

REGION 10 – MARINE

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After a series of unusually warm winters and a warm early December, we went back to the reality of subnormal cold and above normal snow. For the three months, temperatures were, respectively, 1.3°F, 4.6° and 4.5° below normal, with a season low 8° on 16 February. This season's average temperature was 10° below last year. Precipitation was very slightly above normal for December, half of normal for January, fifty percent above normal in February, with half of it in the form of snow. On 7 February, 5" fell. And an additional 19" fell on the 16-17th, for the fourth snowiest month on record. The warm early weather induced an unusual number of birds to stay far into the season and kept some for the entire winter. On the other hand, there were absolutely no northern finches, except for a very few isolated Pine Siskins.

On 14 December, a **Pacific Loon** in basic plumage was found by Tom Burke, Gail Benson and Bob Shriber at Camp Hero on the Montauk CBC. It was subsequently seen there and at the point by others on 24, 27 and 28 December. On 28 December, Guy Tudor saw a **Greater Shearwater** sail in toward Montauk Point before returning out to sea. This is a very late record.

A **Least Bittern**, apparently hit by a car "somewhere in East Hampton" on 25 February, was turned over to a local rehabilitator. There have been less than half a dozen prior winter records. On 27 February, Andy Baldelli saw a **Black Vulture** in Riverhead.

The "Eurasian" form of Green-winged Teal was reported this winter at Short's Pond in Watermill from early December to mid February, on the Brooklyn CBC at Spring Creek 21 December, on the West Pond at Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge into early January, on the Southern Nassau CBC 29 December and on Kellis Pond in Bridgehampton where there were two on 2 February and one on 9 February.

A Semipalmated Plover, very rare in winter, was reported on the Captree CBC 15 December. Several Willets were in the Jones Inlet area, seen both from the Coast Guard Station and from the Point Lookout side: two on 10 December, one on 29 December and two on 5 January. Although uncommon to rare in winter, Red Knots were virtually absent from the Region this season. A single bird was found on the Montauk CBC 14 December and another at Great Kills Park, Staten Island, on 19 January. However, on 21 December there were 18+ at the inlet jetty Jones Beach West End. Long-billed Dowitchers wintered at the Massapequa Preserve,

with other reports from the Marine Nature Study Area in Oceanside in January and five in Mastic at the Forge River on 15 February.

On 13 December, the day before the Montauk CBC, Hugh McGuinness, Bryan Pfeiffer, Peter Polshak, Brian Kane and Patrick Santinello watched a **Great Skua** cruise by the Montauk Point lighthouse. The next day a Great Skua (the same?) was found sitting on the beach at Hither Hills State Park by Betsy McCully and Joe Giunta. It stayed for an hour, allowing several counters to see it before it flew west and disappeared. On the Southern Nassau CBC, 29 December, 2 Forster's Terns were seen, but not thereafter.

Reports of alcids included a **Thick-billed Murre** seen in Gerritsen Creek off Marine Park by Eric Salzman and Valerie Helton on the Brooklyn CBC 21 December and another, reported by Robert Kurtz, was seen at Montauk Point 3 February and sporadically for the next two weeks. A **Black Guillemot** was seen at Lake Montauk inlet on the Montauk CBC 14 December. On a pelagic trip to Hudson Canyon on 7 December, John Haas, *et al* saw an **Atlantic Puffin** in NY waters.

While walking the dog in Peconic on 4 December, Lester Feldman found a **Common Raven** sitting on a utility pole crossbar. A **Blue-gray Gnatcatcher** was found on the Sagaponack CBC 15 December. This species was last seen in winter on the Central Suffolk CBC 27 December 1986. A **Wood Thrush** continued in Central Park and was last seen by Tom Fiore on the Lower Hudson CBC 15 December. On 10 February, a **Variied Thrush** appeared in Ridge at a feeder. It remained until 20 February.

Nashville Warblers found on four CBCs to 21 December is a state high for the winter. The **Hermit (or Hermit x Townsend's hybrid) Warbler** found at the end of last season continued to 1 December. An **Ovenbird**, very rare in winter, remained in Central Park to 5 December and on 26 January one was found at Montauk Point along the dirt road north of the concession stand. A **Northern Waterthrush**, also very rare in winter, continued in Central Park through the Lower Hudson CBC 15 December.

On 15 December on the Queens CBC, Seth Ausubel found a *Spizella* sparrow in the dunes near the Atlantic Beach inlet jetties. Not completely sure of the identification because of poor viewing conditions (rain and fog), he returned the next day and verified that it was a **Clay-colored Sparrow**. A NYSARC report has been submitted. There are two prior winter records, from Suffolk County. **Grasshopper Sparrows**, extremely rare in winter, were found on the Montauk CBC at Turtle Cove just west of the lighthouse on 14 December and on the Sagaponack CBC 15 December. The Montauk bird was also seen 18 January and another was seen 15 February in a roadside flock of sparrows near the entrance to Gilgo Beach.

Stu Lipkin found a **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** at a feeder in Harbor Hills Sanctuary in Lake Success 14 December on the Queens CBC. While there are records in November and December, there appear to be none in recent years in

Region 10. Then another was reported later in the season at Woodlawn Cemetery in The Bronx on 6 February by Starr Saphir and Dorothy Poole. Neither bird exhibited characteristics that might indicate the rarer Black-headed Grosbeak. A male **Painted Bunting** appeared at a feeder in East Shoreham in mid December and remained to late February. It was not reported at the time, but photos were taken and the identification was confirmed.

There are 14 Christmas counts, including portions of two which overlap NY and NJ, that cover our Region. Virtually our entire Region and all its habitats are accounted for. The total number of species reported this year was 182, plus two count period birds. Several counts exceeded 130 species. Not all of these species were seen again once the New Year started.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

APP – Alley Pd P; CLP – Clove L P, SI; CP – Central P; FBF – Floyd Bennett Field; FI – Fire I; FP – Forest P; FTT – Fort Tilden QUEE; GKP – Great Kills P, SI; HLSP – Hempstead L SP; HP – Hook Pd, Southampton; JBCH – Jones Beach; JBWE – Jones Beach West End; JBWR – Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge; LI – Long Island; MAP – Massapequa Preserve; MEB – Mecox Bay; MNSA – Marine Nature Study Area, Oceanside; MOR – Moriches; MP – Montauk Pt; NYRBA – New York Rare Bird Alert; PEL – Pelagic trip to Hudson Canyon; PL – Pt Lookout side Jones Inlet; PP – Prospect P; RMSP – Robert Moses SP; SHIN – Shinnecock Inlet; SI – Staten I; VCP – Van Cortlandt Park BRON.

CHRISTMAS BIRD COUNT DESIGNATIONS

(These four letter identifiers are the official assigned codes as used in the *American Birds* Christmas Count Issue). NJLH – Lower Hudson 15 Dec; NYBR – Brooklyn 21 Dec; NYBW – Bronx-Westchester 22 Dec; NYCA – Captree 15

Dec; NYCS – Central Suffolk Co 21 Dec; NYMK – Montauk 14 Dec; NYNN – Northern Nassau Co 21 Dec; NYOR – Orient 28 Dec; NYQU – Queens 14 Dec; NYQW – Quogue-Watermill 14 Dec; NYSG – Sagaponack 15 Dec; NYSI – Staten Island 14 Dec; NYSM – Smithtown 27 Dec; NYSN – Southern Nassau Co 29 Dec.

LOONS – DUCKS

Red-throated Loon: 2935 NYMK 14 Dec, Reg high.

PACIFIC LOON: Camp Hero NYMK 14 Dec (TB *et al.*), then there or at MP 24, 27, 28 Dec.

Red-necked Grebe: 5 on 4 CBCs; number increased at end of season.

Eared Grebe: s of Montauk Village 18-19 Jan; w end T Montauk 25 Jan; PL 15 Feb thru.

N. Fulmar: PEL 7 Dec.

Greater Shearwater: PEL 7 Dec (JH, BF); MP 28 Dec (GT), a very late record.

Great Cormorant: expanding in Reg, approaching Double-crested numbers; 300-400 on CBCs; scattered throughout.

LEAST BITTERN: picked up on road East Hampton (still alive) 25 Feb; less than 6 prior winter records.

Great Blue Heron: total 600+ on all CBCs; max 127 NYCA; 115 NYSN; half the CBCs exceeded previous highs.

Great Egret: 16 on 8 CBCs, high for winter.

Snowy Egret: NYSN 29 Dec, only report.

Tricolored Heron: 2 NYSN 29 Dec, only report.

BLACK VULTURE: Riverhead 27 Feb (AB).

Turkey Vulture: CP 6 Dec; NYCS 21 Dec; NYBR 21 Dec; Old Field 10 Jan; Middle Island 12 Jan; Hampton Bay 17 Jan; CP 17 Jan; SI 19 Jan; Hither Hills 20 Jan; Babylon 27 Jan; PP 14 Feb; 1 or more seem to have wintered on eastern LI.

Greater White-fronted Goose: 7 on 3 CBCs; most of these birds wintered.

Canada “Richardson’s” Goose: HLSP 15 Dec; NYSG 15 Dec; 3 MEB

9 Feb.

Brant: “black” intermediate-type race FBF 25 Jan.

BARNACLE GOOSE: HLSP 15 Dec; Baiting Hollow 19 Jan-20 Feb; the usual question of origin.

Tundra Swan: 2-5 wintered eastern LI.

Wood Duck: est. 75 on 9 CBCs; quantity and distribution represent a significant increase in winter birds.

Eurasian Wigeon: 4 on 4 CBCs.

Green-winged “Eurasian” Teal: Short’s Pond Watermill, early Dec-mid Feb; NYBR at Spring Creek 21 Dec; West Pd JBWR into early Jan; NYSN in Oceanside 29 Dec; 2 Kellis Pd Bridgehampton 2 Feb, 1 on 9 Feb.

Tufted Duck: Cooper’s Neck Pd, Southampton 11 Jan (JA, WT).

Harlequin Duck: 5 PL; 1-2 MP; several others.

Barrow’s Goldeneye: Bayville 19 Dec thru; MEB 11 Jan.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Osprey: count week NYQU mid Dec.

Bald Eagle: sub-ad Riverside P 15 Dec; 8 on ice flows in Hudson River from upper Manhattan 29 Jan. The balance of sightings from the east end of LI may be just the same two wintering birds; imm South Haven County P 4 Dec; Poxabogue 13 Dec; ad, imm Gardiners I 14 Dec; NYSG 15 Dec; along Carmens Ri 15 Dec; imm Napeague 6 Jan; imm Watermill 27 Jan; Southaven County P 25 Jan; Major’s Harbor Mashomack 12 Feb; ad, imm on the ice from South Ferry Shelter I 13 Feb; 3rd yr imm feeding on ice Swan Pd 26 Feb.

N. Harrier: 168 on 11 CBCs; widespread and reasonably abundant for a species with breeding problems.
Red-tailed Hawk: est. 350 on all 14 CBCs; this large raptor is doing well.
Rough-legged Hawk: 11 on 4 CBCs, all from east end LI.
Am. Kestrel: approx. 30 on CBCs; about the same as 5 years ago.
Merlin: approx 35 on CBCs; slightly more abundant this winter than the past, totals now exceeding Am. Kestrel.
N. Bobwhite: 39 on 4 CBCs; missed on NYCS first time ever; the accelerated decline of this species started about 10 years ago; it is a species in trouble on LI.
Virginia Rail: 10 on 8 CBCs; more common than Clapper Rails in winter.
Semipalmated Plover: NYCA 15 Dec, very rare in winter.
Am. Oystercatcher: 64 JBWE 8 Dec; 12 NYSN 29 Dec; 5 remaining in Jones Inlet 5 Jan, single 23 Feb.
Lesser Yellowlegs: MAP to 5 Jan, rare in winter.
Willet: 2 Jones Inlet 10 Dec, 5 Jan; 1 Jones Inlet 29 Dec; rare in winter.
HUDSONIAN GODWIT: east end Hook Pd 5 Jan (*vide* HMG), NYSARC report requested; unprecedented date.
Red Knot: NYMK 14 Dec; north end Great Kills P SI 19 Jan; 18+ JBWE 21 Dec; normally rare in winter, rarer yet this winter.
Purple Sandpiper: while seen on rocks and jetties in usual places throughout, only single digit numbers except for 24 at Atlantic Beach.
Long-billed Dowitcher: wintered MAP; MNSA in Jan; 5 Forge Ri Mastic 15 Feb; rare in winter.
Red Phalarope: PEL7 Dec (JH, BF).
GREAT SKUA: MP 13 Dec (HMG *et al*); then NYMK 14 Dec.
Laughing Gull: NYSG 15 Dec; CP 22 Jan thru.
Little Gull: JBWE inlet 8 Dec, then sporadically on PL side; L Montauk NYMK 14 Dec; MP 26 Dec; increase

to 2 PL 5 Jan; Captree SP 17 Jan thru; SHIN mid Feb thru; 2 Breezy Pt 23 Feb with other gulls attracted by major clam kill.

Black-headed Gull: 3 on 3 CBCs; most reliably found on falling tide at PL.
Iceland Gull: 4 on 4 CBCs.
Lesser Black-backed Gull: on 1 CBC; after a surge in abundance, has become quite scarce in early winter; became more abundant later in season.
Glaucous Gull: 4 on 3 CBCs.
Black-legged Kittiwake: PEL7 Dec; 57 NYMK 14 Dec; 303 NYSG 15 Dec.
Forster's Tern: NYSN 29 Dec.
Dovekie: PEL7 Dec (JH, BF); sporadically along the South Shore from Breezy Pt to MP.
THICK-BILLED MURRE: Gerritsen Creek off Marine Park NYBR 21 Dec (ES, VH); MP 3 Feb and sporadically for next two weeks.
Razorbill: PEL7 Dec; 1024 on 8 CBCs, mostly at Montauk; large numbers widely distributed, most gone by mid-winter; 1 in LI Sound off Sands Pt NYNN 21 Dec.
BLACK GUILLEMOT: L Montauk Inlet NYMK 14 Dec.
ATLANTIC PUFFIN: PEL 7 Dec (JH, BF, mob).

DOVES – WOODPECKERS

Barn Owl: 4 on 3 CBCs; is found mostly in inaccessible areas and may possibly be less uncommon than it appears.
E. Screech-Owl: 72 on 8 CBCs.
Great Horned Owl: 36 on 10 CBCs.
Snowy Owl: JBWE 9 Dec; RMSP 10 Dec; JBSP 21 Dec, 13 Jan, 16-23 Feb; Cow Neck in North Sea 23 Jan; Calverton 21-22 Feb.
Barred Owl: CP 24-26 Dec (TF), very rare anywhere in Reg.
Long-eared Owl: 6 on 3 CBCs.
Short-eared Owl: 7 on 5 CBCs.

N. Saw-whet Owl: 3 on 2 CBCs; now less common in winter.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: est. 500 on all 14 CBCs; successful expansion.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: est. 40 on 12 CBCs; probably a winter high for the Reg.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

E. Phoebe: widespread; CP 1 Dec; NYNN Dec 21; NYCS count week; VCP 21 Dec- 9 Jan; Bronx P/Zoo 24 Dec; APP 26 Dec; HLSP on NYSN 29 Dec; GKP 19 Jan; **8** widely scattered Riverdale BRON 3 Feb.

Western Kingbird: Mount Loretto P SI thru 7 Dec.

COMMON RAVEN: Peconic 4 Dec (LF).

Tree Swallow: PL JBWE area to mid Jan; a few others to mid Jan.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: 24 scattered over 9 CBCs; unusually scarce this winter.

BLUE-GRAY GNATCATCHER: NYSG 15 Dec, last seen in winter NYCS 27 Dec 1986.

WOOD THRUSH: CP thru 15 Dec.

VARIED THRUSH: Ridge feeder 10-20 Feb.

WARBLERS

Orange-crowned Warbler: 15 on 9 CBCs; rare but regular in winter; number undoubtedly a record winter high for state.

Nashville Warbler: CP to 15 Dec; Amagansett 8 Dec; NYQU 14 Dec; NYSG 15 Dec; Eastport/East Moriches area of NYCS 21 Dec; a high number for winter.

HERMIT (or Hermit x Townsend's hybrid) WARBLER: thru 1 Dec.

Pine Warbler: 6 Calverton 4 Dec; 6 on 4 CBCs; Manorville feeder 12 Dec on; APP 23 Jan; Sunken Meadow SP 2nd-3rd week Jan; APP 23 Jan; exceptional numbers this winter.

Palm Warbler: 21 on 6 CBCs.

Ovenbird: CP to 5 Dec; MP 26 Jan, few have survived this late.

N. Waterthrush: CP to 15 Dec (TF), rare in winter.

Com. Yellowthroat: CP to 15 Dec; VCP 22 Dec-9 Jan.

Yellow-breasted Chat: 7 on 5 CBCs.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

Chipping Sparrow: 25 on 10 CBCs; number and distribution high for this uncommon wintering species; **26** Grumman facility in Calverton 12 Jan (AG, TWB).

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW: Atlantic Beach inlet jetties 15-16 Dec (SA), 3rd winter record, 2 previous were from SUFF.

GRASSHOPPER SPARROW: NYMK 14 Dec; NYSG 15 Dec; Gilgo 15 Feb; extremely rare in winter.

Nelson's Sharp-tailed Sparrow: NYSG 15 Dec; MNSA, wintered.

Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow: Accabonac Harbor 8 Dec; NYBR 21 Dec; 2 NYSM 27 Dec.

Seaside Sparrow: NYQW 14 Dec; up to 6 seen Shinnecock during Jan.

Lapland Longspur: small numbers JBWE, RMSP, Riverhead sod fields, others.

Snow Bunting: less common and smaller flocks this year.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: Harbor Hills Sanctuary in Lake Success NYQU 14 Dec (SL); Woodlawn Cemetery BRON 6 Feb (StS, DP).

PAINTED BUNTING: at feeder East Shoreham mid Dec to late Feb, *intro*.

Dickcissel: s of Sag Harbor 17 Jan-8 Feb.

Rusty Blackbird: 207 on 9 CBCs.

Baltimore Oriole: CP 10, 12 Dec; NYSG 15 Dec; CP 25 Dec; Park Pl & Sixth Ave KING 8 Jan.

Pine Siskin: several CP feeders to mid Jan; Riverdale 22 Dec; a few others.