

REGION 5 — ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

GENE HUGGINS

As one observer reported, it was another mini-winter in central New York. The average temperature for the three month period was 4.2° above the norm of 25.0° making this the eighth warmest winter since records were first kept in 1902 and the balmiest on record since 1952-53. Precipitation in the form of rainfall was above normal for December, with 5.24 inches establishing it as the third wettest on record. Rainfall for January was near normal and February was dryer than usual. Total snowfall for Syracuse was 93.9 inches, and Old Forge received 122 inches by the end of the period. Although January's snowfall was three inches above the norm of 27.9, very little of it stayed on the ground with the mild weather. An open winter with a scarcity of berry and seed

crops made for generally poor birding, especially in the Adirondacks and the southern highlands.

Despite a noticeable decline in the populations of land birds, a good variety of waterfowl were found on our major rivers and urban ponds. Common Loon persisted to the end of the period at both Fairhaven and Oswego Harbor. A surprising 42 Great Blue Heron were reported from the Region, with the largest concentration near Fulton. Over a thousand Canada Goose were observed at Woodman's Pond, Rome, Fairhaven and near Montezuma during the last week of December and the beginning of January. Each winter for the last several years an increasing number of Green-winged Teal have overwintered on the Hookway Tract (a flood control pond) in Syracuse. This season the maximum was 23, an increase of least 11 birds from the preceding year. Observers conducting the waterfowl census in mid January counted a record number of Mallards (4359), which contributed to the highest census total since 1964. For the second consecutive winter Am. Wigeon were found; this season a total of 16 was observed from five different locations. The overall population for most of our diving ducks was down with the exception of Ring-necked Duck, attaining a new high of 21 on the waterfowl census. Besides two King Eider at Oswego Harbor, the Region's first **Harlequin Duck** in five years highlighted this season's display of ducks.

Winter raptor numbers showed a moderate increase over the previous winter. Reports of N. Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk and Am. Kestrel were up, suggesting that rodents were more easily accessible. A **Merlin** in early December constituted the Region's third winter record since 1988.

Other winter highlights include more Wild Turkey in northern Oneida and Herkimer Counties. Thirty Wild Turkey near Remsen and seven at a feeder in Old Forge all winter indicated this bird's continued population expansion. Late departures included such species as Sanderling, Dunlin, Bonaparte's Gull and Black-legged Kittiwake. The two reports of Long-eared Owl were the first in six years and eight to twelve Short-eared Owl were reported from three locations south and east of Oneida L. A few Bohemian Waxwing near Rome was the only group to be seen all winter. The first major snowstorm to pass through our area occurred during the second weekend in January. With over ten inches of snow on the ground, significant numbers of Snow Bunting were found foraging in the manured fields located in the southern portion of the region. Of course birders take this opportunity to look for Lapland Longspurs and they were not disappointed when a total Regional count of seven were

observed. This same storm also may have contributed to the disappearance of Gray Catbird, Field Sparrow and Swamp Sparrow afterwards. Carolina Wren was found at higher elevations than normal, particularly at feeders located in northern Pompey Township and Erieville. Am. Crow and Am. Robin were found in greater numbers than usual along Lake Ontario, especially at Fairhaven and Oswego.

Winter finches were virtually absent except for American Goldfinch and Evening Grosbeak. Pine Grosbeak and White-winged Crossbill were observed at most for two days only, along with just three reports of Pine Siskin.

Negatives for the season include very few scoters, no Killdeer, and no Common Snipe. With the Oswego River remaining ice free for most of the winter, very few white-winged gulls were seen resting at sites where they are normally found. Finally, American Tree Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow and Dark-eyed Junco were not especially common, averaging no more than ten to twenty birds per day after December.

Observers in the Region reported 115 species during the winter. The most unusual of these were **Harlequin Duck** and **Merlin**. Other notable species reported were Red-throated Loon, Red-necked Grebe, Tundra Swan, Snow Goose, King Eider, Bald Eagle, Sanderling, Dunlin, Black-legged Kittiwake, Long-eared Owl, N. Saw-whet Owl, Gray Jay, Com. Raven, Boreal Chickadee, Gray Catbird, Bohemian Waxwing, Rufous-sided Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow and White-winged Crossbill.

A special thanks to Gary Lee and Marge Rusk for their contributions to the introduction of this report.

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Abbreviations: DH - Derby Hill, OSWE; LSB - Fairhaven, Little Sodus Bay and vicinity, CAYU; LOL - Lake Ontario Littoral, OSWE; NPT - northern Pompey Township, ONON; OnonL - Onondaga Lake, ONON; SSSP - Selkirk Shores State Park, OSWE; SVB - Sylvan and Verona Beach, ONEI; TRWMA - Three Rivers Wildlife Management Area, ONON.

LOONS-DUCKS: Red-throated Loon: one Oswego H 16 Dec, 5 Jan. Com. Loon: max five Oswego R 23 Feb, four Oneida L 22 Dec, two LSB 2 Dec, one Onondaga L 3 Jan, *intro*. Pied-billed Grebe: one Oswego R 16 Dec to 17 Feb, two LSB 1 Jan. Horned Grebe: max 12 LOL 5 Jan. Red-necked Grebe: one SPd 1 Dec,

one SVB 10 Feb. Double-crested Cormorant: six Oswego 2 Jan, three in the same locality 23 Feb. Great Blue Heron: max 19 Fulton 24 Jan, *intro*. Tundra Swan: two Oneida L 9-15 Dec. Snow Goose: max 300 Holland Patent 20 Dec. Canada Goose: max 1250 LSB 6 Jan, *intro*. Wood Duck: three Baldwinsville 27 Jan to 17 Feb; singles LOL 2 Dec-13 Jan, Rome 5 Dec, Dewitt 1-2 Jan. Green-winged Teal: *intro*. Am. Black Duck: max 151 Woodman's Pd 1 Dec. N. Pintail: one Oswego 2 Jan, two LSB 8 Feb. Gadwall: max 27 LSB 27 Jan. Am. Wigeon: ten LOL 2 Dec, two Baldwinsville 19 Jan to 3 Feb, two LSB 1 Jan, 8 Feb, one Oswego 1 to 20 Jan, one Twn of Brutus 22 Dec, 16 Feb. Canvasback: nine LSB 8 Feb, 27 reported for the period. Redhead: max 26 LSB 26 Jan. Ring-necked Duck: max 19 Skaneateles L, mid Jan, *intro*. Greater Scaup: max 619 Skaneateles L, mid Jan. Lesser Scaup: five Oswego 9 Feb, three LSB 8 Feb, one Baldwinsville 17, 23 Feb, one Skaneateles L 19 Jan. King Eider: male Oswego 1, 2 Jan, female there 10-23 Feb. **Harlequin Duck**: female Oswego R Phoenix 13 Jan. Oldsquaw: max 90 Oswego 27 Jan. White-winged Scoter: five LOL 5 Jan, singles Oswego 17 Feb, Scriba 24 Feb. Com. Goldeneye: max 332 Oswego and LSB 6 Jan. Bufflehead: max 200 LOL 2 Dec. Hooded Merganser: max 100 Oneida L 9 Dec. Com. Merganser: max 1380 OnonL and Oswego R 15 Jan. Red-breasted Merganser: max 500 LOL 2 Dec.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Bald Eagle: ad Fulton, 5 Jan, 3-10 Feb, ad OnonL 29 Jan, imm Oswego 6 Jan, imm LOL 2, 13 Jan, one Fulton Chain, Adk's to the end of period. N. Harrier: four SVB 22 Dec-1 Jan, Biddlecum 23 Feb. N. Goshawk: five reports. Rough-legged Hawk: max ten MADI and ONON 10 Feb. Am. Kestrel: five near Oneida L 9 Dec, 22 Dec. **Merlin**: one Cicero Swamp 9 Dec, an unidentified falcon possibly this species seen twice Syracuse in Jan. Ring-necked Pheasant: 15 reported for the period. Ruffed Grouse: max 12 Nelson 27 Feb. Wild Turkey: max 50 Holland Patent, Jan, *intro*. Am Coot: max 20 LOL 2 Dec, three LSB 8-13 Jan, one Oswego 19 Jan-23 Feb, one OnonL 4 Feb. Sanderling: last SPd 1 Dec, record late. Dunlin: last four SPd 1 Dec. Bonaparte's Gull: ten Oneida L 9 Dec, last Syracuse 15 Jan. Iceland Gull: singles Oneida 22 Dec, Oswego 2-13 Jan, Fulton 8 Jan-17 Feb, two, one an ad *kumleini*, Baldwinsville 27 Jan-23 Feb. Glaucous Gull: two Baldwinsville 9 Jan to end of period. Great Black-backed Gull: max 520 LOL & Oswego R 1 Jan. Black-legged Kittiwake: one SPd 1 Dec.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Mourning Dove: max 110 Sterling 6 Jan. E. Screech-Owl: five reports. Snowy Owl: two Oswego 1-19 Jan, one SVB 22 Dec-27 Jan, one Big Moose L 27 Feb. Barred Owl: one SVB 23 Dec-6 Jan, one Old Forge 19 Dec. Long-eared Owl: one Baldwinsville, one Liverpool 29 Jan. Short-eared Owl: *intro*. N. Saw-whet Owl: one Cato 1 Jan, one Old Forge 20 Feb. Red-bellied Woodpecker: one at a feeder Holland Patent 25 Feb. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: singles Hannibal 16 Dec, Pompey 9 Feb, Camillus 19 Feb. N. Flicker: 24 reports.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLING: Horned Lark: max 145 Twn of Otisco 14 Jan. Gray Jay: three n. branch Moose R 19 Dec. Am. Crow: max 260 Pumpkin Hollow 22 Jan. Com. Raven: one Third L 23 Feb. Black-capped Chickadee: max 75 LOL 2 Dec. Boreal Chickadee: singles Third L 19 Dec, Old Forge 2 Feb, DH 22 Feb. Red-

breasted Nuthatch: max 25 TRWMA 2 Jan. Carolina Wren: 14 reports, *intro*. Winter Wren: singles at Deansboro 29 Dec, Port Byron 1 Jan. Golden-crowned Kinglet: five SSSP 19 Jan, very scarce. E. Bluebird: two Oneida 22 Dec, three Skaneateles 30 Dec, one Nine Mile Pt 8 Feb. Am. Robin max 110 LSB and Oswego 8 Feb. Gray Catbird: one Andrew's Road Dewitt 2 Jan, three Dewitt 7 Jan, one Fayetteville 10 Jan. Bohemian Waxwing: max 11 Rome 9, 16 Feb. Cedar Waxwing: max 170 Dewitt 15 Dec. N. Shrike: 21 reports for the period.

VIREOS-WARBLEDERS: None

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: Rufous-sided Towhee: one Cazenovia 11 Jan. Am. Tree Sparrow: max 43 Toad H 23 Dec. Chipping Sparrow: one Nine Mile Pt 9-11 Jan. Field Sparrow: one Oswego 10 Jan. Song Sparrow: 21 reports. Swamp Sparrow: one Dewitt 5 Jan, only report. White-throated Sparrow: nine Hookway Tract Syracuse 1 Jan. Dark-eyed Junco: max 20 Oneida 30 Jan. Lapland Longspur: three T Otisco 12-14 Jan, four Cazenovia 19-29 Jan. Snow Bunting: max 1000 Fabius 7-10 Jan. Red-winged Blackbird: six/day until mid Feb, arr Hookway Tract 19 Feb. E. Meadowlark: two Mexico 2 Jan. Rusty Blackbird: one NPT 1-3 Feb. Com. Grackle: max 22 Oneida 22 Dec, one Hastings 15 Jan, arr Oneida, Rome 22 Feb. Brown-headed Cowbird: max 12 Lamson Road ONON 23 Jan. Pine Grosbeak: ten Erieville 24 Jan, only report. Purple Finch: nine Rome 29 Dec. House Finch: max 177 Cato 12 Feb. White-winged Crossbill: one Hastings 5, 6 Jan, only report. Pine Siskin: three reports 8 Dec to 20 Jan. Am. Goldfinch: max 91 Hastings 22 Feb. Evening Grosbeak: max 100 Erieville 25 Jan.

Corrigenda: Kingbird 40:164, 165 Spring Arrivals Table: Tree Swallow should read 14 Mar instead of 14 Apr, Savannah Sparrow should read 20 Mar instead of 14 Apr; 40:184 Lamson Road is in ONON, not OSWE; 40:187 Willow Flycatcher: max 28 Clay and OSWE 28 May, delete Peat Swamp; 40:188 Chipping Sparrow: max 23 Clay and OSWE 27 Apr, delete *intro*; Swamp Sparrow: max 54 Clay Marsh and Scott Swamp 28 May.

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