

REGION 2 — GENESEE

RICHARD T. O'HARA

This was definitely an old-fashioned winter — long, cold and plenty of snow and ice. It all began about Thanksgiving time and never let up for more than a day or two at a time until after April 1. Temperatures averaged below normal each month, although there were not many below zero readings. Several severe storms were accompanied by high winds in January, February and March. Snowfall was well over 140 inches in Rochester, the second heaviest total in over a century of records. Nor did it ever get a chance to melt very much, so that at this writing, mid-April, the woods and hedgerows are still not entirely snow free. The ice on local ponds and bays was still largely there on April 1, therefore; migrant waterfowl found only a few places to concentrate in the region.

Nevertheless, it was an interesting winter in several respects. The Christmas counts were excellent and many late-lingering species stayed over into January. Our reports of wintering hawks were encouraging even though Rough-legs were almost missing until the return flights of March. Ducks were forced to concentrate on large open bodies of water, especially Canandaigua Lake and Lake Ontario where they were well observed. Birds were forced into feeders or other known sheltered areas and held close by the harsh weather conditions, so perhaps fewer than usual escaped observation. And, finally, in spite of three or four bad storms which blocked roads and closed schools, there were many fine days when local birders were active, and many reported their finds regularly which is most helpful in giving an accurate and complete summary.

The most notable negative factor, as was anticipated in the fall, was the almost total lack of finches. In March, migration was very spotty and irregular for reasons mentioned above, but the earliest movement was noted as usual in late February. About mid-March and again near the end of the month, flights were observed including waterfowl, hawks, Crows, Robins, and blackbirds; but at month's end, the season was somewhat retarded, especially for ground feeding species such as Killdeer, Meadowlark, and sparrows.

Among the most unusual records were: Snow Goose, Common Eider, King Eider, Goshawk, Golden Eagle, Bald Eagle, Turkey, Virginia Rail, Purple Sandpiper, Little Gull, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Dickcissel, Yellow-headed Blackbird, Oregon Junco and Field Sparrow.

Observers: JC—Jerry Czeck; GD—Gertrude Davis; JD—James Doherty; JF—ohn Foster; GOS—Genesee Ornithological Society; AK—Allen Kemnitzer; WCL—Walter C. Listman; LLCC—Little Lakes Christmas Count; WL—Warren Lloyd; TM—Thelma McNett; LM—Laura Moon; RO'H—Richard O'Hara; CP—Chip Perrige; RCC—Rochester Christmas Count; ST—Sara Talpey; TT—Thomas Tetlow; PW—Paul Weld.

Locations: BB—Braddock's Bay; Can L—Canandaigua Lake; CL—Conesus Lake; DEP—Durand Eastman Park; EL—East Lakeshore; GR—Genesee River; IB—Irondequoit Bay; MB—Manitou Beach; MP—Mendon Ponds; RS—Russell Station; SB—Sodus Bay; WP—Webster Park.

LOONS—DUCKS: A single Common Loon on December 27 was the season's last (RCC), while Red-throated Loons were noted on December 20 at MB (WCL) and on December 26 at EL (JC). Neither was noted again in the early return flights before April 1. A single Red-necked Grebe was at WP (AK) on December 12. Horned and Pied-billed Grebes were seen occasionally, with 15 of the latter on CL (TT) on December 5 before it froze over.

A few Great Blue Herons were noted in December on both of the local Christmas counts, and the first to reappear in the Spring was one on March 14 on the lower GR (GOS). The last Whistling Swan were seen at BB on December 21, 4 birds, while

the first Spring record was 32 birds on March 14 at WP (WL); a fine count of 127 was made on flooded land near Groveland on March 28 (CP et al).

Canada Geese were first reported on February 20, a flock of 12 birds at RS (JD); and large numbers came in the last weekend in February when 2,500 were counted on IB (CP). Both Mallard and Black Duck were up sharply on the Christmas Census; and there was at least one winter report each of Gadwall, Pintail, Green-winged Teal and American Widgeon. The first Shoveller was one at BB on March 10 (WL); and Wood Duck appeared on March 20, a single bird on the lower GR (GOS).

The best winter count of Redheads was 1,500 at Can L (WL) on February 7; while another flock of 150 was noted at SB on March 14 (GOS). Fewer Canvasback were observed on Can L this winter with only 100 on January 10 being the high count (RO'H); at SB 170 were noted on March 14 (GOS). Three Ring-necked Ducks on February 3 at RS (GOS) were rather unusual both for time and place; but 175 at Groveland on March 28 (CP) was far the highest count. A few Lesser Scaup were identified in the usual winter flock of several hundred Greater Scaup at Summerville (GOS). Oldsquaw were scarce along the lake again although they may have only moved further out as the ice built up. No unusual counts of scoters were made after the Christmas Count of 941 White-winged and 4 Common Scoters. Both Eiders were noted in December at MB and elsewhere (WL et al). 3 Ruddy Duck were rather unusual at Summerville on March 21 (JD). The flight of Hooded Merganser was good on several days in March; but wintering Common and Red-breasted Merganser both seemed relatively scarce all winter.

HAWKS—OWLS: A good variety of wintering raptors was present in this region, and beginning on February 27 several days brought early migrants along the Lake Ontario shoreline. All three accipiters seemed up in numbers again this winter. Goshawks were widespread-reported from at least 5 separate locations and by many different observers; perhaps the most frequent observations were made at MP as last year (CP). Up to 4 Cooper's Hawks were frequenting the Webster area in February (JC). Single Sharp-shinned Hawks were noted at Macedon and Webster in January by TT and TM. Red-tailed Hawks were not common near the west Lake shore, perhaps due to heavy snow, but were very common inland; one observer noted 22 on a drive between Scottsville and Perry on January 24 (TT); while another count of 22 was made near Geneseo on March 28 (JD et al). A single Rough-legged Hawk was seen at MP on January 16 (CP).

The resident Bald Eagles were still present on January 3 (LLCC). An unusual record of 12 Marsh Hawks on Nations Road near Geneseo on March 21 no doubt represented mostly recent arrivals (JF, TT). Sparrow Hawks were present in good numbers this winter despite the snow conditions, although they were not as common as the Red-tails.

The best of the early records of migrant hawks in February and March are as follows:

<i>Species</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>Observers</i>
*Turkey Vulture	Mar. 27	1	Montezuma	TT
Goshawk	Mar. 27	1	E. Port Bay	TT
*Red-sh. Hawk	Mar. 15	7	E. Lakeshore	WL
Rough-l. Hawk	Mar. 27	19	Wayne Co.	TT
Rough-l. Hawk	Feb. 27	12	Braddocks Bay	CP
*Golden Eagle	Mar. 14	1	Webster Park	WL
*Bald Eagle	Mar. 20	1	Charlotte	Connor et al
Bald Eagle	Mar. 28	2	Hemlock Lake	RO'H
Marsh Hawk	Feb. 28	7	Braddocks Bay	CP

* First report of the year

A single Turkey was seen on Rt. 64 near Bristol on January 10 (RO'H). Pheasants were well reported on the Christmas Counts. A Virginia Rail survived at least until January 10 at MP (CP). About 40 Coot were wintering on the lower end of CL (RO'H).

Shorebirds made the best showing ever on Christmas Counts in this region with 4 species still present on December 27; these were Common Snipe, Purple Sandpiper, Dunlin, and Red Phalarope. In addition, 3 Common Snipe were noted in Greece on January 9 (WL); and 3 Killdeer were at Lima all through February (JF). The first migrant Woodcock were reported on March 15 from Webster (White) and Palmyra (Hartranft). A single Lesser Yellowlegs was early on March 28 at Nations Road (CP et al).

A few Glaucous and Iceland Gulls were seen off and on with the usual large flocks of Herring Gulls at Irondequoit Bay and Braddocks Bay. Except for 3 Glaucous on the Christmas Count December 27, only single birds were noted, and it is difficult to say how many may have been present. Great Black-backed Gulls were again rather low in numbers. Bonaparte's Gulls stayed until the very end of December, but only one single bird was noted thereafter RS (WL); this bird was still present on February 8—very unusual in this region.

Mourning Doves continue to increase and are now quite common as a winter bird here. Each year a new high is reached on our Christmas Counts.

Owls were rather scarce or poorly reported after the Christmas Counts. However, on both of those Counts, Screech Owls and Great Horned Owls were impressive with 13 and 16 of the former and 26 and 18 of the latter heard or seen. 2 Snowy Owls frequented BB off and on, and 1 was still there at the end of March; otherwise this bird was unreported. 2 Long-eared Owls were found in Seneca Park on the Rochester Christmas Count; while a good flock of 16 Short-eared Owls was present on Nations Road in March (ST et al). This is the same area where hawks were concentrated and no doubt was the scene of a high rodent population—a good demonstration of the value of these persecuted birds!

GOATSUCKERS—STARLINGS: While a few Kingfishers were reported this winter as usual, the first one that was probably a migrant was not noted until March 28, Nations Road (JD); like many of the other normal March arrivals, they were still not well distributed on April 1.

The same comment is as true of the Flicker as of the Kingfisher. A fine count of 12 Red-bellied Woodpeckers and 6 Red-headed Woodpeckers was made in the Nations Road area on March 28 (JD et al). The same list included 3 Pileated Woodpeckers. This land is part of the Wadsworth estate and is largely undisturbed open wood lots and pastures with many large old oaks. A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was noted in Irondequoit on January 30 (LM).

A large winter flock of Horned Larks with Snow Buntings and Lapland Longspurs seen on January 16 near Shore Acres contained mostly the northern subspecies of larks, although a few pale birds were included (RO'H).

No reports of Phoebe had been received before April 1. Likewise Tree Swallows were still absent at the end of the period. The Crow roost near Mt. Hope Cemetery was down to less than 2,000 birds; this compares to some 15,000 birds ten years ago; it is possible that the overall population of this species is not reduced drastically over a wide area, but the impression of local observers is that the decline is very real and somewhat alarming.

A Brown Thrasher was present at a feeder in Greece from January 15–25 (Beane). The greatest single flock of Robins noted among many wintering flocks was 250 on December 13 in DEP (JD). 2 Bluebirds were seen in Fairport on January 3 (JF). 2 Hermit Thrushes were noted on the Rochester Christmas Count. Only a few reports of Golden-crowned Kinglets were received after the Christmas Count; apparently they were scarce, as was the Red-breasted Nuthatch this year.

The first Water Pipits this spring were noted on March 21, a flock of 80 birds on Nations Road (JF, TT); a late fall report of 1 bird December 6 at BB (WCL). Cedar Waxwings were not noted as frequently as most years but a count of 300 on February 21 in Webster was unusually large (WL). Northern Shrikes was more common than usual early in the winter — a new high of 11 being noted on the Rochester Christmas Count, December 27; later when the snow deepened, they were less common but still regular.

VIREOS—WARBLERS: No reports, even on the Christmas Counts other than Myrtle Warblers which again wintered at MP; the high count was 7 (CP).

BLACKBIRDS—SPARROWS: Meadowlark was one of the laggards noted above this spring; after a count of 9 on the LLCC and a single on the Rochester Christmas Count, few were seen before the last week in March. One of the highlights of the winter was the appearance of one adult and one immature Yellow-headed Blackbird in a large flock of wintering redwings, grackles, and cowbirds in Pittsford; the adult bird was seen at least twice, January 19 and 31 (Newman) and the immature bird once (CP); there are only one or two other records for this species locally, although we have been expecting to see it appear more often as it has apparently done in other areas of the northeast recently; this wintering blackbird flock contained at least 250 redwings, 150 grackles, and 300 cowbirds.

Spring flights of blackbirds, especially Redwings, did begin in late February but were then abruptly halted until almost mid-March by the return of severe weather; by the end of March, however, they were becoming as evident as ever!

A Dickcissel came regularly to a feeder in Webster from early December to January 16 (Donaldsons).

All of the northern finches were scarce or entirely absent this year. One observer noted a few Purple Finches in DEP on December 7 (PW); and a few others appeared at a feeder in Penfield during most of March (GD). Evening Grosbeaks were noted on both Christmas Counts, and occasionally thereafter, but many observers saw none at all. Goldfinches were well distributed with one exceptional flock of 500 seen on Nations Road, March 28 (CP). 2 Redpolls and 2 Pine Siskins on the RCC were about the only records of either species. No Pine Grosbeak nor either crossbill were reported this season.

A single Rufous-sided Towhee was noted on each Christmas Count — none thereafter. One of our very few winter Savannah Sparrows was reported on the LLCC on January 3. A record high count of 8 Field Sparrows was made on the Rochester Christmas Count while 4 others appeared on the LLCC. Both White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows also appeared on both Counts, the latter in record numbers on RCC.

The Oregon Junco reported in October and November was still appearing irregularly at the end of winter (MS). Swamp and Song Sparrows seemed scarcer than usual, no doubt due to the heavy snow cover.

Several good flocks of Lapland Longspurs and Snow Buntings were reported; about 30 of the former on January 16 at Shore Acres (RO'H), and 1,250 of the latter March 21 in Lima (Fosters) being the largest numbers.

265 Carling Road, Rochester, New York 14610

REGION 3 — FINGER LAKES

DOROTHY McILROY AND SALLY HOYT SPOFFORD

The warm weather of November lasted into early December. Complete freeze-up of Montezuma Refuge occurred on Dec. 7, causing an exodus of the waterfowl. After mid-December it was a hard winter with above normal snowfall, 90 inches in Ithaca compared with the usual 75 inches, with heavy snowfalls occurring in early