

# ***Fort Drum Fish & Wildlife Management Program***



## **Wildlife Viewing Report – 6 February 2018**

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### **Birds**

As is often the case, bird activity has been pretty light on Fort Drum this winter, with a few localized exceptions. Some groups of birds that often are relatively common during winter in northern New York are scarce this year, most notably open country hawks, which unlike most years are almost totally absent from the large fields in Training Areas 12 and 13. Some irruptive species, such as Common Redpoll and Bohemian Waxwing have not come south in any numbers this year, regular wintering birds such as Northern Shrike are unusually scarce, and few American Robins and other species that winter in highly variable numbers are being seen.

Perhaps the most interesting avian phenomenon in northern New York this winter is the appearance of numerous Pine Siskins, White-winged Crossbills, and Red Crossbills in and near the Adirondacks. These species roam around large parts of North America searching for large crops of conifer cones, on which they feed. When they encounter bumper crops of cones, they will settle down to breed, which they can do at any time of the year, even during the middle of harsh, northern winters. Crossbills in particular are rare in New York most winters, but can be abundant during these periodic irruptions, and both species of crossbill as well as Pine Siskins are now common in the Adirondacks and likely are nesting. So far no Pine Siskins or White-winged Crossbills have been found on Fort Drum this winter, but several Red Crossbills have been observed in Training Areas 7 and 14 recently, where this species has nested in the past.

Snowy Owls irrupted south again this winter, although not in the large numbers seen in other recent irruptions. Although present in northern New York generally, very few have been seen on Fort Drum. One or two Snowy Owls have spent the winter in agricultural fields immediately adjacent to Fort Drum and likely hunt over fields on the installation, but actual use of Fort Drum habitat has not been well documented this winter.

Except during relatively mild winters, most water on Fort Drum ices over in winter so most waterfowl leave for the season, but persistent open water in the Cantonment often allows at least a few ducks and geese to overwinter. Despite very cold early winter temperatures a handful of Mallards and American Black Ducks wintered on West and Pleasant Creeks, with two Green-winged Teal joining them. A few hundred Canada Geese were also present up to early January but these geese appear to have moved on.

**(continued)**



***Snowy Owl on Delles Road across from Fort Drum on 11 January 2018.***

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## **Wildlife Viewing Report – 6 February 2018 (continued)**

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Among half-hardies, that is species that usually migrate south for the winter but are capable of overwintering given the right conditions, the only notable representative encountered on Fort Drum this year so far is Red-headed Woodpecker. At least three adult Red-headed Woodpeckers are overwintering in Training Area 5 oak woodlands, thanks to a large acorn crop. During the fall several Red-headed Woodpeckers were seen storing acorns, so it wasn't a surprise when three or four individuals were found in December, well after this species usually departs Fort Drum for the winter. This is the fourth year since 2011 that Red-headed Woodpeckers have overwintered on Fort Drum, each time corresponding to the presence of abundant acorns.

### Species observed on Fort Drum from January 1 – February 6, 2018:

|                       |                         |
|-----------------------|-------------------------|
| Canada Goose          | Blue Jay                |
| Mallard               | American Crow           |
| American Black Duck   | Common Raven            |
| Green-winged Teal     | Horned Lark             |
| Wild Turkey           | Black-capped Chickadee  |
| Ruffed Grouse         | Red-breasted Nuthatch   |
| Bald Eagle            | White-breasted Nuthatch |
| Cooper's Hawk         | Brown Creeper           |
| Northern Goshawk      | Golden-crowned Kinglet  |
| Red-tailed Hawk       | American Robin          |
| Rough-legged Hawk     | European Starling       |
| Rock Pigeon           | Snow Bunting            |
| Mourning Dove         | American Tree Sparrow   |
| Snowy Owl             | Song Sparrow            |
| Red-headed Woodpecker | White-throated Sparrow  |
| Downy Woodpecker      | Dark-eyed Junco         |
| Hairy Woodpecker      | Northern Cardinal       |
| Northern Flicker      | Red Crossbill           |
| Pileated Woodpecker   | American Goldfinch      |