

REGION 2 — SOUTHERN TIER — (PART 1)

(Including some records from adjacent regions)

Our first snowfall of any consequence came early this year (November 1), but the winter as a whole was relatively mild and open. There were few long periods of snow, and none of the freezing rains like those of last winter. Temperatures, too, reached no extremes. Warm weather in February gave hopes of an early spring, but these hopes were premature, and the first migrants have been arriving about on schedule. All correspondents mention low numbers of many small land birds this winter.

LOONS — DUCKS:

Pied-billed Grebe — Wintered in greater numbers than usual. 14 counted on February 10 Finger Lakes waterfowl census.

Whistling Swan — Rare on small bodies of water in this region. Two crippled birds reported from Dryden Lake October 30 were captured and released in the waterfowl pond at Stewart Park, Ithaca. They survived less than a month.

Ducks — The 2nd annual Finger Lakes waterfowl census, covering the 6 major lakes from Canandaigua to Skaneateles, was held February 10. A total of 11,027 Anatidae were recorded, an increase of 675 over 1951. Species seen in 1952 but not 1951 included Whistling Swan (Keuka Lake; cripple?), Gadwall (2, Keuka), Pintail (1, Seneca; 3, Skaneateles), Lesser Scaup (4, Keuka) and Ruddy Duck (1, Keuka).

HAWKS — OWLS:

Rough-legged Hawk — A notable concentration of 9 individuals at the Seneca Ordnance Depot February 10 (Census group).

Osprey — First winter record for this area; one seen February 8 at southwest corner of Cayuga Lake (W. Dilger, L. Spiegel).

Coot — As mentioned in October report, Coot production at Montezuma last summer was low. This is reflected in low Finger Lakes winter population; 63 seen on February 10 census, 500 last year.

Long-eared Owl — There were two roosts of at least 7 birds each reported; one near Horseheads (Mrs. Welles) *See Spiker Report—Part 2* and one near Jacksonville (Mrs. Graham).

SWIFTS — SHRIKES:

Brown-capped Chickadee — Although many were reported elsewhere in the state, I have heard of but 2 from this region. One was seen at Brooktondale on January 27 (W. J. Hamilton III, R. Rosche). Another was mentioned in a letter from Mr. Rising as having been reported "by a beginner" in the Triple Cities area late in February.

Tufted Titmouse — Definitely increasing in the Ithaca area. Since this species was reported from Stewart Park all through the summer, the 4 seen at a feeding tray February 24, said to have been present there most of the winter (R. Rosche), may possibly represent a family group. Special atten-

tion will be given to this species this spring to establish definite breeding record if possible.

Carolina Wren — One at a feeding tray in Trumansburg, one in Ithaca. An irregular permanent resident here.

Mockingbird — The bird mentioned in the last report as having been seen on September 17 just northeast of Ithaca was seen several more times, the last known observation having been in mid-December (R. Eadie).

VIREOS — WARBLERS:

Ovenbird — First winter record. Found alive on a fraternity house porch in Ithaca on December 19, thriving at date of writing (March 12) at home of P. P. Kellogg.

BLACKBIRDS — SPARROWS:

Rusty Blackbird — Two males were present in Mrs. Hoyt's yard in Etna from January 19 to February 27. This is apparently the second winter record from the Cayuga Lake basin.

Evening Grosbeak — In plentiful numbers everywhere, sometimes associating with Pine Grosbeaks.

Pine Grosbeak — The most notable feature of this winter has been the major invasion of Pine Grosbeaks, which have been with us since mid-November. No flight of this magnitude has occurred in this region for many years. Almost all specimens examined have been of the small north-eastern subspecies, *Pinicola enucleator eschatosus*. One female from Oneonta is referable to the larger *leucura*.

Snow Bunting — A number of flocks of several hundred reported.

Other Fringillidae have been low in numbers. Very few reports of Purple Finch, Redpoll, Crossbill and Longspur. Juncos, Tree Sparrows and especially Song Sparrows seen in lesser numbers than usual.

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REGION 2 — SOUTHERN TIER — (PART 2)

The winter in the Southern Tier has been reasonably "snug", with periods of cold and snow that were longer than usual without mild breaks. The thermometer has hit zero and slightly below on a few occasions, and the ground has been white most of the time since before Thanksgiving, with snowfalls of from three to six inches. This correspondent has had more response from points in the area than ever before, having in addition to the *Keuka Park Conservation Club* and *Chemung Valley Audubon Club*, heard from the *Watkins-Montour Bird Club*, and has received items of interest from Mrs. Walter McMurtry at Wellsville, and Mrs. G. J. Carter at Avoca.

Midwinter census were taken between December 29 and January 1st. The Keuka Park group listed 43 species, Chemung Valley 37, Watkins-Montour 20, and Mrs. McMurtry at Wellsville 9. Total number of species listed by all was 55, with 9045 individuals.

LOONS – DUCKS:

Loons were definitely scarce on Keuka and Seneca Lakes this winter, being seen at rare intervals, while in normal years they may be seen frequently from any highway that borders the lakes. Ducks were low in numbers on Keuka, although there were a number of large rafts of Redheads on Seneca. Two Old-squaws were at the Penn Yan end of Keuka Lake until that branch froze over, and there was a lone individual at the head of the lake at Hammondsport through the first half of the winter. Golden-eyes were much later arriving in the fall than usual, not appearing generally until December, and then in scattered small flocks. Red-breasted Mergansers have remained all winter, which is a little unusual; Hooded Mergansers were here until January, reappearing after the first of March. A pair of Whistling Swans came to the head of the lake at Hammondsport in middle October, and the two were there together until March 4, since which time one has been there alone. The other is said to have been shot, as the body was found floating on the water. Some observers have indicated that one of them might have been a Mute Swan, but I was never able to differentiate between the two birds, as each had the black bill and straight neck. A lone Canada Goose appeared at Branchport the last week in February, but the first noticeable migration came on March 11, when flocks were passing north continuously all day. A flock of 25 at Alpine on March 7.

HAWKS – OWLS:

Hawks have not been especially noticeable about Keuka Lake, but a number of species have been reported from farther away. On January 11 a group from the Chemung Valley club saw 11 hawks in a half hour, including Sharp-shinned, Cooper's, Red-tail, Rough-legged, Pigeon and Sparrow Hawks. Mrs. McMurtry reports a Marsh Hawk on December 28 at Wellsville, while Mrs. Carter at Avoca identified two Goshawks on March 4.

Groups from the Keuka Park club during February visited an area east of Seneca Lake and north of Sampson where there was a concentration of Long-eared and Short-eared Owls and one Barn Owl. An Osprey was recorded at Elmira on March 2, by A. L. Fudge.

On February 13 Mrs. Welles visited a swamp north of Horseheads where 7 Long-eared Owls had been seen; she found four live owls and one dead one nearby, also some empty shot-gun shells; by the end of that week there were 2 owls. The Chemung Valley club has had eleven Mourning Doves wintering, and a Mockingbird has spent the winter at the feeding station of Paul Graham in Corning. A Red-bellied Woodpecker came to the feeding station of Mrs. R. W. Watson in Montour Falls between December 31 and March 5.

BLACKBIRDS – SPARROWS:

A lone Red-wing was at the cat-tail marsh at Hammondsport through January, and a flock of 25 wintered at Watkins Glen. Redwing migration began the second week in March, first flocks appearing at Hammondsport and at Elmira on the 11th. Both the Elmira group and Mrs. McMurtry at Wellsville report wintering Cowbirds, while 8 Grackles visited the feeding

station of Mrs. L. J. Beardsley at Watkins Glen on stormy days. Pine Grosbeaks were reported on the midwinter census at Elmira, and were also seen near Wellsville. This has very definitely been an Evening Grosbeak winter. They have been common in Hammondsport since November, being there yet on March 10; flocks in some numbers have also wintered at Watkins Glen, Elmira, Odessa, Rock Stream and Andover, at the latter place 35 having been banded by Mr. Huber Watson. A few banded grosbeaks came to feeding stations in Wellsville, but were not captured. Cardinals began singing in Hammondsport on February 11, and these birds continue to increase numerically all through the area. A few Redpolls were present in late fall, but none during the winter. I heard first Song Sparrow in song on February 13. Snow Buntings in large flocks have been quite general over the area, some flocks numbering above a thousand individuals, many of them with a scattering of Lapland Longspurs included.

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REGION 3 — LAKE ONTARIO

This has been a normal winter in almost every respect. There have been no really severe storms and the accumulation of snow on the ground has not been great at any time. Yet there has been some snow at almost all times and we have had no extensive periods of thawing weather. Precipitation has been average and there has been little open water on any except the largest bodies of water.

Bird life in this area has shown a similar consistent pattern. The number of half-hardy species wintering is much less than last year. The normal population shifts of late winter have perhaps been less marked than usual, especially among waterfowl. There is no indication to date (March 9th) of how the Spring migration will develop, except in the case of Geese mentioned below.

LOONS — DUCKS:

Loons and Grebes rare all winter. One Great Blue Heron on Feb. 20th (Listman), Canada Geese absent since early January but at this writing, early March, several hundred have been seen over Rochester.

Two Wood Ducks at Ling Road in early January, one last reported Feb. 4 (Miller). Normal wintering ducks present in usual numbers.

HAWKS — OWLS:

Red tailed and Marsh Hawks increasing by mid-February. A few Rough-legged Hawks scattered through the winter. Two Bald Eagles moving west along the Lakeshore on February 15 (Luebner and Moon).

Probable Kumliens Gull at Summerville Feb. 10 (Moon) Gr. Black-backed Gulls plentiful; White winged Gulls rather scarce; Bonaparte's not reported after late December. Owls well represented, except Snowy's. Three Barred Owls at Bergen Swamp, Feb. 24 (G. O. S. Hike). At least 8 Short-eared Owls at Manitou for several weeks in late winter — still present at this writing (Migrants?).