

REGION 1 — NIAGARA FRONTIER

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The winter of 1971-72 can be divided in half. December and January presented temperatures several degrees above the long-term average with precipitation several inches below normal. February and March found these patterns dramatically reversed. There was enough snowfall so that several areas experienced record or near record accumulations. The usual March thaw was delayed until late in the month and most of the smaller fresh water lakes and streams were still frozen until late in the month. Predictable results were (1) the larger numbers of "half hardies" and other stragglers, and (2) retarded movements and limited numbers of the usual March migrants.

Significant trends or points of interest were (1) slight increases in the numbers of Common Loons and Great Blue Herons, (2) a lackluster performance by swans, geese and most ducks, (3) increased numbers of wintering accipiters (two smaller species) and Red-shouldered Hawks, (4) encouraging counts of migrating Red-shouldered Hawks, (5) good winter totals of American Coot, Killdeer and Common Snipe, (6) record counts of Glaucous and Great Black-backed Gulls, (7) a mediocre showing of the owls except for the Snowy Owl which was relatively common and widespread, (8) larger numbers of wintering wrens and thrushes than in any recent year, (9) a surprisingly modest showing of icterids in view of the mild weather, (10) an excellent flight of all the winter finches featuring genuine invasions by thousands of Evening Grosbeaks and Common Redpolls (11) fair to good numbers of the most of sparrows, (12) low numbers of Snow Buntings compared with most winters.

Rarities recorded were the Glossy Ibis, Mute Swan, Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Red Phalarope, Pomarine Jaeger, Black-headed Gull, Boreal Chickadee, Ovenbird, Dickcissel, House Finch and Hoary Redpoll.

Abbreviations: Bflo—Buffalo; BOS—Buffalo Ornithological Society; CC—Christmas Count; Chaut—Chautauqua; Co—County; INWR—Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge; Nia—Niagara; obs—observers; Ont—Ontario.

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LOONS—DUCKS: Compared with any recent year, the 4 Common Loons at three localities in Jan is unmatched. Red-necked Grebes were observed repeatedly in Dunkirk Harbor between Feb 22 and Mar 21 with a peak of 4 Mar 12 (WAM et al). As usual Pied-billed Grebes were found on Southern Tier county streams and rivers as long as they remained open, in addition to the Nia River and Dunkirk Harbor. Great Blue Herons were liberally represented throughout the winter with a near-record count of 6 Dec 19 on the Grand Island (BOS) CC and 5 at 4 localities during Feb when this species is usually rare. The Black-crowned Night Heron, however was unreported suggesting the possibility of contamination or loss of winter food in this area. An extraordinary straggler was a *GLOSSY IBIS* on the Genesee River at Scio Dec 21 (Dodson, Lucott) and Dec 24 (L. and M. Pendleton), the latest date for the region by about 20 days. The uncommon to rare *MUTE SWAN* was reported Mar 18, 25, 28 north of Canadea (LDB et al). Several late flocks of Whistling Swans were observed on the southern half of Chaut Lake—17 on the Jamestown CC Dec 26, 76 Jan 1 (FE), 100 Jan 11 (Eckberg); the spring over-

flight was apparently concentrated in the period Mar 21-23 with a maximum count of only 170 Mar 23 on the Allegheny Reservoir (FE). Canada Geese at the Oak Orchard refuge complex ranged between 1000 and 2000 until early Feb but declined to 300 by Feb 11 (JM et al) with the onset of severe weather; the highest count during Mar was 25,400 on the 31st at INWR (JM). A few Snow and Blue Geese were reported late in Mar with 3 of each species Mar 25 at INWR (JM et al). Significant winter counts of ducks on the Grand Island (BOS) CC Dec 19 included 64 Gadwall, 191 American Widgeon, 147 Redhead, 7728 Canvasback (near average), 242 Greater Scaup (second lowest since 1933), 812 Buffhead, 4376 Common Merganser, 2 Red-breasted Merganser (lowest ever). A count of 70 Pintail over Dunkirk Mar 21 in the highest ever for that locality. Single Green-winged Teal wintered in the Forest Lawn Cemetery, Bflo (many obs) and along the Frissell Road, Frusburg (RS et al). The first mid winter record of the Shoveler was an individual Feb 16 in the Forest Lawn Cemetery, Bflo (Emersons). Wood Ducks wintered at Belmont, Allegany and Jamestown. Most of the counts of diving ducks were about average or below except for a few previously mentioned. Good counts of migrating White-winged Scoters on Lake Ont occurred on Mar 11 with 125 at Point Breeze and 130 off Yates Township (WAM et al) and off the mouth of the Nia River Mar 20 (RA, Thill). Four Ruddy Ducks in Dunkirk Harbor Jan 20-31 (DC) were unseasonal.

HAWKS—OWLS: Numbers of the two smaller accipiters seem to have increased significantly over recent winters. For example, 5 Sharp-shins and 12 Cooper's Hawks were reported from scattered locations. Significant counts of wintering hawks were 45 Red-tails on the Grand Island (BOS) CC Dec 19, 51 Red-tails Dec 27 on the INWR CC, 38 Rough-legs during Feb in the Lyndonville area (WGS), 14 Rough-legs Jan 29 near Centerville (LDB et al), 10 Marsh Hawks Jan 1 on the Allegany Co CC. More Red-shouldered Hawks were reported this winter than ever with 1-2 seen occasionally at INWR (JM,OO), 2 Jan 4 near Gerry (RS) and singles Feb 10 at Stockton (OS,NB) and Feb 17 at Cherry Creek (OS,NB, R. Olson). A *GOLDEN EAGLE* was seen Mar 29 over Lewiston (Klabunde). An immature Bald Eagle occurred Jan 8 at INWR (Meddaugh). The first *PEREGRINE FALCON* reported in several years was seen Dec 5 along the Nia River near Lewiston (many obs) and also on Grand Island (Rew). A significant movement occurred Mar 21 over Hanover, Dunkirk and Sheridan Townships, Chaut Co 55 Red-tailed, 130 Red-shouldered Hawks, 6 Marsh, 15 Sparrow Hawks (RPA). Still another encouraging count of Red-shouldered Hawks was 74 over Youngstown Mar 29 (WHK).

A substantial count of Ring-necked Pheasants was 100 Mar 9 along Lake Ont from Wilson to Point Breeze (WHK). Record or near-record counts of the American Coot were obtained for Dunkirk Harbor with 41 Jan 22 and 44 Feb 17 (DC). As usual, a few Killdeer and Common Snipe wintered successfully in Chaut Co with maximum counts of 4 Killdeer on Jan 31 at Claks Corners (Moe) and 5 snipe at Towerville Mar 1 (DC). The first regional record of the *RED PHALAROPE* for Jan was an individual Jan 1 in Dunkirk Harbor (DC) on the Dunkirk CC; this species has wintered successfully on Lake Ont at Rochester recently.

The rare and irregular *POMARINE JAEGER* was observed Dec 16 at Bay View (TB). Record high counts of Glaucous and Great Black-backed Gulls at Nia Falls, Ont are included here because some of the birds were in New York and they move freely back and forth across the international boundary. On Jan 13 (HRA) and on Jan 23 (PB et al) 23 Glaucous Gulls were recorded while 230 Great Black-backed Gulls were counted Jan 19 (HRA). A maximum of 4 Iceland Gulls was noted during Jan at the same location (HRA). A *BLACK-HEADED GULL* was seen Dec 4 in the Queenston, Ont—Lewiston, N.Y. area of the Nia River (HDM et al). The first Jan Franklin's Gull was observed Jan 15-24 on the Nia River across from

Bfio (many obs). The highest ever Jan count of Bonaparte's Gull was an estimate of 8000 on the Nia River on Jan 13 (HRA). A count of 4 adult and 2 immature Little Gulls on the Queenston, Ont—Lewiston section of the Nia River Feb 2 (HRA) was both large and late.

Wintering concentrations of the Mourning Dove were substantial and widespread with maximum counts of 160 Dec 27 on the INWR CC and 147 Jan 2 on the Hamburg-East Aurora CC. The decidedly uncommon Barn Owl was also reported on the last mentioned CC. The Snowy Owl was well represented by many individuals well scattered throughout the region and a superb maximum count of 7 on Feb 27 in the Lyndonville area (WGS). The Lake Ont plain produced four records of 6 Long-eared Owls, slightly higher than in recent winters. Short-eared Owls were also recorded from the Lake Ont plain or Erie Co with a maximum of 30 at Alden on Feb 12 (Wolffing). A Saw-whet Owl was reported Feb 4 at Hamburg (TB).

GOATSUCKERS—STARLING: The Red-bellied Woodpecker was noted in two areas where it is still very rare—Dec 19 (WAM) and Jan 4 (PB) in Beaver Island State Park on the Nia River and visiting a feeder in Jamestown Jan 22-Feb 18 (Morrell). As in past winters a few Red-headed Woodpeckers and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were observed; the former was represented throughout the winter by singles at INWR (several obs) and at a feeder during Feb at Clarks Corners (several obs) while a sapsucker survived at a feeder in Allegany State Park (several obs).

A **BOREAL CHICKADEE** was noted this winter Dec. 26, 27 (WAM, Karkak) and Jan 8 (WAM) and 15 (Goodman, Wilcove, Zehr) in Acacia Park Cemetery, Pendleton where a bird was reported last winter. Red-breasted Nuthatches were more widely distributed than last winter with many individuals or pairs visiting feeders and a maximum of 14 on Jan 12 in the Alfred area (CK, Brooks). At least 3 Winter Wrens were noted during the winter on the Lake Ont plain (several obs) while the Carolina Wren was noted in at least 6 localities throughout the winter but suffered some mortality during the severe Feb and Mar weather. The Mockingbird was reported from only 4 locations this winter compared with 9 last winter. A Catbird was reported again this year on the Hamburg-East Aurora CC Jan 1 while 5 Brown Thrashers were noted at scattered locations.

Substantial numbers of Robins were observed including a maximum of 43 Dec 27 on the INWR CC. Winter records of the Hermit Thrush included singles on Grand Island Dec 14 (WHK) and 19 (WAM), Jan 16 Jerusalem Corners (RPA), Jan 29 at a feeder in Spring Brook (Danner) and Mar 5 Batavia (Masons). For the first time in many years wintering Eastern Bluebirds were reported—5 Dec 12 in Evans Township and 7 Jan 4 at Evans (Coggeshall, Hauser); 4 Jan 18 on Hartland Road, Somerset (HRA); 1 Feb 1, 15 INWR (OO). The only Ruby-crowned Kinglet was seen on the Grand Island (BOS) CC Dec 19. An early Water Pipit was seen Mar 11 at Towerville (DC). The maximum number of Cedar Waxwings reported was 393 on Jan 1 Allegany Co CC. An excellent flight of Northern Shrikes found these birds scattered throughout the area during the winter with a high count of 5 on the Hamburg-East Aurora CC Jan 2. The first Loggerhead Shrike arrived on Mar 19 at Clarence (WAM).

VIREOS—SPARROWS: Predictable because of the relatively mild fall weather were lingering Myrtle Warblers with 1 on the Grand Island (BOS) CC Dec 19 and 19 on the Jamestown CC Dec 26. Unexpected and totally unprecedented, however, was an **OVENBIRD** which lived on mixed wild bird seed at a feeder and roosted in a garage in Fillmore Dec 1-Feb 14 (many obs); many detailed verification reports were submitted and are on file in the Buffalo Museum of Science.

Far fewer Eastern Meadowlarks than during recent similarly mild winters were reported with the peak only 42 Dec 27 on the INWR CC; a noteworthy count of

returning spring migrants was 128 over Lake View on Mar 21 (PH). Larger flocks of Red-winged Blackbirds than usual were observed with 30 Jan 1 on the Allegany Co CC and 47 Jan 2 at Griffin Lane, Elma (Wendlings). Two Baltimore Orioles were reported at feeders, Dec 16 at Riverside, Bflo (HDM et al) and Jan 16 in Boston (Dodges, Jones). Rusty Blackbirds were seen on two CCs — Dec 19 Grand Island and Dec 26 Jamestown; individuals were noted Jan 1 (JM,OO) and Feb 16 (PH) at INWR and at Tift Street marsh, Bflo Feb 6 (RPA). An unusual mid-winter concentration of Common Grackles was a flock of 12 on Jan 20 in the Town of Alma (LDB). The only large winter flocks of cowbirds were 132 and 111 on Jan 1 Scio and Allegany Co CCs. Returning flocks of several hundred Red-wings and grackles appeared in the Frewsburg area on Mar 2 (FE).

DICKCISSELS were reported at three feeders in Allegany Co but the only verified record was of an adult male Jan 1 in Wellsville (Ferrands) which was also reported Dec 19 and Jan 4 and 6. A fine invasion of Evening Grosbeaks involving thousands of birds peaked during Jan with numerous feeders serving flocks of many dozens or in a few cases over 100 individuals; maximum numbers were noted on area CCs — 2218 Jan 1 Allegany Co, 800 Jan 2 Hamburg — East Aurora, 785 Jan 1 Scio. Unusually large concentrations of Purple Finches were recorded at two locations — 75 to 85 Feb 23-Mar 4 at Riverside Road south of Frewsburg (many obs) and 44 Dec 31 at Belmont (LDB). From 6 to 12 *HOUSE FINCHES* wintered at a feeder in Eggertsville (Ward et al). Pine Grosbeaks were present in small flocks scattered widely throughout the region; high counts were 21 at Red Bird, Chaut Co Feb 5 (DC) and 18 Jan 2 on the Hamburg-East Aurora CC; the last report was of 1 at Lyndonville Mar 11 (WGS). Records of the always-rare *HOARY RED-POLL* came from two localities — 2 Feb 17 and 1 Feb 29 on the Bliss Road, Oakfield (Beebee) and 2 at a feeder in Hamburg Feb 17 (TB), the latter location where most authentic regional records of recent years originate. Numbers of Common Redpolls totaled in the thousands during Jan and Feb with most active feeding stations visited by small flocks; maximum counts were 800 Feb 26 and 600 Feb 6 in the Fredonia area (DC), 500 Jan 29 at Caneadea (CK); there were also between 20 and 30 estimates of flocks containing from 100 to 500 individuals. Pine Siskin were well scattered in small flocks frequently visiting feeders particularly from Jan through Mar with a high count of 50 Jan 28 in fields at Belmont (LDB). Very high CC totals of the American Goldfinch reflected the mild weather during Dec and Jan — 386 Jan 1 Alleghany Co, 315 Jan 2 Hamburg-East Aurora, 215 Jan 1 Scio, 103 Dec 19 Grand Island. The five reports of Red Crossbills were all from the Hamburg area (20 on Jan 2 CC) or from Allegany Co (71 on Jan 1 Scio CC) but White-winged Crossbills were widely distributed throughout the region during Jan and Feb with many individuals and small flocks visiting feeders during the severe weather of the later month and a maximum of 15 on Feb 2 in the Youngstown Cemetery (Emersons).

Most unusual was a Savannah Sparrow that wintered at Silver Creek including daily visits to the feeders of T. Welch during Feb and Mar where it was observed by WAM Feb 27. Significant CC totals of the Slate-colored Junco were 535 Jan 2 Hamburg-East Aurora, 431 Jan 1 Allegany Co, 297 Dec 19 Grand Island and for the Tree Sparrow were 1033 Dec 19 Grand Island and 662 Dec 27 NWR. Single Field Sparrows survived the rugged late winter weather at feeders in Allegany State Park (FE) and Hamburg (TB). Maximum counts of the White-crowned Sparrow, 19 Jan 1 Allegany Co CC compared with 20 on the same count a year ago and of the White-throated Sparrow, 93 Jan 2 on Hamburg-East Aurora CC compared with 96 a year ago, and 35 Dec 26 Jamestown CC compared with 35 a year ago. The CC total of 8 Swamp Sparrows Dec 27 at the INWR was significant. Song Sparrow totals were disappointingly low and did not compare favorably with those of a year ago (see Kingbird Vol. 21(2);75). The highest count of Snow

Buntings for the winter, 755 on Jan 6 at Fredonia (DC) was substantially lower than during most years.

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REGION 2 — GENESEE

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What began as a mild open winter during December and most of January became much more severe in February and continued colder and snowier than normal right through the end of March. It seemed milder than it actually was because the preceding winter was so heavy, but the comparison is deceptive. Nearly 100 inches of snow had been recorded in Rochester by March 30, and temperatures were very close to normal for the season. Several thaws in early winter prevented ice and snow from accumulating much until 11.4 inches fell on February 19 and 20. Most bodies of water were still locked in ice at the end of the season.

Total precipitation was just about normal for January, February, and March and water levels were higher than normal along Lake Ontario. Most weekends were pleasant enough to keep observers active and a large volume of reports were sent in to give an accurate view of bird life here.

The combination of mild weather and a fine finch flight resulted in very good, although not record-breaking numbers, on both local Christmas census counts. A combined total of ninety-one species left very few unrecorded. Many of the half-hardy species noted below were discovered on these useful counts, and it is also interesting to see how many had disappeared when severe weather set in during February.

March produced few migrants before the last weekend and most migrants other than waterfowl were still scarce on the 31st.

Positive trends include: (1) A strong flight of early returning waterfowl in late March including several species of dabblers as well as most divers. (2) Fine numbers of Redheads wintering on Canandaigua Lake. (3) Two records of Harlequin Duck. (4) Good season for Snowy Owls and Short-eared Owls and continuing up-trend for Screech Owl. (5) Several records for wintering Bluebirds and large flocks of Robins. (6) As noted above, better than average showing of winter finches, especially Pine Siskins, redpolls, and crossbills.

Negative trends include: (1) Apparent drop in wintering Greater Scaup Duck. (2) Relative scarcity of Oldsquaws and Common Mergansers. (3) Near absence of Red-breasted Nuthatches after a good fall flight. (4) Few reports of Lapland Longspurs.

Rarities include: Harlequin Duck, Goshawk, Bald Eagle, Dunlin, Black-legged Kittiwake, Saw-whet Owl, Boreal Owl, Catbird, Ovenbird, Dickcissel, House Finch, Harris' Sparrow, and Chipping Sparrow.

Abbreviations: BB—Braddocks Bay; BANS—Burroughs-Audubon Nature Sanctuary; CL—Canandaigua Lake; Con L—Conesus Lake; DEP—Durand Eastman Park; GOS—Genesee Ornithological Society; GR—Genesee River; HBP—Hamlin Beach Park; HL—Hawk Lookout; IB—Irondequoit Bay; LO—Lake Ontario; LLCC—Little Lakes Christmas Census; MB—Manitou Beach; MP—Mendon Ponds; RCC—Rochester Christmas Census; RP—Round Pond; SC—Sandy Creek; SB—Sodus Bay.

Observers Cited: JA—Jean Ambrose; RA—Robert Ambrose; MC—Michael Carlson; JC—Julie Claffey; GD—Gertrude Davis; JD—James Doherty; JE—J. Esley; AF—Arlene Foster; JF—John Foster; RJ—Robert Jones; AK—Alan Kemnitzer;