

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE WINTER SEASON

DECEMBER 1 — MARCH 31

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Without question the major feature of the winter season was the weather, except for the Long Island area. A great snow storm struck all other parts of the State with at least two feet of snow just after Christmas and was followed by one of the coldest Januaries on record. In most areas the temperature did not get above freezing for as much as three weeks at a time. As a result the heavy snow cover persisted until well into March, and no real northward migration was noted until almost the end of the month.

With much of their food supply covered by snow, the regular wintering birds were scarce in open areas. However, where they were able to get to well-maintained feeders, their numbers appear to have been close to normal. Specially noted at many feeders were the increased numbers of Rufous-sided Towhees. Christmas Counts were curtailed by the weather in some Regions, but where observers were able to get afield, the totals appear to have been about average. Captree Christmas Count on Long Island set a new State record of 135, and together the eight Long Island Counts recorded the amazing total of 16 species of shorebirds, the most notable of which were White-rumped, Baird's and Western Sandpipers.

The highlight of the season in all upstate areas was the tremendous number of Common Redpolls. They seemed to thrive on the cold and were reported everywhere until March in the hundreds and thousands. Many of them came regularly to feeders, but flocks of them remained in the open. Large counts of Evening Grosbeaks and Red Crossbills were also reported, the latter staying through the entire period where there was a sufficient cone crop. They were gone from Long Island by early January. Boreal Chickadees fulfilled the promise of last fall's incursion with up to as many as twelve reported from all Regions except 10.

The extreme cold closed most of the lakes and ponds so that the waterfowl count was generally down. Except for Goshawks, which continue to show an increase, the numbers of hawks and owls were disappointingly low, partly, of course, because of the lack of mice caused by the deep snow cover.

In addition to those mentioned above, rarities included: Common Teal

It is regretable that no reports were received from Region 4 and, for the second successive issue, from Region 1. Such omissions make this summary less meaningful and must be disappointing not only to Federation members in those Regions but to members throughout the State.

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REGION 2 — GENESEE

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It was along, cold winter. Snowfall at the end of March had reached over 117 inches at the Rochester Airport, most of it recorded before the middle of February. This is about 50 per cent above average for this region. March was a month of almost unbroken cold weather but very little snowfall. There was only one brief thaw after late December, this one coming in late January, and the heavy cover of ice and snow was almost undisturbed all winter.

On the other hand, precipitation from January 1 to March 31 was somewhat below normal. This was mainly because the snow was always of low water content, again reflecting the low temperatures which prevailed. Ice locked all the ponds and streams tightly and frequently extended so far offshore into Lake Ontario that waterfowl had few places to concentrate.

Nevertheless, it was not an uninteresting season for hardy birders. The two local Christmas Counts produced good lists and a wide variety of species was reported, including some of the more erratic wanderers as well as many half-hardy hangers-on. Migration was virtually unnoticeable until the last few days of March. Especially on the 28th, in spite of rather cool weather, a southwest wind brought a heavy flight of Canada Geese, a fair hawk flight and rather small numbers of other waterfowl and early passerines.

Rarities noted include: Kittiwake, Boreal Chickadee and a Varied Thrush. The latter bird is a first record for the region.

Abbreviations: BB—Braddocks Bay; MP—Mendon Ponds; SB—Sodus Bay.

Observers Cited: GD—Gertrude Davis; JF—John Foster; JH—Jean Haller; AK—Al Kemnitzer; BK—Bea Kemnitzer; WL—Walter Listman; RM—Robert McKinney LM—Laura Moon; NM—Neil Moon; RO—Richard O'Hara; BO—Bernard Olin; GOS—Genesee Ornithological Society (field trip); JT—Joe Taylor; TT—Tom Tetlow.

LOONS—DUCKS: No Loons were reported after Dec 14. A single Red-necked Grebe was at Manitou on Feb 7 (WL). At least 2 Great Blue Herons remained into mid-January (TT) (RM). The first returning birds were noted on March 28 (WL) Braddocks Bay (6 birds). There were 28 Whistling Swans at BB on the 28th (WL et al). The first one had appeared several days earlier. A single Snow Goose remained at Mendon Ponds into early January (Perrigos).

Both Canada Geese and the early puddle ducks, i.e. Pintail and American Widgeon were slow to move in large numbers. At the end of March, the Geese were finally coming in strongly, but the ducks were still not present in force. A few of nearly all expected species were noted, but many newly-opened ponds and bays were strangely empty. A few stragglers of several species were noted on the Christmas Census lists, including 2 Gadwall, 2 American Widgeon, 8 Wood Duck, the latter species mostly on the unfrozen sections of the lower Genesee River.

The diving ducks were present in normal numbers during the winter where open water was available, which was not too easily located. Canvasbacks were an exception, being quite scarce, after the smaller inland lakes froze over, until March 28