

REGION 3 — FINGER LAKES

SALLY HOYT SPOFFORD

This was a very open winter, for the light snowfalls were usually followed by thaws, so that there was rarely more than 8-10 inches of snow on the ground. In January, temperatures soared to the high 60's and even reached 70° F one day. February had several periods of extreme cold, but not to compare with some years. March was really the worst month, and feeding stations which had been ignored previously did a thriving business. Winds were strong in February and March, usually from the south, which seemed to hasten migration, bringing in some birds ahead of schedule. Blackbirds, Robins and Killdeer followed quickly the windy period around March 10, as did the first flocks of Canada Geese. Another rush of migrants appeared on March 26-28.

There were no winter finches except American Goldfinches and a few February flocks of Snow Buntings. The northern part of the Region had Rough-legged Hawks, but they were scarce to the south. There were scattered Snowy Owl sightings, and a few Northern Shrikes. Outstanding feature of the period was the record-breaking Canada Goose population that built up during March on Cayuga Lake and at Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge. (See body of report).

Most unusual birds: the Eared Grebe on Seneca Lake, and the Lesser Black-backed Gull at the south end of Cayuga Lake for the fourth winter.

There were frequent complaints of a scarcity of birds. How much was actual and how much was a reflection of the abundance of wild food because of the mild season is difficult to ascertain.

Observers cited: JB—Jamesine Bardeen; WEB—Walter E. Benning; JBr—Jack Brubaker; CVAS—Chemung Valley Audubon Society; WCD—William C. Dilger; EBC—Eaton Bird Club; HAF—Helen A. Fessenden; AG—Alfred Graham; LIC—Lawrence I. Grinnell; FG—Frank Guthrie; WJH—William J. Hamilton, Jr.; CH—Clayton Hardy; JH—James Holman; JWC—January Waterfowl Census groups; PK—Paul Kelsey; ML—Malcolm Lerch; RSL—Randolph S. Little; GM—Gordon Maclean; DM—Dorothy McIlroy; PM—Peter Murtha; GR—Glenna Rowley; E and RS—Elizabeth and Richard Sandburg; JS—John Snelling; BS—Bruce Sorrie; SHS—Sally H. Spofford; BSt—Betty Strath; JW—Jayson Walker; ARW—A. Richard Weisbrod; MW—Mary Welles.

Area compilers: Jamesine Bardeen, Walter E. Benning, William Groesbeck, Frank Guthrie, Clayton Hardy, Jayson Walker, Mary Welles.

Localities: Cay L—Cayuga Lake; Conn Hill—Connecticut Hill; MNWR—Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge; Schuy Co—Schuyler County; Sen L—Seneca Lake; SWS—Sapsucker Woods Sanctuary.

LOONS—DUCKS: Red-necked Grebe: one Jan 1-8 Ithaca Yacht Club (LIG). Horned Grebe: 117 on JWC, common on all lakes except Keuka and Owasco. EARED GREBE: originally reported in spring of '66 by JW on Sen L near Geneva, it, or another, in winter plumage was seen various times in Jan and early Feb by various observers and positively identified. (WEB, JW). Pied-billed Grebe: 8 on JWC; one spent winter hugging a buoy near Ithaca Yacht Club. Great Blue Heron: several wintered as usual, migrants returned last week Mar. Mute Swan: three seen regularly north end Cay L, occasionally on Owasco L. Whistling Swan: first one Mar 28 MNWR (WEB). Canada Goose: almost 250 wintered n. end Cay L, a high wintering count; first migrants at MNWR on Mar 10 (CH); heavy migration noted Mar 9-11, Mar 25-26. The numbers on Cay L and at MNWR at end of month are the largest ever: a Conservation Dept flight produced an estimate of over 100,000, and on Mar 25 the line of geese on Cay L stretched for 12 miles (SHS). Snow

Goose: first, two Mar 11 with Canadas over Cornell campus (E. Belak); scattered birds on Cay L Mar 25-26, 100+ Mar 31 MNWR. Blue Goose: 110 Mar 25 near Levanna on Cay L (DM); 400+ Mar 31 MNWR (CH).

Mallard: 1977 on JWC; 500 wintered at SWS. Black Duck: 1841 on JWC represents first time this count has almost equalled that of Mallards; 275 wintered SWS, a high count. Gadwall: 16 on Cay L on JWC is unusual, with singles on Sen L and Chemung R; one Feb 19 Keuka L. Pintail: one wintered, Cay L and SWS, migrants mid-Mar. Green-winged Teal: two, JWC, Chemung R—unusual, European Widgeon: one, late Nov to mid Mar, Sen L s. of Dresden, with Mallards (Harold Legg and mob). American Widgeon: several wintered Cay L and Sen L. Shoveler: first, six Mar 12 Cay L (PM). Wood Duck: two wintered SWS; one, Feb 19, early date, Keuka L (FG, ML). Returned SWS Mar 27. Redhead: 7000 on JWC was triple that of last year, but visibility better. On Cay L, 2500 on Feb 15 at ice edge was increase of 1000 over preceding week. Ring-necked Duck: three on JWC, Keuka L (FG); one wintered Sen L at Geneva (WEB). Canvasbacks were somewhat down in numbers. Scaup were actually scarce on Cay L, being difficult to find, even in rafts of Redheads. No sign of the Sheldrake Point Barrow's Goldeneye this year. Common Goldeneye: scarce on Keuka; normal numbers in Jan on Cay L but seemed scarce in Feb, compared with most years. No Scoters reported. Ruddy Duck: four, Keuka L, JWC—unusual, Hooded Merganser: 17 on JWC on Keuka is a high winter count.

HAWKS—OWLS: Turkey Vulture: first, one Mar 29 MNWR (WEB). Goshawk: sightings in Ithaca area on Dec 8, Jan 5 and 16; one Mar 10 Waterloo (JW). Sharp-shinned Hawk: one wintered on edge Cornell campus (ARW); another seen frequently near Newfield. Cooper's Hawks: more reports this winter, not necessarily representing an increase as observers have been urged to watch especially for this species: one, EBC census Dec 31; imm dead on road s. of Alpine Junction on Dec 5 (JH); one, Elmira census Dec 31; one, Schuy Co Bird Club census Jan 1; three reports during season in Keuka area; adult female Mar 11, probable migrant, Ringwood area e. of Ithaca (JS). Red-tailed Hawk: numerous sightings. Red-shouldered Hawk: first, one Mar 12 e. of Ithaca (JS); pair SWS Mar 19. Rough-legged Hawk: few reports in southern half of Region; more common northern area, esp. MNWR, but not a "big year" for them. Marsh Hawk: one on Schuy Co census Jan 1 (JB); one Cay Basin census Jan 1 (RL); other sightings Feb 22 Conn Hill (BSt), Feb 28 n.e. of SWS (WCD), Mar 1 over SWS (BS). Peregrine Falcon: one sighting Jan 31 near Elmira airport (MW); Pigeon Hawk: one Dec 31 (rare in winter) EBC, no supporting details; one Feb 19 West Dryden area (WCD).

Ruffed Grouse: fairly abundant this year. Bob white: more birds released last fall, so repeated sightings in Ithaca area, but some coveys decimated as winter passed. Turkey: numerous sightings in Ithaca area, of up to 25 birds in a flock. Best areas: Danby Hills, Pony Hollow on Rte 13, Irish Settlement Road near Barton-Miller farms. Also, appropriately, on Turkey Hill! American Coot: a count of 697 on JWC seems extremely high, esp. in light of poor breeding success in most areas last summer.

Killdeer: two or three wintered in open places; first migrants, Mar 3, 10-11. Three American Woodcock and two Common Snipe were seen on CVAS census Dec 31; first migrant Woodcock, Mar 11-12, Ithaca. Glaucous Gull: one adult Feb 10, Stewart Pk Ithaca (DM). Iceland Gull: one very creamy bird, most of Dec and early Jan, Stewart Pk; a different bird Mar 13-19, same loc (DM). **LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL:** for fourth consecutive year at s. end Cay L. First report Dec 13 (DM), last date Mar 15 (mob). A flock of 1500 Herring and Ring-billed Gulls at Watkins Glen on Feb 26 is a high count for there (JB). Mourning Doves wintered in usual numbers in most areas except at Elmira where

few reported. Screech Owl: almost no reports, one dead in Varna early Dec, two reports Keuka area (FG). Great Horned Owl: one on nest Feb 28 near Montour Falls (JB). Snowy Owl: one, Mt. Pleasant e. of Ithaca, Dec 13-15, shot on latter date; one Dec 14 through mid-Feb seen frequently in down-town area of Elmira along river, probably at least one other in same area; one near Freeville in January (R. Thompson); one Feb 5 Canoga Marshes (E and RS); two, EBC census Dec 31; none reported from Keuka, Hornell or Schuy Co. Long-eared Owl: one only, Jan 21, Bone Plains Rd n.e. Ithaca (HAF). Short-eared Owl: only one at Ithaca, an injured bird found near Ludlowville, brought to SWS (Beckwith); several sightings w. of Geneva; one Mar 3 MNWR (CH); up to six or seven in Keuka area. Saw-whet Owl: one, Dec 22 Jacksonville (AG); one Zeman Road, n.e. Ithaca Mar 4 (HAF).

GOATSUCKERS—STARLING: Belted Kingfisher: one or two wintered as always where there was open water. Yellow-shafted Flicker: scarce as winter bird around Ithaca, reported from other parts of Region, six to eight at Montour Falls (JB). Red-bellied Woodpecker: continues to increase; reported from Elmira, Clyde (one to four all winter), seven in Waterloo area, one at an Elmira feeder, two, possibly three on Trumansburg Rd, one at Hector Pk, one at Montour Falls airport. Red-headed Woodpecker: rare at any time in Region, much rarer as winter bird; five reports this year: one Dec 10 near Myers Pt, Cay L (WJH), one Jan 15 Long Pt in Yates Co; one Feb 4 on Taughannock Blvd Ithaca (C. Stern), one Mar 11 on Sen L (L. Cunningham), one Mar 13 Remington Rd Ithaca. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: one Mar 29 Waterloo Cemetery is slightly early, if a migrant (JW). No 3-toed Woodpeckers in Region. Eastern Phoebe: first reported last week Mar. Horned Larks: sizeable flocks end of Jan and early Feb, disappeared by end of Feb leaving residents on territory. Tree Swallow: most unusual was the occurrence of up to 12, as late as Jan 20, in a sheltered area at MNWR (CH). Blue Jays were reported as very abundant in some areas, but I had far fewer in Etna than in recent winters. Crows returned in force the end of Mar. BOREAL CHICKADEE one spent most of the winter at the John Bartons' feeder in Montour Falls (mob), in company with a Carolina Wren, an interesting combination. White-breasted Nuthatch: many reports of scarcity of this species. Red-breasted Nuthatch: almost no reports all winter. Carolina Wren: no reports at Ithaca during entire period; five wintered in Watkins Glen area. Mockingbird: increasing number of reports throughout Region; two near Ithaca marina in enormous multiflora rose hedge. Blue bird: first, one Mar 11 West Dryden area (WCD). Robins: as usual a few wintered; in fact 20 seen on Schuy Co census Jan 1; first returns Mar 5, in numbers around Mar 24-26. Hermit Thrush: one winter report, Elmira Dec 31 (G. Rowley). Few kinglets. Cedar Waxwing: several large flocks reported. Northern Shrike: scattered reports around area; last Mar 26 Irish Settlement Rd (PK).

VIREOS—SPARROWS: Myrtle Warbler: a few wintered throughout the Region, but not in usual numbers. Yellowthroat: one entire winter, Montour Falls marsh (JBr, mob), first winter record in several years. Eastern Meadowlark: almost no winter reports, migrants returned Mar 10-11, as did Red-winged Blackbirds. Baltimore Oriole: one, Elmira feeders, Dec 10-30; a male at an Elm Street feeder, Ithaca, Feb 1 on (DM). Rusty Blackbird: two, all January, Howser farm near N. Lansing (DM). Common Grackle: returned in numbers Mar 10-11; Brown-headed Cowbird: a few wintering flocks, migrants Mar 6 on.

Cardinal: 102 on Schuy Co census on Jan 1 gives some idea of numbers in whole Region now (JB). Most other finches were scarce (see general remarks). Evening Grosbeak: in Feb, scattered reports of single sightings of 1-4 birds only. A Dec 31 sighting of 110 Redpolls at Elmira is only report of this species. One Siskin report, no crossbills or Pine Grosbeaks. American Goldfinches made news at feeders after

mid-Feb causing their usual confusion in winter plumage. A flock of 75, Feb 19 just n. of Taughannock is noteworthy (GM). Savannah Sparrow: first, one Mar 6 Jacksonville (AG); one Mar 19 in mixed flock of larks and buntings at 0° F, MNWR (WEB). Vesper Sparrow: one Dec 31 Geneva, EBC census. No migrants until Apr 1. Oregon Junco: two Dec 31 Elmira (Esther Ruggles). Tree Sparrow: very scarce in early winter, large flocks after mid-Feb. Field Sparrow: one Dec 31 Geneva, EBC census. Fox Sparrow: one Mar 16 SWS (ACL) is rather early, followed by three other sightings the same week, then no more reports during period. White-throated Sparrow: few wintered. One very unusual report of a flock of 50-60, Feb 14 Elmira airport (W. K. Nowill). Lapland longspur: scattered sightings, max six Feb 11 Waterwagon Rd, Ithaca (DM); last, one Mar 19, MNWR (WEB). Snow Buntings: arrived in flocks last weekend Jan, abundant at Keuka, the higher hills at Hornell; last date Mar 19, MNWR (WEB).

Laboratory of Ornithology, 33 Sapsucker Woods Road, Ithaca, N.Y. 14850

REGION 4 — SUSQUEHANNA

LESLIE E. BEMONT

December temperatures ranged from near zero on the fourth to 66 degrees on the tenth but averaged close to normal for the month. Precipitation also averaged close to normal but two thirds of the December snow fell in the last third of the month. January and February precipitation was 50 to 70 per cent of normal. January temperatures averaged four to five degrees above normal and February temperatures five to six degrees below normal. March temperatures also averaged below normal but precipitation was 100 to 130 per cent of normal. A warm spell March 10 and 11 seemed to produce quite large numbers of migrants, but was followed by one of the coldest days of the season when the official temperature dropped to minus 10 on March 19.

Birdwise it was a rather dull winter with Goldfinches and Snow Buntings the only winter finches here in appreciable numbers, and even they were not present in really large numbers. Northern raptors were also scarce as a group, although nearly all of the most likely species were reported at least once. Two Brown Thrashers and a Catbird head the "half-hardy" list but there were also two Baltimore Orioles, a White-crowned and several White-throated Sparrows reported and rather more than the usual number of Robins and Song Sparrows wintered. On the plus side, too, was a very appreciable increase in the number of Tufted Titmice. A winter record of a Red-bellied Woodpecker is noteworthy.

Abbreviations used: Bing—Binghamton; Chen—Chenango; Cort—Cortland; Pep Res—Pepacton Reservoir; Skan L—Skaneateles Lake.

Observers: GC—G. Corderman; MC—M. Cubberly; C, JD—C. & J. Davis; M, AD—M. & A. Davis; RD—R. Dirig; CG—C. Gerould; CGo—C. Gottschal; JAG—J. A. Gustafson; FL—F. Linaberry; MM—M. Mallinson; HM—H. Marsi; AM—A. Morey; JN—J. New; JO—J. Osadchey; RP—R. Pantle; FQ—F. Quick; RS—R. Saunders; R, MS—R. & M. Sheffield; AS—A. Stratton; WS—W. Stupke; MW—M. White; R, SW—R. & S. White; RW—R. Williams; SW—S. Wilson.

LOONS—DUCKS: Common Loon: one Dec 10 Pep Res (MC); one Jan 1 Skan L (JAG). Great Blue Heron: one Dec 1 Owego (CG); one Dec 9 Candor (RP); one flying over Margaretville Jan 1 (MC); first spring migrants Mar 22 Chen Forks (M, AD). Whistling Swan: an injured bird, unable to fly, remained at Oneonta