

The increase of the Mourning Dove as a wintering bird and the increase of the introduced House Finch have been chronicled in these summaries fairly recently. The number of Mourning Doves reported on the 1963/64 Christmas counts was 3533 from 44 counts compared to 2560 from 41 two years before. The average number for regular counts (see *Kingbird* 13(2):99) were Long Island 139 (compared to 118) and upstate 83 (compared to 31). A further northward expansion of the House Finch is recorded in the Hudson Valley and there was a large increase in the numbers recorded on the Christmas counts on Long Island.

There were, at least, as many rarities as normal. Among these may be noted a Boreal Owl at Rochester, Lesser Black-backed Gull at Ithaca and Elmira, two Harris' Sparrows in Region 8, Varied Thrush and Lark Sparrow in the Hudson Valley, and Brambling and Spotted Towhee on Long Island.

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It is regretted that the report from Region 4 was not received in time to be used in this summary.

## REGION 1 — NIAGARA FRONTIER

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Winter in the Niagara Frontier was relatively mild during December, January and February. Long periods of cold temperatures were the exception and snowfall was erratic. There were many periods when the ground was mostly snow free. However, the weather pattern reversed in March; there was much cold weather, and snow accumulated to depths greater than in any other part of the winter.

The continuation of mild fall weather into early winter, combined with an excellent available food supply, apparently induced large numbers of blackbirds and sparrows to winter. To a lesser extent, the same might be said of some fruit-eating birds, like the Robin and Flicker. But the same abundance of available food must have also existed in the north country, for many typical winter birds, with the exception of those dependent on small mammals, were either very scarce or unreported.

Ice-free ponds, lakes and streams, especially in the southern tier, probably account for the number and variety of straggler waterfowl reported during December and early January. Likewise, the lack of open water during most of March resulted in an unusually poor waterfowl movement. The outlet of Chautauqua Lake provided habitat for more numbers and species of waterfowl than any other place in the Region, including the temporary sinks and ponds in the Oak Orchard area that were mostly frozen all month.

Most typical March migrant landbirds were about two weeks late in arriving in normal numbers. Several days during the first week were good for migration; however, it wasn't until March 26-28, and especially during the night of March 27-28, when large numbers of these birds moved into the Region.

It is always interesting to watch for the effects of man-made objects on the distribution and occurrence of birds. This winter, in order to stabilize ice in Lake Erie and prevent it from clogging water intakes in the Niagara River, an ice-boom was constructed from Buffalo to Fort Erie, Ontario where the river makes its exit from the lake. The engineers say it

was successful; there was almost no open water in eastern Lake Erie at the end of winter; and the Niagara River was relatively free from ice-jams during most of the winter. Naturally, field students were interested to see what effects, if any, this would have on wintering waterfowl. The only comments reaching the writer were that waterfowl seemed to be more scarce than in previous winters. However, it seems most likely that waterfowl were not concentrated in large numbers in open water areas, but because of the lack of large ice-jams, were relatively scattered in smaller groups. Observers who used their telescopes to look over the middle of the river, rather than concentrating on areas close to shore, reported what seem to be average numbers of ducks. Our Winter Waterfowl Count does not show any sharp reduction in numbers.

Highlights of the season include the first regional records of winter Dunlin and Common Tern; the occurrence of several rarities—Mute Swan, Bohemian Waxwing and Harris' Sparrow; and a moderate Snowy Owl flight. Negative aspects include an almost complete absence of winter finches, and lower numbers of some regular winter landbirds; a generally poor winter for feeding station operators; and most important of all . . . a question, "What is happening to some of the fish-eating birds that have always wintered in small numbers on the Niagara River?" (see below under Great Blue Heron and Belted Kingfisher)

Abbreviations used below are: ad—adult; Alleg—Allegany; BACC—Buffalo Audubon Society Christmas Count; BCC—Buffalo Ornithological Society Christmas Count; Bflo—Buffalo; Chaut—Chautauqua; Co—County; Gen—Genesee; imm—immature; ISP—Island State Park; JCC—Jamestown Audubon Society Christmas Count; Lk—Lake; max—maximum; NF—Niagara Falls; Nia—Niagara; OO—Oak Orchard; Ont—Ontario; opp—opposite; Pt—Point; R—River; SCC—Scio Christmas Count; TGMA—Tonawanda Game Management Area; WWC—Winter Waterfowl Count; yrs—years.

Contributors: RFA—Robert F. Andrie; HHA—Harold H. Axtell; CMB—Clarence M. Beal; AHB—Allen H. Benton; TLB—Thomas L. Bourne; WWB—Winston W. Brockner; RB—Richard Brownstein; GB—George Buckland; LDB—Lou and Doris Burton; AC—Arthur Clark; WC—Wilma Csont; FD—Mrs. Fred Danner; MME—Mary Louise and Marjorie Emerson; AF—Arthur Freitag; GH—Mrs. George Hartloff; LJ—Mrs. John Jacoby; LK—Lewis Kibler; WHK—Walter and Harriette Klabunde; WK—Ward Klepfer; OM—Ollie Meddaugh; HDM—Harold D. Mitchell; CN—Mr. and Mrs. Charles Neel; RLN—Royce and Lillian Norton; EO—Edwin Olmstead; EMP—Elizabeth Pillsbury; FMR—Frances M. Rew; RCR—Richard C. Rosche; CAR—Clarence and Arlene Rote; DS—Daniel Salisbury; HCS—Mrs. Harry C. Schafer; ELS—Edward L. Seeber; WGS—William A. and George M. Smith; RLS—Robert L. Sommerville; KOS—Kenneth and Ora Swanson; AEU—Alice and Edward Ulrich; GGW—Gertrude G. Webster.

**Loons — Ducks:** Common Loon: one, Jan 10, Rushford Lk (LDB)—very late inland record. Pied-billed Grebe: only wintering bird reported from upper Gen R, Alleg Co (LDB). Double-crested Cormorant: one, Jan 1 (AHB et al); one, Jan 3 (WWB et al); one, Jan 9 (FMR et al), Dunkirk Harbor. Great Blue Heron: none wintered in Nia R area for second consecutive year; Dec and Jan records of single birds at Olean and Scio; first migrants Mar 28. Black-crowned Night Heron: no reports. American Bittern: one, Dec 10, Belmont (LDB et al)—late (died Dec 11—specimen now in Bflo Museum of Science). **Mute Swan:** three, Feb 27, mouth of OO Creek at Pt Breeze, Orleans Co (RB et al)—apparently feral birds; reported by many observers from mid Jan to late Mar. Whistling Swan: five, Dec 27, Chaut Lk (JCC); 18, Dec 31, Chaut Lk at Stowe (CMB et al); five, Jan 21, Dunkirk Harbor (EMP); one imm wintered Feb 1-Mar 17 on

Nia R opp Bflo (RLS); first migrant Mar 14, Beaver ISP (AF); noticeable flights Mar 22 (66, Chaut Lk Outlet, CMB; 21, over Hamburg, RCR; 22, over Bflo, HHA) and Mar 28 (40, over Hamburg, TLB; 12, Buckhorn ISP, WK); max 76-85, Mar 24-28, Chaut Lk Outlet (CMB et al). Canada Goose: first migrants Feb 20, Dunkirk Harbor (EMP et al) and Mar 3, Lyndonville (WGS); few reports of overhead migrants; max counts in OO area—1500 on Mar 7 (RCR et al), 3500 on Mar 14 (RCR et al) and 7000 on Mar 31 (HHA et al)—fewer than in most recent years. Blue Goose: one, Mar 17, Eden (TLB); one, Mar 31, TGMA (HHA et al)—only reports.

Mallard: highest count (1119) in 11 yrs (WWC). Gadwall: one, Jan 10 (LK et al); one, Feb 6 (FMR et al); three, Feb 11 (RB), Dunkirk Harbor. Pintail: highest count (39) in 11 yrs (WWC)—25 of these were in OO area (OM); peaked at TGMA on Mar 14, 850 (RCR et al). Green-winged Teal: five, Dec 18, Belmont (LDB)—latest Regional report and especially late for southern tier. Blue-winged Teal: two, Mar 27, Belfast (LDB)—first migrants. American Widgeon: highest count (85) in 11 yrs (WWC)—79 of these were at NF; unusually scarce during Mar. Shoveler: one male, Dec 13, West Branch Nia R (FMR, RCR et al)—late; four, Mar 29, Frewsburg (CMB)—first migrants. Wood Duck: single birds reported Jan 10 with Mallards and Black Ducks at Forest Lawn, Bflo (AF) and at Williamsville (HHA); three, Mar 25, Chaut Lk Outlet (CMB)—first migrants. Redhead: best Mar flight in past five or more years—max 152, Mar 11, Nia R (HDM), 350, Mar 25, Chaut Lk Outlet (CMB) and 100, Mar 25, Nia R opp Bflo (HHA). Canvasback: lowest count (2721) since 1959 (WWC). Lesser Scaup: no wintering birds; 35, Mar 25, Chaut Lk Outlet (CMB)—first migrants. King Eider: one, Dec 27, gorge at NF (BCC); one, Jan 10, Lk Ont between Fort Nia and Olcott (HHA et al). White-winged Scoter: more wintering than usual; max—65, Jan 5, Nia R opp Bflo (RFA et al) and 94, Jan 10 (WWC) of which 81 were on Lk Ont between Olcott and Pt Breeze (WHK); highest count on WWC since 1955; one, Mar 25, Chaut Lk Outlet (CMB). Ruddy Duck: three, Jan 3, Chaut Lk (KOS)—last report; no Mar migrants. Common Merganser: highest count (8220) since 1960 when 15192 were estimated (WWC).

**Hawks — Owls:** Turkey Vulture: one-two, Mar 28, OO area (DS et al) first migrants. Hawk migration: Mar 18 over south shore Lk Erie at Irving (CN)—Sharp-shinned-2, Red-tailed-29, Red-shouldered-6, Rough-legged-2, Sparrow-1, unidentified-14—total-54 birds; no other hawk movements reported. Goshawk: one ad, Jan 8, Lake View (TLB). Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks: except for the last half of Mar when migrants appeared, there were more winter observations of Sharp-shinned than Cooper's—an interesting situation because the Cooper's has always been thought to be more common in winter than the Sharp-shinned. Outside of peak migration periods the Cooper's seems to be decreasing in the Region. Red-tailed Hawk: none reported on any of the southern tier Christmas Counts. Red-Shouldered Hawk: one ad, Dec 12, near East Aurora (RCR et al)—latest; one, Mar 2, Hamburg (TLB)—first migrant; none wintered for the second consecutive year. Rough-legged Hawk: fairly well distributed after Dec in very small numbers except on Ont Plain in Lyndonville area where max of 14-Dec 29, 24-Jan 1 and 21, and 1-23, Mar 1-31 were counted (WGS). Bald Eagle: one imm, Dec 19, Hamburg (TLB); one imm, Feb 9, 11, 14, Nia R in vicinity of Navy Island (GGW et al); one ad, Feb 12, Orchard Park (TLB); one imm, Mar 24, over Hamburg (TLB); one in almost ad plumage, Mar 25, Beaver ISP (AF). Marsh Hawk: scattered reports of wintering birds; most regularly reported in Lyndonville-Shadigee area (WGS) where Rough-legs occurred with max of 8, Mar 14 (RCR et al). Bobwhite: pair, Mar 27, near Alabama (RCR et al)—probably birds released in area last fall. Turkey: fewer southern tier reports than usual; their continued northward spread into Erie Co is borne out by two observations—one, Mar

13, near Chestnut Ridge Park and two, Mar 25, Newton Road, Hamburg (TLB). American Coot: two, Jan 21 (EMP) and one, Feb 6 (FMR et al), Dunkirk Harbor—the most regular wintering locality in recent years.

Killdeer: late birds Dec 20 at Grand Island (GGW et al), Dec 29 at Cuba (LDB), Jan 3 at Chaut Lk (KOS); first migrant Mar 4 at Marila (HCS); major influx occurred over the night of Mar 27-28. **Dunlin**: two, Feb 6 (FMR et al) and one, Feb 28 (AC et al), Dunkirk Harbor—first reports of wintering birds for the Region. Glaucous Gull: scarce during most of Dec, Feb and Mar but perhaps more numerous than usual in late Dec and Jan on Nia R; max seven, Dec 27, NF area (ELS et al) and eight, Jan 17 Lewiston-Queenston area (FMR et al). Iceland Gull: few reports in Dec, Feb and Mar but a count of 12, Jan 9 (WHK) on the Nia R between NF and Lewiston is the highest ever seen in the Region in a single day; other observers reported fewer numbers in this area in mid Jan but most agreed that this bird was more numerous than usual. Iceland Gull (**L.g.kumlieni**): one, Dec 27, NF area (ELS et al). Great Black-backed Gull: commenting on the results of the BCC in the Nia R region, Whitney Mallam stated, "(The) Great Black-backed Gull shows the most striking constant rise in numbers of any count species. Prior to 1959 there were never over 100 reported, yet this is the fifth year of the last six when over 100 were reported and the second consecutive year when over 200 were recorded." 237 were counted. Franklin's Gull: one, Dec 6, NF (DS et al)—late. Bonaparte's Gull: none wintered on Nia R; three, Jan 17, Nia R at Lewiston (FMR et al)—last; three, Feb 6, Dunkirk Harbor (FMR et al). Little Gull: one, Jan 17, Nia R at Lewiston (FMR et al)—only report. **Common Tern**: one, Dec 27, Nia R opp Tonawanda (HDM et al); one, Jan 2, Dunkirk Harbor (FMR et al)—the first winter records between Dec 8 and Apr 5 in the Region.

Barn Owl: one, Dec 3 (TLB) and Jan 1 (GH), Hamburg—only reports. Snowy Owl: the expected flight that began in late Oct and Nov involved fewer individuals than has often been the case in flight years. As the winter progressed they became less often reported than during Nov and Dec. As usual, most birds were seen in the metropolitan Bflo area. Other reports are: one-two frequently through period, Lyndonville area (WGS); one, Dec 6, Greenhurst, Chaut Co (CMB); one, Dec 27 and Feb 26, Batavia (GB); one, Jan 3 (WWB) and Feb 6 (FMR et al), Dunkirk Harbor; one, Feb 18, Eden (TLB); one, Feb 19, near Olcott (GGW et al). Harold Axtell examined some pellets brought from an area frequented by one-three individuals on the Nia R opp Bflo and found them to contain only the remains of three house rats. Long-eared Owl: one, Jan 31, Evans (WWB)—only report; continues to become more scarce each winter, with no major roosting areas having been found in about five years. Short-eared Owl: exceedingly scarce on Grand Island with none reported Dec 27 on BCC for the first time since 1953; a major concentration in Lyndonville-Shadigee area with Rough-legged Hawks—max counts here were 16-Dec 5, 24-Jan 17, 15-Feb 6, 32-Mar 22, 41-Mar 23 and 37-Mar 29 (WGS). Saw-whet Owl: one, Jan 6, Hamburg (TLB)—only report.

**Goatsuckers — Starling**: Belted Kingfisher: for the first time in a number of years we have several winter reports for the Nia R area, where formerly they were regular in very small numbers at this time of the year. Their recent scarcity seems to be correlated with the noticeable disappearance of other fish-eating birds during winter, like the Great Blue and Black-crowned Night Herons, which also were regular in small numbers. The number of wintering birds reported from open streams in the southern tier counties is increasing. Yellow-shafted Flicker: more wintering throughout Region than average; one frequented a feeding station where it was observed eating small seeds. Red-bellied Woodpecker: one, Jan 19, Feb 19 and Mar 1-31, Batavia (GB)—usual locality; one, Mar 28 (DS et al)

and Mar 30 (MME) at feeder, Knowlesville Rd., Town of Alabama—the second report in four yrs from the OO area. Red-headed Woodpecker: two, Dec 27, Beaver ISP (AEU et al); one, Jan 3, Transit Bridge, Alleg Co (LDB); one, Jan 31 and three, Feb 7, Fort Nia (WHK)—indicative of a good acorn crop. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: one, Dec 29, Belmont (LDB)—rare in winter. Eastern Phoebe: one, Mar 27, Wanakah (TLB)—first migrant. Horned Lark (*E.a.alpestris*): 10 Jan 17, near Wilson (WHK); two, Feb 27, Lake View (TLB); four, Mar 1, Marila (HCS); two, Mar 11, Eden (TLB); two, Mar 27 and four, Mar 28, Alabama (RCR et al). Common Crow: 500, Dec. 28, Alfred (LDB)—indicative of Alleg Co roost that still is to be specifically located. Black-capped Chickadee: somewhat less common than average according to a number of observers, but Christmas Count data shows about average numbers. Tufted Titmouse: one, Dec 11, Lakewood, Chaut Co (CMB); four, Dec 27, Jamestown area (JCC); two, Dec 31, Fluvanna, Chaut Co (CMB et al); one, Dec 27 and Jan 1, Grand Island (FMR et al); two, Jan 26-27 and one, Feb 15, 20, 23, Lewiston (WHK); one, Jan 6-7, Mar 3, 12, 21-24, Springbrook (FD et al); one-two at a feeder occasionally in suburban Tonawanda (CAR)—a somewhat wider distribution especially north of Bflo. Red-breasted Nuthatch: very scarce with only four-five reports of single birds other than max of six, Jan 1, Hamburg-East Aurora area (BACC).

Winter Wren: one, Dec 27, 31, Jamestown (CMB et al)—only report. Mockingbird: one throughout the period, Rensch Rd, Amherst (RCR et al)—seen feeding on thorn apple fruits and decaying apples; one, Jan 30, near Busti, Chaut Co (EMP); one, Feb 6, near Shadigee, Orleans Co (WGS); one Feb 9, Athol Springs (WC). Brown Thrasher: one, Dec 5, 9, 11, 19, Jamestown (CMB). Robin: more wintering individuals especially about Mountain Ash trees than usual with max of 17, Dec 13, Tonawanda (AF) and 15-25, Jan 4-20, Lewiston (WHK); 20, Feb 21, Belvidere, Alleg Co (LDB)—probably early migrants; generally scarce during most of Mar compared with most years until the night of Mar 27-28 when thousands moved into the Region. Hermit Thrush: one, Feb 8, Eden (TLB)—rare winter resident. Eastern Bluebird: one, Feb 27, Wanakah (TLB)—first migrant; max 10, Mar 28, Springbrook (HCS). Golden-crowned Kinglet: scarcer than usual. Ruby-crowned Kinglet: one, Dec 27, Beaver ISP (AEU et al)—very rare in winter. **Bohemian Waxwing**: one, Jan 10 Belmont (LDB)—seen well with Cedar Waxwings. Cedar Waxwing: more abundant than usual especially about Multiflora Rose hedges; max of 1-150, Dec 6-31, Belmont (LDB), 172, Jan 1, Hamburg-East Aurora area (BACC), 175, Jan 5, Derby (TLB) and 100, Jan 25, Springbrook (FD). Northern Shrike: well distributed throughout Region but not as common as in some years; max three, Feb 6, Lyndonville area (WGS); one was seen feeding on a junco in Lewiston (WHK); definite movement occurred Mar 1-10. Loggerhead Shrike: one, Mar 31, OO area (HHA et al)—only report. Starling: 1000, Mar 30, Jamestown Roost (CMB).

**Warblers — Vireos**: Myrtle Warbler: one, Dec 24 and Jan 7, Beaver ISP (AF et al); one, Feb 9, Pt. Stockholm, Chaut Co (KOS).

**Blackbirds — Sparrows**: Wintering blackbirds, especially Redwinged Blackbirds and Cowbirds at feeding stations, were more common than usual. Max counts of wintering birds: Eastern Meadowlark—eight, Jan 15 and nine, Jan 26, Lyndonville (WGS); 19, Jan 21 and 12, Jan 22, Wellsville (LDB). Redwinged Blackbird—25, Dec 23, Belmont (LDB). Common Grackle—12, Dec 1, Hamburg (TLB); eight, Feb 1, Wellsville (LDB). Brown-headed Cowbird—22, Dec 1-31 and 2-30, Jan 1-31, Hamburg (RFA et al); 2-25, Dec 1-31, Belmont (LDB); 38, Dec 27 (BCC); 15-75, Jan 4-31, Lewiston (WHK). Rusty Blackbird: one, Dec 14 and Jan 1, Belmont (LDB); one, Jan 15-16, Springbrook (FD); three, Feb 23-24, Lewiston (WHK)—this bird becomes more regular in winter each year—all these

reports are from feeders. All Mar migrant icterids were delayed and it wasn't until Mar 26-28 that numbers more suggestive of the average Mar appeared, about two weeks late. Estimates Mar 30 at the Jamestown Roost are as follows: Redwinged Blackbird-500, Rusty Blackbird-500 (equals previous max spring count), Common Grackle-200, Brown-headed Cowbird-1000 (CMB).

Evening Grosbeak: six, Jan 2 (SCC); one, Jan 24, Hamburg (TLB); five, Feb 9 and one, Feb 13-14, Friendship (RLN); 12, Feb 26, Richburg, Alleg Co (LJ)—only definite reports all winter; other reports coming to our attention indicate a very limited early Feb movement. Purple Finch: scarce with a "brief and light, but definite movement about the second week of Feb" (HHA); max 16, Mar 20-21, Jamestown area (GGW et al). Common Redpoll: two, Mar 25, Chestnut Ridge Park (TLB)—only report. Pine Siskin: two, Jan 2 (SCC) and six, Mar 11, Wellsville (LDB)—only reports. Rufous-sided Towhee: one male, Dec 14-Mar 31, Rensch Rd, Amherst (RCR et al); 9 other reports of single birds from 8 locations—far more winter reports than usual. Field Sparrow: one, Dec 4, Hamburg (TLB); one, Jan 1-23 (EO) and Jan 4 (LDB), Belmont; one, Jan 23, Pt. Stockholm (KOS); one, Feb 28, Chaut Lk Outlet (AC et al)—more winter reports than usual. Harris's Sparrow: one imm male at feeder of Mr. and Mrs. William Kranz, Pleasant Ave, Lake View, Erie Co; first identified Jan 16 (RFA) but reported to have arrived in mid Dec; observed and photographed by many observers throughout period; this bird often sang. White-crowned Sparrow: unprecedented number of about 75-100 wintered at an abandoned nursery at Newfane, Nia Co (HHA, WHK et al); other winter reports—10 other reports of one to five birds from 4 locations—this bird becomes more common and widespread each winter. White-throated Sparrow: less common than last year. Fox Sparrow: one, Dec 5-15, Rensch Rd, Amherst (RCR et al); two, Dec 27, Jamestown area (JCC); one, Jan 15, Fluvanna (CMB). Swamp Sparrow: three, Jan 28, Chaut Lk Outlet (AC et al)—few recent winter records for southern tier. Lapland Longspur: apparently a fair late Feb-mid Mar flight; max 26, Feb 27, Somerset (RB et al) and 25, Mar 14, Shadigee (RCR et al). Snow Bunting: scarce all winter; most reports for Jan and Feb with max of 175, Jan 7 and 100, Feb 1, Wellsville (LDB) and 500, Feb 20, near Stockton, Chaut Co (EMP et al); definite movement occurred last week of Feb but almost no early Mar reports when they quite often are the most abundant.

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## REGION 2 — GENESEE

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The first month of the period started out like the beginning of a long, hard winter. However, a moderating trend developed and December actually averaged 0.9 degrees above normal temperature for the month and 3.4 inches below normal precipitation. January provided a generous amount of wintry weather with temperatures averaging below normal and precipitation above normal. While snow covered the ground during most of January and February, heavy accumulations did not occur. The last two months of the period recorded below average precipitation. An early spring seemed indicated during the first two weeks of March, but this brief spell of mildness did not last and most ponds and bays remained frozen to the last days of the period with March temperatures averaging 2.8 degrees below normal.