

Deposit since Jan. 2 — 116 were counted at a feeder on Feb. 8 and 10 and during March the daily count was near 200 several times (Wilson). More normal numbers in other areas. A flock of about 30 Redpolls was seen at White's Pond Mar. 15 and again Mar. 20 (R. & S. White). There have been only scattered reports of Pine Siskins, but Goldfinches have been quite common through the winter in both Binghamton and Deposit. The same is true of Slate-colored Juncos, which were also seen regularly in Bainbridge (E. J. Smith). An early Field Sparrow record — 4 at Deposit Mar. 4 (Wilson). A White-throated Sparrow showed up at Mr. Wilson's feeder Jan. 8 and has been there ever since. Fox Sparrows appeared at Deposit Mar. 4 and at Binghamton Mar. 14. They have been noted frequently since with the highest count being over 20 at Binghamton Mar. 30 (H. Marsi). 6 Swamp Sparrows were present at Boland's Marsh up to Jan. 1 (Bemont). After a poor year last year Snow Buntings are back to normal this year and numerous large flocks have been seen. One flock of over 1000 birds was found near Hawleyton by Miss Helen J. Kent Feb. 2.

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REGION 5 — ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

The counties of Herkimer, Oneida, Madison, Oswego, Onondaga, and that part of Cayuga north of the Seneca River constitute Region Five. It has within its boundaries many population centers such as Syracuse, Utica and Rome, and many lakes and rivers.

The most prominent water feature of the region is Oneida Lake with its main tributaries, Chittenango, Wood, Fish, and Scriba Creeks, and its outlet, the Oneida River, which in turn flows into the Oswego River. Other important bodies of water are Skaneateles and Otisco Lakes of the Finger Lakes, Onondaga Lake, Delta Lake, and the Fulton Chain in Herkimer County. The northeastern part of the region drains largely through the Moose River, the eastern part largely through the Mohawk, and most of the western half through the Seneca and Oneida Rivers, which form the Oswego River. The northwest corner is drained through the Salmon and Little Salmon Rivers and their tributaries. The area around Hamilton drains south through the Chenango River.

The lower elevations are centered largely along Lake Ontario, around Oneida Lake, and along the Mohawk River. These low altitude areas, which tend toward Appalachian and Carolinian bird life, are encroached upon by the hill country on the south (the northern limit of the Alleghany Plateau), by the Tug Hill Plateau on the north, and the southwestern and western fringe of the Adirondacks in Herkimer County. Generally, as one passes from the low altitude areas to those of higher elevation, the percentage of forested land increases, although little of the wooded area is in original stands.

Three of the major life zones are present in the Region. The vast majority of the country falls in the maple-beech-birch-hemlock class, but the northern and eastern part of Herkimer County has a good percentage of the spruce-fir association. Very small areas of the oak-hickory group are found in the outlet valleys of the Finger Lakes, along the south shore of Oneida Lake, and in those parts of Oswego and Cayuga County abutting on Lake Ontario. Swamp-wise, four very rich areas are located in Region 5 — 1.) the large wooded swamps scattered around Oneida Lake, 2.) the large aquatic plant marshes of the Sandy Pond area, 3.) the spruce-sphagnum bog known as Cicero Swamp, between Syracuse and Oneida Lake, and 4.) the many flooded areas, both wooded and cat-tail, along Lake Ontario between the Salmon River and Fair Haven. Many marshes are also located along the Seneca and Oneida Rivers and at the southern ends of the Finger Lakes.

Unfortunately, only one bird club, the Onondaga Audubon Society, regularly "birds" the region, but active and effective contacts have been made with a small group at Oneida and Westernville. A group at Utica are currently concerned with the organization of a local birding group. The major share of birding interest in the region falls on such places as the Oneida Lake area, Oswego (in the winter), Sandy Pond (in summer and fall), and various representative areas near Syracuse (eg. Green Lakes, for birds of heavy timber; Three Rivers Game Management Area, for birds of interspersed country and breeding game birds; Camillus Valley, for birds of southern associations; and Selkirk, for some of the uncommon breeding warblers and the hickory-oak group birds).

Most of the area, particularly the eastern half, the southern edge of the Tug Hill Plateau, and that portion of Herkimer County (laughingly called the "Panhandle") jutting onto the Adirondacks, remains ornithologically unexplored.

The mild season of the fall continued without interruption until 12/30, when a severe cold spell began, which reached its peak about 1/10, abated slightly, and then returned with renewed vigor until the third week of January. Evidence of the cold weather of this period was the almost complete freezing of both Onondaga Lake and the Oswego River, and the consequent concentrations of birds in the few open spots along the river and in Oswego Harbor. The end of January saw a definite break in the cold weather, which was abruptly terminated by a second, shorter, but almost as severe cold spell in early and mid-February. At the cessation of this cold spell, the spring migration began and had assumed good proportions by early March. A two week cold spell, early to mid-March, stagnated the migration; by 3/21 migration had resumed and noticeable flights were on the move; a 12-inch snow on 3/29 again halted the migration to the end of the period. The winter was notable for 1.) the many half-hardies staying with us, 2.) the really spectacular flights of Snowy Owls and Northern Shrikes, 3.) the numbers of "white-winged" gulls along the Oswego River, 4.) the reduced numbers of Rough-legged Hawks and Short-eared Owls wintering in the Region, and 5.) the very poor showing of winter finches.

LOONS — DUCKS: Last date for Common Loons was 12/27 on Oneida Lake; no wintering records this year. Horned and Pied-billed Grebes wintered in small numbers (1 - 3) at Oswego and Skaneateles. Double-crested Cormorant — 1 immature bird wintered at Oswego Harbor; seen on Onondaga Audubon Society Field Trip 1/24 and 3/7. Great Blue Heron — no wintering birds; first spring date 3/7 at Fayetteville. Whistling Swan — 7 birds at Brewerton, Oneida Lake on 3/28; stayed for about a week; despite its more common status west of us, this bird is a rather uncommon transient through Syracuse area. Canada Geese — first spring date of 57 on 2/28 at Cross Lake. Gadwall — 2 winter records of this bird, which is uncommon here even in migration; 1 at Onondaga Lake on 1/10, 1 at Baldwinsville on 2/14. Baldpate — 1 at Baldwinsville 2/14. Baldpate and Pintail — migrating through early and in smaller than usual numbers. Tremendous numbers of ducks wintered along the Oswego River and in Oswego Harbor; high counts by the O. A. S. on several winter trips are: Greater Scaup—3000, Golden-Eye—500, American Merganser—5000. Though this has been the highest count of American Mergansers in several years, the numbers of Old-Squaw, Buffle-head, and Canvas-backs wintering in Oswego Harbor were far below the usual figures. White-winged Scoter — 1 on 3/7 in Oswego Harbor.

HAWKS — OWLS: Cooper's Hawk — a rash of records beginning 3/23 of single birds in widely separated areas would indicate the start of this bird's spring migration through the region. Red Tailed Hawk — by all reports, the most common wintering raptor, even out-numbering the Sparrow Hawk; nesting activity began about 3/15. Rough-legged Hawk — though the first fall date was 10/17, the main group of wintering birds did not arrive until mid- or late November and were considerably reduced in numbers as compared to last year's figures (high count, February, 1953 — 26; high count, February, 1954 — 7). Marsh Hawk — wintering birds were few and far between this year; where normally 6 - 8 birds (mostly female

or immatures), could be seen on any winter day last year, only 1 - 3, (mostly males) could be found this year. Sparrow Hawk — winter counts were extremely low, the only high count being 10 on 12/27. Red Shouldered, Marsh, and Sparrow Hawk were observed in migration by O. A. S. at Oneida Lake on 3/28. Coot — 3 wintered in a protected bay at Oswego. Killdeer — no wintering birds; first spring date 2/22 at Fayetteville. Glaucous and Iceland Gulls — excellent flight of these birds this winter; 10 records of Glaucous Gulls, mostly from Oswego River (exception — 3 at Westernville, north of Rome, on 2/27) between early part of January and early part of March; 12 records of Iceland Gulls between January and March along the Oswego and Seneca Rivers and at Onondaga Lake; a fine adult of the Kumlien's form was seen several times at Baldwinsville and Phoenix. Great Black-backed Gull — the freeze up of the Oswego River in early January concentrated these birds in the half-frozen harbor at Oswego, creating the all-time high of 150 birds on 1/10.

For Onondaga Audubon Society and the Syracuse birders in general, this has been a wonderful owl year. Screech Owl — 9 reports scattered through the winter; 3 of these birds were captured and banded by Dr. B. P. Burtt of Syracuse in February. Horned Owl — 2 nest sites located and under regular observation. Snowy Owl — the flight this year surpassed any **previously recorded** flight in this area (I emphasize "**previously recorded**" because the greater numbers may be due to a more developed contacting and recording system); first date was 10/31 at Oneida Lake; peak number of reports was in early and mid-February; several birds still present at end of this period; total number of birds reported — 40. Barred Owl — 2 at Constantia on 12/28. Long Eared Owl — 3 captured and banded by B. P. Burtt on 2/6, 8, and 10 (1 each day) near his home in Syracuse. Short Eared Owl — its winter status practically paralleled that of the Rough-legged Hawk; first arrival was 10/16 at the Three Rivers Game Management Area, but the wintering population was not present until the end of December; total number of wintering birds reduced as compared to last year (14 in winter of 1952-1953; 6 in winter of 1953-1954). Saw-whet Owl — 2 captured by SPCA in Syracuse on 2/13; both birds were turned over to B. P. Burtt, who banded and released them; 1 seen on 3/21 at Fayetteville.

SWIFTS — SHRIKES: Belted Kingfisher and Flicker — both present until end of December; no winter reports of them after the cold spell of January. Tree Swallow — first date was 36 on 3/28 at Oneida Lake. Tufted Titmouse — 1 on 1/9 and 1/30 at Kenwood, Oneida; also a good description of one seen at Syracuse on 3/7 was given by an inexperienced but reliable observer. It is hard to say if these birds are mere strays or if they represent the continued influx of southern birds into the area. If they are part of the southern movement, it would be interesting to know from which point they are spreading — up from the Finger Lakes, west from the Mohawk Valley, or east from the Ontario Plain. Brown Creeper, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Robin — all wintered in very small numbers; no reports of Red-breasted Nuthatch for the entire period. Carolina Wren — 1 at Kenwood, Oneida, on 3/19, 20, 30; another example of the southern influence perhaps. Pipit — none wintering; first spring date was 35 on 3/19 at Syracuse. Gray Shrike — a really spectacular flight this winter; first report on 11/26 was followed thereafter by 2 - 3 reports per week; 1 singing bird was noted at Syracuse from 3/9 to 3/21; birds still present at the end of winter period.

WARBLERS — FRINGILLIDS: Magnolia Warbler — 1 immature male on 12/12, 13, at a feeding station in Westernville (Mrs. F. W. May). Red-wing Blackbird — first spring date 2/19 at South Onondaga; first female Red-wing reported on 3/21 at Cross Lake.

The winter of 1953-54 will go down as the poorest "winter finch" year in the past five. Evening Grosbeak — only 5 reports (highest number, 35) through entire period. No Crossbills or Pine Grosbeaks were reported, Redpolls were observed just **twice**, and Pine Siskin flocks (6 reports) were never above 15. Several of the sparrows, notably White-throated and Swamp, wintered, probably because of the mild weather in December, which would also account for the report of 6 Field Sparrows on 12/2 at Westernville. Snow Buntings — certainly the most common winter fringillid, even outnumbering the Juncos and Tree Sparrows; an enormous flight went through the Syracuse area on 3/21 when approximately 2000 (in flocks of 20 - 500) were seen by O. A. S. members; none reported since that date to the end of March.

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