland Gull: late Jan peak of 9-12 birds Oswego R; unusual sites included 1 SVB 6 Dec; 3 Phillips Lake Cato 3-9 Dec.
Lesser Black-backed Gull: 1 ad Oswego 25-28 Jan (MAK, mob).
Glaucous Gull: 1 FH 14 Dec; 1 SVB 24 Dec; 1 Oswego 1-11 Jan, 8 Feb; scarce compared with Iceland.
Great Black-backed Gull: max 370 Oswego 17 Jan.
Black-legged Kittiwake: 1 imm Oswego 21-26 Dec (SA, mob), record late.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS

Mourning Dove: max 122 Liverpool 4 Feb.
E. Screech-Owl: 9 reported.
Great Horned Owl: 16 reported.
Snowy Owl: 1 FH 12-16 Dec; 1 imm and 1 ad Fairfield after mid-January, only reports.
Barred Owl: 13 reported including 1 at T Western feeder sporadically 21 Dec - 9 Feb.
Short-eared Owl: singles Oswego 2 Jan, DH 17 Jan.
N. Saw-whet Owl: 1 T Western 25-29 Dec; 1 BLNC 9 Feb.
Belted Kingfisher: 1 Old Forge to 26 Dec, late for Adks; 1 wintered West Winfield, frozen most years.
Red-headed Woodpecker: max 3 FH 4 Dec, 1 remained thru; 1 Barneveld 22 Feb.
Red-bellied Woodpecker: several reports of wintering lower Tug Hill OSWE, may be a slight range extension.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: 1 Kayuta L 7 Dec; 1 Pompey 15 Jan; 1 NH 29 Jan, more than many winters.
N. Flicker: no reports after CBC's.

FLYCATCHERS-WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: 16 for the season with 1 imm Bethel, 1 Fairfield, 1 Bville and 2 ONEI persistent.
Am. Crow: max 6554 Syr roost 20 Dec.
Fish Crow: 1 Syr 19 Dec; up to 4 Liverpool and OnonL Jan-Feb.
Com. Raven: max 11 Remsen 2 Feb; 1 Verona 27 Dec, only other location.
Horned Lark: max 200 Bridgewater 11 Dec; Old Forge 12 Feb and Woodgate 13 Feb.
Tufted Titmouse: max 17 Utica 20 Jan; 8 FH 18 Jan.
Red-breasted Nuthatch: daily maxima of 8-10, some irruptive movement but also remained in breeding areas.
Brown Creeper: max 4 per day several locations.
Carolina Wren: 2 Syr 20 Dec; 1 Fayetteville to 2 Jan; 2 Camillus 6 Jan, slight increase.
Winter Wren: singles NH 18-20 Dec & 19 Jan, only reports.
Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 8 Kirkland 4 Dec; 2 SSSP 22 Jan; 1 West Winfield 4 Feb, only reports after CBC's.
E. Bluebird: numerous reports before storm of 30 Dec; max 8 Skaneateles 3 Jan thru.
Hermit Thrush: 1 West Winfield 4 Feb (KZ), only report.
Am. Robin: max 143 Skaneateles 3 Jan; overall lower than other open winters.
N. Mockingbird: max 4 NYS Fairgrounds 20 Dec; 6 other reports; 1 Oswego throughout.
Bohemian Waxwing: 3 SSSP 21 Jan (DCr).
Cedar Waxwing: max 352 Paris 12 Dec.

WARBLERS

Yellow-rumped Warbler: 1 Kirkland 20 Dec - 22 Jan; 2 Howland Island WMA 1 Jan; 1 Paris 6 Jan.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS

E. Towhee: single males thru season at Pompey & Liverpool feeders.
Am Tree Sparrow: max 70 Paris 16 Feb; from most reports not especially numerous.
Fox Sparrow: 1 Old Forge to 21 Dec, only report.

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Song Sparrow: max 4 NH 20 Dec; uncommon given mildness winter.
Swamp Sparrow: 1 NH 20 Dec - 6 Feb, only report.
White-throated Sparrow: max 10 CM 20 Dec and Kirkland 17 Feb.
White-crowned Sparrow: max 2 Clinton 20 Dec; 1 Paris 8-24 Feb.
Dark-eyed Junco: max 11 Dewitt 21 Feb; generally low counts.
Lapland Longspur: 2 Oswego 1-6 Jan; 1 Kirkland 1 Jan, only reports.
Snow Bunting: max 400 Kirkland 21 Dec; present in Woodgate 13 Feb; return flight max 240 Mexico 21 Feb when difficult to find in open fields.
N. Cardinal: 36 Liverpool feeder 8 Jan, unusual numbers in Region.
Red-winged Blackbird: winter max 20 Camillus 2 Jan; arr ONON 13 Feb.
E. Meadowlark: singles Mexico 4 Jan, 7 Feb.
Rusty Blackbird: 2 Paris 6 Dec; 1 Clinton 20 Dec.
Com. Grackle: 1 Central Square 3 Dec; 2 Syr 20 Dec, only winter; arr Fayetteville 16 Feb.
Brown-headed Cowbird: max 14 Sangerfield 26 Dec; 1 Fayetteville 12 Jan; 1 T Western thru.
Pine Grosbeak: max 40 SSSP and vicinity 9 Jan.
Purple Finch: 2 Clinton 20 Dec, only report.
House Finch: numbers remain low, some daily maxima of 20-40.
Red Crossbill: max 20 SSSP 6 Feb; 15 Remsen 9 Dec.
White-winged Crossbill: max 8 Verona 27 Dec; only 3 other reports.
Com. Redpoll: max 400 Bethel & 320 Mexico 22 Jan.
Hoary Redpoll: max 4 Bethel 22 Jan-10 Feb; one Pompey 28 Jan & 7 Feb.
Pine Siskin: 10 Utica 10 Jan, only report.
Am. Goldfinch: max 100 Bethel 25 Jan.
Evening Grosbeak: max 100 Nine Mile Point 27 Feb; most reports from highlands HERK, ONEL, & OSWE.

REGION 6 - ST. LAWRENCE

GERRY SMITH

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The winter of 1997-1998 was one of the mildest on record. Only the beginning in November and the end in March provided significant bursts of real winter. While human inhabitants of northwest Lewis, most of Jefferson, and northern St. Lawrence counties will mark this winter by the great ice storm of the century, evidence of impacts on birds was minimal. While undoubtedly some increased mortality occurred, particularly for smaller species, this was probably more than compensated for by reductions in mortality due to the mild winter. While it might be difficult to convince those human residents who lacked power for up to 33 days that this was an easy winter, it was. For the rugged avian and human residents of northern New York the winter of 1997-98, sans the ice storm of the century, was an easy one.

Positives for the season include: 1) good numbers and diversity of half-hardies, as would be expected for a mild winter; 2) good numbers of most mouse-raptor hawks, although well below a great year; 3) Wild Turkeys everywhere; 4) continued increasing numbers of southern species such as Red-bellied Woodpecker and Tufted Titmouse [Is this really positive?]; 5) increasing frequency of Common Raven everywhere, even in lowland areas; 6) wintering warblers and Savannah Sparrow; and 7) a decent winter finch flight.

Negatives include: 1) awful waterfowl numbers, particularly for *Aythya* species on Lake Ontario, with once common species such as Greater Scaup becoming increasingly rare; 2) a scarcity of all owl species, including the usually conspicuous Snowy and Short-eared owls; and 3) a poor year for northern passerines other than finches.

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Abbreviations: BRB-Black River Bay; CV-Town of Cape Vincent JEFF; ELL-Town of Ellisburg JEFF; HEN-Town of Henderson JEFF; LOU-Town of Louisville STLA; LWMA-Lakeview Wildlife Management Area; MCBC-Massena Christmas Bird Count; MSPD-Moses Saunders Power Dam Area, including Head Pond; NBCBC-New Boston Christmas Bird Count; PILPT-Pillar Point Area; PTPEN-Point Peninsula Area; PTSAL-Point Salubrious Area; PRWMA-Perch River Wildlife Management Area; WFC-Federation of New York State Bird Clubs waterfowl count; WHWMA-Wilson Hill Wildlife Management Area.

LOONS-DUCKS

Red-throated Loon: 1 MSPD 10-28 Dec (MB BD), only report.
Com. Loon: 12 MCBC 28 Dec; max 1-2 per day scattered on large bodies of water to 16 Jan.
Horned Grebe: 1 MCBC 28Dec, only report, now very scarce in winter.
Red-necked Grebe: 2 MCBC 28Dec, only winter report.
Double-crested Cormorant: 1 BRB 5 Dec; 2 MSPD 11 Dec, only reports.
Great Blue Heron: max 6 PTPEN 13 DEC; scattered singles to early Jan.
Turkey Vulture: 1 Watertown CBC 21 Dec (GS), a rare verified winter report.
Snow Goose: 1 WHWMA 7Dec (MB); 2 Watertown CBC 21 Dec, the only true winter reports; spring migrants arrived en masse in late February, with 500 Woodville ELL 28 Feb.
Canada Goose: max 1000 BRB 24 Dec; a few hundred winter's"
Canada x White-Fronted Goose: 1 probable hybrid at Fishers Landing JEFF 15-16 Dec (NL,LBC), photographed and sent to Cornell, SUNYESF for verification.
Mute Swan: 2-3 per day BRB thru Dec, only true winter records; arr 10 PRWMA 26 Feb (BH).
Tundra Swan: max 125 PTPEN 24 Dec (LBC,BH), may be Regional record high and is extraordinary; 7 at PTPEN 21 January, equally amazing. Sometime soon this species may winter through.
Trumpeter Swan: pair PRWMA breeders present by late Feb.
Gadwall: 49 BRB 2 January (BH), high number for winter.
EURASIAN WIGEON: 1 ad male WHWMA 5 Oct (BD), rare regional record.
Am. Black Duck: max 156 WFC; most counts 4-15 per day.
Mallard: max 297 MCBC; most counts 10-20 per day.
N. Pintail: 1 PRWMA WFC, only winter report; arr 1 ELL 28 Feb.
Canvasback: 1 MSPD 16 Jan; 1 Town of Ogdensburg STLA 22 Feb, only reports.
Redhead: 500 Montario Pt ELL WFC, only report.

Ring-necked Duck: 1 male Town of Ogdensburg STLA 16 Dec(NL); 3 Watertown CBC (M.Brown), only winter reports.
Greater Scaup: becoming increasingly scarce, max 150 ELL 31 Jan; few elsewhere, with 7 WFC incredibly low!
Lesser Scaup: 1 MSPD late Jan-Feb (BD), only report.
White-winged Scoter: 100 Wellsley I SP 12 Dec, only report.
Oldsquaw: as with most other diving ducks scarce, max 110 Montario Pt ELL 21 Feb; most reports only 2-10 per day.
Bufflehead: very scarce, max 49 WFC; most 3-6 per day.
Com. Goldeneye: virtually the only common diving duck,100-400 per day regular; max 1540 WFC.
Barrow's Goldeneye: 1 male mid Dec-mid Feb Fishers Landing JEFF (NL), only report.
Hooded Merganser: many more than a usual winter,1-3 per day scattered on Lake Ontario and St.Lawrence River thru; max 10 PTPEN 8 Dec (LBC).
Com. Merganser: 100-200 per day most deeperwater locations thru;max 1000 Wellsley I SP 12 Dec.
Red-breasted Merganser: 3 PRWMA WFC; 1 MSPD 5 Feb, only reports.

HAWKS-ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: Widely distributed as 1-4 per day around Lake Ontario and the St. Lawrence River,generally open winter resulted in few concentrations.
N. Harrier: Fair numbers abd widely distributed in JEFF,1-4 per day most areas through,7 PTPEN and CV 24 Dec,max, few reports from other counties.
Sharp-shinned Hawk: Total 9 reports as 1-2 per day.
Coopers Hawk: Total 12 as 1-2 per day.
N. Goshawk: Total 9 reports as singles,a good seasons total.Red-tailed Hawk:Good numbers present,most counts 10-20 per day NW Jeff,fewer elsewhere,Max 63 PTPEN and CV 1 Feb(GS,MAK).
Rough-legged Hawk: 15-50 per day regularly in NW Jeff thru,Max 75 PT PEN and CV 24 Dec(GS,TCarrolan),very good

numbers but not at levels of 150-200 per day record years.

Am.Kestrel: Scarce,most winter counts 1 per day NW JEFF with many days without them,wintermax 3 PTPEN and CV 24 Dec,5 PTPEN and CV 23 Feb may include migrants.

Gray Partridge: 17, CV 24 Dec,max,most counts in their CV stronghold only 4-6 per day.

Ring-necked Pheasant: Virtually gone even as stocked birds, 5 Total in 4 reports, Most impressive one male that survived at a feeder in Barnes Corners LEWI, on the Tug Hill Plateau , until being dispatched by a Northern Goshawk in late Jan.

Ruffed Grouse: scattered as 1-4 per day,Uncommon.

Wild Turkey: Population explosion continues as they are now fairly common everywhere including Lake Ontario Plain,most counts 10-20 per day however 40-60 per day counts are not uncommon.

COMMON MOORHEN: 1,probably injured at Beaver Meadows Marsh near Watertown JEFF(DMB,LBC) 28 Dec,Extraordinary here in winter.

Killdeer: Arrival 1 ELL 28 Feb.Red Phalarope:Fall report,1,Hawkins Pt near MSPD 11 Nov(BD).

Little Gull: Fall report,1,MSPD 18 Sept,rare in this region.

Ring-billed Gull: 10-30 per day early Dec,scarce thereafter until en masse arrival along Lake Ontario in third week of Feb.

Herring Gull: 3250,MSPD 10 Dec(BD),most high counts from MSPD with numbers elsewhere 15-50 per day.

Iceland Gull: 9 MSPD 29 Jan,max,a few other reports of singles,scarce away from MSPD.

Glaucous Gull: Max,44 MSPD 29 Jan(BD),most records there 7 per day or less,only 1 report away from MSPD.

Great Black-backed Gull: Max,1580 MSPD 5 Feb,most counts away from MSPD 5-20 per day.

Black-legged Kittiwake: Fall report,1,MSPD 29 Oct,infrequent in this region.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS

Mourning Dove: Widespread as 20-75 per day in the Eastern Lake Ontario and St. Lawrence River lowlands.

Great Horned Owl: 6, LOU 12 Dec(MB),max.

Snowy Owl: By our standards this was a terrible year,most records occurred during the first half of December as one per day scattered,Only a total of 6 all singles were recorded thereafter,definitely not a flight year.

Barred Owl: four scattered singles only.Short-eared Owl: 6, CV 24 Dec,max,most other records singles all from NW JEFF,a poor year.

Belted Kingfisher: A few scattered singles only,most unusual is 1 at the open outlet of Cranberry L STLA 21 Dec(LBC).

Red-bellied Woodpecker: Total 8 as 1-2 per day in JEFF,excellent number and reflects ongoing increase in this region.

N. Flicker: Total 15 as 1-3 per day mainly in NW JEFF,Good numbers for winter reflecting this mild year.

Pileated Woodpecker: 8,MCBC 28 Dec,max,many reports of 1-2 per day suggest species is doing well in our area.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS

N. Shrike: 1-3 per day widespread,a fair year locally.Gray Jay:2,Seveys corners STLA 21 Dec (LBC),only report.

Blue Jay: 150,MCBC 28 Dec and 143 NBCBC 30 Dec,maxs.

Am.Crow: 600,Town of Hounsfield JEFF 3 Dec,max..

Com. Raven: Numbers continue to increase with the species now regularly occurring on the Lake Ontario Plain and in the St. Lawrence River Valley in winter,Max 8 NBCBC 30 Dec,Widespread as 1-2 per day scattered thru.

Horned Lark: Only a few scattered 1-2 per day until arr 21 Jan,15-50 per day thereafter.

Black-capped Chickadee: Max,467 NBCBC.

Tufted Titmouse: Total 11 reports are far more than usual,Max 4 MCBC.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: Scarce,Only a few scattered reports of 1-3 per day,max 9 NBCBC.

White-breasted Nuthatch: 1-3 per day most areas,Max 56 MCBC is impressive.

Brown Creeper: Total 12 including 7 on MCBC.

Carolina Wren: 1, Kelsey Creek Watertown 2 Dec-5 Jan (DMB), only report.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: a few scattered singles, Max 4 NBCBC.

Eastern Bluebird: Fewer than in recent winters, Total 9 including 6 Wellsley Is. SP 3 Jan (DMB).

Am. Robin: Most reports 2-8 per day at lowland locations thru, max 28 Watertown 16 Feb.

N. Mockingbird: 1, Sacketts Harbor 2 Jan and 1 Deer Lick Rd CV 1 Feb, only reports but in many seasons we have none.

Bohemian Waxwing: 5, NBCBC 30 Dec and 12 Stony Pt 31 Jan, only reports. Cedar Waxwing Few reports, Max 116 NBCBC.

ORANGE-CROWNED WARBLER: one at Brouse's feeder along Kelsey Creek in Watertown through period, late Nov - Mar 98. (DMB, M. Brown, DP, mob). First Winter record for Region.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: 1, 1-31 Dec and 2 1-15 Jan all at Kelsey Creek feeder Watertown.

Am. Tree Sparrow: A poor season with all counts in the 15-75 per day range.

SAVANNAH SPARROW: Extraordinary are reports of 3 different individuals from PTPEN and CV 21 Jan-12

Feb (GS, MAK, NL), Species is virtually unknown in winter prior to these reports.

Song Sparrow: Total 4 singles to 19 January, more than usual.

White-throated Sparrow: Total 9 as 1-2 per day from all sectors.

White-crowned Sparrow: 1 Rays Bay Marsh HEN 24 Feb (LBC, BH) is rare report of a successful wintering individual.

Dark-eyed Junco: Most reports 2-8 per day, max 71 MCBC.

Lapland Longspur: 1-2 per day all from NW JEFF scattered thru period.

Snow Bunting: Most reports less than 100 per day, exception is 1000 near Lafargeville JEFF 28 Dec.

Red-winged Blackbird: 1, Kelsey Creek feeder Watertown 24 Dec, only winter report, Springarr 4 HEN 22 Feb.

Brown-headed Cowbird: Max 11 MCBC. Pine Grosbeak: A good but not great flight year, widely distributed as 5-20 per day, max 40-70 per day primarily from CBCs. Purple Finch: Scarce few records mostly from CBCs, Max 18 LOU 1 Feb (MB).

Red Crossbill: Scattered records of 1-3 per day, Max 8 MCBC.

White-winged Crossbill: 6, NBCBC (NL, L. Mazzochi), only report.

Common Redpoll: widespread invasion, 50-150 per day all areas; high counts of 250 per day.

Hoary Redpoll: total 15 primarily as singles in large flocks of Common Redpoll. Given the magnitude of the Common Redpoll flight, these numbers are reasonable. Only reports from experienced observers are accepted, given the difficulty of Hoary Redpoll identification.

Pine Siskin: scattered reports of 1-8 per day to mid Jan, none thereafter.

Am. Goldfinch: fair numbers present at 10-50 per day; max 164 MCBC.

Evening Grosbeak: flocks of 15-100 per day present at many locations; max 258 NBCBC.

Late Fall Records

Pied-billed Grebe: 16 WHWMA 11 Oct (DB), excellent report.

Red-necked Grebe: 8 at MSPB 11 Nov (BD).

Gadwall: 660 WHWMA 5 Oct (BD), excellent fall count.

Ring-necked Duck: 3000 WHWMA 5 Oct (BD), extraordinary fall report.

Red Phalarope: 1 Hawkins Pt near MSPD 11 Nov (BD).

Little Gull: 1 MSPD 18 Sep, rare in Region.

REGION 7 - ADIRONDACK-CHAMPLAIN

JOHN M.C. PETERSON

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The season began uneventfully enough. Plattsburgh was a sunny 44°F on 17 December, just prior to the Christmas Bird Counts. From bare ground on the Ferrisburg CBC [VT-NY], snow depths increased with time and elevation, reaching 14-28 inches of snow cover on the 28 December Saranac Lake CBC. A storm from the south on 30 December added another 13 inches at Lake Placid.

Inlet was -25°F on New Year's Day. Then on 4 January a warm front moved northward, bringing snow, but carrying a vast tonnage of tropical moisture. Meanwhile, an Arctic high anchored over southern Quebec sent down dense, cold air to wedge under the less dense warm front, setting up a classic temperature inversion. The stage was set for the Great Ice Storm of '98. Freezing rain began on 5 January, but the warm front sagged south and Plattsburgh returned to a foggy 47°F the next day. Then the warm front surged back and stalled for three days of frozen hell. Yet while Plattsburgh only reached 29°F on 7 January, Lake Placid was unscathed at 40°F. The sounds were incredible: the constant high-powered rifle shots of heavy, ice-laden pine boughs being stripped, the giant cracks and larger crashes of falling hardwoods, the background roar of overflowing brooks and rivers. With up to 5 inches of rain exceeding normal monthly totals of under 2 inches, rivers left their banks: the Ausable, Boquet, and Saranac on 8 January; the Salmon during thunderstorms the next day. Raquette Lake was a foot above record and the Forked Lake dam washed out. Up to 3 inches of ice wiped out more forest than the 1938 New England hurricane, Mount St. Helens, or the Yellowstone fires. The end of the millenium may see a subsequent surge of Mourning Warblers and Indigo Buntings.

Redpoll flocks disappeared from feeders in affected areas like Elizabethtown until 11 January, while Black-capped Chickadees flooded in (little wonder, with so many Quebec forests flattened). By early February, with conifers stripped of cones by the ice, White-winged Crossbills had been reported from at least 14 feeders in Clinton, Essex, and Franklin counties; this editor can recall but a single such report in the previous quarter-century.

Flooded roads and downed trees and power lines delayed the Federation Waterfowl Count until the second weekend of 17-18 January, except for an unaffected area around Ticonderoga done right after the ice storm.

The rest of the season was anticlimactic, with Plattsburgh 45°F on 2 February, bitter cold at mid month, a 24-25 February snowstorm, and mild at season's close. This was the third mildest February on record, after 1981 and 1984, and some 9.5°F above normal. At season's end, precipitation for the year was 6.99 inches, with 3.45 inches normal.

Conducted once before, in 1933, the Minerva Christmas Bird Count was revived after 64 years. More species were found in 1997 (22 vs. 9), as well as more individuals (721, up from 319), but this time there were both bird feeders and more observers (6, compared to 3). There are also fewer farmyards and pastures with livestock and logging horses, so Snow Buntings and House Sparrows were missed, along with Boreal Chickadees, which should be found as we grow more familiar with the remaining boreal habitat.

Cedar Waxwings were fairly abundant at lower elevations, with 258 found on the NYS side of the Ferrisburg count circle on 20 December. Bohemian Waxwings arrived later and in more modest numbers, with the first 30 at Peru on 3 January followed by sightings at Elizabethtown, Essex, Keene, Keene Valley, and Westport. Bohemians have now been recorded in all but two winters since 1979-80, although last year they delayed their appearance until the spring season. Among the winter finches, this was a good winter for Pine Grosbeaks, both crossbills, and both redpolls, and even Evening Grosbeaks put on a stronger performance than expected in recent years. Pine Siskins and American Goldfinches continued to decline after December.

In spite of the Great Ice Storm of '98, a total of 95 species was reported, back to more expected numbers after last winter's record 99 species. Rarities included **American Wigeons** on both the Ferrisburg and Saranac Lake counts, **Harlequin Duck** at Ausable Point, **Thayer's Gull** (!) at Plattsburgh, and an overwintering **Eastern Towhee** at Peru. A second winter Glaucous Gull was at Westport on the morning of the 20 December Ferrisburg CBC and eventually lifted off and headed inland with other gulls toward the Essex County landfill. A week later, on the 27 December Elizabethtown CBC, Joan Clark stationed herself outside the dump in late afternoon as the gulls were leaving for the lake, and her prescience was rewarded with what was undoubtedly the same large white-winged gull.

Five Adirondack-Champlain Regional sites have been designated Important Bird Areas (IBAs) by the National Audubon Society: Crown Point State Historic Site, Ferd's Bog, the Four Brothers, Huntington Forest Natural Area, and Spring Pond Bog Preserve.

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Abbreviations: AP - Ausable Point WMA; CH - Cumberland Head; ECBC - Elizabethtown CBC, 27 Dec; FCBC - Ferrisburg CBC, 20 Dec; FWC -

Federation Waterfowl Count, 10-18 Jan; MB Monty Bay; PB - Plattsburgh Bay; PCBC - Plattsburgh CBC, 21 Dec; SLCBC - Saranac Lake CBC, 28 Dec; TL - Tupper Lake; WB - Whallon's Bay.

LOONS-DUCKS

Horned Grebe: max 38 WB 6 Dec (TM), ESSE.

Red-necked Grebe: MB 3 Dec (NO); max 22 CH 18 Dec (BK).

Double-crested Cormorant: TL I Dec (CD), late and unusual inland.

Great Blue Heron: WB 5 Dec; FCBC; 2 PCBC, increasingly late in recent years.

Snow Goose: 5 SLCBC, overhead; arr Chazy 27Feb (H&RB), early CLIN by 7 days.

Wood Duck: 1-3 Westport 5-20 Dec (JP, J&PT); AP 6 Dec (TM); 2 PCBC, rare in winter.

Gadwall: 3 Westport 5 Dec (J&PT)-20 Dec (TB,KM,JP *et al*), late.

AM. WIGEON: 3 FCBC; I SLCBC, very rare and late.

Canvasback: 4 PB 4 Dec, typically low.

Ring-necked Duck: max 30, mostly drakes, Westport 5 Dec (JP, J&PT).

Gr. Scaup: max 700 PCBC.

Lesser Scaup: last Westport 24 Jan (RM), late.

HARLEQUIN DUCK: ad drake AP 27 Dec (HK)-3 Feb (BK,CM), second CLIN and third Regional record.

White-winged Scoter: max 7 CH 6 Dec.

Black Scoter: PB 4 Dec (BK,CM), late CLIN by 6 days.

Bufflehead: max 60 Westport 6 Dec (TM)

Com. Goldeneye: max 4,428 FWC.

Hooded Merganser: 10 MB 3 Dec; max 13 FWC; Essex 14 Feb (RM)-28 Feb

(JK,WK,JP); AP 21 Feb (BK); Lincoln Pd 28 Feb (MG), a remarkable winter showing.

Com. Merganser: max 2,027 FWC.

HAWKS-ALCIDS

Osprey: Coll Bay 20 Dec (J&PT), highly unexpected, yet the third ESSE record in Dec since 1976.

Bald Eagle: 5-6 wintered TL; 5 FCBC; 3-5 Town of Hope along Sacandaga R; 4 NYS Eagle Survey; other reports from AP, Plattsburgh, West Chazy, and Westport, as well as Amtrak "Adirondack" crew, another strong showing.

Red-tailed Hawk: western dark-morph imm Westport 28 Feb (JK,WK,JP).

Peregrine Falcon: imm Peru 15 Dec (BK,CM); Scomotion Cr 19 Jan (BK); Saranac R mouth 9 Feb (RW), late.

Wild Turkey: widespread reports from a dozen locations in all 4 counties, including several feeder reports.

Am. Coot: Westport 19 Dec (KM,JP), rare in winter.

THAYER'S GULL: 2nd winter Plattsburgh Plaza 6 Dec (J&RH).

Iceland Gull: Saranac R mouth 9 Feb (GW), 24 days late CLIN.

Glaucous Gull: 2nd winter FCBC and ECBC, *intro*.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS

Snowy Owl: Willsboro 10 Feb (fide GL), only report.

Belted Kingfisher: Point au Roche 4 Jan (HK); WB 10 Feb (RH), late.

Black-backed Woodpecker: 2 SLCBC, only report.

N. Flicker: 3 FCBC; 1 ECBC; PCBC; Point au Roche 3 Jan (CM), late yet increasingly typical.

Pileated Woodpecker: max 13 ECBC, high.

FLYCATCHERS-WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: 8 reported, relatively low.

Gray Jay: max 10 SLCBC; Raquette L feeder thru, Rt 28 Long L 24 Feb.

Com. Raven: max 23 ECBC.

Boreal Chickadee: 1 ECBC; 4 SLCBC, only reports.

Tufted Titmouse: max 9 ECBC and PCBC; 4 FCBC; pr reappeared Elizabethtown feeder 17 Jan, after disappearing with ice storm (JP).

Red-breasted Nuthatch: max 165 ECBC, relatively abundant.

Carolina Wren: Westport 6-20 Dec, only record.

E. Bluebird: max 21 FCBC; Adirondak Loj 27 Feb (J&PT), highly unexpected.

Am. Robin: max 21 FCBC, numbers down from winter 1996-97.

Bohemian Waxwing: arr 30 Peru 3 Jan (JD); max 83 Keene Valley 19 Jan (RM); 2 roadkills Essex 7 Feb (DS); other sightings Elizabethtown, Keene, and Westport.

Cedar Waxwing: max 258 FCBC; 78 PCBC; 68 ECBC; 20 Elizabethtown 6 Jan at start of ice storm (JP), more abundant than previous species in most areas.

WARBLERS

Yellow-rumped Warbler: count week PCBC, only report.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS

EASTERN TOWHEE: Peru 28 Nov-24 Feb (JD,BH-photo), overwintering.

Am. Tree Sparrow: max 26 FCBC, numbers extremely low compared to 1996-97.

Song Sparrow: 1 FCBC; 2 PCBC, only reports.

White-throated Sparrow: Keene thru 1 Feb (MB,RM), only report.

White-crowned Sparrow: 1 FCBC at Essex feeder, rare here in winter.

Dark-eyed Junco: max 87 PCBC, lower than previous winter.

Lapland Longspur: North Farm Rd, CLIN, 31 Dec (GW), always an excellent find.

Snow Bunting: max 125 TL 12 Jan (CD), excellent for interior; smaller flocks from ECBC, PCBC, Essex, Gabriels, and Whallonsburg.

Red-winged Blackbird: 2 SLCBC, overwintered Speculator; 2 Keene Valley 2 Feb; max 10 Keene Valley 14 Feb (RM), the latter perhaps representing early arrivals.

Com. Grackle: 5 SLCBC, only report.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 11 PCBC; 2 SLCBC; Speculator Dec (PK), numbers clearly down in recent winters.

Pine Grosbeak: max 52 SLCBC; at least a dozen other reports, including some at

HAMI feeders and an ad male at an Elizabethtown feeder with Evening Grosbeaks 16 Jan, in the wake of the ice storm (JP).

Purple Finch: 29 PCBC, only report.

House Finch: 151 PCBC, only report.

Red Crossbill: max 131 FCBC; record 63 ECBC; 15 SLCBC; 24 Elizabethtown 9 Dec; flock Westport 11 Dec; roadkill New Russia 13 Dec, most common in lower elevation areas with bumper white pine cone crop.

White-winged Crossbill: max 446 ECBC; record 73 FCBC; 31 PCBC; 19 SLCBC; 9 CLIN feeders; 4 ESSE feeders; 1 FRAN feeder following ice storm, an unprecedented influx.

Com. Redpoll: The regular flock disappeared from Elizabethtown feeder 6 Jan, where 24 reappeared 11 Jan following ice storm (JP); some dying north end Raquette L. Dec; max 500 Upper Jay 20 Feb (RM); 3000+ Speculator 14 Feb (PK); 301 FCBC; 242 PCBC; 204 SLCBC, extremely widespread and numerous.

Hoary Redpoll: max 3 FCBC and SLCBC; 1 *exilipes* subspecies ECBC returned to the same Elizabethtown feeder 7 Feb (RM,JP,DS); Port Henry 17 Feb (RB).

Pine Siskin: max 219 ECBC, reappeared Elizabethtown 12 Jan following storm.

Am. Goldfinch: max 56 PCBC, increasingly scarce since late autumn.

Evening Grosbeak: max 407 SLCBC; reappeared Elizabethtown 12 Jan in the wake of the Great Ice Storm of '98.

REGION 8 - HUDSON-MOHAWK

JANE DENKER GRAVES

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The winter of 1997-98 was warm, generally cloudy, and wet. As reported from the Albany County Airport, December's mean temperature was 29.8°F, 3.3° above normal, with no below-zero days. Sunshine averaged 46%, 7% above normal. There were 2.10 inches of precipitation, 0.83 inches below normal, and 14.7 inches of snow. January was a warm month, averaging 28.9°F, 8.3° above normal. There was only one sub-zero day, January 1. It was a cloudy month, with only 34% sunshine, 12% below normal. Precipitation was 3.80 inches, 1.44 inches above normal, with 13.5 inches of snow. February was also warm, averaging 31.8°, 8.3° above normal, with 42% sunshine, 10% less than normal. Precipitation measured a slightly above normal 2.58 inches, with 6 inches of snow.

Comments echo last year's, with generally open water and good wild food crops. Birds remained dispersed throughout the period. The 11 reporting CBCs had high counts both of species and individuals, with several records set. The Federation January Waterfowl Count again produced only 13 species and 7850 individuals. Bald Eagle again wintered locally in good numbers, but numbers of immature birds were down from last year. Gulls were, as usual, concentrated in the Colonie landfill/Cohoes areas of the Hudson and Mohawk rivers. Lingered landbirds were well represented on CBCs, with E. Phoebe, Carolina and Winter wrens, Gray Catbird, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Common Yellowthroat, and Field, Fox, Swamp and **Lincoln's** sparrows being reported. The winter finch invasion was evident throughout the period, with all 9 regular winter finch species reported on area CBCs, as well as 3 Hoary Redpoll reports. The 123 species reported included 28 species of waterfowl, 12 species of hawks, 7 species of gulls, 6 species of owls, 8 species of sparrows, and 10 species of finches.

Contributors: Ken Able, Sue Adair, Elliott Adams, Alan Devoe Bird Club monthly sighting reports (ADBC), Kate Beale, Beth Bidwell, Brad Bidwell (BBi), Bob Boehm (BBo), Carol Budliger, Robert Budliger, Paul Connor, Bill Cook, Walter Ellison, Jane Graves, Hudson Mohawk Bird Club's Birdline of Eastern New York (BEN), William Lee, Andy Mason, Nancy Martin, Laura Meade, Tom Palmer, Ray Perry, Barbara Putnam, Jim Sotis, Douglas Steele, Craig Thompson, Alison Van Keuren, Robert Yunick.

Abbreviations: ACCBC - Albany County CBC, 21 Dec; CBL - Coxsackie Boat Launch, GREE; ChCBC - Chatham CBC, 20 Dec; CL - Collins Lake, SCHE; FPCBC - Fort Plain CBC, 28 Dec; FR - Five Rivers Environmental Education Center, Delmar, ALBA; FtE - Fort Edward area, WASH; FtM - Fort Miller, WASH; GCBC - Galway CBC, 3 Jan; GI - Green Island, ALBA;

HFCBC - Hudson Falls CBC, 20 Dec; HR - Hudson River; JGCBC - Johnstown-Gloversville CBC, 27 Dec; MR - Mohawk River; NB - New Baltimore, GREE; NRP - Nott Rd. Park, Guilderland, ALBA; NYSWC - New York State Waterfowl Count, 11, 18 Jan; SCBC - Salem CBC, 27 Dec; ScCBC - Schenectady CBC, 20 Dec; SI - Simmons Island, Cohoes, SARA; SL - Saratoga Lake, SARA; SNHP - Saratoga National Historical Park, SARA; SPd - Stanton Pond, ALBA; SRCBC - Southern Rensselaer CBC, 28 Dec; SSCBC - Saratoga Spa CBC, 20 Dec; StFl - Stillwater Flats (includes Saratoga Sod Farm), SARA; TCBC - Troy CBC, 3 Jan; TR - Tomhannock Reservoir, RENS.

LOONS-DUCKS

Com. Loon: 1 SL 3 Dec, 2 SL 7 Dec; 1 Germantown 11 Jan; 1 NYSWC; only reports.
Horned Grebe: 1 ACCBC, only report.
Red-necked Grebe: 2 Hague Bay WARR 5 Dec, only report..
Double-crested Cormorant: 1 GI 5 Dec, only report.
Great Blue Heron: 47 on 9 CBCs; high count 19 ScCBC; reported thru.
Turkey Vulture: 1 Rt. 90 bt. Exits 24-25 5 Feb (SA), very early.
Snow Goose: 2060 on 3 CBCs; 4000+ Stillwater 13 Dec (JS); 75-100 StFl 4 Jan; 1 NYSWC; 75 HR Stillwater 28 Feb.
Canada Goose: high counts 7218 TCBC, 2915 NYSWC; 960 T Florida MONT 21 Feb; 1900 Stillwater-Half-Moon 28 Feb.
Brant: 1 CL/MR SCHE 2 Dec thru.
Mute Swan: max 51 e. side HR bt. Stuyvesant Landing/Dome Pd. 11 Jan; 1 SPd 27 Dec, 4-28 Feb; 6 CBL 21 Jan.
Wood Duck: 6 on 3 CBCs; 2 StFl 28 Feb.
Gadwall: 1 ACCBC; 2 TCBC.
Am. Wigeon: 6 SL 3 Dec (WL); 7 ACCBC.
Am. Black Duck: 1698 on 11 CBCs; 244 NYSWC.
Mallard: 8077 on 11 CBCs; 1105 NYSWC; 50 Brant L 29 Jan, 6 Feb.
N. Pintail: 11 on 4 CBCs; 1 Clarks Mills WASH 22 Feb (JS); widely reported after that date.
Green-winged Teal: 1 TR 6 Dec; 1 NRP 22 Feb, only reports.
Canvasback: 120 ChCBC; 3000 NYSWC; one Half Moon 28 Feb.
Redhead: 2 Stillwater 17 Jan (WE, NM); one CBL 26 Jan.

Ring-necked Duck: 130 ACCBC; 4 HFBCB; 4 TCBC; 2 NYSWC; 75 Alcove Res 1 Jan; 3 Stillwater 17 Jan.
Greater Scaup: 1 Cohoes Commons 6 Dec; 5 NYSWC; 1 HR COLU 26 Jan; 1 Half Moon 28 Feb.
Lesser Scaup: 1 SSCBC CW; 1 GI TCBC, 22, 25 Jan, 11, 16 Feb.
White-winged Scoter: 2 SSCBC.
Black Scoter: 12 ChCBC.
Oldsquaw: 1 ACCBC; 1 TCBC; 1 m MR Colonie 10 Jan; 1 HR COLU 26 Jan; 1 f GI 28 Feb.
Bufflehead: max 100 SL 3 Dec; 1 FtM 9 Feb; arr 2 StFl 28 Feb (WE).
Com. Goldeneye: max 200 SL 3 Dec; 246 on 6 CBCs; 212 NYSWC; 117 FtM 17 Jan; 55 Stillwater 17 Jan; 93 Stillwater 28 Feb.
Hooded Merganser: max 200 SL 3 Dec (WL); 6 NYSWC; 3 HR Stillwater 17 Jan (WE, NM); 3 HR Spier Falls Rd 28 Feb.
Com. Merganser: high counts 300 MR Waterford 4 Dec; 306 NYSWC; 20 Schodack Landing 22 Feb (PC).
Red-breasted Merganser: 1 Waterford 4 Dec; 1 SRCBC, only reports.
Ruddy Duck: 1 CL 3 Dec; 21 ACCBC; 1 SCBC, only reports.

HAWKS-ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: 16 on 6 CBCs; at least 20 ad, 8 imm Conklingville Dam, HR, MR, L George, Battenkill R, Hoosic R all season.
N. Harrier: 21 on 7 CBCs; 6 present FtE thru; 5 NB 7 Jan; 4 reports of singles.
Sharp-shinned Hawk: 36 on 11 CBCs; 20 reports of singles.
Cooper's Hawk: 22 on 7 CBCs; 17 reports of singles.

N. Goshawk: 1 GCBC; 2 SSCBC; 1 Conklinville 16 Dec (WL); 1 Westerlo 22 Jan (AV).

Red-shouldered Hawk: 1 FPCBC; 1 GCBC; one Rt. 50 SARA 31 Dec, 7 Feb; 1 Ballston Spa 22 Jan (probably same bird); 1 Bloomfield Rd. SARA 21 Dec; 1 Duaneburg 26 Jan.

Red-tailed Hawk: max 139 FPCBC; 113 TCBC.

Rough-legged Hawk: 38 on 8 CBCs; max 14 FPCBC; 8-12 FtE thru; 6 Van Epps Rd. area MONT 2 Jan; 3 Bacon Hill SARA 4 Jan; 18 reports of singles.

Golden Eagle: 1 imm m found Ft Ann WASH 29 Dec, died 1 week later (DEC); 1 imm Chatham 22 Feb (RG).

Am. Kestrel: 19 on 8 CBCs; 18 reports of singles.

Merlin: 1 SRCBC; 1 TCBC; 1 Niskayuna 14 Jan (WL); 1 Delmar 13 Feb (BEN).

Peregrine Falcon: 1 ACCBC; 1 SSCBC CW; 1 ad ScCBC; 3 SRCBC; 1 TCBC; 1 ad m CL 22 Dec (RP); 1 Scotia 24 Dec (RP); pr Dunn Memorial Bridge 29 Dec (RB, CB); 1-2 seen along HR

Albany/Cohoes/Troy area thru; 2 Corning Tower Albany 10 Feb (S. Gooding to BEN); 1 imm Reist Sanctuary 27 Feb (RP);

Ring-necked Pheasant: 6 on 3 CBCs; one other report.

Ruffed Grouse: 38 on 8 CBCs; 4 Amsterdam 24 Dec, 21 Feb; 6 reports of singles.

Wild Turkey: high counts 245 ChCBC; 335 FPCBC.

Am. Coot: 1 HR WASH 12 Dec; 5 ACCBC; 1 SSCBC CW; one Livingston 8, 28 Feb.

Killdeer: arr Livingston 27 Feb; 2 Slingerlands 28 Feb.

Bonaparte's Gull: 1 Troy 8 Dec (AV).

Ring-billed Gull: max 300 Coxsackie 21 Jan.

Herring Gull: max 3344 TCBC; 4000 MR Colonie 10 Jan (WE).

Iceland Gull: 6 Colonie/Cohoes 6 Dec; 1 FPCBC; 12 TCBC; 1 NB 7 Jan; 9 Colonie 10 Jan; 2 Cohoes 2 Feb; 1-5 CBL 28 Jan-26 Feb; 1 Binnekill 29 Jan.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: 1-2 Colonie/Crescent area 4 Dec-28 Feb; 1 MR Niskayuna 18 Dec; 1 Bethlehem HS 10 Jan.

Great Black-backed Gull: max 950 TCBC; 1000 MR Colonie 10 Jan, 400 28 Feb.

DOVES-WOODPECKERS

Rock Dove: high counts 2007 TCBC; 1009 ScCBC.

Mourning Dove: high counts 909 SRCBC; 852 HFCBC.

E. Screech-Owl: 20 on 9 CBCs; 8 other reports.

Great Horned Owl: 46 on 9 CBCs; 10 other reports.

Snowy Owl: no reports.

Barred Owl: 11 on 6 CBCs; 4 other reports.

Short-eared Owl: 7 FtE 12 Dec-17 Jan, 1 still present 9 Feb; 2 W. Ames Rd. T Canajoharie MONT 7 Feb; 1 Duaneburg Rds. SCHE 9 Feb thru (*vide* RP); present Staleyville Rd T Sharon SCHOE thru.

Long-eared Owl: 1 ACBC; 1 Kinderhook 17-31 Jan (Cris Winters); 1 FR 20 Feb (DS).

N. Saw-whet Owl: 2 FPCBC; 2 GCBC; 2 JGCBC; 1 ScCBC; 3 reports of singles.

Belted Kingfisher: 33 on 8 CBCs; max 10 ChCBC; 8 Jan, 4 Feb reports.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: 94 on 11 CBCs, high count 32 ChCBC; 16 reports of singles.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: 3 ChCBC; 1 SRCBC; 1 TCBC; 1 Austerlitz 1 Jan; 2 Delmar 10 Jan (Amy Budliger); 1 NRP 22 Feb.

Downy Woodpecker: 697 on 11 CBCs; max 128 ChCBC.

Hairy Woodpecker: 206 on 11 CBCs; max 36 TCBC.

N. Flicker: 155 on 10 CBCs; max 26 ScCCBC, TCBC; 4 Jan, 4 Feb reports.

Pileated Woodpecker: 69 on 11 CBCs; 18 reports of singles.

FLYCATCHERS-WAXWINGS

E. Phoebe: 1 ACCBC; 1 ChCBC; 1 Battenkill RENS 7 Feb; 1 Coxsackie 9 Feb; 1 Watervliet 10 Feb.

N. Shrike: 11 on 6 CBCs; max 6 GCBC; 7 reports of singles.

Blue Jay: 3173 on 11 CBCs; numbers up significantly from last year.

Am. Crow: max 18106 TCBC; 7309 ScCBC.

Fish Crow: 6 ChCBC, TCBC; 4 Jan and 2 Feb reports.

Com. Raven: 25 on 7 CBCs; max 13 SRCBC; widely reported thru.
Horned Lark: 584 on 7 CBCs; seen in moderate numbers Jan-Feb.
Black-capped Chickadee: max 846 JGCBC, 792 SRCBC, 635 GCBC; moderate irruption JL.
Tufted Titmouse: max 148 ScCBC, 130 ACCBC; 1 banded JL 14 Feb; unusual in that area.
Red-breasted Nuthatch: 249 on 11 CBCs; max 42 ChCBC, JGCBC.
White-breasted Nuthatch: max 114 ChCBC.
Brown Creeper: 75 on 10 CBCs; max 11 ACCBC.
Carolina Wren: 10 on 7 CBCs; 1 W. River Rd. SARA 20 Dec; 1 Waterford 3 Jan; 1 Albany 27 Jan; 1 Schodack Center 24 Feb, at suet feeder;
Winter Wren: 1 MR e. of Amsterdam 18 Dec; 2 ScCBC; 1 JL 14 Feb; 1 PISP 28 Feb.
Golden-crowned Kinglet: 63 on 10 CBCs; max 30 SRCBC; reported in small numbers thru.
Ruby-crowned Kinglet: 1 ChCBC, only report.
E. Bluebird: 603 on 11 CBCs; max 164 ChCBC; present in excellent numbers through period.
Am. Robin: max 774 ChCBC, 348 ScCBC; wintered widely.
Gray Catbird: 2 ChCBC.
N. Mockingbird: 52 on 7 CBCs; 6 Jan, 2 Feb reports.
European Starling: high count 13, 943 TCBC.
Bohemian Waxwing: 2 JGCBC.
Cedar Waxwing: high counts 322 JGCBC; 193 SRCBC; 179 FPCBC.

WARBLERS

Yellow-rumped Warbler: 1 Colonie 6 Dec (WE, NM), only report.
Com. Yellowthroat: 1 ScCBC, only report.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS

N. Cardinal: high counts 96 ChCBC; 86 SRCBC; 22 at feeder Guilderland 14 Feb.
Am. Tree Sparrow: high counts 408 FPCBC; 429 SCBC; record numbers banded at T. Palmer's feeder (RY).

Field Sparrow: 1 ACCBC; 4 ChCBC, only reports.
Fox Sparrow: 1 ScCBC, only report.
Song Sparrow: 179 on 11 CBCs; high count 48 TCBC.
Swamp Sparrow: 2 FPCBC; 1 ScCBC; 1 SRCBC.
Lincoln's Sparrow: 1 ChCBC, rare in winter.
White-throated Sparrow: max 120 ScCBC; 40 Guilderland 14 Feb.
White-crowned Sparrow: 1 FPCBC.
Dark-eyed Junco: max 322 SCBC; 318 ChCBC.
Lapland Longspur: 30 FPCBC; "several" Van Epps Rd. MONT 2 Jan; 3 FtE 17 Jan.
Snow Bunting: max 324 FPCBC; 200 FtE 28 Feb.
Red-winged Blackbird: 40 on 4 CBCs; reported in small numbers after 9 Feb; 100's in trees Brookview RENS 22 Feb (PC); common after that date.
E. Meadowlark: no reports.
Com. Grackle: 11 on 2 CBCs; 100's in trees Brookview RENS 22 Feb (PC).
Brown-headed Cowbird: 49 on 4 CBCs; up to 12 FR thru.
Pine Grosbeak: 2 FPCBC; 9 JGCBC; 9 SRCBC; 7 Warrensburg 26 Dec; 20 Taborton 1 Jan; 12 Scotia 7 Jan; 5 Gloversville 12 Feb; 4 Guilderland 19 Feb.
Purple Finch: 75 on 6 CBCs; few Jan and Feb reports.
House Finch: max 435 SRCBC; 351 TCBC; scarce at feeders.
Red Crossbill: 2 JGCBC; 10 SSCBC CW; 14 5R 21 Jan.
White-winged Crossbill: 2 ChCBC; 1 FPCBC; 24 GCBC; 9 JGCBC; 3 SSCBC; 11 TCBC; 20 Warrensburg 17 Dec; 40 Delmar 23 Dec; 30 Slingerlands 7 Jan.
Com. Redpoll: max 1411 SCBC; 900 JGCBC; 800 TCBC; 551 HFCBC; excellent numbers thru.
Hoary Redpoll: 1 Jewel Red SARA 20 Dec (BBI); 1 Van Epps Rd MONT 2 Jan (BBo/KB); 1 f or imm Berne 7-12 Feb (KA); NYSARC reports requested.
Pine Siskin: max 15 Hague 5 Dec; 52 on 5 CBCs; almost completely absent Jan-Feb.
Am. Goldfinch: max 227 SSCBC; 237 ScCBC, low numbers.

Evening Grosbeak: max 713 JGBCB;
279 GCBC; 81 SRCBC; 56 FPCBC; 50
Warrensburg 30 Dec; 120 Greenfield 4
Jan; 50 Spier Falls Rd 28 Feb.

House Sparrow: max 616 FPCBC; 598
TCBC.

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REGION 9 - HUDSON-DELAWARE

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Is El Niño affecting the weather in the northeast and is it affecting the birds? The scientific debate continues and we'll have to leave it up to the meteorologists to eventually answer the first part of the question. December's average temperature turned out to be normal, but the month was drier than usual. Above average temperatures didn't come until January and February, long after most birds had settled into their winter habitats, so that little effect was seen. We'll have to wait for the spring to see if this extremely mild winter has affected the birds. There was an ice storm in mid January that affected the northern part of Region 9 but had little effect on the birds.

There was almost no snow in the southern part of Region 9, and only the northern sections and higher elevations had any sustained snow cover. Both January and February averaged 5 to 7 degrees above normal. The only effect may have been a wider dispersal of waterfowl and other birds dependent on open water.

An immature male oriole reported last season remained at Rockefeller State Park till the end of December. Much debate surrounds the identification of the bird. It was first thought to be a Bullock's due to; a orange-yellow throat with a thin black stripe down the middle, white belly, yellowish undertail coverts, and hint of a dark eye stripe, although the head was darker than a typical immature male Bullock's. Within a week and over the course of its stay at the feeders it turned markedly more orange although no orange was still seen in its belly or flanks. The face was atypical of either immature male Baltimore or Bullock's. The head did not have a blotchy appearance the way most immature male Baltimores are depicted. The bird did have a hooded appearance and lacked a light colored superciliary but also had a darker eye stripe. Some experienced birders now considered it a Baltimore. But, with the lack of knowledge of the

variability of early winter immature male Baltimore and Bullock's orioles and a distinct possibility of a hybrid or a bird of mixed lineage, I will leave the identification up to debate.

Great Cormorants, common along Westchester's Long Island Sound shore were well reported inland. Many observers reported them along the Hudson River, and there were a couple reports of them on the larger reservoirs.

Both vulture species were well reported. Black Vultures continue their expansion, including a few reports from the east side of the Hudson. Turkey Vultures were much more common, with each county having sightings.

A Varied Thrush was found along Route 416 between Montgomery and Goshen on the Eastern Orange County Christmas Bird Count.

Only a few warblers were reported, all in December. A Nashville Warbler was reported on the Hudson Valley Bird Line in Hasting-on-Hudson 1 December. and an Orange-crowned Warbler, again in Hastings on 7 and 16 December. A Black-throated Green Warbler was in Purchase 14 December. Two Common Yellowthroats were found on the Bronx-Westchester CBC on 28 December, one in Rye the other in Larchmont.

It was a great winter for finches. Purple Finch, Red Crossbill, White-winged Crossbill, Common Redpoll, Pine Siskin, and Evening Grosbeak were all reported. All of the crossbill sightings were in December or early January, as most if not all wintered further south. Evening Grosbeak seemed to be most common in Sullivan County. Common Redpolls were seen in Ulster County in early December, and a huge flock of 400 was reported from Rockland County in February.

While the finches invaded, it was quite a different story for owls. Only single reports were received for Snowy and Northern Saw-whet owls.

A couple of remarkable half-hardies were found in February. A Rose-breasted Grosbeak visited a Dutchess County feeder in January and February (AB, BB, RTWBC). Two Baltimore Orioles were found, one at feeders in Sullivan County on 23, 24 Feb (KC, GK) and one in Dutchess County on 27 Feb (PG).

Other highlights included: Eared Grebe, Greater White-fronted Goose, Tundra Swan, Eurasian Wigeon, Barrow's Goldeneye, Merlin, Iceland Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Glaucous Gull, Northern Shrike, Lapland Longspur.

Contributors: Elaine Andersen, John Askildsen, Judy Atwood, Peter Berger, Michael Bochnik, Al Brayton, Bea Buchanan, Tom Burke, Agnes Bushing, Bob Bushing, Barbara Butler, Carol Capobianco, Dick Champion, Sue Champion, Mary Collier, Kris Conklin, Bill Cook, George Krum, Jeff Daley, Renee Davis, Keith Dowling, Audrey Fishburne, Dot Fleury, Valerie Freer, David Fullerton, Mary Fullerton, Pat Gable, Scott Graber, Lois Head, Phyllis Jones, Paul Lehman, Allan Michelin, Barbara Michelin, Richard Nord, Russ O'Mallet, Eleanor Pink, Joe Scordato, Selden Spencer, Edward Treacy, Alison Van Keuren, Chet Vincent, Joe Weise.

Abbreviations: BWCBC-Bronx-Westchester Christmas Bird Count, CPP-Croton Point Park, DCCBC-Dutchess County Christmas Bird Count, EGR-Edith G. Read Wildlife Sanctuary, GA-Galeville Airport, GSCBC-Greenwich-Stamford Christmas Bird Count, JBNHS-John Burroughs Natural Historical Society, LHVBL-Lower Hudson Valley Bird Line, MC-Marshlands Conservancy, MRG-Mianus River Gorge, OCA-Orange County Airport, OCCBC- Eastern Orange County Christmas Bird Count, PCBC-Peekskill Christmas Bird Count, PCCBC-Putnam County Christmas Bird Count, PP-Piermont Pier, RCCBC-Rockland County Christmas Bird Count, RNC-Rye Nature Center, RTWBC-Ralph T. Waterman Bird Club, TPP-Thompson Pond Preserve.

LOONS-DUCKS

Red-throated Loon: common along Long Island Sound shore.

Com. Loon: 1 Croton Reservoir 14 Dec; common along Long Island Sound shore.

Pied-billed Grebe: 1 Crestwood Lake 28 Dec (BWCBC); 1 Kiamesha Lake 6 Dec; 4 Sylvan Lake 13 Feb.

Horned Grebe: common along Long Island Sound shore.

Red-necked Grebe: 1 Orange Co. 20 Dec (OCCBC); 1 Rye 21 Jan (TB); 1 Larchmont 29 Jan (TB).

Eared Grebe: 1 Larchmont 17 Jan - 21 Feb (TB).

N. Gannet: 2 EGR 24 Jan (TB).

Great Cormorant: 1 Rockland SP 1-6, 31 Dec; 1 Kensico Reservoir 6 Dec; 10 Charles Point 14 Dec; 12 Cornwall Bay 20 Dec (OCCBC); 1 Croton Reservoir 20 Dec (PCBC); 3 Charles Point 20 Dec (PCBC); 1 CPP 9 Jan; 34 Peekskill Bay 18 Jan; 7 Jones Point 14 Feb; common along Long Island Sound shore.

Double-crested Cormorant: 2 Orange Co. 20 Dec (OCCBC); 6 Westchester Co. 20 Dec (PCBC); 1 Rye 28 Dec (BWCBC); 1 Larchmont 19 Feb (TB).

Great Blue Heron: 40 EGR 28 Dec (BWCBC); 3 New Paltz 4 Jan (BC,AF).; well reported in Dutchess Co., Feb.

Black Vulture: 1 GA 6 Dec (ET); 3 Yorktown 20 Dec (PCBC); 5 Rockefeller SP 11 Jan; 3 Cortlandt Lake 8 Feb; 11 GA 7 Feb; 4 GA 15 Feb; 3 Newburgh 15 Feb; 3 Iona Island 14 Feb.

Turkey Vulture: 12 Westchester Co. 28 Dec (BWCBC); 2-3 GA 7,22 Feb; 3 Ashokan Reservoir 28 Feb (BC,AF); other scattered reports, much more common this winter.

Greater White-fronted Goose: 3 Round Pond, Amenia 7 Dec (DF).

Snow Goose: 3 CPP 1- 14 Dec (HVRBA); 13 Round Pond, Amenia 7 Dec (DF); 1 Rockland SP 31 Dec - 1 Jan; 1 Stanfordville 1 Jan - 10 Jan; 1 Domin Farm 15, 22 Jan; 7 Tivoli 1,21 Feb (CC).

Brant: 72 WEST 28 Dec (BWCBC); 1 Ellenville 20 Dec (VF).

Tundra Swan: 2 Tymor Park 20 DEC (DCCBC); 1 Narrowsburg. 26 Jan - 28 Feb (VF,RD,LH).

Wood Duck: 1 ORAN 20 Dec (OCCBC); 8 WEST 28 Dec (BWCBC); 1 Ellenville 1 Jan - 4 Feb (PB); 2 Bashakill 14 Feb (MC,VF,PJ); 1 George's Island 28 Feb (MB).

Eurasian Wigeon: 1 Rye 28 Dec- 21 Jan; 1 Premium Mill Pond 27-28 Dec (TB,PL).

N. Pintail: 4 WEST 28 Dec (BWCBC); 1 Pleasant Valley 16-17 Feb (EP).

Green-winged Teal: 5 Bashakill 6 Dec; 2 Round Pond, Amenia 8 Dec; 3 ROCK 21 Dec (RCCBC); 30 WEST 28 Dec (BWCBC).

Canvasback: reported widely on the Hudson River, low numbers at EGR.

Ring-necked Duck: 1 Kaiaimesha Lake 6 Dec; some Round Pond, Amenia 7 Dec; 12 Scarsdale 28 Dec (BWCBC); 20 Abel's Pond, DUTC 8 Jan; 10 Round Pond, Amenia 11 Jan; 7 Brown's Pond, Newburgh

15 Feb; 35 Lake Walton 23-27 Feb (AM,BM).
Greater Scaup: 6503 EGR 28 Dec (BWCBC).
Lesser Scaup: 450 EGR 28 Dec (BWCBC).
Surf Scoter: 2 EGR 28 Dec (BWCBC); 1 Larchmont 19 Jan (TB).
White-winged Scoter: 1 Larchmont 24 Jan (TB).
Oldsquaw: common along Long Island Sound shore.
Barrow's Goldeneye: 1 f Rye Beach 25-28 Feb.

HAWKS-ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: Widely reported on the Hudson River and in the larger reservoirs and wetlands.
N. Harrier: 4 GA 8 Dec.
Sharp-shinned Hawk: 10 WEST 28 Dec (BWCBC).
Cooper's Hawk: 9 ORAN 20 Dec (OCCBC); 6 WEST 28 Dec (BWCBC).
N. Goshawk: 1 Claryville 19 Dec, feeding on deer carcass(JW); 2 ORAN 20 Dec (OCCBC); 1 Brewster, Carmel 10 Jan; 1 DUTC 3 Feb (RO).
Red-shouldered Hawk: few reports from each county, more prevalent this year.
Red-tailed Hawk: common throughout the Region.
Rough-legged Hawk: 1 Muscoot Park 15 Dec; 1 WEST 20 Dec (PCBC); 1 ORAN 7 Feb; one Pine Island late Feb (JS,ET).
Golden Eagle: 2 TPP 31 Dec-Feb (BB,AV,HVRBA); 1 Mongaup 11 Jan, 8 Feb (JA); 1 Rio dam 7 Feb.
Merlin: 1 CPP 15 Feb; 1 EGR 28 Feb (TB).
Peregrine Falcon: 1 ROCK 21 Dec (RCCBC); 1 Lenoir Preserve 28 Dec (KD); 1-2 Newburgh-Beacon Bridge all winter(ET); 1 Rio Reservoir 7 Feb; 1 Rio dam 8 Feb (JA); 1 Cold Spring 16 Feb; 1 Bear Mt. Bridge 20 Feb.
Ruffed Grouse: 1 Claryville 4 Dec, displaying and drumming(JW); 5 OCA 20 Dec (OCCBC); 1 Rombout Rd.,DUTC 18 Jan; 1 Domin Farm 3 Feb (CV).
Wild Turkey: many reports from entire Region, numbers still expanding.
N. Bobwhite: 2 Old Cramby Rd.,DUTC 2,7,19 Dec.
Virginia Rail: 2 Rye 28 Dec (BWCBC).

Am. Coot: 200 Sylvan Lake, Feb
Killdeer: 1 Fishkill Cemetary 13 Feb; 1 Kingston 19 Feb.
Ruddy Turnstone: 5 Long Island Sound shore 28 Dec (BWCBC)
Sanderling: 3 Larchmont 28 Dec (BWCBC).
Dunlin: 51 Long Island Sound shore 28 Dec (BWCBC)
Com. Snipe: 5 OCA 20 Dec (OCCBC); 1 Rye 28 Dec (BWCBC).
Am. Woodcock: 1 MC 25 Jan (TB); few West Point 22 Feb (ET).
Bonaparte's Gull: 58 Rye 28 Dec (BWCBC).
Iceland Gull: 1 Watch Tower Dumpsite, Walkill 6 Dec; 5 Fallsburg 27 Dec (HVRBA); 1 Woodbourne 12-14 Feb (VF); 1 EGR 27 Feb (TB).
Lesser Black-backed Gull: 1 Piermont Pier 16 Feb; 1 Piermont Pier 27 Feb (ET).
Glaucous Gull: 1 EGR 30 Dec (HVRBA).

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS

E. Screech-Owl: commonly reported on Christmas Bird Counts.
Great Horned Owl: commonly reported on Christmas Bird Counts.
Snowy Owl: 1 Briarcliff 12 Jan (HVRBA).
Barred Owl: 1 OCA 20 Dec (OCCBC); 1 WEST 20 Dec (PCBC); 1 Woodstock 24 Feb (BC,AF); 1 Old Camby Rd, DUTC 27-28 Feb (BB).
Short-eared Owl: up to 10 GA 8 Dec- 28 Feb (DC,SC,AV,HVRBA); 1 CPP 10 Jan (HVRBA).
N. Saw-whet Owl: 2 Ward Road Liv Manor 14 Feb (RD).
Red-headed Woodpecker: 1 White Plains 28 Dec (DF,MF); 1 Blue Chip Farm 15 Feb.
Red-bellied Woodpecker: 106 WEST 28 Dec (BWCBC); numbers still increasing.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: reported from ROCK, DUTC and WEST.
Pileated Woodpecker: 6 OCA 20 Dec (OCCBC); 1 WEST 28 Dec (BWCBC); many scattered reports from DUTC doing very well in ULST (JBNHS).

FLYCATCHERS-WAXWINGS

E. Phoebe: 1 Bashakill 7 Dec; 1 Katonah 1 Feb; 1 Bashakill 14 Feb (MC, VF).

N. Shrike: 1 GA 4 Jan - 22 Feb (AV,HVRBA); 1 Rombout Rd., DUTC 19 Jan (JA); 1 Stump Pond Rd 8 Feb (RD); 1 Grahamsville 15 Feb (SG).
Fish Crow: 1 ORAN 20 Dec (OCCBC); 6 WEST 20 Dec (PCBC); 8 WEST 28 Dec (BWCBC).
Com. Raven: 2 Rio Reservoir 15 Feb, observed carrying nesting material (HVRBA); many reports of 1-4 in each county.
Horned Lark: 2 EGR 12 Dec; 84-87 OCA 20 Dec, 2 Jan; 60-200 Anemia during Jan, 8 Feb.
Red-breasted Nuthatch: widely reported in very good numbers.
Brown Creeper: 1 Woodstock 22 Feb (BC,AF); scattered reports further south.
House Wren: 1 MC 6-28 Dec, 14 Jan (TB).
E. Bluebird: Rye 28 Dec (BWCBC); 2 Blue Chip Farm 22 Feb.
Hermit Thrush: 7 CPP 6 Dec.; 8 WEST 28 Dec (BWCBC).
VARIED THRUSH: 1 Rte. 416 between Montgomery and Goshen 20 Dec. (OCCBC).

WARBLERS

Orange-crowned Warbler: 1 Hastings 7, 16 Dec (HVRBA).
Nashville Warbler: 1 Hastings 1 Dec (HVRBA).
Black-throated Green Warbler: 1 Purchase 14 Dec (HVRBA).
Com. Yellowthroat: 1 Rye 28 Dec (BWCBC); 1 Larchmont 28 Dec (BWCBC).

TANAGERS-WEAVERS

Chipping Sparrow: Iona Island 2 Jan (HVRBA); 1 Hennessey Ln, DUTC 14 Feb (JA); 1 Lenoir Preserve 22 Feb (MB).
Fox Sparrow: 6 WEST 28 Dec (BWCBC); many other scattered reports.

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Lapland Longspur: 1 OCA 31 Dec (HVRBA).
Snow Bunting: 1 EGR 2 Dec; 12 Kensico Reservoir 6 Dec; 6 EGR 12 Dec; 92 OCA 2 Jan (HVRBA); 1 EGR 25 Feb.
Rose-breasted Grosbeak: 1 DUTC feeder 5 Jan thru (AB,BB,RTWBC).
Red-winged Blackbird: 1 Kingston Point Park 20 Feb, first arrival for ULST(AV).
Rusty Blackbird: 14 ORAN 20 Dec (OCCBC); 1 WEST 20 Dec (PCBC); 20 Domin Farm 1 Jan; 2 Rombout Rd, DUTC 9 Jan.
Baltimore Oriole: 1 SULL 23-24 Feb (KC,GK); 1 DUTC 27 Feb (PG).
Oriole, sp: 1 Rockefeller SP 1 Dec. - 28 Dec.
Purple Finch: 12 ORAN 20 Dec (OCCBC); 3 ROCK 21 Dec (RCCBC); few scattered reports.
Red Crossbill: 6 MRG 21 Dec (GSCBC); 43 Teatown Reservation 20 Dec (PCBC).
White-winged Crossbill: 5 MC 3 Dec; 11 MRG 21 Dec (GSCBC); 24 North Castle 21 Dec (HVRBA); 1 RNC 28 Dec (BWCBC).
Com. Redpoll: Scattered reports in ULST in early Dec; many reports in good numbers from SULL Dec-Feb; 2 Newburgh 15 Dec; 80 Cranberry Lake 21 Dec (GSCBC); 20 TPP 31 Dec (HVRBA); 20 Somers 21 Dec; 38 Fahnestock 28 Dec; 40 Monticello 1 Jan (HVRBA); scattered reports from DUTC only during Jan and Feb; 400 Rockland SP 8 Feb; 150 Nyack Beach SP 21 Feb.
Pine Siskin: widely reported in all counties; 100 Shrub Oak 20 Dec (PCBC); 580 PUTN 3 Jan (PCCBC).
Evening Grosbeak: many reports in Dec; well reported from SULL in early Jan and early Feb.

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REGION 10 - MARINE

SEYMOUR SCHIFF

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ALVIN WOLLIN

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The weather for the winter season was unusual on two counts. First, it was much wetter than normal, almost by half. Then it was very much warmer by a very significant amount. December 31 was the only day in the month under 20°F. January 8 recorded a new high of 65°F. February tied the record for the warmest ever and for the first time no snow fell during the month. With mean temperatures of 40.0° in January and 40.6° in February, this had to be the warmest winter any of us has experienced.

As a result there were many late and unusual wintering birds. A pair of Piping Plovers was seen at Westhampton Dunes on 6 December. The Christmas counts recorded phoebes, lingering warblers, and some unusual wintering birds, namely larger than usual numbers of Wood Duck, an *Empidonax flycatcher* (presumably a Least Flycatcher), and a **White-eyed Vireo** in Prospect Park plus a **Clay-colored Sparrow** at the Montauk dump.

The generally warm weather over the Northeast made this season's northern finch invasion especially unusual. Evidently food supply and not weather is the dominant factor in these irruptions. For the first time in many years there was a major White-winged Crossbill influx along with lesser numbers of Red Crossbills and Common Redpolls. Birds were seen from Staten Island to Montauk Point. This season was no exception to the observation that northern finches can be notoriously unpredictable. Although widespread and consistent at given locations, their movements were certainly erratic. At no time could one be assured that they would be seen. They were in, out, and gone only to be found another place and another day. Because of this, it has been difficult to judge the total overall numbers visiting us this season.

A half dozen Greater White-fronted Geese were reported in the first half of the season, a considerable increase over prior years.

In very recent years there has been an increase in the number of wintering Razorbills at Montauk Point. The trend continued this season with **100+** reported on 8 February. In addition more alcids were seen in areas to the west.

Vagrants included up to three wintering "Black" Brant, the western subspecies *Branta bernicla nigricans*, wintering at Riis Park/Fort Tilden, Queens with the expected huge number of *B. b. hrota*; a possible Ross's Goose seen by single observers on two occasions at Marine Park golf course in Brooklyn (no details), a **Purple Gallinule** found near dead in Breezy Pt mid Feb [carcass to Don Reipe] and a wintering **Black-headed Grosbeak** on Staten Island (details and photo).

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Abbreviations: APEC-Alley Pond Environmental Center; BP-Breezy Pt; B-Brooklyn; BX-Bronx; CB-Cedar Beach; CBC-Christmas Bird Count; CP-Central Park; CS-Central Suffolk; CLP-Clove Lake Park, SI; CRSP-Connetquot River State Park; DR-Dune Rd, FI-Fire Island; FBF-Floyd Bennett Field; FP-Forest Park; GKP-Great Kills Park, SI; HLSP-Hempstead Lake State Park; JBWR-Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge; JBCH-Jones Beach; JBWE-Jones Beach West End; LI-Long Island; M-Montauk; MEC-Mecox Bay; MOB-many observers; MP-Montauk Point; NN-Northern Nassau; NYRBA-New York Rare Bird Alert; O-Orient, PL-Point Lookout side Jones Inlet; PP-Prospect Park; PT-Pelagic trip from fishing boat 40 mi southeast of MP; Q-Queens, QW-Quogue/Watermill, RMSP-Robert Moses State Park; SH-Shinnecock; SICBC-Staten Island CBC; VCP-Van Cortlandt Park, Bronx.

LOONS-DUCKS

Red-necked Grebe: single birds variously from SI to MP; three wintered in Jones Inlet.

Eared Grebe: MP 30-31 Dec; Montauk Harbor 2 Jan.

N. Fulmar: 7 PT 28 Feb (DF, BR).

shearwater species: Tobay sea watch 18 Dec (EL, SS, AW).

Great Egret: 3 SI CBC 20 Dec; 5 Weesuck Creek, East Quogue 31 Dec; others.

Black Vulture: 2 Fresh Kills Landfill, SI 21 Dec (RM).

Turkey Vulture: MP 7 Dec; Democrat Pt. 21 Dec; Holbrook 24 Jan.

Greater White-fronted Goose: Mattituck 17 Dec; Watermill 18 Dec; 3 Calverton 2 Jan; Marine Park Golf Course and environs most of Dec and Jan; some others out east.

Snow Goose: large flocks Eastern LI; 1 blue morph CS CBC 27 Dec; 3 blue morph in flock JBWR 4 Jan.

Ross's Goose: 1 reported in a flock of Snow Geese by two separate single observers on separate dates, 23 and 28 Dec (IG) and (ES), respectively. [No details].

Brant: 1 to 3 of subspecies "Black" Brant wintered Riis Park/Fort Tilden, Queens among the Brant from early Dec on.

Tundra Swan: Connetquot State Park Jan 25; Hook Pond late November on.

Wood Duck: wintering birds widespread CP, HLSP; 25 on Bronx River mid Jan (TF).

Eurasian Wigeon: 1 PP; 2 JBWR; others.

Blue-winged Teal: Bergen Beach; B CBC 20 Dec, Pond X; Lawrence Jan into Feb.

Green-winged "Eurasian" Teal: 2 Speonk 12 Dec thru.

Tufted Duck: 1 drake wintered on Swan Pond in East Patchogue; 2 Wildwood Lake, Riverhead 17 Dec.

King Eider: 4 PL 7 Dec, then 1 thru; 5 M CBC 20 Dec; other single birds throughout the season..

Com. Eider: up to 9 PL early Dec; lesser numbers there thru; 1000+ MP 8 Feb, in general numbers were more normal following the huge concentration of last winter

Harlequin Duck: up to 7 PL thru; others.

Barrow's Goldeneye: Northwest Harbor late Feb.

Com. Merganser: HLSP; 30+ Sunken Meadow SP mid Jan; others.
Ruddy Duck: 1,000 in the Reservoir CP 15 Dec; increasing to 2500 CP 16 Dec, possibly just the difficulty of estimating numbers.

HAWKS-ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: CRSP 21 Dec; M CBC 20 Dec, same bird?; imm Bronx River, BX CBC 20 Dec.

Red-tailed Hawk: Gramercy Park, NY City 11 Feb.

Rough-legged Hawk: 5 B CBC 20 Dec.

Wild Turkey: 30+ CRSP and environs, VCP early Feb.

PURPLE GALLINULE: 1 found in yard at Breezy Pt mid Feb, died at rehab center a few day's later.

Piping Plover: 2 Westhampton Dunes, west of the spit 6 Dec (DF).

Am. Oystercatcher: 3 Q CBC 20 Dec; 2 JBWR 2 Jan; 5 Oak Beach 1 Feb; 3 JBWE 28 Feb.

Lesser Yellowlegs: Q CBC 20 Dec.

Red Knot: a small number wintered in the Black-bellied Plover/Dunlin flock JBWE.

Purple Sandpiper: wintered on jetties PL, JBWE, Atlantic Beach, MP.

Parasitic Jaeger: sub-adult light morph BP 1 Dec (TF).

Laughing Gull: B CBC 20 Dec; Ft Tilden 2 Jan.

Little Gull: BP 1 Dec; PL 18 Dec; BP 24 Feb.

Black-headed Gull: 2 imm wintered in the Bonaparte's Gull flock PL; SH 7 Feb thru.

Mew Gull: possible 2nd year at PL till 2 Dec, this is the bird discussed in last season's report.

Iceland Gull: widespread and numerous; max 6 Fresh Kills Landfill SI CBC 20 Dec.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: widespread and more numerous this year; max 18 Fresh Kills Landfill SI CBC 20 Dec; 10 BP 17 Jan.

Glaucous Gull: MEC 6 Dec; PP 17-20 Dec; Mattituck 25 Dec; SH 1 Jan thru; RMSP 26 Jan; BP 19-24 Feb.

Black-legged Kittiwake: 2 Amagansett 7 Dec; 22 there 11 Dec; 1 Breezy Pt; B CBC 20 Dec; 2 MP 8 Feb; 13 PT 28 Feb (DF, BR).

Dovekie: 1 fly-by M CBC 20 Dec.

Com. Murre: 13 PT 28 Feb (DF, BR).

murre species: 5 PT 28 Feb (DF, BR).

Razorbill: 33 MP 6 Dec; 5 Amagansett 7 Dec; 33 MP 7 Dec; 11 E. Hampton 11 Dec; 104 M CBC 20 Dec; 4 CS CBC 27 Dec; 44 E. Hampton 19 Jan; 70+ MP 7 Feb; 100+ MP 8 Feb; 1 Breezy Pt 24 Feb; 55 PT 28 Feb (DF, BR).

Black Guillemot: 1 fly-by M CBC 20 Dec.

Atlantic Puffin: 2 PT 28 Feb (DF, BR).

alcid species: PT 28 Feb (DF, BR)

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS

Barn Owl: JBWR 15, 20 Dec; FBF 19 Dec.

Snowy Owl: 1 JBWE mid Dec; M CBC 20 Dec; Crooke's Pt; SI 26 Dec.

Long-eared Owl: Sagaponack 21 Dec; 2 wintered CP.

Short-eared Owl: Riis Park/Fort Tilden 7 Dec; JBWR 15 Dec; GKP 25 Dec; VCP 28 Dec; wintered JBWE

N. Saw-whet Owl: CP early to mid Dec; Ft. Tilden B CBC 20 Dec.

Red-headed Woodpecker: 5 wintered CP.

FLYCATCHERS-WAXWINGS

EMPIDONAX SPECIES: 1 wintered at APEC (mob), presumably a Least Flycatcher.

E. Phoebe: Clay Pit Pond SI CBC 20 Dec; Woodlawn Cemetery, BX CBC 28 Dec; Blue Heron Park, Staten Island 1 Feb.

Western Kingbird: Breezy Pt 1 Dec; Douglaston Marsh to Dec 19.

N. Shrike: 1 at Democrat Pt. 21 Dec; 2 RMSP 21 Dec; Dune Rd, Hampton Bays 28 Nov; PP 29 Dec; Short Beach, Smithtown 2 Feb.

White-eyed Vireo: wintered PP.

Blue-headed Vireo: APEC 25 Dec (SW).

Tree Swallow: groups wintered at GKP, PL/JBWE, and Breezy PT.

House Wren: 2 SI CBC 20 Dec.

Winter Wren: Shu Swamp, Mill Neck 1 Feb; others.

Marsh Wren: PP 4 Jan.

WARBLERS

Orange-crowned Warbler: wintering PP, PL, APEC, Riis Park, and a few others.

Black-throated Blue Warbler: Inwood Park, Manhattan 1 Feb (JD).

Pine Warbler: MP CBC 20 Dec; CP mid Jan; 3 CRSP Jan 25; PP 1 Feb.

Prairie Warbler: 1 at the RMSP administration bldg 21 Dec
Palm Warbler: Q CBC 20 Dec; 3 CS CBC 27 Dec.
Black-and-white Warbler: Pelham Bay Park 6 Dec.
Ovenbird: PP TO 2 Feb
Com. Yellowthroat: MEC 7 Dec; 3 CS CBC 21 Dec; 2 Riis Park 17 Dec; QW CBC 20 Dec; NN CBC 27 Dec; CB 29 Dec; VCP 10 Jan; PP 17 Jan.
Yellow-breasted Chat: wintered PP; others.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS

Chipping Sparrow: 2 Q CBC 20 Dec; 2 CS CBC 27 Dec; O CBC 3 Jan.
CLAY-COLORED SPARROW: Montauk Dump Feb 8-22 (DF *et al*).
Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow: no winter reports.
Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow: Q CBC 20 Dec.
Lincoln's Sparrow: PP 17 Dec; M CBC 20 Dec; B CBC 20 Dec.
Dark-eyed "Pink-sided" Junco: JBWR 15 Dec.
Lapland Longspur: up to 9 wintered JBWE.
BLACK-HEADED GROSBEAK: imm at SI feeder early Dec to mid Jan.

Dickcissel: 1 with House Sparrows at a feeder Sagaponack Pond 31Dec; Long Beach 4 Jan.
Rusty Blackbird: 45 to 60 wintered Shu Swamp, Mill Neck, the most reliable spot in the Region to find this species in winter; several dozen VCP; others.
Com. Grackle: 8100 SI CBC 20 Dec; 502 Q CBC 20 Dec.
Boat-tailed Grackle: 350 JBWR vicinity; 20 SH; 3 CB 20 Feb
Purple Finch: early in season
Red Crossbill: fewer and smaller flocks than White-winged Crossbill, less common toward end of season.
White-winged Crossbill: widespread and erratic on South Shore in small to large flocks; max 135 Sunken Forest, FI 21 Dec.
Com. Redpoll: many birds widespread and early; 12 CP 1 Dec; 9 PP 15 Feb.
Pine Siskin: winter CP; 3 M CBC 20 Dec.
Evening Grosbeak: Sands Pt. Preserve feeder 8 Dec.

Late Fall Additions

Red-throated Loon: 560+ off Atlantic Avenue, Amagansett 30 Nov (HMG), a very large number.
Semipalmated Plover: DR 16 Nov.
Parasitic Jaeger: 2 MP 25 Oct (SB).
Com. Tern: 30 MP 25 Oct.

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LOST IN A PECULIARLY UNIQUE NEIGHBORHOOD

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As an intrepid birder, I often go wandering around in the woods. Although I hardly ever get lost, sometimes I do get temporarily disoriented.

One time I was hopelessly befuddled. The entire morning was spent fumbling around in a dense forest looking for a way out. Finally, just before lunch, I came out of the woods and saw a narrow road. It was not heavily traveled because weeds were growing quite vigorously down the center and even completely across in spots. Nevertheless, I figured if I followed it, sooner or later I would wind up someplace. I chose the downhill direction because that might have a greater probability of connecting with a more heavily traveled road.

As I walked along, I got in some birding. Along a wet thicket I heard, "Fee-bee'-oh...Fee-bee'-oh..." Aha, Alder Flycatcher! As I went a little farther, just past some old wet brushy pastures I heard, "Fitz-bew...Fitz-bew..." Aha, Willow Flycatcher! I stopped and looked through my binoculars and enjoyed some great views with my telescope. But, as I went along, I became puzzled by the lack of any other birds. Not even a Common Yellowthroat or a Black-capped Chickadee. Not even a pesky American Crow or the raucous squawks of a Blue Jay. As I ambled along, mile after mile, all I ever heard was "Fee-bee'-oh...Fee-bee'-oh..." and "Fitz-bew...Fitz-bew..."

The farther I walked, the hungrier I grew. Fortunately, a couple of jelly donuts were stashed in my backpack. I chomped into one, but eager anticipation abruptly shifted to outraged disappointment. Instead of jelly, there was just a barren cavity. "Pshaw!" I exclaimed, only to be admonished by "Fee-bee'-oh" and "Fitz-bew". "Everything snaps back to the average", I reassured myself, so maybe the next donut will have an extra dollop of jelly; I hoped. Nope. No such luck. That one was also devoid of jelly. This obviously was not an average day. "This must be an omen" I muttered, only to be endorsed by "Fitz-bew" and "Fee-bee'-oh". Disgruntled and hungry, I trudged on.

"Where the hell am I?" I wondered. "This is such a strange place. When I get out of here I will have to locate it on a map and take the Chenango Bird Club here for a field trip. No one would believe that there is a road where only two species of birds exist."

As I covered more miles, the road got progressively narrower. It became just a single file path. Nevertheless, I continued, still hearing only "Fee-bee'-oh" and "Fitz-bew".

Then, at last, after all this walking, it finally dawned on me where I was. The empty donuts should have alerted me. They were an unambiguous diagnostic field clue to the genus. Of course, I was walking on Flycatcher's Trail.

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