

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WINTER SEASON

December 1 – March 31

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In contrast to the previous winter, the winter of 1965-66 provided a good flight of northern finches. There was a large flight (using the terminology of James, *Audubon Field Notes* 12:256) of Evening and Pine Grosbeaks and of Redpolls in much of the state, although the lower Hudson Valley and Long Island had smaller numbers. Hoary Redpolls were observed in four regions (2, 3, 5 & 8). There was a fair to good flight of Pine Siskins and Crossbills (especially White-winged). Purple Finches however, were scarce throughout the state all winter. There was a fair flight of Black-backed Three-toed Woodpeckers, the species was recorded in five regions and the Northern Three-toed was reported near Rochester.

Increases in the numbers of wintering Mockingbirds were noted by several regional editors. The increase of the wintering population of this species during the last decade can be documented from the regular Audubon Christmas counts.

	64/65	63/64	62/63	61/62	60/61	59/60	58/59	57/58	56/57	55/56
Long Island and New York City	50	36	19	5	7	10	6	2	1	3
Upstate	22	17	16	8	5	2	0	4	0	0

This winter 81 Mockingbirds were recorded on the New York City and Long Island counts used to provide the data in table 1. Davis and Heath also note a further increase in the wintering numbers of the Mourning Dove. This phenomenon has been detailed recently in these summaries (*Kingbird* 13:99 & 15:99). No further increases of the House Finch were noted on Long Island but the increase in the Hudson Valley continued. There were no records away from the normal areas.

The waterfowl count was the lowest in recent years. The largest decreases occurred with Scaup (down 26 thousand), Brant (down nine thousand) and Redhead (down seven thousand). Probably the decrease of the Redhead is the most significant since the numbers of Brant depend completely and Scaup largely on coastal flocks which are easily missed.

The discovery of a winter roost of Cowbirds in Albany is of considerable interest. Although this species winters in coastal areas in good numbers, wintering inland in the numbers reported appears to be unprecedented. However there seems to be little reason why, with feeders and dumps for foraging and buildings to roost on, icterids should not be able to winter in the manner of the Starling.

Notable rarities included Eared Grebe (Region 1 & 2); Western Grebe (Region 2); Barrow's Goldeneye (Region 3 & 10), Varied Thrush (Region 8 & 9), Tufted Duck and Bullock's Oriole (Region 10).

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Abbreviations used in all regional reports: Co—county; imm—immature; L—Lake; max—maximum one-day count; mob—many observers; Pk—Park; Pt—Point; R—River; Rd—Road.

REGION 1 — NIAGARA FRONTIER

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The temperature and precipitation for the period from December 1 to March 31 held to a close average for Western New York. The milder temperature of December was offset by colder weather in January. The slight previous covering of four inches of snow was augmented on the night of January 22 and 23 by a fall that left 18.2 inches of snow. Later, on the 30th the addition of 16 inches accompanied by gale winds created conditions with bare spots alternating with larger areas of deep drifts. During February, the temperature averaged 0.8 degrees above the mean and precipitation .61 inches below normal. March evened off and was constant except when a high 78 degree temperature on March 23 was followed by a drop to 28 degrees and a heavy fall of snow on March 24.

This late March storm resulted in a change that brought many migrants into view along the highways. The numbers of birds observed on the road shoulders ran into the thousands. Many persons reported hundreds of birds within a few miles of travel along the road and in all cases the following order in numbers—Song Sparrows, Robins and Meadowlarks in the ratio of 6:3:1.

Horned Grebes remained until early January. Wintering ducks were normal in numbers with a few of the rarer Gadwall, Redhead, and Ring-necked. The Herring and Ring-billed Gull population in the Niagara River remained comparable with that of other years as did the Glaucous and Iceland Gulls. In late December and early January the presence of a Black-headed Gull in the Niagara River at the Falls excited interest.

Reports of wintering Rough-legged and Red-tailed Hawks came from the east and south of Buffalo as well as from the usual areas in the plains to the north. A record of a Bald Eagle from Barcelona and several in February from Grand Island are encouraging. Snowy Owls were reported every month of this season. The sighting of eleven Whistling Swans in a field near Hamburg on February 12 marked the first arrival date of spring waterfowl migrants.

A Saw-whet Owl, heard calling near Hamburg; a Boreal Chickadee at Ashville; a Red-throated Loon on the snow at Springville are of special interest.

Abbreviations used; Alleg—Allegany; arr—arrived; BACC—Buffalo Audubon Society Christmas Count, ctr—Chestnut Ridge Park; BIPk—Beaver Island Park; BCC—Buffalo Ornithological Society C C, ctr—Grand Island; Bflo—Buffalo; Chau—Chautauqua; CCs—Christmas Counts; DCC—Dunkirk CC; Cr—Creek; Gen—Genesee; H—Harbor; Is—Island; ISP—Island State Pk; JCC—Jamestown CC; L—Lake; Lo—Lower; mig—migration or migrating; Nia—Niagara; F—Falls; N—north; nr—near; OCC—Olean CC Ont—Ontario; OO—Oak Orchard area; opp—opposite; Reg—Region; S—south; SCC—Scio CC; SSLE—South Shore Lake Erie; Spgs—Springs; TGMA—Tonawanda Game Management area; thru—throughout; up—upper; v—ville; WWC—Winter Waterfowl Count.