

New Jersey Birds



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Changes from the Fiftieth Supplement to the AOU Checklist

by DON FREIDAY

In the recent past, “they” split Solitary Vireo into Blue-headed, Plumbeous, and Cassin’s Vireos. “They” split the towhees, separating Rufous-sided Towhee into Eastern Towhee and Spotted Towhee. “They” seem to exist in part to support field guide publishers, who must publish updated guides with revised names and newly elevated species. Birders often wonder, “Who are ‘They,’ anyway?”

“They” are the “American Ornithologists’ Union Committee on Classification and Nomenclature - North and Middle America,” and they have recently published a new supplement to the Check-list of North American Birds (Chesser et al. 2009). The supplement contains a few changes that involve birds occurring in New Jersey; these changes are described below. Laurie Larson and Jennifer Hanson have already alertly incorporated these changes into the official state list, viewable at <<http://www.njbrc.net/documents/NJStateList.pdf>>. The AOU supplement and the full checklist are available on-line at <<http://www.aou.org/checklist/north/index.php>>.

I have included changes to scientific names, even though birders generally do not use them. Say what you will about the AOU Committee, most birders would agree that the Committee’s standardized list of common names makes birding much more fun, and bird names much easier to pronounce.

Boreal Chickadee scientific name change: *Poecile hudsonica* becomes *P. hudsonicus*

Won’t it be nice if someday this name change has significance for a birder in NJ? The last “invasion” of Boreal Chickadees into NJ was 1981-1982, and it seems there have been none since. The change, by the way, is to establish gender agreement (masculine) between genus and species names.

Nelson’s Sharp-tailed Sparrow becomes Nelson’s Sparrow

Saltmarsh Sharp-tailed Sparrow becomes Saltmarsh Sparrow

These were once considered conspecific under the common name Sharp-tailed Sparrow, but studies published in 1993 established that they were indeed

two separate species. The original names created for them have been deemed cumbersome by the AOU committee. Now we have a shot at getting their full names out of our mouths before they disappear into the grass again!

Our tanagers are really cardinals: tanager genus *Piranga* has been moved from the *Thraupidae* to the *Cardinalidae*

This change, which for NJ birders affects Summer Tanager, Scarlet Tanager, and Western Tanager, has been expected for several years. Mitochondrial DNA studies support the move, as do many birders familiar with tropical tanagers of the family *Thraupidae*. For now, there is no change to these species’ common names, e.g. Summer Tanager is not changed to “Summer Cardinal.” However, checklist order must be revised, and presumably future field guides will also be revised to reflect this changed checklist placement. On the NJ checklist, the tanagers now appear immediately after Snow Bunting and immediately before Northern Cardinal.

Scientific name change for redpolls and siskins

Redpolls, siskins, and goldfinches had all been in the same genus, *Carduelis*. Both redpolls now are moved into the newly created genus *Acanthis* (elevated from being a subgenus). Thus, Common Redpoll becomes *Acanthis flammea*, and Hoary Redpoll becomes *A. hornemanni*.

In a similar move, siskins and New World goldfinches have been placed into genus *Spinus*. Thus, Pine Siskin becomes *Spinus pinus* (don’t you love that one!) and American Goldfinch becomes *S. tristis*.

European Goldfinch becomes the only species on the AOU Checklist in the genus *Carduelis*.

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COVER PHOTO: Perhaps the avian star of winter 2008-2009 was the Green-tailed Towhee which wintered in the yard of John and Peggy McDevit, Collingswood, Camden County. The bird was first detected 1 Jan, lasted until 10 May, and was seen by hundreds of birders for a 7th state record. Photo/Peter Burke

The Role of Inlets in Piping Plover Nest Site Selection in New Jersey 1987-2007

by CHRISTINA L. KISIEL*

Introduction

The Piping Plover (*Charadrius melodus*) is a small shorebird that occurs throughout North America along lakes, rivers and the ocean. New Jersey's Piping Plover (*C. m. melodus*) population is part of the Atlantic coast population, which extends from Newfoundland in Canada to North Carolina in the United States (Elliott-Smith & Haig, 2004; Miller et al. 2009). In New Jersey they are found primarily on ocean beaches where they nest between the toe of the dune and the high tide line. Most adults arrive on the breeding grounds in late March and begin laying eggs in April. An egg is generally laid every other day until the clutch is complete at four (occasionally three on a re-nest). Incubation commences after the last egg is laid, thus assuring synchronous hatching (Cairns, 1982). The adults split incubation duties evenly and the eggs hatch in approximately 28 days. The precocial chicks leave the nest bowl within a few hours and are responsible for feeding themselves. The adults play a strong role in defense and protection from the elements (the chicks cannot regulate their body temperature until approximately 2 weeks of age). After 25 days, the chicks are capable of short flights and are considered fledged. If a nest is destroyed, or chicks are lost before they fledge, the adults may re-nest (occasionally up to 3 more times but most often with just one additional attempt) (Elliott-Smith & Haig, 2004). Migration from the New Jersey breeding grounds peaks in August but begins in early July (especially for the females, who sometimes leave before their chicks are fledged) and extends into October, with the rare recording of a late individual into November and December (T. Pover, personal communication, 3 December 2008; <<http://www.nj Audubon.org/Tools.Net/Sightings/SightingsArchive.aspx>>).

Piping Plover nesting season corresponds to the peak tourism season in coastal communities and this pressure on their habitat, coupled with its degradation as it has been (and continues to be) developed, led to the species being state listed as endangered in 1984 (E.N.S.C.A. 23:2A) and federally listed (Endangered Species Act of 1973) as endangered or threatened in 1986. The Great Lakes population is listed as endangered while the Atlantic coastal and

Great Plains populations are listed as threatened. After the species was listed the New Jersey Division of Fish and Wildlife's Endangered and Nongame Species Program (ENSP) and its partners began closely monitoring the Piping Plover population, recording the location and outcome of each known nesting attempt. Therefore, a long-term dataset set, comprised of detailed population, reproductive and nest location information was available for analysis.

The US Fish and Wildlife Service's (USFWS) Atlantic Coast Piping Plover Recovery Plan, the guidance document used by species managers, has created population and reproductive goals for this species (USFWS, 1996). In the twenty-plus years since the Piping Plover was listed, New Jersey has never reached its reproductive goals (a five year average of 1.5 fledges/pair) (Pover, 2007). The state population, despite yearly fluctuations, is relatively flat with no long-term gains (see Fig. 1). Despite the best efforts of ENSP and its cooperators, the state population is not progressing towards recovery. Other states in the Atlantic coast region have seen population increases, in some cases dramatically (Hecht, 2007). Understanding the distribution of NJ's plovers might allow us to determine why we are unable to emulate other states' population increases. Although ENSP compiles yearly reports and NJ information is folded into Atlantic coast reports, there has not been an



An adult Piping Plover in breeding plumage. Photo: State of New Jersey

effort to conduct a long-term examination of the spatial and temporal distribution of nesting Piping Plovers in this state. The ability to understand the factors that influence site selection may offer valuable insight into their habitat requirements as well as focus management efforts into the areas that are the most important in the state for nesting success. Past is prologue and understanding the distribution of the birds over the last 20 years may be the best way to determine future directions of New Jersey Piping Plover conservation efforts.

Study Area

The study area was the Atlantic Coast beaches of New Jersey from Sandy Hook to Cape May. The southern part of the Cape May peninsula on the Delaware Bay side north to the Cape May Ferry Terminal (or the western outlet of the Cape May

Canal) was also included. From 1987-2007 there was no documented nesting by Piping Plovers north of the Cape May Canal. It is likely that any pairs in this area would be detected because the Delaware Bay region is a stopover habitat for migratory shorebirds and there are many biologists working in that area who would be aware of nesting birds. No nesting was detected on the beaches of interior Sandy Hook Bay during the study period, so that area was also not part of this project. There is a high density of humans in that area, and if there was nesting there it is likely it would have been observed and reported.

Methods

This analysis was conducted with data that was collected from 20 years of field work by many people representing different agencies. All the data collected by the cooperating agencies (US Park Service – Gateway National Recreation Area, Sandy Hook Unit, US Fish and Wildlife Service- Forsythe and Cape May National Wildlife Refuges and The Nature Conservancy) was combined with data collected by the NJ Division of Fish and Wildlife Endangered and Nongame Species Program (ENSP), who, in addition to field duties are responsible for the organization and quality control of the data on a state-wide level.

A cursory examination of the available data revealed an apparent clustering around inlets and led to an investigation of the role inlets played in site selection among New Jersey's Piping Plovers. Other regions in the range have noted the importance of inlets to Piping Plovers (USFWS, 1996) There are 13 inlets in the state (including the bays at either end, which functioned as inlets in the context of this research). The inlets that existed during this study were, from north to south, Sandy Hook Bay, Shark River Inlet, Manasquan Inlet, Barnegat Inlet, Little Egg Inlet, Brigantine Inlet, Absecon Inlet, Great Egg Inlet, Corson's Inlet, Townsend's Inlet, Hereford Inlet, Cape May Inlet and Delaware Bay.

The inlet systems were divided into two categories - shored and unshored. Shored inlets were those that had jetties (to stabilize the inlet and prevent any natural movement, as well as for boater safety/shipping ease) while unshored inlets had no jetties or other stabilizing features (such as sea walls) and the sand was free to move and shift naturally. Some of the inlets in New Jersey were stabilized on just one side and since the two sides functioned differently each was split into north and south units and independently analyzed on each side.

I created spatial files in ArcMap 9.2 that represented every known nesting pair in New Jersey from 1987-2007. This data was created by synthesizing GPS data and field notes (from the years prior to when GPS coordinates were available). Multiple nesting



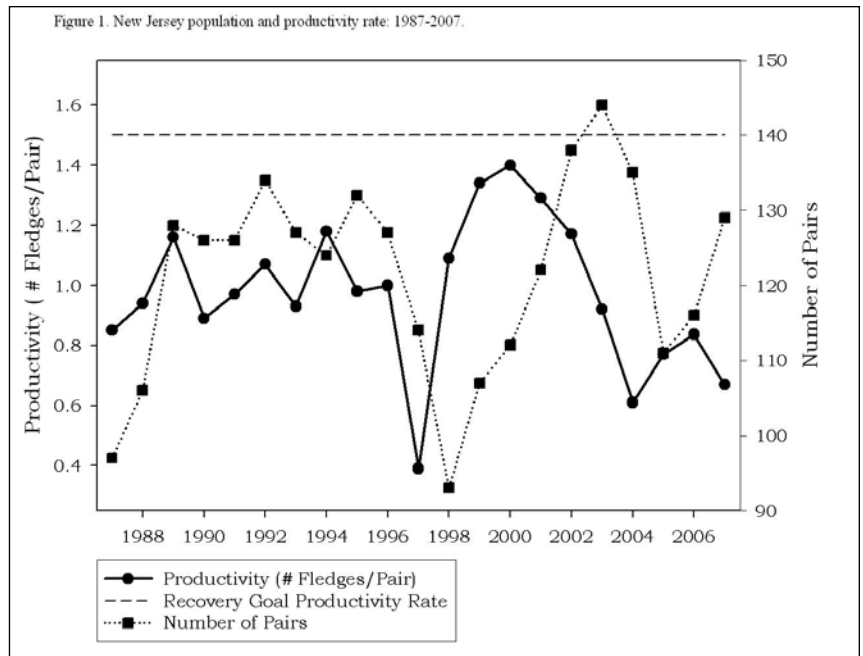
Barnegat Light. This aerial photo shows a shored inlet. Note the lack of sandy habitat and foraging opportunities. Instead there is a thin swath of sand and a lot of vegetation, which is unsuitable nesting habitat for this species. Photo/State of New Jersey

attempts were condensed into one outcome to avoid overrepresentation by some pairs. I then created poly lines that represented the north and south boundaries of each inlet. I measured the distance from the nesting pair to the closest inlet which provided a distance, in miles, for each record. I next merged the distance data with reproductive data for each nesting pair. Finally, I ran statistical tests to examine the distance of pairs to nearest inlet, distance of pairs to shored and unshored inlets, and fledge rate (number of fledges/pair) at shored versus unshored inlets. Since individuals were not banded on a long term or large scale basis during the study period, there was no way to account for multiple measurements on the same pairs. However, the majority of Piping Plovers probably do not live longer than 5 years and many do not nest in their first year post fledge (Wilcox, 1959). Therefore, the twenty year survey period might have captured portions of or the entirety of at least 6 generations, assuaging some of the implications for multiple measurements on the same individuals since it is likely there was quite a bit of turnover from 1987-2007.

Results

The majority (62%) of all Piping Plover pairs were located within 1 mile of an inlet (Fig. 2). The difference between <1.0 mi and all other categories was so great that this category was further subdivided into one tenth divisions to determine if the pattern of a higher number of pairs nesting closer to inlets continued, and to a less dramatic degree, it did with the majority of the pairs being located within a half mile of the inlet. I next divided the data into those pairs that were closer to shored versus unshored inlets. Again, the pattern of being < 1.0 mi from an inlet held for both categories. Splitting the data into these two categories also showed that the majority of the pairs were located closer to unshored inlets. 70.6% of all known pairs were located closer to an unshored inlet, while 29.4% were located closer to a shored inlet (Fig. 3). A similar trend was observed for the number of fledges, with 74.16% of fledges produced from 1987-2007 located on sites closer to unshored inlets versus 25.84% located at sites closer to shored inlets. There was no statistically significant difference between the distances to inlets between pairs who nested near shored inlets versus those who nested near unshored inlets. Therefore more pairs were located near unshored inlets but the preference for nesting as close as possible to inlets held for both categories.

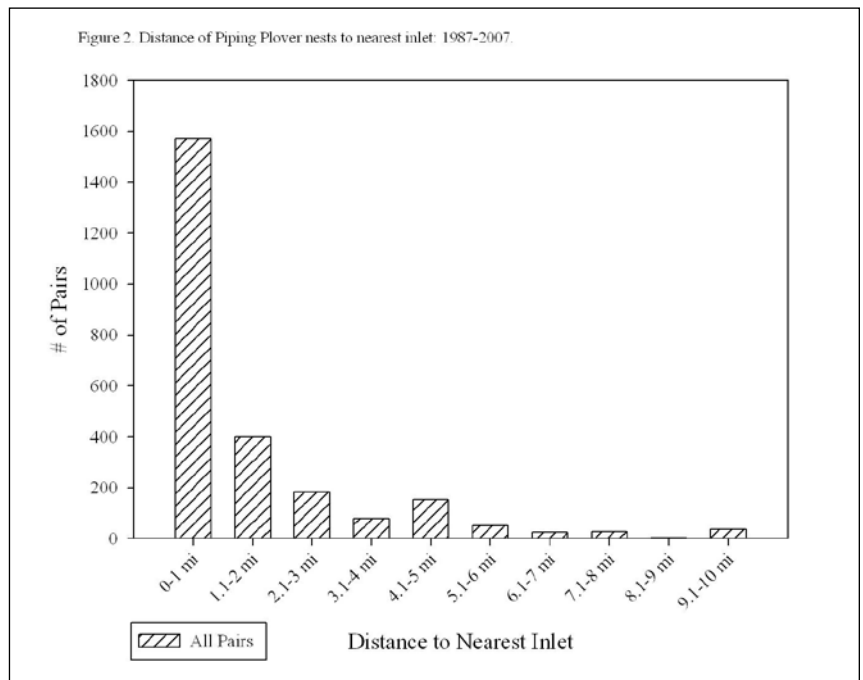
Reproductive success did not differ whether pairs nested near a shored or unshored inlet. In fact, it was remarkable how similar the rates were for each category. Piping Plovers are a short lived species and in New Jersey the population trends are tightly correlated with reproductive success. Despite a higher

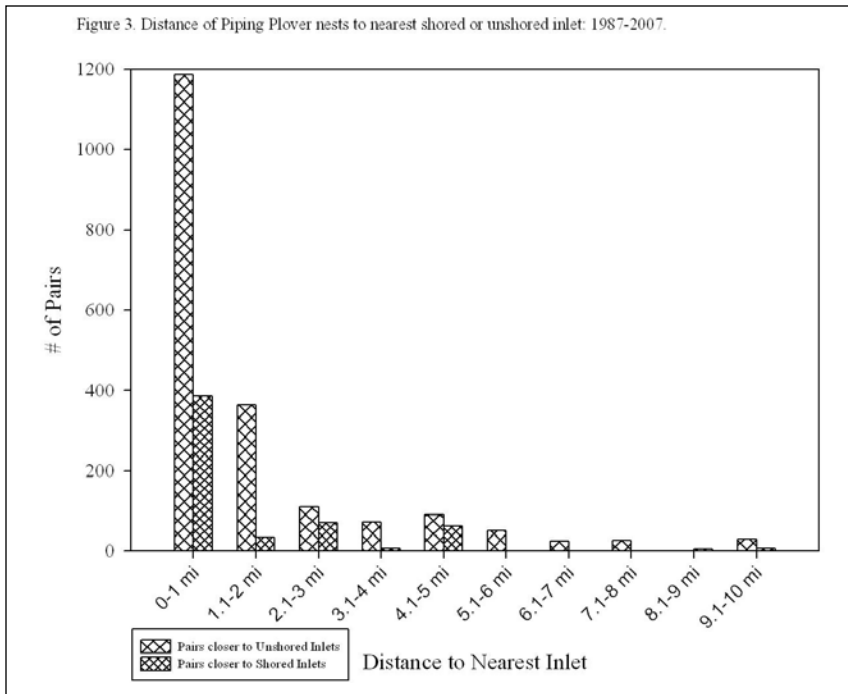


number of pairs being attracted to unshored inlets (and therefore a higher number of young fledged from these areas), these birds did not have higher fledge rates. The fledge rate was 0.95 fledges/pair at unshored areas and 0.90 fledges/pair at shored areas, which was not a statistically significant difference.

Discussion

Inlets played a crucial role in Piping Plovers nesting site selection and this was especially true for those that were unshored. This was a critical finding to understanding nesting site selection and ultimately the ability of Piping Plovers to recover in New Jersey. It suggests that Piping Plovers searching





for optimal habitat in New Jersey may be limited by the number of unstabilized inlet areas available for nesting, which are only present at a small number of locations. It may also explain why there are stretches of coastline that were never used by Piping Plovers between 1987-2007 – there was not an unshored inlet nearby (Fig. 4).

There are several possible reasons why Piping Plovers prefer to nest near inlets. The first hypothesis is that inlets provide the kind of dynamic environment that Piping Plovers naturally prefer. The only other habitat type in a coastal system that probably exceeds inlets in dynamism is an overwash, which occurs when a dune is breached. Overwashes however, are even less common along the NJ coast than unshored inlets



Corson's Inlet State Park. This aerial photo shows an unshored inlet. Note the lack of symmetry of the beach. Instead there are wide sandy swaths available for nesting and plenty of access to foraging habitat. Photo/State of New Jersey

and even more ephemeral in nature (they provide short-term habitat that is only available after a storm creates it and fill in with vegetation quickly). Since inlet beaches are subject to the effects of weather and the sea on more than one side (as opposed to the single orientation of an oceanfront beach) they are more likely to be shaped and reshaped as flooding events, storms, wind and waves hammer the multiple sides of the inlet beach. This rejuvenation of the beach is probably very attractive to the birds since it can reduce vegetation density and provide a fresh quality to the habitat. The “newness” factor of habitat is appealing to Piping Plovers. An example of this attraction to novel habitat can be seen in the work that is being done on the Missouri River in Nebraska by the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) and which is being studied by researchers from Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. The USACE has created sandbars in the middle of the river, which provide new habitat to the plovers. The sandbars are not vegetated and compete with the older, natural sandbars that plovers have previously utilized as nesting areas. The work there has shown that the plovers prefer the engineered sandbars at a higher rate than would be expected by chance and perhaps even to their detriment (the higher than average densities that the birds are nesting in are exacerbating predation issues and may also be leading to infanticide) (D. Catlin, personal communication, 8 November 2008). Other examples have been observed in New Jersey. When an overwash was created at North Brigantine Natural Area in the mid-1990's, birds nested at a higher density and with great reproductive output than is often the norm in NJ. Stone Harbor Point saw enormous growth, despite dismal reproductive success, in the early 2000's when the habitat was increasing.

A second hypothesis is that inlets provide more surface area available for foraging than an oceanfront beach. For a precocial species like a Piping Plover one can imagine that proximity to quality foraging habitat (also known as MoSH, or moist substrate habitat/moist sparse habitat) is a central component to nesting site selection (Cohen, 2005). Since the adults do not feed the young, they must locate the areas where MoSH opportunities are highest. Inlet beaches provide a greater chance that the young will encounter foraging opportunities than oceanfront beaches do. It might also be hypothesized that since the adults share incubation and defense duties, adults might want to situate their nests close to MoSH habitat so that the non-attending adult is never too far from the nest if there is a need to return and defend the nest. In fact, previous research confirms some of this hypothesis. One study showed that the fledger rate for chicks foraging on an inlet beach was 69% versus 19% on oceanfront beaches (Patterson, Fraser

& Roggenbuck, 1991). Another showed that chicks with access to salt-pond mudflats experienced higher fledge success (Regosin, 1998). A third study showed that all segments within 1 km of ephemeral pools or tidal bay flats were used for nesting, while <50% of beach segments without these features were used (Elias, Fraser & Buckley, 2000). Finally, Fraser, Keane & Buckley showed that plovers nest near MoSH, even if they cannot access it easily (2005). With washover events a fairly common occurrence in inlet systems, it is not hard to imagine the foraging habitat being invigorated by these regular overwash events and the plovers being attracted to that feature.

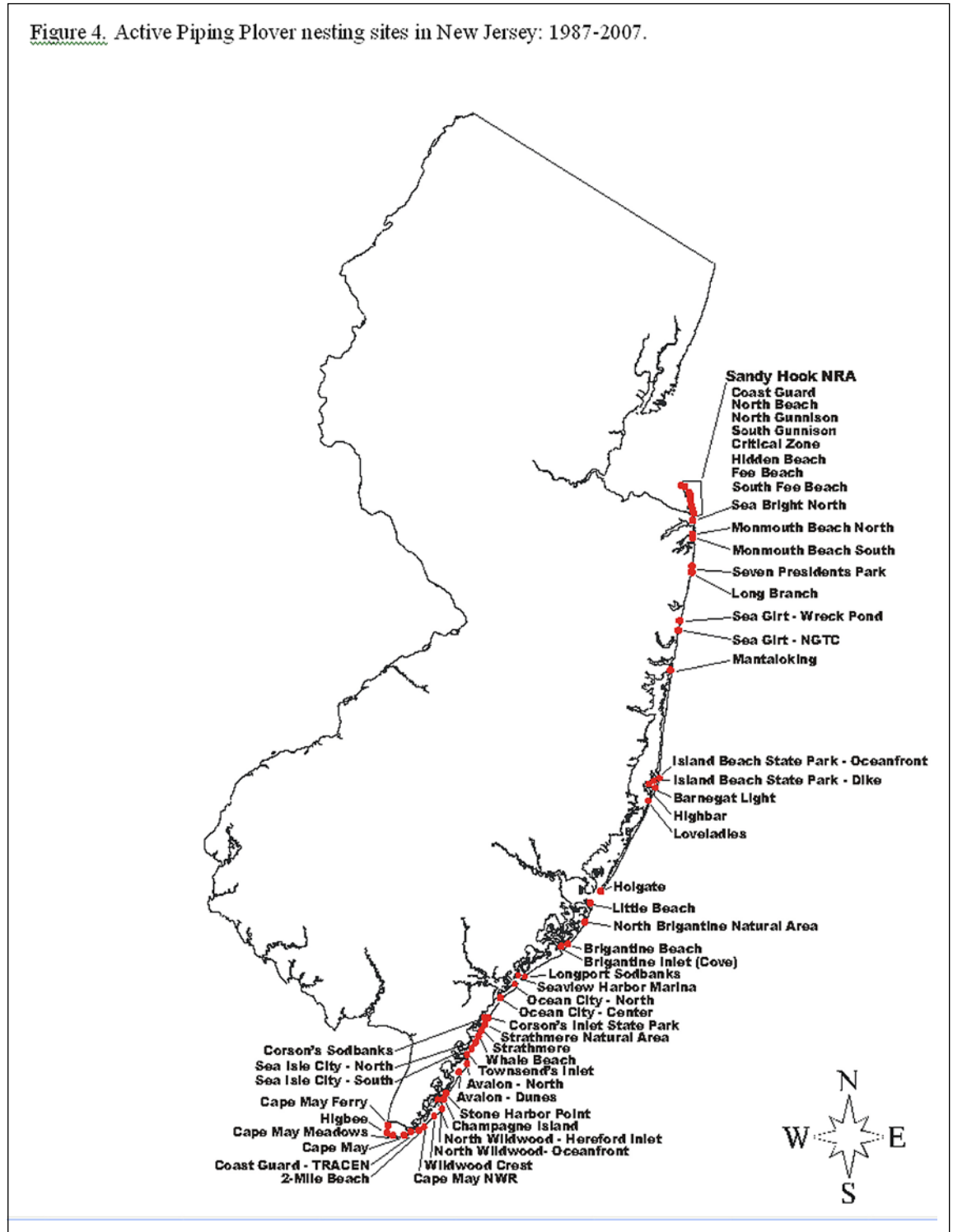
In New Jersey, there were 13 inlet systems that were within the area that was suitable, usable habitat for Piping Plovers, but only 5 remained unshored and natural on both sides (and that number is likely to decline very soon). The rest have a jetty (or some other stabilizing element) on one or both sides.

Inlets by nature are somewhat transient in that they can open and close in different locations as sand shifts and moves along the coast. This characteristic is not compatible with the human wants and needs of a stable environment on which to live and operate. Humans prefer inlets to be stable for boater safety, to keep channels open and to stop or slow down the shifting of the barrier islands that people live and work on. The first jetties were installed in New Jersey early last century in an effort to stabilize inlets (Salvini, 1995). Over time, efforts became more sophisticated and permanent so that jetties now consist of large granite stones packed together to pre-

vent movement (<http://intraweb.stockton.edu/eyos/page.cfm?siteID=149&pageID=4>).

Unfortunately, jetties also prevent the natural washovers of a site and reduce the amount of MoSH available to plovers for foraging. There are fewer mud flat areas and overwash areas at these shored inlet beaches than in unshored inlet beaches. It is unlikely that these sites will ever return to their unshored versions since that would involve the removal of the jetties, a highly improbable scenario. The focus from here forward should be to reduce the chance that

Figure 4. Active Piping Plover nesting sites in New Jersey: 1987-2007.





Adult Piping Plover (background) with young. Photo: Michael O'Brien

any additional shoring will occur at unshored inlet areas and to increase restoration efforts that mimic the conditions of these areas to compensate for the loss of habitat. Due to their large size, Sandy Hook and Delaware Bay are not likely to be candidates, nor are the inlets associated with the federal refuges and some state natural areas (where there are no nearby human structures). That leaves one or both sides of Great Egg Inlet, Corson's Inlet, Townsend's Inlet and Hereford Inlet as those that are susceptible to additional shoring.

There was no statistical difference in fledge rate among the categories and the rates were below target levels. This suggests that although unshored systems attracted a larger population of Piping Plovers to their sites, they were not better at fledging birds, which is ultimately the metric used to measure success in this population. These data suggested the need to concentrate management efforts at increasing reproductive success at sites adjacent to unshored systems since this is where this is where the majority of the birds were located within the state.

Management Implications and Conclusions

Piping Plovers may have become victims of their own adaptiveness. Over time they have survived as a species by capitalizing on their unique ability to not only endure, but thrive, in an environment that is constantly changing. The coastal beach ecosystem is a harsh setting whose inhabitants must be able to cope with salt, sand, water and much less cover (in terms of vegetation and other protective features) than their inland counterparts. Due to these conditions, biodiversity on a beach is lower than can be

found in more forgiving environments elsewhere. However, the species who endure in coastal systems are exquisitely adapted to the conditions they encounter on a daily basis.

For these species, they have not only adapted to a naturally changing environment but have come to rely on that change to successfully navigate their way through the landscape. Unfortunately, the advent of human development in coastal regions brought a revolution the likes of which had never occurred in this system. Stabilization was thrust upon it and its effect has had far reaching consequences for the species that had spent so much time honing their abilities to take advantage of, and eventually depend on, the dynamism that is so intrinsic to the system.

In their natural state, beaches are constantly shifting and being reshaped over time. Entire islands migrate westward, inlets open and close, dunes develop and are later blown out. The massive power source that is the ocean, coupled with the force of winds and tides, ensure that no area in a coastal system is likely to remain static for very long (Kaufman & Pilkey, 1983). The impact of global climate change and the subsequent increased sea-level rise will only intensify its dynamic quality. But for humans, there is no greater threat to their environment than change. Despite the positive impacts that (what humans define as) catastrophic events can have (hurricanes revitalize habitat, wildfires allow a forest to grow and remain healthy) humans stubbornly refuse to accept that these events are a part of the natural cycle and work tirelessly to prevent systems from functioning in healthy, natural ways. In systems across the globe, humans have sought prophylactic solutions to avoid the change that they perceive as a danger to their way of life.

One of the greatest examples of this is found within coastal systems, which are more prone to change than many other ecosystems. Once humans began to live and work in coastal environments (rather than just use them seasonally), stability became a central goal. There have been many attempts to reach this goal and those attempts have taken many forms. People have filled low lying areas, built jetties and groins, placed sand in eroding areas and erected miles of dune fence. But every storm demonstrates that our attempts will never be permanent. However, these storms have a peculiar effect - instead of proving that our attempts are futile, they instead harden our resolve that we will eventually be successful in our endeavors.

This propensity for stability has serious implications for Piping Plovers. This research has shown that nesting site selection by Piping Plovers in New Jersey is primarily driven by access to natural, changing beach environments. These are quite often adjacent to inlet systems, which are unfortunately one of the

most highly targeted areas for stabilization. Many of the inlet systems in New Jersey have already been stabilized. The result of these efforts (in this case, through the construction of jetties on the north and/or south sides of an inlet) appears to have had negative consequences for the inlet's ability to attract Piping Plovers to the beaches near it. Although the stabilized inlets still attracted Piping Plovers to their beaches, it was at a rate of almost 1:3 when compared to unshored inlet systems. The jetties no longer allow the water and sand to interact as they once did – no washovers, no severe erosion or accretion, no opening or closing of the inlet itself – which is precisely what they were meant to accomplish. The irony is that they will never be successful in the long term – in fact, jetties exacerbate erosion – and yet in the short term they are incredibly efficient in disturbing the natural patterns of the system – often to the detriment of its inhabitants (Pilkey, 1998, Brown, 2002).

It appears that Piping Plovers are maladapted to the human-disturbed coastal environment commonly found in New Jersey. The amount of habitat that they find attractive is dwindling on a yearly basis. Although much of the development that could occur already has, there are still vulnerable areas that must be protected to the highest degree possible. It may already be too late for Piping Plovers in New Jersey. We may never reach our population goals or see long-term population growth simply because there is not enough suitable habitat available for this species. It is virtually impossible to imagine a scenario where inlet stabilization efforts will be reversed, or that future stabilization efforts will be eliminated. So where does that leave the future of Piping Plovers in New Jersey?

For one, projects whose goal is to restore or improve existing habitat conditions should be aggressively pursued. An excellent example of this is the Cape May Meadows restoration project that was completed in conjunction with a beach replenishment in 2005. This was a near perfect execution of the type of projects that should be pursued. The site is located near an inlet and has a long history of site use by plovers. The restoration project sought not only to attract birds to the site but to increase reproductive success among them, clearly the Achilles heel for New Jersey plovers, and both goals have been met. The foraging ponds have been an undisputed success, and the commitment to maintaining this habitat has been paramount to its triumphant execution. This is a shining example of the type of restoration project that must be undertaken if we are to have any chance at recovery in this state. Other sites that would be excellent candidates for large scale restoration efforts are Barnegat Light and Cape May NWR. They both have a history of birds nesting at their sites and could see an increase in pair numbers with the right conditions.

However, that is only part of the solution. Fledge rates were low in virtually all locations over time. Low fledge rates may have been sustainable if there was an abundance of suitable habitat available. But in its absence, the rates are alarming and do not bode well for the long term viability and growth of this population. In addition to creating more habitat opportunities, we must ensure that the birds that are attracted to these sites are not being drawn into population sinks. Therefore, we must enact stronger measures in terms of predator control, reduction of ORV and beach rake use to ensure that all efforts are made to improve reproductive success for this population.

Piping Plovers may never recover in New Jersey and we may only ever maintain a stable population (no small feat considering the situation). However, by proceeding in a thoughtful and careful manner, we may be able to mitigate some of the damage that has been done to their habitat and create new opportunities for nesting and high reproductive rates in this state.

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The Winter 2008-2009 Incursion of Rough-legged Hawks (*Buteo lagopus*) in New Jersey

by MICHAEL BRITT*

Introduction

During the winter of 2008-09, a large number of Rough-legged Hawks irrupted into New Jersey. The flight commenced after a 19 December snow-storm (that dumped up to 10 inches in northern New Jersey), was followed by another smaller storm on 21 December (Office of the New Jersey State Climatologist 2009). 22 December seemed to be the “big day” with reports of multiple birds from the Hackensack Meadowlands, Great Swamp NWR, Alpha Grasslands, and Duke Farms. One-day high counts for the season were as follows: Hackensack Meadowlands, 10 on 12/26/08, author; Wallkill River NWR, 10 on 1/2/09, author; Barnegat CBC, 8 on 1/4/09, VONJAS 1/8/09; Alpha, 6 in early February, VONJAS 2/12/09; Great Swamp, 5+ in late December, VONJAS 12/31/08; and Troy Meadows, 5 on 2/6/09, author. Large flights are not caused by a single factor but rather an array of factors that “operate simultaneously” (Bosakowski 1992). This article will explore the ingredients needed for a good Rough-legged Hawk winter in New Jersey.

Natural History

The Rough-legged Hawk is a large, polymorphic, arctic *buteo*. Light and dark morphs occur in all age/sex classes (Wheeler 2003). With the exception of adult and sub adult males, all other age/sex classes have an intermediate morph “that forms a clinal link between light and dark morphs” (Wheeler 2003). According to Wheeler 2003, “Plumage variation and regional status of morphs adhere to Gloger’s Rule.” That is, dark morphs tend to be more common in the moister areas within the breeding range (e.g., northern Quebec and Alaska) and relatively scarce in the more arid regions such as the “north-central Canadian tundra” and especially “at high-arctic latitudes (Wheeler 2003). Consequently, in the east, dark morphs can account for 50% or more of a local wintering population (Wheeler 2003).

The Shawangunk Grasslands (a late winter staging area just north of New Jersey in Ulster County NY) held fifteen Rough-legged Hawks on February 26, 2005, eight of which were dark morphs (53.3%). Of the twelve Rough-leggeds that were recorded in the

Hackensack Meadows during winter 2008-09, five (41.7%) were dark morphs. Hence, significant proportions of dark morphs can be observed on wintering grounds south of these humid breeding areas.

This species is sexually dimorphic but some overlap in size between the sexes does occur (Wheeler 2003). Measurements range from 18-23 inches (45-58 cm) in length, with a wingspan of 48-56 inches (122-142 cm) (Wheeler 2003). Weights averaged 29 ounces (822 g) for males (n=5) and 38 ounces (1.08 kg) for females (n=7, Brown and Amadon 1968).

Rough-legged Hawks spend the breeding season on the vast Arctic tundra, building nests primarily on cliffs. Some nests are placed in trees, especially where the species utilizes “semi-open spruce woodlands” for breeding (Wheeler 2003). The Rough-legged Hawk is a bird of expansive, open terrain. When wintering in New Jersey, the Rough-legged frequents salt, brackish, and freshwater marshes; large fallow fields; landfills (both active and inactive); airports; and agricultural areas. Currently the “population is stable but fluctuates locally and regionally at irregular intervals because of prey abundance and other factors” (Wheeler 2003).

Rough-legged Hawks, with their relatively small feet and talons, are essentially small rodent (lemmings, voles, mice, rats) specialists but will also prey on a variety of other prey items (rabbits, birds, fish, reptiles, amphibians, insects), and take advantage of carrion given the opportunity (Wheeler 2003). Rough-legged Hawks often hunt by hovering and kiting but will still-hunt (from a perch or the ground)

during calm conditions. Like American Kestrels (*Falco sparverius*), Rough-legged Hawks often hover over areas with high concentrations of meadow voles (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*), which can be detected by the excretions (visible in ultraviolet light) that the rodents leave along their runways (Koivula and Viitala 1999). Like other raptors, Rough-legged Hawks will sometimes feed on the wing, especially during piracy attempts.

Rough-legged Hawks are short to moderate distance migrants that are said to exhibit a differential pattern of migration, in which female birds (with their larger body mass) tend to winter further north than males (Wheeler 2003). However, this tendency may not be as pronounced in the east, as the wintering range here is narrower than the west. Like Snowy Owls (*Nyctea scandiaca*), most Rough-legged Hawks observed in New Jersey are immature birds, which are virtually impossible to sex in the field. Vanguard Rough-legged Hawks may arrive in New Jersey by mid-October but the peak of the fall flight is late October into November. This species is recorded in very small numbers at New Jersey hawk watches. From 1976 to 2006, Cape May averaged only 3.9 birds, with a high count of 13 birds in 1999 (New Jersey Audubon 2009). However, it is worth noting that the species’ migratory pathways are not fully understood as revealed by an experiment carried out in 1990 by Citizens United and the Cape May Bird Observatory (Sutton 2003). During that year, East Point (a marsh road flanked by woods in eastern Cumberland County) was manned for sixty days from September to early December to get a sense of just how many raptors move up the Delaware Bayshore to find a narrower crossing of the bay. While Cape May recorded 3 Rough-legged Hawks that fall, East Point tallied 27 (Sutton 2003). Clearly, our understanding of Rough-legged Hawk migration routes in the state is incomplete and warrants more research.

Most Rough-legged Hawks wintering in New Jersey arrive between mid-December and late January, but the movement is protracted, dependent upon snow depth and prey populations to our north (Wheeler 2003). In spring migration, most Rough-legged Hawks depart the state between February and mid March, with the exact timing being weather-dependent. Global climate change could have a significant impact on this species, as permafrost melts and the taiga advances northward. On the same note, global climate change will probably also wind up affecting the hawk’s winter distribution in New Jersey and elsewhere.

Prime Conditions for a Flight

New Jersey is near the middle of the Rough-legged Hawk’s wintering range in the east, the southern extent being Delmarva Peninsula, northern Virginia, Kentucky, and Tennessee (Wheeler 2003). However,



There were five dark morphs among the 12 Rough-legged Hawks that wintered in the Hackensack Meadowlands during winter 2008-09. The white panels on the primaries of this bird are suggestive of a juvenile but it is difficult to say with certainty because the wings are partially swept back. Photographed in the NJ Meadowlands along Valley Brook Ave., 25 December 2008. Photo/Kevin Watson





This light morph Rough-legged Hawk was very approachable, as it favored the remediated *Spartina* marsh behind Secaucus High School. This particular bird often hunted from the railing of the marsh walkway or this nearby tree. Photographed 27 December 2008. Photo/Mike Britt

the wintering range is not uniformly inhabited and in the east most Rough-leggeds winter north of New Jersey, favoring expansive agricultural areas in upstate New York and southern Ontario, especially fallow hayfields.

In NJ, Rough-legged Hawk statewide totals on Christmas Bird Counts (CBC) over the last fifty years ranged from 3 in 2006-07 to 111 in 1981-82 (National Audubon Society 2009). Noteworthy is the fact that most CBCs take place in the latter half of December (the current count period is December 14-January 5), which typically is not the peak of this hawk's winter abundance in the state.

There are good Rough-legged winters and poor ones. Rough-legged Hawks tend to be most scarce during mild winters with relatively little snowfall. The best Rough-legged Hawk incursions into New Jersey tend to be during the harshest winters with the heaviest snowfall. Snow tends to be the "X factor" because meadow voles (*Microtus pennsylvanicus*), a chief prey item, are difficult to detect and capture in deep snow. The voles prefer to stay in their runways under the snow because that is where most of their food (grass, seed, etc.) is, plus the snow provides insulation and some level of protection from predators. Since Rough-legged Hawks often hunt visually from the air, the voles (and their excretions) may be concealed under the snow.

When deep snow buries upstate New York, New

England, and southern Ontario (the core of the wintering range in the east), Rough-leggeds will often invade New Jersey. For example, after the 23-24 January 2005 blizzard, 21 Rough-legged Hawks were tallied during a 25 January survey conducted along the Mullica River-Great Bay Estuary alone (Sutton and Dowdell 2005). Rough-legged Hawks favor the coastal marshes during periods of extensive snow cover because the milder coastal temperatures coupled with the tidal nature of the marshes ensures that snow cover does not last for extended periods (Bosakowski 1992). However, it is important to note that weather is not the only factor promoting big flights.

Backdrop for the 2008-2009 Irruption

Summer 2008 was said to be a good lemming year on the eastern Canadian tundra. When lemmings peak, populations of Arctic predators (e.g., Snowy Owl, Gyrfalcon (*Falco rusticolus*), Rough-legged Hawk, Arctic fox (*Alopex lagopus*) peak as well. During such years there will be increased production of young by these species. Increasing predator abundance results in decreasing prey numbers as the season progresses towards late summer/early fall. While most age/sex classes of Gyrfalcon winter on the tundra, the entire population of Rough-legged Hawk disperses southward to find areas with better foraging opportunities (Wheeler 2003). Without significant snowfall, most Rough-legged Hawks will winter in the aforementioned areas north of New Jersey. However, a 19 December 2008 snowstorm pushed lots of Rough-legged Hawks into the more hospitable climes of New Jersey.

Once here, the hawks look for areas that have an abundance of small rodents. Based on hawk numbers, the two best areas in the state during the winter of 2008-09 were the Wallkill River NWR and the New Jersey Meadowlands, with each area accruing one-day high counts of 10 Rough-leggeds. The Rough-legged Hawk habitat in the Wallkill is a combination of fallow fields, freshwater marsh, and food crops. The Hackensack Meadowlands is a combination of brackish tidal marsh and old landfills (former garbage dumps). The two hotspots in the Meadowlands were the MRI tract (a remediated *Spartina*/*Phragmites* marsh in Carlstadt in the northern part of the Hackensack Meadowlands district) and the area around Richard W. DeKorte Park (in the central part of the district), the latter site seeming to benefit from the halting of the Encap project. Encap cleared lots of *Phragmites* for the slated golf course and commercial development. Since construction stopped, nature reclaimed the land. Meadow Voles and Eastern Cottontails (*Sylvilagus floridanus*) were especially abundant in the network of open ground, mounds of rock and earth, and early successional growth. The Rough-legged Hawks hunted most often over mugwort (*Artemisia vulgaris*) on the

Encap site and the adjacent Kingsland landfill.

Rough-legged flights are said to be cyclic, every four years or so in tandem with the previously describe lemmings scenario. Interestingly, the winter of 2000-01, 2004-05, and 2008-09 were all big Rough-legged Hawk winters. The best years are a result of good breeding success, classic winter weather, low prey populations (or decreased vulnerability due to snow and other factors) in favored wintering areas north of New Jersey, and good *local* prey populations. Large flights of Rough-legged Hawks often coincide with flights of their Arctic counterpart, the Snowy Owl.

Account of Winter 2008-09 Observations

Mid-December is a good time to look for arriving (wintering) Rough-legged Hawks in their preferred New Jersey haunts. On December 13, 2009, I surveyed the Barnegat Bay marshes (from Barnaget to Parker Run) via well known marsh roads running east from Route 9. A total of four birds (two light, two dark) were observed hunting the marshes. However, by January 4th, 8 Rough-leggeds were recorded in the area via the Barnegat CBC (New Jersey Audubon, 2009). Even during poor flight years, the Wallkill River NWR and the marshes around Barnaget Bay, Mullica River, Great Egg Harbor River/Tuckahoe River; and some areas along the Delaware Bayshore (e.g., Jakes Landing, Turkey Point) usually hold a few birds. On December 18th (the day before the big snow storm), I observed a migrant (light morph) Rough-legged over Hatfield Swamp and wondered if a big flight was about to commence. The week or so after the storm would answer that question. A smaller snow storm increased the chances of a flight by depositing an additional one to four inches in northern New Jersey on December 21st (Office of State Climatologist, 2009). While commuting through the Hackensack Meadowlands (via I-95) on December 22nd, I observed a Rough-legged Hawk hover-hunting over the area of Berry's Creek/Oritani Marsh (Bergen County). A check of *jerseybirds*, a New Jersey Birding list serve, later that night revealed additional reports from the Great Swamp (Morris County), Duke Farms (Somerset County), and the Alpha Grasslands (Warren County). The widespread nature of the reports gave one hope. I rose eagerly on the morning of December 23rd. The plan was to survey the two best spots in the Hackensack Meadowlands in a relatively short period of time to get a good sense of just how many Rough-leggeds arrived. When I pulled into the parking area at Mill Creek Point (a great observation point in Secaucus across the river from the MRI tract), a light morph Rough-legged Hawk was perched in a small tree (waiting?) right across the small creek by the boat launch. A quick scan of the marshes across the way revealed two more light morphs and a dark



Rough-legged Hawks often hunt from the air via a combination of hovering and kiting. Rough-leggeds will resort to perch-hunting during calm conditions and even hunt from the ground. North Arlington, 1 January 2009. Photo/Steve Byland

morph, all hovering over the marsh. I spent roughly thirty minutes here, before I made the ten minute drive over to DeKorte Park in Lyndhurst. Once in the DeKorte area, I observed a light Rough-legged Hawk hovering over Oritani Marsh and a dark bird hovering over Saw Mill Creek and later the DeKorte impoundments. A total of six individuals were tallied the morning of December 23rd.

On December 26th, I repeated the survey route followed three days earlier, this time starting at daybreak. Four Rough-legged Hawks were counted at Mill Creek Point (three dark, one light) and the DeKorte area held six (four light, two dark). However, at least twelve different Rough-legged Hawks utilized the Hackensack Meadowlands as revealed by the one day high counts of five dark morph (various dates) and seven light morph (Jan. 23, 2009). Knowing too that the Wallkill River NWR often attracts large numbers of Rough-leggeds, I surveyed the marshes and fields here on January 2, 2009, and observed a conservative total of ten Rough-leggeds (six light, four dark). Troy Meadows (a remnant of Glacial Lake Passaic) held five Rough-leggeds (four light, one dark) on February 6th but interestingly not a single bird was observed here on February 8th when the temperature broke 60 degrees. The same trend was noted in the Hackensack Meadows, Great Swamp, and Alpha Grasslands as well, after this mild spell. However, eight Rough-leggeds were still present at the Wallkill River NWR on February 16th, although it is worth noting that this is the northernmost wintering area in the state (on the Orange County, NY line). It has been said that Rough-leggeds begin migrating northward at the first hint of spring (Wheeler 2003). Rough-legged Hawks



are very plastic in their movements, responding to a number of biotic and abiotic factors and will even shift northward in the wintering range at virtually any point in the season if snow cover retreats.

Agonistic Interactions and Roosting Observations

Other raptors with similar food habits to Rough-legged Hawks shared the prime habitat in the DeKorte area of the Hackensack Meadowlands. These included numbers of Red-tailed Hawk, Northern Harrier, American Kestrel, Barn Owl, Long-eared Owl, Short-eared Owl, and Snowy Owl. Not surprisingly, several agonistic interactions were observed. On December 23, 2008, a Rough-legged Hawk flushed three ground roosting Short-eared Owls, when it landed on a nearby mound. On January 22, 2009, a Snowy Owl was observed chasing a Rough-legged off of a pole and pirating its prey (a small Cottontail), which the Snowy then took to the ground to consume. On January 29, 2009, a Rough-legged Hawk made a 300-400 yard flight across a field to pirate from an adult male Northern Harrier, causing the Harrier to leave its perch and drop its meal, which the Rough-legged then took to the same perch and consumed. A case of attempted piracy was also observed at the Wallkill River NWR on the evening of February 7, 2009. Here, a Rough-legged Hawk tried to pirate a vole from a Short-eared Owl, until the owl out-climbed it and began soaring hundreds of feet in the air, at which point the Rough-legged Hawk ended its pursuit. While an abundance of Meadow Voles may act to reduce interspecific competition to an extent, stealing a meal can be more energy efficient at times.

Noteworthy roosting observations transpired on January 25, 2009 and February 7, 2009, as I watched a light morph Rough-legged Hawk (presumably the same bird) go down to roost in the *Phragmites* marsh along Berry's Creek at twenty minutes past sunset. Rough-leggeds are said to prefer coniferous or deciduous stands for roosting, although ground roosting has been documented. At the Shawangunk Grasslands NWR in nearby upstate New York, Rough-legged Hawks often roost in a deciduous stand in the southeast portion of the old airport. The DeKorte area Rough-leggeds roosted communally (whether on the ground or in trees is unknown) along the train tracks behind the Kingsland landfill (which may act as a wind breaker), as this is where the birds dispersed from at daybreak.

Conclusion

During the winter of 2008-09, a large incursion of Rough-legged Hawks was noted in the Hackensack Meadowlands, Wallkill River NWR, Alpha Grasslands, Great Swamp NWR, Troy Meadows, Duke

Farms, and a few other sites. The flight peaked during the last quarter of December after two snowstorms, one on December 19th, another on December 21st, deposited significant snowfall. Good numbers of Rough-legged Hawks remained at these locations until a bout of spring-like weather during the first 10 days of February, at which point northward dispersal commenced. Large flights of Rough-leggeds are a result of a combination of factors such as good breeding success (large clutches), harsh winter weather with heavy snowfall, diminished prey availability to our north (due to a low ebb in the vole cycle or reduced vulnerability due to heavy snow cover), and high local populations of small rodents in favored New Jersey wintering grounds.

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Format of the Regional Reports

Species name (major rarities in all-caps): significance of record (optional; see below), number of individuals (if more than one), location, date, observer initials.

Abbreviations used for “significance” terms include:

high = high count(s) for season
all-time high = all-time high for that season in that region (not necessarily for entire state)

low = an unusually low total
late = somewhat or unusually late

all-time late = all-time late for that region

early = somewhat or unusually early

all-time early = all-time early for that region

dep = last record from that season, although not unusually late (listed only if of some significance)

arr = first record from that season, although not unusually early (listed only if of some significance)

Within a given species, records with a similar significance (e.g., seasonal high counts) are clumped together, separated by commas, and usually ordered by date. These reports are separated by a semicolon from those with a different significance (e.g., late records).

County names appear in italics.

Other Oft-used Abbreviations:

ad: adult

imm: immature

juv: juvenile

f: female

m: male

et al.: and others

fide: vouched by

m.obs: many observers

v.obs: various observers

Is: Island

Lk: Lake

Mt: Mountain

NWR: National Wildlife Refuge

Pt: Point

Res: Reservoir

SF: State Forest

SP: State Park

Twp: Township

WINTER Field Notes

December 2008 – February 2009



REGION I

Northwestern Region, including Sussex, Warren, Hunterdon, and the western parts of Morris and Passaic Counties.

EDITOR—Rick Radis, 69 Ogden Avenue, Rockaway, NJ 07866; e-mail: isotria@verizon.net

Corrigenda from Fall 2008:

The empid reported as an Alder in September in Holland Township was not identified beyond “Traill’s” sp.

The Dickcissel reported as being DH’s first for Hunterdon was actually only his first for Holland Township and first fall record in Hunterdon.

The winter 2008-2009 saw a weather pattern that has become typical in recent years, a relatively mild December followed by a colder and snowier January and February. By season’s end, only the largest reservoirs and lakes had open water. Reports of large numbers of diving ducks and other waterbirds

were relatively few, and several observers reported lower than usual numbers.

Three Christmas Bird Counts were conducted in the region: Sussex CBC 14 Dec (90 species, compiler Alan Boyd), Northwest Hunterdon CBC 14 Dec (91 species, compiler Pete Kwiatek), and Walnut Valley CBC 20 Dec (93 species, compiler Dennis Briede).

Snow Goose numbers continue to build in the region, largely in southwestern Warren County and northwestern Hunterdon; Rich Kane reported a high of 15,000 at Merrill Creek in late January. Perhaps associated with this rise were the rarer geese; or are observers simply looking more closely at geese now that there are greater opportunities? Greater White-fronted Geese were seen in Newton and Sussex Boro; a Ross’s was briefly present at the Lentini corn maze in Newton; and Cackling Geese were found at Alpha, Merrill Creek, and Round Valley Reservoir. Doubtless a return from last year, the Barnacle Goose was back in Califon by December 1 or earlier. An Eared Grebe found on 6 January at Round Valley Reservoir was seen by many observers and remained through the period. Coinciding with a freeze-out on Lake Erie in January, Red-necked Grebes began to arrive at Round Valley and Merrill Creek late in the month.

Reflecting the mild autumn, Lake Hopatcong had a near-record late Osprey on 15 December, and another was also late at Green Pond on 1-8 December. Several observers thought that Northern Harrier numbers were down, particularly at Walkkill River NWR; the regional high was 7 at Alpha in mid-December. An adult female Northern Goshawk was at Green Pond on 2 December, near where the species nested in the spring, the only report. Liberty Loop had a high of ten Rough-legged Hawks in early January, and the species was widely reported in better than average numbers throughout the region. American Kestrel continues its steep decline; there were a total of four reports from the region. A good find at any season, but rarest in winter, was a Sandhill Crane at Liberty Loop on 15 February; the bird was seen two days later by a few other birders, but not thereafter.

The three best places to see rare or uncommon gulls in the region are the Sussex County Landfill in Lafayette (please register at the entrance), Merrill Creek Reservoir,

and Round Valley Reservoir. The latter is the most productive, particularly at the boat launch area at the western end of the reservoir. All three sites had Iceland Gulls in various plumages this winter, and Glaucous Gulls were found at Round Valley and the landfill, as well as at Spruce Run Reservoir. A high of 68 Lesser Black-backs was reached at Round Valley by the end of February. Most owls were either under-reported or simply low in numbers. Short-eared Owls were found in small numbers at their annual wintering areas at Alpha and the WRNWA. Horned Larks and Snow Buntings were found in higher than average numbers, particularly at Alpha, WRNWR, and the Allamuchy area, as were Lapland Longspurs; eight of the latter were seen around the Wallkill on 2 January. Wintering sparrows seemed to be present in relatively low numbers, but a Lark Sparrow on the Sussex CBC was a highlight.

An excellent flight of White-winged Crossbills began in early January, and small flocks were found at numerous sites in Sussex County, though reports came from all counties in the region. Birds could be reliably found through the end of the period at Allamuchy SP, on Clinton Rd., and along Old Mine Rd in the Water Gap. Common Redpolls also staged a better-than-average flight, usually in company with big numbers of Pine Siskins that invaded the state in late fall.

This winter saw Pine Siskins present in near-record quantities that haven't been seen in decades. They were well-dispersed throughout the region, and also statewide. Numbers seemed to grow as the winter progressed, and several observers noted that their feeders were "besieged" or "cleaned out" by large, aggressive flocks of siskins, particularly in bad weather. Flocks numbering in the hundreds were sometimes seen, the largest found by Mike Hiotis at Old Mine Road in the Delaware Water Gap on 3 January, where over 1,000 siskins in 11 flocks were found griting along the roadside. By the end of the period, singing and calling Pine Siskins appeared to outnumber goldfinches in many areas of the region, which seemed to hold promise for the coming nesting season, when siskins are occasionally rare nesters after winter invasions.

Contributors

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Abbreviations/Locations

Clinton Rd is in the Pequannock Watershed in West Milford, *Passaic*, Culver's Lake (CL), Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area (DWGNRA), Heritage Park in West Portal (HP), High Point State Park (HPSP), Liberty Loop in Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge (LL), Merrill Creek Reservoir (MCR), Northwest Hunterdon Christmas Bird Count (NWHCBC), Round Valley Reservoir (RVR), Southwest Morris Winter Count January 18 (SWMWC) compiled by David Harrison, Spruce Run Reservoir (SRR), Stokes State Forest (SSF), Sussex Christmas Bird Count (SCBC), Swartswood Lake (SL), Wallkill River National Wildlife Refuge (WRNWR), Walnut Valley Christmas Bird Count (WVCBC).

WATERFOWL – CRANES

Greater White-fronted Goose: Clove Lake section Sussex Boro 14 Dec (fide ABo), Newton near hospital 8 Jan (GM), Long Valley area SWMWC 18 Jan (fide DH).

Snow Goose: high 15,000 MCR 29 Jan (RK), 3,790 SRR 13 Dec (fide SB), 2,500+ Alpha 20 Dec (MB), 3,000 MCR 24 Jan (MN), 1,500 Alpha 26 Jan (MN).

ROSS'S GOOSE: Lentini Corn Maze near Newton 6 Jan (JFe).

Cackling Goose: MCR 7 Feb (GS, JW), 2 Oberly Rd Alpha 8 Feb (fide SB), RVR 14 Feb (fide SB).

BARNACLE GOOSE: returning bird Califon Dec 1-15 Feb (DH, JW, RR, v.obs; accepted by NJBRC).

Tundra Swan: MCR 24-26 Jan (MN), 2 SRR 26 Jan (MN), 12 SRR 7 Feb (RK), 2 LL 15 Feb (fide SB), 2 farm field Bethlehem

7 (Feb) (DH).

Wood Duck: 4 Columbia Lk 16 Feb (BH).

Gadwall: 26 Holland Twp 15 Feb (DH).

Black Duck: high 80 Assiscong Marsh 14 Feb (DH), 50 SRR 19 Feb (RK).

Northern Pintail: 16 Columbia Lk 16 Feb (SM, BH).

Green-winged Teal: 3 SRR 13 Feb (RK), 12 Delaware Lk Columbia 16 Feb (BH, SM), m 2 Jan+ Holland Twp (DH).

Redhead: 6 Horseshoe Lk, Roxbury during period (SF), 6 RVR 1 Feb (fide SB), 1 m Columbia Lk 8 Feb (BH), MCR 13 Feb (RK), 2 m MCR 25 Feb (LK).

Lesser Scaup: 18 RVR 3 Jan (LK), 20 SRR 21 Feb (RK).

White-winged Scoter: NWHCBC, 2 RVR 7 Feb (JW, RK), 2 RVR 24-26 Feb (MH).

Long-tailed Duck: RVR 7 Feb (RK).

Bufflehead: high 50 Del R Holland Twp 7 Feb (DH), 45 MCR 13 Feb (RK).

Common Goldeneye: low 22 Del R Frenchtown 8 Jan (LK), 20 Del R Holland Twp 31 Jan (DH), 20 MCR 13 Feb (RK).

Hooded Merganser: 50 Lk Susquehanna, Blairstown 13 Dec (BH).

Ring-necked Pheasant: a few Alpha 1 Dec (JPr), 6 Barbertown/Point Breeze Rd Kingwood Twp 21 Jan (LK).

Ruffed Grouse: WVCBC.

Wild Turkey: 37 Green Pond/Craigmeur, Rockaway Twp 21 Feb (RR).

Red-throated Loon: NWHCBC.

Common Loon: 4 RVR 10 Jan (MB).

EARED GREBE: RVR 6 Jan+ (TV, FSjr, MH, v.obs; accepted by NJBRC)

Red-necked Grebe: RVR 31 Jan (MH), high 5 RVR 7 Feb (RK, JW), MCR 7 Feb (JW), Splitrock Res 26 Feb (RR), RVR 27 Feb (MH).

Great Cormorant: NWHCBC.

Black Vulture: high 129 NWHCBC; 84 SWMWC 18 Jan (fide DH), 65 HP 1 Dec (RK), 20 WRNWR 16 Feb (MB).

OSPREY: Green Pond 1 Dec (RR); remarkably late Lk Hopatcong 15 Dec (DW).

Bald Eagle: 6 Split Rock Res 2 Dec (RR), 4 Raccoon Ridge 7 Dec (BH), high 11 WVCBC, 2 Stockton 28 Dec (LK), 3 WRNWA 2 Jan (MB), 2 WRNWR 16 Feb (MB), 2 Green Pond 26 Feb (RR).

Northern Harrier: 7+ Alpha 20 Dec

(MB), 3 HP 3 Jan (RK), 12 WVCBC.

Northern Goshawk: ad f Green Pond 2 Dec (RR).

Red-shouldered Hawk: 2 imm Picatinny Arsenal 2 Dec (RR), WRNWR 2 Dec (MB), ad near Van Campen's Glen DWGNRA 1 Feb (ABO, DB), near Blairstown 16 Feb (BH), ad Holland Twp 22 & 28 Feb (DH).

Red-tailed Hawk: 15 WRNRA 30 Jan (KW).

Rough-legged Hawk: high 10 LL 2 Jan (MB), 3 Alpha 22 Dec (fide SB), light morph Rosemont-Sergeantsville Rd Delaware Twp 24 Dec (LK), Readington Twp 29 Dec (DH), Lopatcong 15 Jan (RK), light morph Rt 565 n of Ross's Corners 17 Jan (ABO), 2 LL 19 Jan (RR, TV), 5 Alpha 24 Jan (BH), 6 WRNRA 30 Jan (KW), Asbury, Warren 5 Feb (DH), 6 Oberly Rd Alpha 7 Feb (fide SB), 8 LL 15 Feb (fide SB).

Golden Eagle: imm WRNWR 2 Dec (MB), 3 Raccoon Ridge 7 Dec (BH), Van Campens Inn DWGNRA 17 Feb (fide SB).

American Kestrel: 2 wintered Holland Twp (DH), m Alpha 20 Dec (MB), m WRNWR 2 Jan (MB), West Portal, *Hunterdon*, 5 Feb (RK), Kelly Rd WRNWR 7 Feb (KW).

Merlin: Featherbed La, Kingwood Twp 14 Dec (LK), Rte 519 Kingwood Twp 28 Dec (LK), m WRNWR 2 Jan (MB), Holland Twp 7 Feb (DH).

Peregrine Falcon: ad f Mount Hope 2 Dec (RR), 2 Columbia 16 Dec (BH), HP 3 Jan (RK), Alpha 24 Jan (BH).

Virginia Rail: Lk Denmark 2 Dec (RR), SCBC.

American Coot: high 85 RVR 26 Dec (LK).

SANDHILL CRANE: remarkable LL 15-17 Feb (KW, FW, JZ).

SHOREBIRDS – WOODPECKERS

Killdeer: 9 Rockaway Mall, Rockaway Twp 12 Dec (RR).

Wilson's Snipe: 15 Lk Denmark 2 Dec (RR), 4 old fish hatchery Hackettstown 22 Jan (SF), wintered spring-fed seep Holland Twp (DH).

Ring-billed Gull: 12,324 NWHCBC.

Iceland Gull: 2 imm CL 12 Dec (FW), Sussex Co Landfill 13, 27 Dec (fide SB), 2 Sussex Co Landfill 9 Jan (fide SB), 2 RVR 31 Jan (MH), 2 RVR 7 Feb (JW, RK, CP), MCR 13 Feb (RK), SRR 20 Feb (RK), 1st

yr SRR 23 Feb (fide SB), 3-4 SRR 25 Feb (DH).

Lesser Black-backed Gull: CL 12 Dec (FW), 3 RVR 10 Jan (MB), second record SWMWC Long Valley area 18 Jan (fide DH), 17 RVR 7 Feb (JW), 6 Delaware R. Milford 7 Feb (DH, GS, CP), 50+ SRR 19 Feb (RK), 3 Alpha 22 Feb (fide SB), 68 SRR 25 Feb (fide SB).

Glaucous Gull: Sussex Co Landfill 13 Dec (JPd), imm Sussex Co Landfill 9 Jan (fide SB), 2 RVR 30-31 Jan (DH, MH), RVR 7 Feb (JW, GS, CP), SRR 13 Feb (fide SB), ad SRR 23 Feb (fide SB).

Eastern Screech-Owl: high 86 NWHCBC.

Barred Owl: Clinton Rd 9 Feb, (MB, MH, et al.), 2 Lk Denmark 23 Feb (RR).

Long-eared Owl: cedar stand near Columbia 7 Feb (BH).

Short-eared Owl: 2-3 Alpha 13-17 Dec (JPr), Alpha 20 Dec (MB), 4 LL 26 Dec-26 Feb (JFu, KW, et al.).

Northern Saw-whet Owl: Horseshoe Lk, Roxbury 6 Dec (RR), in cedar stand near Columbia 1 Feb (BH).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: arr on sugar maples Budd Lake 2 Dec (ABa), high 47 WVCBC, 17 SWMWC 18 Jan (fide DH), most of season Hardyston (KW), 9 Sawmill Rd/Ridge Rd HPSP 23 Feb (RR).

Pileated Woodpecker: record high 11 SWMWC 18 Jan (DH), 8-10 DWGNRA 1 Jan (RR).

FLYCATCHERS – FINCHES

Eastern Phoebe: Stockton 28 Dec (LK), 2 SWMWC 18 Jan (fide DH).

Northern Shrike: Gorney Rd, Lafayette 14 Dec (fide ABO), Kelly Rd. WRNWR 15-16 Feb (KW, MB), Peters Valley DWGNRA 20-22 Feb (JZ et al.).

White-eyed Vireo: with details WVCBC.

Blue-headed Vireo: WVCBC.

American Crow: 1,000 Alpha 26 Jan (MN).

Common Raven: NWHCBC, 2 Liberty Rd, Wantage 2 Jan (DP), Clinton Rd 9 Jan (fide SB), 4 near Decker Rd, Lafayette Twp 15 Jan (FW), 2 Hackettstown and Mooney Mt SWMWC 18 Jan (fide DH), MCR 26 Jan (MN), Mt. Olive 29 Jan (ABO), 2 Kelly Rd WRNWR 7 Feb (KW), 4 Green Pond 22 Feb (RR), 2 Schooley's Mt Long Valley 26 Feb (RR).

Horned Lark: 150 WRNWR 2 Dec (MB), 250+ Alpha 20 Dec (MB), 75+ Long Bridge Rd Allamuchy 29 Jan (ABO), 160 Shades of Death and Long Bridge Rds Allamuchy 31 Jan (W&SW), 300 Oberly Rd Alpha 8 Feb (RK).

Red-breasted Nuthatch: high 91 NWHCBC.

Marsh Wren: marsh near Calno School DWGNRA 1 Jan (RR).

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: 3 DWGNRA 1 Jan (RR).

Hermit Thrush: 12 DWGNRA 1 Jan (RR).

Gray Catbird: Alumni Field Hackettstown 15 Feb (TH).

Brown Thrasher: Black R WMA SWMWC 18 Jan (fide DH), Mooney Rd Roxbury 6 Feb (ABO).

American Pipit: 50 HP 12 Dec (RK).

Cedar Waxwing: high 306 SCBC.

Pine Warbler: 2 Succasunna Plains Roxbury 6 Dec (RR).

Eastern Towhee: Kingwood Twp 28 Dec (LK).

American Tree Sparrow: high 295 WVCBC; 50 WRNWR 2 Jan (MB), 100+ Great Meadows 1 Jan (RR).

LARK SPARROW: Station Park Sparta 15 Dec (DP, BB, BT, JO).

Chipping Sparrow: 2 Raritan Twp 20 Dec (JC).

Savannah Sparrow: 23 Great Meadows 8 Jan (RR).

White-crowned Sparrow: 6-10 HP through period (RK), 6 Holland Twp 19 Dec (DH), 25 SCBC, 20+ Roy Rd, Fredon Twp 29 Dec (JFu), 2 WRNWR 2 Jan (MB), 20+ Beemer Farm Wantage 19 Jan (TV, RR), 2 Gibbs Rd Allamuchy 29 Jan (ABO).

Lapland Longspur: SRR 13 Dec (MH), 6 Alpha 20 Dec (MB), 4 Liberty Rd, Wantage 2 Jan (DP), Long Bridge Rd, Allamuchy 29-30 Jan (ABO, LM), Ervey Rd, Allamuchy 30 Jan (LM), 2 Shades of Death and Long Bridge Rds, Allamuchy 30-31 Jan (SF, W&SW), 2 Oberly Rd Alpha 8 Feb (fide SB).

Snow Bunting: 24 Alpha 20 Dec (MB), 75+ Long Bridge Rd Allamuchy 29 Jan (ABO), 250 Oberly Rd Alpha 6-8 Feb (RK).

Eastern Meadowlark: 4 Alpha 6 Dec decreased to one there 20 Dec (RK, MB).

Rusty Blackbird: Holland Twp 7 Feb (DH), 19 Picatinny Arsenal 2 Feb (RR).

Common Grackle: 18,500 Lopatcong,

Warren, 21 Feb (RK).

Purple Finch: 30+ Rockaway Bor 2 Dec (RR), 8 Blainstown 27 Dec (BH), Milford 31 Dec (BM), Low double-digits Fredon feeders 8 Jan (W&SW), flocks Frankford Twp 9 Jan (D&DT), many at feeders Waterloo 8 Feb (BT).

White-winged Crossbill: 4 Old Mine Rd DWGNRA 1 Jan (RR), Kuser Bog HPSP 4-5 Jan (KF), 30-60 Clinton Rd 6 Jan (MB), 17 Parsippany 9 Jan (RR), first record SWMWC Long Valley 18 Jan (fide DH), 2-3 MCR 22-26 Jan (MH, RK, MN), 36 Frenchtown 27 Jan (JB), 25 Riegel Community Center Holland Twp 27 Jan (DH), small flock River Rd Califon 28 Jan (LB), 5 Peter's Valley DWGNRA 1 Feb (DB, ABo), 12 RVR 1 Feb (MH), 10 MCR 2 Feb (RK), 7+ Clinton Rd 9 Feb (MB, MH, et al.), 4 Alumni Field Hackettstown 15 Feb (TH), small flock Deer Path Pk Hunterdon 16 Feb (fide SB), 10 Willowood Arboretum Chester 21 Feb (TH), 14 Ridge Rd HPSP 23 Feb (RR), 21 Mahlon Dickerson Reservation Jefferson Twp 27 Feb (RR), 8 Allamuchy SP 28 Feb (W&SW).

Common Redpoll: 3-4 Lk Denmark 2 Dec (RR), 2 Old Mine Rd DWGNRA 1 Jan (RR), 3 Clinton Rd 11 Jan (fide SB), 3-12 MCR 24 Jan+ (RK, MN, et al), 27 Watergate DWGNRA 24 Jan (MH), RVR 27 Jan (DH), 2 Calno School DWGNRA 1 Feb (DB, ABo), 5 RVR 1 Feb (MH), 15 Oldwick 13 Feb (MH).

Pine Siskin: high 1,027 (11 flocks) gritting on roadside Old Mine Rd DWGNRA 3 Jan (MH), 100+ Old Mine Rd DWGNRA 1 Jan (RR), Frankford Twp 9 Jan (D&DT), 250+ Lk Denmark and Picatinny Arsenal 2 Dec (RR), 224 new high SWMWC 18 Jan (fide DH), 250 MCR 26 Jan (MN), 50-70 at feeders Stillwater through end of period (GM, EM), 16 Milford 31 Dec (BM), 400 Worthington SF 9 Jan (BH), 60 Fredon Twp feeders 8 Jan (W&SW), 75+ at feeders at Lake Tamarack, Hardyston by late January (KW), 50+ DWGNRA 1 Feb (DB, ABo), "hordes" Lafayette 1 Feb (KC), 40 at feeders Roxbury 6 Feb (ABo), 100+ at feeders Waterloo 8 Feb (BT), 24 Clinton Rd 9 Feb (MB, MH), 300+ Sparta Mt 27 Feb (RR), 400+ Mahon Dickerson Reservation 27 Feb (RR), 80 Milford 28 Feb (DH).

REGION 2

Piedmont Region, including Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Union, Somerset, Middlesex, Mercer, and eastern parts of Passaic and Morris Counties.

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Although it may not have felt that way at times, the 2008-2009 winter was the 47th warmest on record with average temperatures matching the historic average of 33.0°. Snowfall that began in October was close to the 30-year average of 10.6" across New Jersey. It was the driest February on record.

Winter 2008-2009 will be remembered for the influx of winter finches and raptors. The huge flight of Pine Siskins that began in the fall continued through the winter. Pine Siskins were seen at feeders and birding sites across the region with high counts reaching 100 birds. It was also a memorable year for sightings of White-winged Crossbills, with peak numbers in January and February. Most sightings came from the northern counties in the region, but birds were also found in smaller numbers in the southern counties. The birds were primarily feeding on hemlock and spruce cones. Other winter finches seen were a single Red Crossbill at a feeder in Hewitt in Passaic 28 November through 6 December, a Common Redpoll in a Morris Plains yard on 9 February and 2 Evening Grosbeaks on the Hackensack-Ridgewood CBC.

There was a large influx of Rough-legged Hawks after a 19 December snowstorm that dumped up to ten inches of snow in parts of northern New Jersey. The peak of the flight was 22-26 December. Many northern locations (e.g., Hackensack Meadowlands, Great Swamp, Troy Meadows) had multiple birds until early February. Several sites in the southern portion of the region had a few birds. Snowy Owls staged an invasion in Region II that started with a single bird at Liberty State Park in November. Ultimately, five different Snowy Owls were tallied in the region. Single birds were seen in the area of Liberty State Park, Bayonne Golf Club, and

at the Hilton Hotel in Hasbrouck Heights. Two birds spent the season at Berry's Creek in the Hackensack Meadowlands.

Rare waterfowl made several notable appearances in the region. Mercer County Park continues to be a stronghold for wintering Greater White-fronted Geese with 6 being seen on 4 January. Eight were also seen on Crosswicks-Hamilton Square Road in Mercer on 29 December. A Ross's Goose seen at Parson's Pond in Franklin Lakes 2-8 December is a first record for Bergen County. Another was found on the Princeton CBC. A "Black" Brant was seen at South Amboy on 28 February. A "Eurasian" Green-winged Teal spent a large part of the winter at DeKorte SP and a Eurasian Wigeon was seen twice at LSP.

Two Sandhill Cranes visited various fields in Franklin Twp from 5-27 January. Interestingly, a small group was also seen in a nearby location last winter. A Northern Shrike once again spent the winter at the Great Swamp primarily in the area of the Heron Rookery lot. A Baltimore Oriole was seen in a Hightstown yard on 21 December.

Thanks to Michael Britt for providing some notes for this report.

CBC Results

Great Swamp-Watchung Ridges (85 species) on 20 December, Hackensack-Ridgewood (83) on 20 December, Lower Hudson (109) on 14 December, Somerset County (93) on 3 January, Boonton (93) on 28 December, Ramsey (80) on 27 December, Trenton Marshes (83) on 27 December, Princeton (96) on 14 December and Raritan Estuary (110) on 28 December.

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Locations and Abbreviations

CF is the Allendale Celery Farm, *Bergen*; GSNWR is Great Swamp NWR, *Morris*; LSP is Liberty State Park, *Hudson*; the Pole Farm refers to Mercer County Park Northwest

WATERFOWL – CRANES

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE: Mercer County Park 27 Dec (BC), Mercer County Park 1 Jan (PJ), 6 Mercer County Park 4 Jan (m.obs), 8 Crosswicks Hamilton Square Rd., Mercer 29 Dec (CHe).

Snow Goose: 250 Laurel Hill 5 Dec (MB, DBI), 27,703 TMCBC 27 Dec (fide MD), 400 Pole Farm 27 Feb (WK).

ROSS'S GOOSE: Parson's Pond in Franklin Lakes, *Bergen* 2-8 Dec (RF, m.obs), PCBC 14 Dec (fide LL).

Brant: up to 1000 LSP 1 Dec-17 Jan (v. obs).



Wild-looking Barnacle Geese are now presumed to be wild, e.g. this one at Warinanco Park, Union County 19-26 Feb. Photo/Linda Mack

“BLACK” BRANT: South Amboy 28 Feb (SB, RD, LM-ph.—details to NJBRC).

BARNACLE GOOSE: Warinanco Park 19-26 Feb (CM, LM-ph., v.obs—details to NJBRC).

Cackling Goose: CF 6-7 Dec (RF, JWo), Kearny Marsh 12 Dec (NM), 5 PCBC 14 Dec (fide LL), 2 Mercer County Park 23 Dec (BC), Florham Park, *Morris* 28 Dec (JFe), 3 Kearny Marsh 1 Jan (NM), up to 3 Mercer County Park 3-16 Jan (WK, BC), 2 Donaldson Park 13 Feb (JBe), Kearny Marsh 14 Feb (NM), up to 7 Warinanco Park 22-28

Feb (v.obs).

Tundra Swan: 2 Rosedale Park 13 Jan (WK).

Wood Duck: high 40 GSNWR 22 Feb (JWo).

Gadwall: 100 Kearny Marsh East 7 Dec (NM), 163 RECBC 28 Dec (fide TO), 120 Bayonne Golf Club 6 Jan (JBe).

EURASIAN WIGEON: LSP 28 Dec (MB) & 26 Feb (CHo).

American Wigeon: high 60 Trenton Marsh 28 Feb (JBe).

Northern Pintail: high 165 Kearny Marsh East 1 Jan (NM).

“EURASIAN” GREEN-WINGED TEAL: DeKorte SP 26 Dec-13 Feb (CT, m.obs).

Canvasback: 400+ Newark Bay 5 Jan+ (MB, v. obs), high 450 Bayonne Park 1 Feb (SC), 400 Bayonne Park 7 Feb (JG).

Redhead: drake Weehawken 3 Dec (MB, GM), 2 GSCBC 20 Dec (fide PA), 7 BCBC 28 Dec (fide GM).

Ring-necked Duck: 257 BCBC 28 Dec (fide GM).

Greater Scaup: 400 South Amboy 17 Jan (MB).

Lesser Scaup: 78 RCBC 27 Dec (fide JBr).

Common Eider: LSP 26 Feb (CHo).

Surf Scoter: 13 RECBC 28 Dec (fide TO).

Long-tailed Duck: DeKorte Park 1 Jan (RD, CHo), 6 Perth Amboy, *Middlesex* 19 Jan



This Ross's Goose spent 2-8 December in Franklin Lakes, a rare sighting away from the normal birds found in association with Snow Goose concentrations. Photo/Tom Smith

(JBe), 3 Mill Creek Point 8 Feb (NM).

Common Goldeneye: high 52 LSP 26 Feb (CHo).

Hooded Merganser: 140 BCBC 28 Dec (fide GM), 40 DeKorte Park 31 Jan (WK).

Common Merganser: high 8700 Oradell Reservoir 9 Dec (JWo), 10,252 HRCBC 20 Dec (fide DH).

Ruddy Duck: high 1800 Mehrhof Pond 13 Dec (NM).

Red-throated Loon: high 74 LSP 26 Feb (CHo).

Pied-billed Grebe: CF 4-5 Dec (RF), Rosedale Park 5 Dec (WK), Kearny Marsh 8 Dec (MB, CB), LSP 9 Dec (MB), 2 Lake Carnegie 15 Dec (SM), Oradell Reservoir 22-28 Dec (ML, LS, JWo), Florham Park, Morris 28 Dec (JFe), LSP 4 Jan (JH), Donaldson Park 4 Jan (JBe), 2 Perth Amboy, Middlesex 19 Jan (JBe), Kearny Marsh 19 Feb (RD).

Horned Grebe: 15 LSP 7 Feb (MB, v. obs).

Great Cormorant: 14 RECBC 28 Dec (fide TO), 2 Donaldson Park 29 Dec (JBe), 11 Sayreville Marsh 17 Jan (MB), 12 Ocean Terminal 23 Jan (MB), Newark Bay 7 Feb (MB, v. obs), 5 Hackensack River Marina 8 Feb (NM).

Great Egret: 5 Hackensack Meadowlands 5 Dec (MB), high 8 Kearny Marsh East 13 Dec (NM), Hackensack Meadowlands 10 Jan (CT).

Black-crowned Night-Heron: 56 Laurel Hill 5 Dec (MB, DBI).

Osprey: late GSCBC 20 Dec (fide PA), RECBC 28 Dec (fide TO).

Bald Eagle: 5 Laurel Hill 5 Dec (MB, DBI), 5 Oradell Reservoir 12-14 Dec (JWo, LS), 28 HRCBC 20 Dec (fide DH), up to 9 Oradell Reservoir 26-28 Dec (JWo, LS), Great Piece Meadows 8 Jan (MB), 4 Oradell Reservoir 15 Jan (LS), 3 Duke Farms 27 Feb (DFS), widespread sightings of single birds throughout season.

Northern Harrier: 12 Pole Farm 27 Dec (BC), 28 RECBC 28 Dec (fide TO), 24 SC-CBC 3 Jan (fide JK).

Northern Goshawk: Monroe Twp, Middlesex 30 Dec-27 Jan (S&WM).

Red-shouldered Hawk: 2 Hackensack High School, Bergen 23 Jan (NM), widespread sightings of single birds throughout season.

Rough-legged Hawk: up to 4 GSNWR 21 Dec-1 Feb (TS, m. obs), 6-10 Hackensack

Meadowlands 23 Dec thru early Feb (MB, m. obs), 1-2 Mill Creek Point 23 Dec-21 Feb (NM), 4 Duke Farms 23-31 Dec (DFS), 1-2 Pole Farm 26 Dec-14 Feb (JSt, m. obs), 2 Glenhurst Meadows 28 Dec (MN), 2 Mercer County Park 2 Jan (PJ), Curlis Lake, Mercer 13 Jan (WK), 5 Troy Meadows 6 Feb (MB, DBI), Hackensack High School, Bergen 8 Feb (NM), Norz Farm Fields, Somerset 9 Feb (DFS), 1-E Landfill 14 Feb (NM).

American Kestrel: 2 LSP 2 Dec (WF), 4 LHCBC 14 Dec (fide MB), 5 PCBC 14 Dec (fide LL), 3 Ocean Terminal 23 Dec (MB), 2 Hackensack Meadowlands 23-26 Dec (CT), 2 Pole Farm 28 Dec-3 Jan (VN, WK), 2 South River, Middlesex 13 Jan (TD), 2 Hackensack Meadowlands 14 Jan (CT), widespread sightings of single birds throughout season.

Merlin: Donaldson Park 4 Dec (JBe), GSNWR 6 Dec-23 Jan (MN, m. obs), Rosedale Park 18 Dec (SM), Donaldson Park 18 Dec (JBe), Sayen Gardens 31 Dec (BC), 4 SCCBC 3 Jan (fide JK), DeKorte Park 19 Jan (WK), Princeton Institute Woods 26 Jan (ER), Valleau Cemetery, Bergen 5 Feb (JWo), Lenape Park 9 Feb (FB), Hackensack Meadowlands 15 Feb (RS), Lake Parsippany 19 Feb (NM), Hamilton/Trenton Marsh 21 Feb (ER), 2 Warinanco Park 28 Feb (JFle).

Peregrine Falcon: 2 Berry's Creek 23 Jan (MB), 2 Scudders Falls 30 Jan (WK), widespread sightings of single birds throughout season.



Two Sandhill Cranes visited Franklin Township, Somerset County 5-27 January. Photo/ Mike Lynchski

Virginia Rail: up to 2 CF 5 Dec-13 Feb (RF, JWo, v. obs), 2 LHCBC 14 Dec (fide MB), 4 RCBC 27 Dec (SSe).

Common Moorhen: 2 count week LHCBC (fide MB), Kearny Marsh 2 Jan (ML), Kearny Marsh 14 Feb (NM); rare in winter.

American Coot: 71 Kearny Marsh 8 Dec (MB, CB), high 150 Weequahic Park 24 Feb (TV), 57 Trenton Marsh 28 Feb (JBe).

SANDHILL CRANE: 2 Franklin Twp, Somerset 5-27 Jan (JL, HD, v. obs).

SHOREBIRDS – PIPITS

Black-bellied Plover: 3 Bayonne Golf Club 5 Jan thru period (MB, JG).

Killdeer: 11 PCBC 14 Dec (fide LL), 9 LSP 14 Dec (JBe).

Greater Yellowlegs: 4 DeKorte Park 5 Dec (MB, DBI), 8 Kearny Marsh 12 Dec (NM), Mill Creek Marsh 8 Feb (NM).

Dunlin: LSP 14 Dec (JBe), high 15 LSP 23 Jan (CT), 40 LSP 7 Feb (MB, v. obs).

Wilson's Snipe: GSNWR 12 Dec (MN), CF 12 Dec (RF), 6 PCBC 14 Dec (fide LL), LSP 14 Dec (JBe), Mill Creek Point 2 Jan (MB), Hopewell, Mercer 14-25 Jan (WK), 3 DeKorte Park 16 Feb (LS).

American Woodcock: 3 LHCBC 14 Dec (fide MB), Teterboro Airport 20 Dec (CT), Garret Mountain Park 14 Feb (CT), 2 Rutgers Cook Campus 19 Feb (TR), 7 LSP 26 Feb (CHo).

Bonaparte's Gull: 80 RECBC 28 Dec (fide TO), 100 Ocean Terminal 13 Jan (MB), Rosedale Park 26 Jan (BA).

Iceland Gull: RECBC 28 Dec (fide TO), Donaldson Park 5 Jan (JBe), South Amboy 11 Jan (AL), South Amboy 17 Jan (MB), Weequahic Park 24 Feb (TV), South Amboy 28 Feb (AL).

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Donaldson Park 9 Dec (JWi), Donaldson Park 15 Dec (JBe), 3 TMCBC 27 Dec (fide MD), 6 SCCBC 3 Jan (fide JK), Donaldson Park 4 Jan (JBe), Sayreville Marsh 17 Jan (MB), Johnson Park 20 Jan (JWi), up to 3 Mercer County Park 26 Jan-8 Feb (ER), 2 South Amboy 21 Feb (AL), 2 Lake Carnegie 25 Feb (ER).

Glaucous Gull: RECBC 28 Dec (fide TO), Potash Lake 3-5 Jan (v. obs).

Barn Owl: 4 LHCBC 14 Dec (fide MB).

SNOWY OWL: LSP thru period (MB, v. obs), Hasbrouck Heights 8 Dec thru period



An invasion of Snowy Owls featured 5 apparently different birds in Region 2, including this one in the NJ Meadowlands at Berry's Creek. Photo/Mike Lyncheski

(MB, NM), Berry's Creek 23 Dec (MB), 2 Berry's Creek 26 Dec thru period (MB, MN, CT, m.obs), Bayonne Golf Club 5-6 Jan (MB, JBe).

Barred Owl: one wintered at GSNWR 7 Dec+ (MN, et al), Becker Tract, Essex 15 Jan (DH), Troy Meadows 8 Feb (MB), Franklin Lakes, Bergen 8 Feb (JSchl).

Long-eared Owl: 6 Hackensack Meadowlands 1 Jan (fide MB), 2 LSP 20 Jan (JHo), 4 Pole Farm 21 Jan (WK), up to 4 GSNWR 13 Jan+ (DPe, v.obs), Hackensack Meadowlands 1 Feb (CT), Pole Farm 9 Feb (SM).

Short-eared Owl: 1-3 Berry's Creek 1 Dec+ (MB, CT), up to 5 Pole Farm 28 Dec-14 Feb (VN, WK, m.obs), 3 Bayonne Golf Club 29 Jan+ (EB, MB).

Northern Saw-whet Owl: Pole Farm 22 Feb (JSchi).

Red-headed Woodpecker: GSNWR 6 Dec+ (MN, JWo, RD, m.obs), 3 GSCBC 20 Dec (fide PA), Lord Stirling Park 20 Jan (KMc).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: 19 PCBC 14 Dec (fide LL), 11 SCCBC 3 Jan (fide JK), 3 Upper Raritan Watershed 14 Jan (PB).

Hairy Woodpecker: 45 PCBC 14 Dec (fide LL).

Pileated Woodpecker: 12 PCBC 14 Dec (fide LL).

Eastern Phoebe: PCBC 14 Dec (fide LL), SCCBC 3 Jan (fide JK).

NORTHERN SHRIKE: GSNWR 7

Dec+ (SL, v. obs).

Fish Crow: 1272 TMCBC 27 Dec (fide MD).

Common Raven: 2 Laurel Hill 5 Dec (MB, DBI), 8 RCBC 27 Dec (fide JBr), Franklin Township yard 30 Dec (TC), 2 SCCBC 3 Jan (PB), Clifton 20 Jan (MB), 3 GSNWR 23 Jan (MN), 2 Hackensack Meadowlands 24 Jan (DPo), Ringwood Manor 24 Jan (NM), 2 Laurel Hill Park 31 Jan (RD), 2 Laurel Hill Park 6 Feb (LS), 2

Laurel Hill Park 15 Feb (DPo), Robert Stahl Nature Area 17 Feb (NM), 2 Metuchen, Middlesex 28 Feb (SB).

Horned Lark: 16 LSP 1 Dec (JBo), 40 Berry's Creek 3 Dec (MB), 50 PCBC 14 Dec (fide LL), 32 LSP 14 Dec (JBe), 395 SCCBC 3 Jan (fide JK), 32 LSP 12 Jan (CHo), 28 LSP 5 Feb (CHo), 20 LSP 28 Feb (JA).

Red-breasted Nuthatch: 10 RCBC 27 Dec (fide JBr).

Brown Creeper: 14 RECBC 28 Dec (fide TO).

House Wren: SCCBC 3 Jan (fide JK).

Winter Wren: 2 CF 10 Dec (RF), 2 PCBC 14 Dec (fide LL), 2 CF 5 Jan (RF), widespread sightings of single birds throughout season.

Marsh Wren: 1-2 CF 2 Dec-13 Feb (RF, m.obs), LHCBC 14 Dec (fide MB), Mill Creek Marsh 5 Jan (CT).

Eastern Bluebird: 217 PCBC 14 Dec (fide LL).

Hermit Thrush: 10 LHCBC 14 Dec (fide MB).

Gray Catbird: LHCBC 14 Dec (fide MB), Princeton Institute Woods 28 Dec (EG), Princeton Institute Woods 5 Jan (ER), CF 1 Feb (NM), Halifax Rd., Bergen 6 Feb (DPo), Bonsal Wildlife Preserve 7-14 Feb (SSo), Mill Creek Marsh 21 Feb (NM).

Brown Thrasher: 3 PCBC 14 Dec (fide LL), Hopewell, Mercer 5 Feb (WK).

American Pipit: 38 total for season; including 10 Hackensack Meadowlands



This cooperative Long-eared Owl was one of up to 4 at Great Swamp in January, here 31 Jan. Photo/Peter Burke



Great Swamp is a traditional location for Northern Shrikes; this one appeared there December 7. Photo/Tom Smith

8 Dec (CT), high 13 Zarephath, Somerset
10 Jan (CHo), 8 Mercer County Park 16
Jan (WK).

WARBLERS – FINCHES

Orange-crowned Warbler: Hackensack
Meadowlands 14 Dec (CT), 4 LHCBC 14
Dec (fide MB), Becker Tract, Essex 29 Dec
(DH).

Pine Warbler: 2 PCBC 14 Dec (fide LL),
Hopewell, Mercer 17 Dec+ (SM), 2 Levine
Reservoir in Paterson 20 Dec (CT), Plains-
boro yard 7 Feb (AL), Gladstone, Somerset
19 Feb (SG).

Palm Warbler: LHCBC 14 Dec (fide
MB), Duke Farms 20 Dec (DFS), Mill Creek
Marsh 24 Dec (NM), Mill Creek Marsh 10
Jan (JG).

Common Yellowthroat: Kearny Marsh
East 7 Dec (NM), 2 PCBC 14 Dec (fide LL),
Lake Parsippany 19 Feb (NM).

Eastern Towhee: Rosedale Park 5 Dec
(WK), 2 LHCBC 14 Dec (fide MB), 9
PCBC 14 Dec (fide LL), Maywood, Bergen
20 Dec (DPo), Princeton Institute Woods
28 Dec (EG).

American Tree Sparrow: 145 BCBC 28
Dec (fide GM).

Chipping Sparrow: 11 PCBC 14 Dec
(fide LL), various reports throughout region
(v. obs).

Field Sparrow: 44 PCBC 14 Dec (fide
LL).

Vesper Sparrow: SCCBC 3 Jan (fide JK).

Savannah Sparrow: 28 Hackensack
Meadowlands 14 Dec (CT), 92 SCCBC 3
Jan (fide JK).

Fox Sparrow: 8 BCBC 28 Dec (fide
GM).

Lincoln's Sparrow: SCCBC 3 Jan (PB);
rare in winter.

Swamp Sparrow: 96 BCBC 28 Dec
(fide GM).

White-throated Sparrow: 1467 PCBC
14 Dec (fide LL).

White-crowned Sparrow: 5 LHCBC 14
Dec (fide MB), 37 PCBC 14 Dec (fide LL), 7
Mercer County Park 3 Jan (WK), 17 SCCBC
3 Jan (fide JK), 8 Hackensack Meadowlands
14 Jan (CT), 2 Rutgers Newark Campus 15
Feb (CHo), LSP 26 Feb (CHo).

Dark-eyed Junco: 1294 PCBC 14 Dec
(fide LL).

Lapland Longspur: LSP 1 Dec (JBo).

Snow Bunting: 30 Berry's Creek 3 Dec
(MB), 20 RCBC 27 Dec (SSE, RF), high 120
Ocean Terminal 7 Feb (MB, v. obs).

Eastern Meadowlark: 3 LHCBC 14 Dec
(fide MB), 12 Pole Farm 27 Dec (BC).

Rusty Blackbird: CF 4-10 Dec (RF),
Lord Stirling Park 20 Dec (BP), GSNWR
25 Dec (ML, RF, KB), 2 Mehrhof Pond 28
Dec (NM), Florham Park, Morris 28 Dec
(JFe), 3 SCCBC 3 Jan (PB), 2 CF 5 Jan
(JWo), 2 Hackensack Meadowlands 17 Jan
(RS), 5 Lenape Park 21 Jan (FB), 25 CF 25
Feb (DPo), 20 Trenton Marsh 28 Feb (JBe),
GSNWR 28 Feb (RD).

BALTIMORE ORIOLE: Hightstown
yard 21 Dec (TS).

Purple Finch: 26 PCBC 14 Dec (fide
LL).

RED CROSSBILL: Hewitt yard, Passaic
28 Nov-6 Dec (KR), Valleau Cemetery,
Bergen 10 Feb (JWo).

WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL:
up to 30 Ridgewood, Bergen 5 Jan-10 Feb
(JWo), 17 Parsippany 9 Jan (TV), up to 27



It was a memorable finch winter, but Red Crossbills were by and large not part of the invasion. Thus this female, at a feeder in Passaic County 28 Nov-6 Dec, was of note. Photo/Karla Risdon

Ringwood Manor 11 Jan-27 Feb (m.obs), 30 Duke Farms 2 Feb (DFS), up to 30 Sayen Gardens 3-16 Feb (BC, m.obs), up to 55 Valleau Cemetery, Bergen 5 Feb-26 Feb (JWo), 7 Franklin Lakes, Bergen 6 Feb (RF), 12 CF 6 Feb (RF), 9 Pole Farm 8 Feb (DBi), 3 Oradell Reservoir 10 Feb (JWo), 4 Black River WMA 11 Feb (AB), 13 Duke Farms 11 Feb (DFS), 15 Willowood Arboretum 22 Feb (PM).

COMMON REDPOLL: Morris Plains yard 9 Feb (JFly).

Pine Siskin: many observations across region, higher counts shown here: up to 100 Bernardsville yard 10 Jan-8 Feb (JP), 53 Ringwood Manor 18 Jan (NM), 58 Hopewell, Mercer 23 Jan (WK), 49 Ringwood Manor 24 Jan (NM), 80 Clifton yard 10 Feb thru period (MB), 31 Middle Valley, Morris 12 Feb (AG), up to 39 Somerset yard 12-17 Feb (RL), up to 50 Somerset yard 13 Feb-22 Feb (PB), up to 90 Duke Farms 20-27 Feb (DFS), 32 Ridgewood, Bergen 26 Feb (JWo).

EVENING GROSBEAK: 2 HRCBC 20 Dec (fide DH).



White-winged Crossbills were reported in groups of up to 30 birds in Region 2 this winter; this one was photographed 11 January. Photo/Peter Burke

REGION 3

North Coast Region, including Monmouth and Ocean Counties.

EDITOR — Scott Barnes, Sandy Hook Bird Observatory, 20 Hartshorne Drive, Highlands, NJ 07732. e-mail: scott.barnes@njudubon.org

Weather this season was slightly warmer than normal during December and February, but a serious cold snap made temperatures lower than average in January, freezing inland freshwater and most coastal ponds/wetlands.

Six Christmas Bird Counts were held in the region: Assunpink 14 Dec (89 species, compiler Susan Phelon), Sandy Hook 20 Dec (106 species, compiler Scott Barnes), Lakehurst 27 Dec (86 species, compiler Michael Casper), Pelagic 2 Jan (18 species, compiler Paul Guris), Long Branch 3 Jan (124 species, compiler Patrick Belardo), Barnegat 4 Jan (136 species, compiler Tom Bailey).

The season's avian movements of note began with Snowy Owls on the move along the coast, followed by the best White-winged Crossbill flight in 10+ years during Feb. After an impressive autumn flight, large numbers Pine Siskins—probably the most since the early 1980's—wintered in the region. For the first time since the inception of the "new" Region 3 all six species of North Atlantic alcids were recorded, including an all-time high count for the state of Common Murres. The season also brought a better than average influx of Rough-legged Hawks to the southern Ocean coastal marshes.

Rarities during the season included Pacific Loon, Western Grebe, 2 Eared Grebes, a record-high count of Common Murre, Thick-billed Murre, 2 Black Guillemots, 2 Rufous Hummingbirds, and Bohemian Waxwing,

Abbreviations

BLSP is Barnegat Light State Park, IBSP is Island Beach State Park, SH is Sandy Hook; Assunpink, Great Bay Blvd, and Manahawkin all refer to the wildlife management areas. Christmas Bird Count abbreviations are Assunpink- ACBC, Barnegat- BCBC,

Lakehurst- LCBC, Long Branch- LBCBC, Pelagic- PCBC, Sandy Hook-SHCBC.

Contributors

Trina Anderson, Pete Bacinski, Tom Bailey (TBa), Scott Barnes, McDuffy Barrow (McB), Patrick Belardo, Tom Boyle (TBo), Mike Britt (MBr), Tom Brown (TBr), Joe Carragher, Bob Cunningham, Donna Desjardins, Patty Dexter, Bob Dodelson, James Duffy, Holly Dunbar, Rob Fanning, Jon Feenstra, Alex Majewski, Mike Fahay, Don Freiday, Debbie Grob, Paul Guris, Jennifer Hanson, Brian Hart, Mike Hiotis, Craig Hunter, Karen Johnson, Steve Kacir, Nerses Kazanjian, Ken Klapper, Fred Lesser, Ed Lippincot, Linda Mack, Dave Magpiong, Glenn Mahler, Walter & Beth Mazur, Jeanne McArthur-Heuser, Pat McCoy, Jack McKee, Duane Murawski, Mike Newlon, Rick Radis, Tom Reed, Carol Robbins, Chase Scheifer, Lloyd Shaw (LSh), Tom Smith, Andrew Spears, Linda Stehlik (LSt), Nick Taylor, Harvey Tomlinson, Alex Tongas, Richard Veit, Fred Weber, Steve Weiss, George Wenzelburger, Mike Wolfe

WATERFOWL – RAPTORS

Greater White-fronted Goose: 1-2 Cross Farm Park/Colts Neck area 22 Dec-5 Jan (SB, LM, NK), Cedar Run Dock Rd 27 Dec-5 Jan (JD, HD), LBCBC in Wall Twp, Assunpink 5 Jan (SB, LM), Upper Freehold Twp 9 Feb (SB, LM): an excellent showing.

Snow Goose: high 6305 ACBC.

"BLACK" BRANT: Deal 24 Jan (SB, LM ph.—details to NJBRC).

Cackling Goose: ACBC, 2 LBCBC, 3 Perrineville 5 Jan (SB, LM), Assunpink 8 Feb (TBa).

Eurasian Wigeon: m through period Silver Lake, Belmar (v.obs).

"Eurasian" Green-winged Teal: 10 Feb+ Lake Takanassee (NK, et al).

Canvasback: 100 Toms River 26 Jan (FL), 100 Cedar Run Dock Rd 16 Feb (TBo).

Redhead: 5 LBCBC, 5 BCBC, high 11 Shark River Estuary 19 Jan (SB, LM).

Ring-necked Duck: high 266 Assunpink 9 Feb (SB, LM).

Greater Scaup: "low high" of ca. 3,000 in Barnegat Bay off Cedar Run Dock Rd during period (SB, TBo).

King Eider: imm m BLSP 9-12 Dec (DF), 6 off Holgate/Beach Haven on BCBC included an ad m (BH) and decreased to 3

there 12 Jan (SB, LM).

Common Eider: high 10 BLSP 9 Dec (DF) with smaller numbers thereafter; single females Manasquan Inlet 23 Dec (TS), LCBC, LBCBC.

Harlequin Duck: 2 f on the west side of Barnegat Bay in Barnegat Twp 16 Jan (McB) was an unusual location; high 38 BLSP 15 Feb (TBo).

Bufflehead: high count of 4570 BCBC.

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE: fSH 7 Feb (SB, LM—details to NJBRC) increased to 2 f there 11 Feb (HT); at least one remained through period (v.obs).

Common Merganser: high 2408 LB-CBC.

Ruddy Duck: high 2500 Swimming River Res 2 Jan (AS).

PACIFIC LOON: Deal 9-23 Feb (SB, LM—details to NJBRC, et al).

Horned Grebe: high 104 SH 17 Jan (SB, LM).

Red-necked Grebe: 12 total season; singles LBCBC & BCBC; high 3 Monmouth Beach 2 Feb (TBo), singles wintered locally off Long Branch, Shark River Estuary, and BLSP during period (v.obs).

EARED GREBE: Barnegat Twp 31 Dec-12 Jan (JF, m.obs), Keyport 28 Feb (SB, LM); details and photos on both records were submitted to the NJBRC.

WESTERN GREBE: Manasquan Inlet 23 Jan (AT), relocated off Deal 25 Jan (TS), subsequent reports through period from Sea Bright, Monmouth Beach, Long Branch, and Deal (v.obs; details to NJBRC).

American Bittern: BCBC was only report.

Great Egret: high 2 SHCBC.

Tricolored Heron: Great Bay Blvd 21 Jan (fide MF).

Black Vulture: high 56 ACBC.

Bald Eagle: high 5 southern Ocean coastal marshes 13 Dec (MBr).

Northern Harrier: high 38 BCBC.

NORTHERN GOSHAWK: well-described juv Farmingdale 23 Dec (JM).

Red-shouldered Hawk: juv wintered at SH (v.obs), high 3 BCBC.

BROAD-WINGED HAWK: late juv Dock Rd, Parkertown 8 Dec (SB, LM ph.).

Rough-legged Hawk: migrant SH 26 Dec (MN), high 5 BCBC, 3 Dock Rd, Parkertown 11 Jan (MBr).

GOLDEN EAGLE: BCBC over Stafford Twp (GM, LM, PB).

RAILS – FINCHES

Virginia Rail: 4 LCBC, LBCBC.

Common Moorhen: count first SHCBC, rare in winter.

Parasitic Jaeger: Manasquan Inlet 3 Dec (JC), IBSP 13 Dec (RR).

Iceland Gull: 16 season, high 3 inshore pelagic 8 Feb (PG, SB), 2 Allenhurst 21 Feb (SB, LM); other singles mostly from North Shore area through period (v.obs).

Lesser Black-backed Gull: about 28 season, all coastal; high 6 LBCBC, 2-3 birds were resident at Wreck Pond through period (NT), 2 Deal Lake 22 Jan (DG); many other reports of single birds (v.obs).

Glaucous Gull: SHCBC, LBCBC, SH 9 Jan (LM, SB), Allenhurst 31 Jan (SK), inshore pelagic 8 Feb (PG, SB).

Black-legged Kittiwake: SHCBC, 2 SH 29 Dec (TBr), 2 PCBC, inshore pelagic 8 Feb (PG).

Forster's Tern: LCBC, Monmouth Beach 19 Jan (SB, LM).

Dovekie: bird picked up on a boat 8 miles east of Little Egg Inlet (fide AM), 75 4-10 miles offshore PCBC, single on bayside of SH near SHBO 18 Jan (DM).

COMMON MURRE: all time state high 10 inshore pelagic 8 Feb (PG, SB, et al—details to NJBRC).

THICK-BILLED MURRE: Monmouth Beach 19 Jan (SB, LM, BDo—details to NJBRC).

Razorbill: arr 2 BLSP 24 Dec (CH), 26 PCBC, high 32 in a feeding frenzy off SH 13 Jan (MH, PB), 19 inshore pelagic 8 Feb (PG, SB); 11 other birds, mostly singles 5 Jan-10 Feb from Allenhurst north to SH (v.obs).

BLACK GUILLEMOT: SH 14 Dec (TBo, ph—details to NJBRC), a different bird was discovered at Shark River Inlet 15 Dec (BC, ph—details to NJBRC).

ATLANTIC PUFFIN: first-winter 10 miles offshore on inshore pelagic 8 Feb (PG, SB); very rare land-based sighting BLSP 14 Feb (LSh).

Snowy Owl: IBSP 5-10 Dec (GW, SW, FL), SH 6-8 Dec (JM-H), Shark River Inlet 9-10 Dec (CR, NT), Manahawkin 27 Jan (KJ), Shark River Inlet 24 Feb (TA).

Long-eared Owl: Thompson Park 3-5 Jan (TBa, AS), BCBC, ACBC; high 6 Assunpink 8 Feb+ (TBa).

Short-eared Owl: high 14 BCBC; smaller numbers reported from Manahawkin, Cedar Run Dock Rd, and Dock Rd during period (v.obs).

Northern Saw-whet Owl: single detected on ACBC remained through 8 Feb (TBa).

RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD: Cedar Run bird continued from fall through period (DD); a hatch-year female in Freehold 18 Nov—15 Jan was banded and represented a first record for Monmouth (PM, SB, LM ph.,



Two Orange-crowned Warblers overwintered at Sandy Hook. This one was photographed there 16 Feb. Photo/Peter Burke

RV—details to NJBRC).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: high 10 LCBC.

Eastern Phoebe: singles ACBC & BCBC.

ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER: continuing from fall Thompson Park 1 Dec (SB, LM).

COMMON RAVEN: Parkertown on BCBC (RR), 2 Colts Neck 24 Feb (TR); now a rare-but-regular visitor to region.

Tree Swallow: 7 SH 4 Dec (TBo) decreased to 4 there 14 Jan (LM).

Red-breasted Nuthatch: 8 SH 8 Feb (TBo).

SEDGE WREN: 2 BCBC.

Marsh Wren: overwintering Belford 22 Feb (TBo).

Eastern Bluebird: high 105 ACBC.

American Pipit: high 50 Dorbrook Park 13 Dec (SB, LM), 14 SHCBC, 30 Cedar Run Dock Rd 8 Feb (MN).

BOHEMIAN WAXWING: SH 2 Feb+ (TBo, et al—details to NJBRC).

Orange-crowned Warbler: singles on SHCBC, LBCBC, BCBC; 2 birds over-wintered at SH from mid-Dec through 19 Feb (KK, PD, et al); 2 different individuals were noted at Fisherman's Cove in Manasquan 20 Dec and 2 Jan (both NT).

NASHVILLE WARBLER: late IBSP 13 Dec (RR, TA).

Pine Warbler: late m lingered in Union Beach through 4 Dec (TBo).

Palm Warbler: IBSP 13 Dec (RR, TA), 2 BCBC, "eastern" race Manahawkin 16 Feb (TBo).

Common Yellowthroat: f Poricy Park 26 Dec (KK).

American Tree Sparrow: high 63 SHCBC.

LARK SPARROW: SH 6 Jan (BDo), much rarer in mid-winter.

Grasshopper Sparrow: very late SH 5 Dec (SB, LM).

Saltmarsh Sparrow: over-wintering in Belford 22 Feb (TBo).

Snow Bunting: high 570 SHCBC.

Eastern Meadowlark: high 24 southern Ocean coastal marshes (MBr), 22 Big Brook Park 18 Feb (TBo).

Rusty Blackbird: 20 Riverdale Ave West 13 Dec (SB, LM), high 61 BCBC.

Baltimore Oriole: imm m SH 3-4 Dec (LSt, TBo), Toms River through 16 Dec (W&BM).

Purple Finch: 3 BCBC, 2 Big Brook Park 18 Feb (TBo).

RED CROSSBILL: 2 SHCBC (PB).

WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL: arr 3 BCBC, Hazlet 30 Jan (TBo), a flock of 15-20 was present at SH 2 Feb+ (TBo, PB, SB), 2 Assunpink 8 Feb (TBo), high 31 Big Brook Park 18 Feb (TBo), 20 Lincroft 18 Feb (TBo).

Common Redpoll: 2 Manahawkin on BCBC (Tba), 10 Shark River Inlet 7-26 Jan (EL, NT, v.obs), 2 BLSP 12 Jan (BH), New Gretna 14 Jan (FL), high 12 Pullman Ave, Elberon 19 Jan (SB, LM), 2 SH 25 Feb (RF, TBo).

Pine Siskin: widely reported through period; higher counts were 44 ACBC, 36 Toms River 26 Dec (SW), 78 LCBC, 30 Wells Mills Park 14 Jan (FL), 20 Middletown 23 Feb (TBr).



Lower Delaware Valley, including Burlington, Camden, Gloucester, and Salem Counties.

EDITOR—Steve Sobocinski, 3 Barkley Court, Marlton, NJ 08053. e-mail: ssobocinski@comcast.net

A frigid January was sandwiched between a warm December and February. January was one of the coldest in recent history, with near-record low temperatures in the middle of the month—causing most freshwater to freeze and concentrating wintering waterfowl and Bald Eagles at remaining open water. Snowfall was minimal, with the only notable accumulation Feb 3-4. Both January and February had below-average precipitation.

The bird of the season was a cooperative Green-tailed Towhee in a suburban Collingswood, Camden yard from January 1 through the remainder of the period; the last Green-tailed Towhee in the state occurred in spring of 1985. Many, many thanks to John and Peggy McDevit for allowing birders access to this extremely rare visitor. Other notables included Eurasian Wigeon, a continuing Rufous Hummingbird at a Medford feeder,

Vesper Sparrow, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Brewer's Blackbird and both crossbills. Tundra Swans rebounded from last year's low numbers. White-winged Crossbills were reported from four locations, a nice addition to the usual mix of winter species but not in the numbers sighted in the other regions. The continuing Wild Turkey explosion was exemplified by an incredible 667 on the Northwestern Gloucester Christmas Bird Count (GCBC). Wintering owls were unimpressive, with no Saw-whet Owls recorded. Sparrow numbers were low overall. A low total of 17 American Tree Sparrows was noted on the regional Christmas bird counts. The now-annual winter Pine and Palm Warbler group continued at Franklin Parker Preserve, with respectable numbers of both species remaining through at least the end of January.

There were five regional Christmas Bird Counts: Northwestern Gloucester (GCBC, 14 Dec, compiler Ron Kegel) recorded 87 species; Salem (SCBC, 14 Dec, compiler Jerry Haag) 94 species; Pinelands (PCBC, 14 Dec, compiler Bob Confer) 69 species; Moorestown (MCBC, 28 Dec, compiler Mark Pensiero) 114 species; and Elmer (ECBC, 31 Dec, compiler Jerry Haag) 85 species. The stellar Moorestown total included Great Egret, Northern Goshawk, Orange-crowned Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, Vesper Sparrow, Red Crossbill and Common Redpoll.

The Salem County Raptor Census (SCRC, compiler Jack Mahon) on February 1 celebrated its 25th year with an all-time high count of Bald Eagles.

Contributors

Dave Amadio, Nels Anderson, Tom Bailey, Scott Barnes, Elizabeth Bender, Bob Confer, Ward Dasey, Paul Driver, Dana Eglinton, William Fearn, Jean Gutsmuth, Brian Hart, Scott Henderson, Cliff Jones, Sandra Keller, Chip Krilowicz, David Larsen, Frank Lenik, Len Little, Linda Mack, John & Peggy McDevit, Dave Magpiong, Jack Mahon, Joe Palumbo, Steve Sobocinski, Pat & Clay Sutton, Frank Windfelder, Ted Young.

WATERFOWL – OWLS

Ross' Goose: 2 Compromise Road, Mannington Twp 10 Jan (SK), ad n of Sunset Rd, Mannington Twp 18 Jan (SB, LM).

Cackling Goose: 2 SCBC 14 Dec.
Tundra Swan: high 345 Whitesbog 31 Dec (LL), 218 Whitesbog 11 Jan (BH), 97 Franklin Parker Preserve near Chatsworth 22 Feb (NA).
EURASIAN WIGEON: Mt. Laurel 6 Feb+ (WF, DL), one of a handful of *Burlington* records.
Canvasback: high 285 National Park 7 Feb (DA); 190 Dredge Harbor, Cinnaminson 21 Feb (TB).
Redhead: 2 National Park 18 Jan (DA) and 7 Feb (PD), Dredge Harbor, Cinnaminson 21 Feb (TB).
Ring-necked Duck: high 300 Whitesbog 17 Feb (LL); 54 Lakes Preserve, Willingboro 22 Dec (SS).
Greater Scaup: 17 National Park 7 Feb (PD) and 20+ Dredge Harbor 21 Feb (TB).
White-winged Scoter: Delaware River, Cinnaminson 10 Jan (TB) and 17 Jan (TB, SS).
Long-tailed Duck: Delaware River, Cinnaminson 14 Dec (SS), 2 Palmyra 25 Jan (TB).
Common Goldeneye: up to 29 on Delaware River in Cinnaminson 14 & 21 Dec (SS, TB).
Hooded Merganser: 44 Whitesbog 17 Feb (LL).
Common Merganser: high 114 Hancock's Bridge 18 Jan (SB, LM, DL); 80+ Delaware River, Cinnaminson 17 Feb (SS, TB).
Red-breasted Merganser: 75 flyovers Whitesbog 11 Feb (LL)- an unusually high number for the pinelands.
Wild Turkey: high 667 GCBC 14 Dec.
Great Cormorant: high 40+ Delaware River, Cinnaminson 17 Jan (TB, SS); 12 National Park 18 Jan (DA).
Great Egret: 3 GCBC 14 Dec, MCBC 28 Dec, Abbott's Farm Road, Salem 10 Jan (FL), Mantua Creek, Paulsboro 24 Jan (DA).
Bald Eagle: all-time high 40 SCRC 1 Feb; 14 GCBC 14 Dec, 18 Hancock's Bridge 18 Jan (SB, LM).
Northern Goshawk: SCBC 14 Dec, Lake Lonnie Park, Delran 28 Dec (PD, FW), Logan Township 10 Jan (SH, JH).
Red-shouldered Hawk: pair at Taylor's Preserve throughout period (SS, TB), 3 PCBC 14 Dec, 2 SCBC 14 Dec, Franklin Parker Preserve 27 Dec (TB), 2 MCBC 28 Dec, 2 ECBC 31 Dec, Columbus Sod Farm 5 Jan (DE), Mannington Marsh 1 Feb (TB).

Rough-legged Hawk: 3 Franklin Parker Preserve 25 Dec (JP, EB), Franklin Parker Preserve 27 Dec and 25 Jan (both TB), Amasa Landing Road, New Gretna, *Burlington* 22 Feb (TB).
Merlin: Franklin Parker Preserve 27 Dec (JP, TB), 5 MCBC 28 Dec, Columbus Sod Farm 19 Feb (DE).
American Kestrel: 18 SCRC 14 Dec, 8 GCBC 14 Dec, 1 PCBC 14 Dec, 4 MCBC 28 Dec, 15 ECBC 31 Dec.
Golden Eagle: Franklin Parker Preserve 27 Dec (TB, JP, EB).
Virginia Rail: Rancocas Creek, Hainesport 28 Dec (WD).
Laughing Gull: late Rancocas Nature Center 28 Dec. (SK).
Iceland Gull: Palmyra 28 Dec (TB, TY), 2 Delaware River, Riverton 18 Jan (TB).
Lesser Black-backed Gull: SCBC 14 Dec, 4 MCBC 28 Dec, 3 Delaware River, Riverton 18 Jan, 2 Palmyra 25 Jan (TB).
Long-eared Owl: 3 SCBC 14 Dec, Mannington, Evesham, 2 Alloway and 3 Medford in Feb (all WD).
Short-eared Owl: Featherbed Lane, Sharptown 1 Feb (TB).

HUMMINGBIRDS – FINCHES

RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD: continued Medford feeder until 22 Dec (WD—accepted by NJBRC).
Pileated Woodpecker: ECBC 31 Dec.
Eastern Phoebe: Whitesbog 12 Dec (LL), PCBC 14 Dec, ECBC 31 Dec.
Horned Lark: 116 MCBC 28 Dec, 50 Columbus Sod Farm 3 Feb.
Gray Catbird: SCBC 14 Dec, ECBC 31 Dec, 2 Pemberton 1 Feb (SS).
Brown Thrasher: SCBC 14 Dec, ECBC 31 Dec.
American Pipit: 100 Columbus Sod Farm 14 Feb (DE).
Cedar Waxwing: 195 ECBC 31 Dec.
Orange-crowned Warbler: 2 MCBC 28 Dec.
Pine Warbler: high 12 Franklin Parker Preserve 2 Jan (SS); Evesham 7-28 Dec (SS), 5 Franklin Parker Preserve 25 Jan (TB).
Palm Warbler: high 6 Franklin Parker Preserve 27 Dec (JP, EB) decreased to 3 there 25 Jan (TB).
BLACK-AND-WHITE WARBLER: MCBC 28 Dec.
Common Yellowthroat: Mount Laurel 28 Dec (SS).

GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE: visiting feeder in Collingswood 1 Jan through period (JM, PM, m.obs—accepted by NJBRC).
American Tree Sparrow: low total of 17 on CBCs: 5 SCBC 14 Dec, 3 GCBC 14 Dec, 9 MCBC 28 Dec; 8 Abbott's Meadow WMA 18 Jan (SB, LM, DL).
Chipping Sparrow: 39 ECBC 31 Dec.
Vesper Sparrow: MCBC 28 Dec.
Savannah Sparrow: 24 Columbus Sod Farm 14 Feb (DE).
Lincoln's Sparrow: very rare in winter, Abbott's Meadow WMA 18 Jan (DL, SB, LM).
Eastern Meadowlark: 12 Columbus Sod Farm 15 Jan (DE), 16 Compromise Road, Mannington 1 Feb (TB).
Yellow-headed Blackbird: Sunset Road, Mannington 14 Feb (SK), adm Haine's Neck Rd, Salem 18 Jan (SB, DL).
BREWER'S BLACKBIRD: Woodstown, Salem 17 Jan (CK).
Rusty Blackbird: 17 Franklin Parker Preserve 27 Dec (JP, EB), Pedricktown 7 Feb (PD).
Baltimore Oriole: MCBC 28 Dec, Marlton Park, Pilesgrove Twp 18 Jan (FL).
Purple Finch: 12 Salem River WMA 20 Jan (CK).
Red Crossbill: MCBC 28 Dec.
WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL: 2 Lake Lonnie Park, Delran 17 Jan (TB, SS), Medford WMA 25 Jan (TB), 10 Pittman 10 Feb (fide SB), up to 15 Haddon Heights 16-17 Feb (JG, BH).
Common Redpoll: MCBC 28 Dec, flyover Pedricktown 7 Feb (fide SB).
Pine Siskin: high 100+ feeder in Tabernacle 16 Dec (CJ).

REGION 5

South Coast and Delaware Bay area including Cape May, Cumberland, and Atlantic Counties.

EDITOR — Vince Elia, CMBO R&E Center, 600 Rte. 47 North, Cape May Court House, NJ 08210. e-mail: vince.elia@njaudubon.org

The winter was somewhat typical in that frozen fresh water was present from late December through late January, though it is sometimes less persistent. Waterfowl numbers remained quite high throughout, with sizable flocks of dabblers present on Lily Lake and the ponds at the State Park.

The newly cleared and more open habitat along the yellow trail at the Cape May Point State Park seemed to form a nexus for passerines. Early in the period it held a very late Northern Parula and an Ash-throated Flycatcher, and a little later Yellow-breasted Chat, Orange-crowned Warbler, Palm Warbler, Eastern Phoebe, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, and House Wren. Ruby-crowned Kinglets persisted in numbers much longer into the season than normal.

Five Christmas Bird Counts were conducted in the region: Cape May 14 Dec (156 species, compiler Louise Zemaitis), Marmora 14 Dec (93 species, compiler Ed Bristow), Oceanville 20 Dec (131 species, compiler Brian Moscatello), Belleplain 21 Dec (109 species, compiler Paul Kosten), Cumberland 28 Dec (127 species, compiler Mike Fritz).

There were a number of rare, wayward, and directionally challenged species. The Bird of the Season (or BOTS) award was well contested. The list of highlights included Cackling Goose, a female Eurasian Wigeon—rarely recorded in the state, Eared Grebe, Dovekie, Rufous/Allen's Hummingbird, Ash-throated Flycatcher, and White-winged Crossbill. The arbitrarily determined BOTS award this season goes to (drum-roll please) the Eared Grebe. I extend a heartfelt "thank you" to all those who took the time to write down, or send in, their reports.

Contributors

Scott Barnes, Tom Boyle, Mike Britt, Cameron Cox, Donna Dejardins, Vince Elia, Sean Fitzgerald, Bob Fogg, Don Friday, Mark Garland, Sam Galick, Jason Guerard, Chris Hajduk, Kathy Horn, Roger Horn, Sandra Keller, (SKe) Susan Killeen (SKi), Bev Linn, Dave Lord, Karl Lukens, Tom Magarian, Mike Mandracchia, John McDevit, Michael O'Brien, Tom Parsons, Tom Reed, Catherine Sandell, Chris Vogel, Louis Warren, Matt Webster.

Abbreviations

Avalon Sea Watch (ASW), Cape May city (CM), Edwin B. Forsythe (aka Brigantine) NWR (BNWR), Hidden Valley Extension (HVE) Hidden Valley Ranch (HVR), Higbee Beach (HB), South Cape May Meadows (SCMM), Stone Harbor Point (SHPt), Two Mile Beach (TMB), Turkey Point (TPt), and West Cape May (WCM). Note that Cape Island refers to the entire geographic area south of the Cape May canal. Hereford Inlet is a broad term taking into account Stone Harbor Point, the inlet, and Nummy Island.

WATERFOWL – SHOREBIRDS

Snow Goose: high 10,174 ASW 8 Dec (SF).

Ross's Goose: CUCBC.

Brant: high 6339 BNWR 19 Feb (fide BNWR staff).

CACKLING GOOSE: Cape Island, continuing from 21 Nov-17 Feb (v.obs).

Tundra Swan: high 250 BNWR 22 Jan (fide BNWR staff).

Gadwall: high 180 19 Jan Lily Lake (DF).

EURASIAN WIGEON: OCBC, CMPt SP 13-14 Jan (CV et al.), f Villas WMA 19 Jan-9 Feb (fide BF), 1-2 BNWR 19-24 Jan (MM), Atlantic City 22 Feb (VE).

American Wigeon: high 150 Lily Lake 19 Jan (DF).

American Black Duck: high 5529 BNWR 19 Feb (fide BNWR staff).

Northern Shoveler: high 35 Cape Island 24 Dec (CV).

Northern Pintail: high 2344 BNWR 19 Feb (fide BNWR staff).

Canvasback: high 10 off Cape May city 2 Jan (MO).

Redhead: high 25 BNWR 29 Jan (fide BNWR staff).

Ring-necked Duck: high 73 Villas WMA 8 Feb (SG).

Greater Scaup: high 1650 BNWR 18 Dec (fide BNWR staff).

King Eider: 5 SHPt 14 Dec (CC), Cape May city 15 Dec (MO), Avalon 22-3 Feb (TR).

Common Eider: 16 ASW 12 Dec (SF), high 38 CMCBC, 12 Avalon 8 Feb (DF).

Harlequin Duck: 3 TMB 30 Dec (TR), Sea Isle City 5 Jan (SKe), 3-4 Avalon 31 Jan-20 Feb (v.obs).

Black Scoter: high 10,903 CMCBC, 7000 off CMPt 27 Feb (JG).

Long-tailed Duck: high 634 CMCBC, 350 CMPt 10 Feb (BF).

Bufflehead: high 567 Whitesboro, Cape May 14 Dec (MO).

Hooded Merganser: high 211 BNWR 8 Jan (fide BNWR staff).

Common Merganser: high 65 Turkey Point 17 Jan (DL), 40 McNamara WMA 9 Feb (KL).

Red-breasted Merganser: high 261 ASW 9 Dec (SF).

Ruddy Duck: high 250 Cape Island 1 Feb (MO).

Red-throated Loon: high 1622 ASW (SF).

Red-necked Grebe: ASW 12 & 15 Dec (SF), Cape May-Lewes ferry 16 Feb (DF).

EARED GREBE: Cape May Harbor 17-18 Jan (BF et al.), Hereford Inlet 18 Jan (fide BF), Stone Harbor 22 Jan (fide BF).

Northern Gannet: high 1184 ASW (SF).

Brown Pelican: dep ASW 1 Dec (SF).

Great Cormorant: high 27 near Whitesboro, Cape May 14 Dec (MO).

American Bittern: BNWR 2 Dec (fide SB), 2 OCBC, WCM 1 Feb (CH et al.), SCMM 25 Feb (fide BF).

Little Blue Heron: 2 Two Mile Landing 14 Dec (TM).

Tricolored Heron: 1-2 Stone Harbor/Nummy Island 14 Dec-25 Jan (v.obs).

Osprey: 2 OCBC.

Bald Eagle: high 58 CUCBC, 17 Cohansey River 11 Jan (DF).

Northern Harrier: high 31 BNWR 6 Dec (MB).

Northern Goshawk: BCBC.

Red-shouldered Hawk: high 15 CMPt SP 1 Jan were late migrants (VE, DF).

Red-tailed Hawk: high 35 CMPt SP 1 Jan were late migrants (VE, DF).

Rough-legged Hawk: 8 OCBC.

Virginia Rail: high 3 BNWR 6 Dec (MB), Cape Island Preserve 14 Dec- 1 Jan (VE, BF).

American Coot: high 55 CMPt 8 Dec (JG).

Sandhill Crane: 16 Husted Landing, Cumberland 12 Jan may represent both "pure" birds and hybrids. See the article in NJB by Boyle and Larson for more information (KL).

Black-bellied Plover: high 300 BNWR 6 Dec (MB).

Semipalmated Plover: high 5 SHPt 2 Jan (fide TR).

American Oystercatcher: high 272 Absecon Inlet 1 Dec (CS) decreased to 110 there 24 Feb (fide SB).

'Western' Willet: high 49 Absecon Inlet on OCBC.

Spotted Sandpiper: MCHC (ph.).

Lesser Yellowlegs: CMPt SP 4 Dec (CC), Cape Island 19 Jan (CV).

Hudsonian Godwit: late 2 Dec BNWR (fide SB).

Marbled Godwit: high 29 Absecon Inlet 1 Dec (CS).

Western Sandpiper: high 30 BNWR 4 Jan (JM).

Least Sandpiper: ASW 2 Dec (SF), Strathmere 5 Jan (SKe).

Purple Sandpiper: high 84 Avalon 14 Dec (SF).

Short-billed Dowitcher: SHPt 20 Dec (MO), 4 SHPt 5 Jan (MW).

Long-billed Dowitcher: Wetlands Institute 20 Dec (MO), Turkey Point 28 Dec (DF).

American Woodcock: high 25 Cape Island 8 Dec (JG).

GULLS-FINCHES

Black-headed Gull: CMPt 27 Dec (LW), 1-2 CMPt 9-25 Feb (v.obs).

Little Gull: CMPt 19 Feb (BF, TM).

Iceland Gull: ASW 12 Dec (SF), CMPt 22 Jan (fide BF), Ocean Drive 24 Jan (BF).

Lesser Black-backed Gull: high 3 OCBC, CMPt 29 Dec (BF), Coast Guard Base 2 Jan (CH).

Glaucous Gull: ASW 9 Dec (SF), CMPt SP 2-5 Jan (TP et al.), Ocean Drive 24 Jan (BF).

Black-legged Kittiwake: CMCBC.

DOVEKIE: ASW 17 Dec (SF).



This was the most viewed of 3 different Snowy Owls in Region 5 last winter. It appeared 20 Dec at Stone Harbor Point (photographed here) and lasted to at least 23 Feb. Photo/Michael O'Brien.

THICK-BILLED MURRE: found dead Coast Guard beach 6 Jan (CH).

Razorbill: high 7 ASW 14 Dec (SF).

Barn Owl: singles OCBC & CUCBC.

SNOWY OWL: 1-2 SHPt 20-Dec-23 Feb (v.obs), BCBC, Port Norris 26 Dec-3 Jan (fide DF).

Long-eared Owl: 2 OCBC.

Short-eared Owl: high 5 Jake's Landing 27 Jan (CV).

Northern Saw-whet Owl: CMCBC, 2 CUCBC

RUFOUS/ALLEN'S HUMMING-BIRD: 1-2 continuing WCM from 15 Nov-24 Feb (BL et al.).

Red-headed Woodpecker: 1-3 Villas WMA 1 Dec-28 Feb (v.obs).

Eastern Phoebe: BNWR 6 Dec (SKi), 1-2 CMPt SP 30 Dec-2 Feb (v.obs).

ASH-THROATED FLYCATCHER: CMPt SP continuing from 28 Nov-2 Dec (MG), Cape Island Preserve 20-22 Dec (K&RH et al.).

Blue-headed Vireo: BNWR 23 Jan (DD); unusual mid-winter sighting.

Horned Lark: high 139 CUCBC; 52 Bay Point Road, Cumberland (MW).

Tree Swallow: high 84 OCBC, 50 Cape Island 2 Jan (CH).

House Wren: CMPt SP 14 Dec (SG), CMPt 27 Jan (CV), CMPt SP 1 Feb (VE).

Sedge Wren: HB continuing from 24 Oct-23 Dec (v.obs), Turkey Point 28 Dec (fide DF).

American Pipit: high 90 BCBC, 70 Newport Landing, Cumberland 7 Feb (TR).

Orange-crowned Warbler: CMPt SP 4 Dec (JG), 2 CMCBC, CMPt SP 3 Jan-1 Feb (v.obs), Cape Island Preserve 21 Jan (BF).

Nashville Warbler: WCM 4-7 Dec (BF, MG), 2 CMCBC, CMPt SP 1 Jan (VE et al.).

Northern Parula: late CMPt SP 5 Dec (MG).

Pine Warbler: Cape May city 10 Dec-17 Jan (CH et al.).

Palm Warbler: 1-2 CMPt SP 1 Dec-10 Jan (v.obs), high 15 CMCBC, Villas WMA 19 Jan (DF).

Common Yellowthroat: WCM 3 Dec

(TM), SCMM 11 Jan (TM).

Yellow-breasted Chat: WCM 3 Dec (BF), Cape Island Preserve 5-26 Dec (VE, BF), BCBC, CUCBC, CMPt SP 28 Dec-10 Jan (vobs).

American Tree Sparrow: high 10 Co-hansey River, Cumberland 11 Jan (DF), 7 BNWR 20 Dec (TB).

Chipping Sparrow: high 70 Villas WMA 28 Dec (SG).

Vesper Sparrow: 2 Cape Island Preserve 5 Dec (fide BF), Cape Island Preserve 14-22 Dec (MO), high 3 CUCBC, old Magnesite Plant 14 Feb (VE).

Nelson's Sparrow: high 3 Stone Harbor 14 Dec (CC).

Fox Sparrow: high 115 CMCBC, 20 HB 25 Feb (TM).

Lincoln's Sparrow: Cape Island 2 Dec (CV).

Lapland Longspur: Sea Isle City 13Dec (SG).

Snow Bunting: up to 55 CMPt SP 15 Dec-11 Feb (v.obs).

Dickcissel: Cape May city 3 Dec-25 Feb (BF et al.), SCMM 10 Dec-11 Jan (v.obs).

Rusty Blackbird: high 75 Villas WMA 1 Feb (MW).

Baltimore Oriole: CMPt 14 Dec (KL).

Purple Finch: high 30 CMCBC.

WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL: up to a high of 28 regionally 2 Dec-17 Feb (v.obs).



This hatch year female Rufous Hummingbird appeared in West Cape May 12 Nov and remained through mid-Jan or later. Photo/Michael O'Brien

Common Redpoll: 2 Villas WMA 24 Jan (DF).

Pine Siskin: high 30 CMCBC.



The Stone Harbor Point Snowy Owl proves that wildlife viewing platforms work. Photographed February 17. Photo/Mike Fritz

Fifty Years Ago — Winter 1958

compiled by DON FREIDAY

In each issue of NJB, we feature a few excerpts from corresponding NJAS publications half a century ago. The following are from New Jersey Nature News, Volume 14, No. 2, published April, 1959, which contains regional reports from winter, 1958-1959.

BALD EAGLE SURVEY IN NEW JERSEY

Research teams took to the field on Sunday, February 1, 1959, to begin an extensive study of the resident bald eagles in New Jersey. This state-wide "Bald Eagle

Survey" is sponsored and directed by our Society to determine the number of pairs of bald eagles breeding in our state and to investigate the cause or causes responsible for the failure of this species to produce young in the eight known active nests in New Jersey during the past three years. One theory offered by several eminent naturalists, including Charles L. Broley, "The Eagleman," of Ontario, Canada and Tampa, Florida is that DDT insecticides may be sterilizing the bald eagles." (p. 25. Author: Frank W. McLaughlin). [Ed.'s note: after declining to a single pair in the 1970's, NJ's Bald Eagles responded to the 1972 federal ban on DDT and active management. 63 active nests produced 85 young in 2008 (Smith and Clark 2008).]

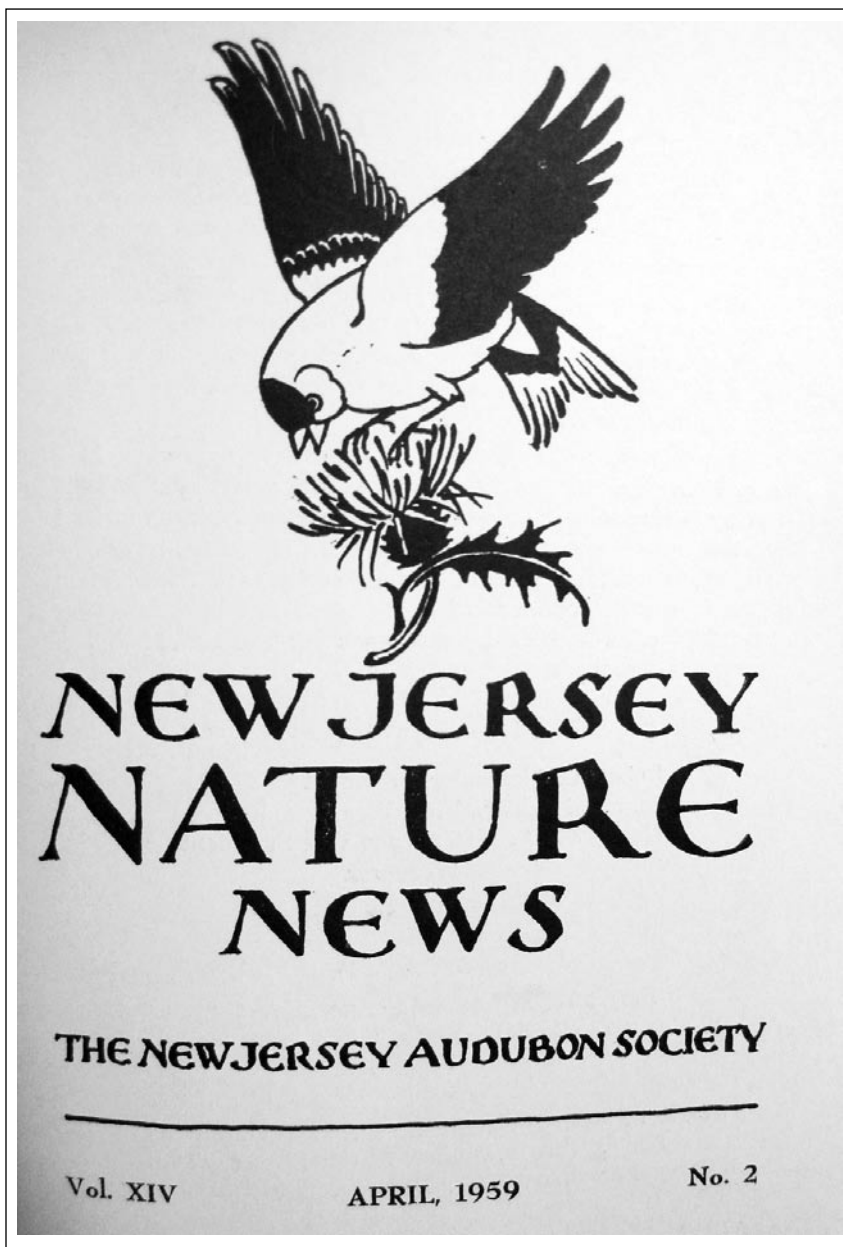
Common names of many species have been changed. For example, the American Egret is now the Common Egret; the Towhee is now the Rufous-sided Towhee. . . (p.36, anonymous.)

Region 1, North Mountain - Christmas counts were conducted. . . the most unusual find was reported by the Hunterdon County group: two red-bellied woodpeckers. Great flocks of evening grosbeaks moved into the area on January 17 and 18. We saw a flock of 150 at Newfoundland. . . (p. 42. Author: Mrs. A. Black.)

Region 2, North Hill - The undoubted highlight of the season was the appearance of three Arctic three-toed woodpeckers at the Oradell Reservoir. These birds were first discovered on December 27 during the Hackensack Christmas census. . . They remained at least through the first week of February. (p. 43. Author: F.P. Frazier) [Ed.'s note: By their current name, these were Black-backed Woodpeckers, of which 16 reports have been accepted by the NJBRC, none since 1983. A good bird to warm the blood during a CBC. . .]

Region 3, North Central [Ed.'s note: this region is now mostly included in current NJB Region 2] - Long-eared Owls have returned to the roosts in Rosedale and Mt. Rose in limited numbers. Dick Thorington reports three birds at Rosedale and two at Mount Rose, also a barred owl at the Princeton pumping station. (p. 45. Author: E. D. Bloor)

Region 4, Lower Delaware Valley - The first evening grosbeak appeared about a week in December,



but on January 24, they descended in a flock, now 50 to 75 appear daily and they are all over the lakes. Pemberton and New Lisbon have had large flocks since October. (pp. 18-19. Author: M.A. Middleton)


Region 5, Atlantic Coast and Delaware Bay
 - Maurice Broun, of Hawk Mountain, reported a gyrfalcon, light phase, at Long beach on January 29. (p. 46. Author: E. A. Choate.)

References

Smith, L. and K. E. Clark 2008. New Jersey Bald Eagle Project 2008. New Jersey Department of Environmental Protection, Division of Fish and Wildlife.


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