

REGIONAL REPORTS

HIGHLIGHTS DECEMBER THROUGH MARCH

Throughout the State generally, it has been a Gray Shrike - Chickadee - Pine Grosbeak - Evening Grosbeak - Snow Bunting winter. The smaller winter finches were few in number, on the whole, but certain species were common in restricted areas. Goldfinches were common in the Finger Lakes; Redpolls common in the Oneida Basin, St. Lawrence, Champlain Valley and Mohawk-Hudson regions; both Crossbills were abundant until late January on Long Island. Evening Grosbeaks left breeding areas in the Adirondacks in late September and were present during the winter in moderate numbers elsewhere.

The Snowy Owl appeared in small numbers in areas bordering the larger inland lakes and Long Island. Rough-legged Hawks and Short-eared Owls were low in numbers reflecting a generally low field mouse population.

Kinglets, Brown Creepers, Red-breasted Nuthatches, Tree Sparrows and Juncos were scarce or absent in most areas.

Meadowlarks, Mourning Doves, Flickers and a few Myrtle Warblers wintered successfully in upstate New York despite the severity of the winter.

The blackbird migration started in the lower Hudson Valley on February 16 and by March 14 they had reached Plattsburg. Grackles appeared to precede the Red-wings by a few days in several areas.

Phoebes appeared in Rockland County on March 10, the Binghamton area March 19, near Syracuse March 8 and near Batavia March 30. Tree Swallows wintered on Long Island and were first seen in Rockland County on March 19, near Binghamton March 20 and near Syracuse March 12.

REGION 1 — NIAGARA FRONTIER

CLARK S. BEARDSLEE

The 1954-55 winter was closer to normal than most. Neither temperatures nor snowfall were such as to affect our winter bird populations very much. The total of 91 species and subspecies reported in January and February compares with 91 for January alone in 1954, when a very mild December encouraged many half-hardy species to stay over. Our share of the Federation waterfowl census was taken on January 16, and found most of our inland waters solidly frozen. Outstanding for the period was the unprecedented flight of Gray Shrikes, which was almost too great to chronicle.

LOONS — DUCKS: Grebes reported during the winter months included two Red-necked and one Pied-billed counted on January 16 during the waterfowl census. Single cormorants were found December 19 (Grand Island, Coggeshalls) and February 26 (Dunkirk, Elderkin). Whistling Swans arrived a bit early (2 Grand Island and 6 Oak Orchard on March 12) and within a week were represented on almost every lake in the territory; on the 19th and 20th from 1500 to 3000 were on Lake Chautauqua, largest number ever reported here. One Snow Goose was among the 1200 Canada Geese at Oak Orchard March 12 (Beardslee) and a Blue Goose joined them the 15th

(Woldman). The McCanns estimated 8500 Canada Geese in the Oak Orchard area on the 20th; peak numbers were not present until after April 1. Wood Ducks were first reported on March 13 at East Mud Lake by Braunberns and at Wellsville by McMurtry. No observer reported as high a Pintail peak at Wolcottville as last year, the high estimate of 2000 (March 12, Mitchell) comparing with 5000 a year earlier. Unusually large numbers of Canvasback wintered on the upper Niagara, both our count January 16 and the aerial count January 20 being very close to 11000. All three scoters were reported in January, 187 White-winged on the 16th (mostly on Lake Ontario), and single Surf and American on the 1st, from Buffalo harbor and Niagara Falls respectively. Mitchell et al reported a King Eider from the upper river December 18.

HAWKS — OWLS: Braunberns observed a Turkey Vulture on March 13 at East Mud Lake. A wintering Red-shouldered Hawk, a rarity here, was seen north of Hamburg February 20 (Faul et al), and Mrs. McMurtry reported a migrant at Wellsville March 13. Seven Turkeys were seen at Bone Run on February 13 (Elderkins) and two groups at Shongo in mid-March (McMurtry). Mrs. McMurtry also found a Killdeer March 6 and reported a late March Woodcock nest at Standard. Glaucous, Iceland, and Kumlien's Gulls were available throughout the winter on the river, chiefly near the Falls. More records of wintering Mourning Doves than usual, and larger flocks, were reported. Only seven Snowy Owl reports are at hand for the winter, considerably below par.

SWIFTS — SHRIKES: Wintering Kingfishers were reported from Wellsville by McMurtry, and Olean by Eaton. Two Red-bellied Woodpeckers, one Red-headed Woodpecker, and several Flickers stayed over with us. Three good-sized flocks of Prairie Horned Larks seen north of Oak Orchard January 16 (Beardslee) were probably too early for migrants. Crows returned to Wellsville February 19 (McMurtry) and to Olean the 22nd (Eaton). A Brown-capped Chickadee was seen at West Falls January 2 by Mitchell. K. McCann & Dietrich found a Phoebe at Oak Orchard March 30; Brockner noted one there the same day, and McMurtry one at Wellsville the 31st. Carolina Wrens were reported from three places in December, four in January, and five in February. A Catbird wintered at a Williamsville feeding station. Robins were common in Buffalo by March 11 and at Olean by the 12th. Bluebirds were seen at Hamburg and Wellsville on the 10th. The greatest influx of Gray Shrikes ever was reported by all observers. It lasted until the fore part of March; after the 13th Loggerheads began to arrive. Parker reported the first Pipits — 18 at Jamestown on March 10.

WARBLERS — SPARROWS: A Myrtle Warbler wintered at Hamburg (Bacon). There seemed to be more Meadowlark records than usual, with one flock of 16 being reported from Kuckville (Beardslee). Grackles arrived March 4 (McMurtry) and Red-wings the 6th (100 at Oak Orchard, Brockner). Mrs. McMurtry found Purple Finches in December, February, and March, and Eaton watched one in the company of two Pine Grosbeaks eating crab apples. Evening Grosbeaks were widely distributed, largest flocks apparently having visited Angelica, Independence, Alfred, Jamestown, and Hamburg. Mitchell and Almendinger found an early Towhee at Derby on March 19, and Brockner an early Vesper Sparrow at Shelby March 27. Wintering White-throated Sparrows were reported from Castile (Thompson) Hamburg (Bacon), and Buffalo (Fisk). The season saw few longspurs, and most of our Snow Bunting records were based upon February observations.

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REGION 2 — GENESEE

HARRY VANBEURDEN

The height of the winter in our region was reached in early February when low temperatures and ice formation drove many waterfowl off inland bodies of water into the open waters of Lake Ontario. Migration lagged several weeks behind the very early precedents set in February and March of 1954; it was not up to par even in comparison with a normal year. However, several interesting late stragglers were noted in December.