

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

19 Chestnut Street, Jamestown, New York 14701

REGION 2 — GENESEE

RICHARD T. O'HARA

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;

RK—Roberta Kilmer; RL—Ruth Lauderbach; WCL—Walter C. Listman; J&TM—Joseph & Thelma McNett; LM—Laura Moon; NM—Neil Moon; RO—Richard O'Hara; BO—Bernard Olin; BP—Betty Perrigo; GP—Glen Perrigo; AS—Al Shay; MAS—Mary Ann Sunderlin; J&JT—Jean & James Tate; M& TT—Michael & Thomas Tetlow; PW—Paul Weld.

LOONS—DUCKS: Both Common and Red-throated Loon were noted in December, but neither was seen again all season. One Red-necked Grebe was present off IB on January 8 (B&GP). A single Whistling Swan was feeding in the mouth of SC on January 15 (RO). A count of 6 Great Blue Heron on the RCC reflects the mild early winter. None were reported in January or February.

A fine count of Black Ducks, 461, on LLCC may be a good omen for this somewhat depleted species. An early flight brought 20 Gadwall to BB on March 30 (WCL et al); this is the best local count in recent memory. Some 400 Pintail in the same place is also noteworthy. While Canvasback were well-represented on the LLCC with 837 counted, they were not common elsewhere until the end of March brought returning birds. Redheads, however, were up sharply on CL with a peak of 4000 noted on March 11 (RO). Greater Scaup seemed scarce largely because they did not winter in large numbers in the mouth of the GR for the first time in memory; this was probably due to dredging and other activity there in the early winter. Bufflehead continue to surprise with excellent numbers present, while Oldsquaws still seem scarcer than a few years ago. Both dark-winged scoters were absent after a heavy flight in the fall. The Harlequin Duck appeared at MB twice, December 19–23, and also March 30. (WCL); both of these were female or immature birds. The Common Merganser, while not rare, seems to be down in numbers here. The RCC count of 82 is very low and it was entirely absent on the LLCC. 4 Hooded Mergansers on January 23 were unusual LO (MAS et al).

HAWKS—OWLS: The first Turkey Vulture appeared on March 30 at HL with the first sizable hawk flight of the spring (WCL). Goshawks were reported 8 times this winter; the last of these was apparently a migrant moving with other species along LO at HL March 30 (WCL). Cooper's Hawk was reported 10 times before the first 5 migrants occurred on March 30 also at HL (WCL). Similarly there were 7 reports of Sharp-shinned Hawks, but no migrants in the first flight. All these numbers are better than three or more years ago and continue the improvement noted in accipiters for the past two years. The March 30 date for the first noteworthy hawk flight is late and underscores the lack of any real break in winter weather before then.

The chief feature of the hawk movement on March 30 was 300 Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks; these birds were quite high and light conditions prevented positive identification of many, but both were included in good numbers (BC et al). A late Red-shouldered Hawk was at MP on December 21 (GP). Rough-legged Hawk was quite well represented here all winter with 7 and 5 on our two CC. Otherwise the best daily count was 6 at Honeoye Falls on February 6 (JF). There were 25 of these birds in the movement on March 30 at HL (BC et al).

The resident pair of Bald Eagles was at the nest site near Hemlock Lake on March 26 (J&AF); one was also noted at CL on March 11 (fide RO) and cottagers reported two birds were present there off and on all winter; this is probably the same pair which nests locally, although rumors are heard of another nest east of CL. Marsh Hawks were noted occasionally near BB (WCL) and Sparrow Hawks were present in good numbers all winter. Counts of 20 and 14 on CC were representative numbers.

Pheasants seem to be holding quite steady since the stocking program of the state has been dropped. Only 1 Ruffed Grouse was noted on the LLCC this year. No Turkey reports probably only means that coverage of suitable areas southeast of Rochester is poor.

Coot appear to be enjoying a population explosion; they were common everywhere until ice forced them out in early winter with a peak of 500 on Con L December 25 (WCL). A single Dunlin was noted on the RCC and another at SB December 28 (WCL). Only a few Killdeer were reported in the early March flights along LO, but a few individuals may have wintered successfully also. Woodcock was the only other shorebird noted before April this year.

About a dozen reports of Glaucous Gulls represent a good number for this region. Iceland Gull was less common with only 3 or 4 observed all winter, but this is still better than some recent years. Great Black-backed Gulls were better too, with many present where last year only a few were seen. Sometimes gulls in general seemed scarce, but this was probably due to severe ice conditions in mid-winter, since they became common again when open water again appeared. It is interesting to note the ratio of Herring to Ring-billed Gulls; on the RCC it was 1:3; by February this was reversed, although Ring-bills certainly winter here in much greater numbers than they did 15 or 20 years ago. Bonaparte's Gulls stayed late with several January reports including 85 at IB on January 12 (AK). 1 to 3 Little Gulls were noted with these late Bonaparte's Gulls by m. o.b.; the last report was January 11 (AK et al). Even more unusual were 2 Black-legged Kittiwake at MB on December 4 (WCL); these were migrating birds.

Worth noting are the Mourning Dove totals of 363 and 238 on the RCC and LLCC; these birds are now so common and widely distributed in winter that they are no longer noteworthy except for the large numbers involved, for example at one feeder as many as 61 were counted (GD).

Owls were well represented locally. An encouraging 23 Screech Owls on RCC is much higher than several recent years. Snowy Owls were regular in some places, but numbers were not spectacular; most observers recorded 1 to 3 per day along the lakeshore especially at BB; in addition, 2 were at the Monroe County airport (RA) and scattered birds elsewhere; the two CC totaled 6 birds. A single Long-eared Owl was near MP on January 1 (J&AF); another was at HL on March 11 (AS) and a third was observed near RP on March 18 (GP et al). Short-eared Owls wintered both in Mendon and near Honeoye Falls with maximums of 7 and 12 at each location (m. o.b.); none were noted from lakeshore marshes, however, A Saw-whet Owl was discovered near RP on March 25 (WCL et al). The really outstanding Owl, however, was a Boreal Owl picked up dead but in good condition on Chase Road, Hamlin and given to NM on February 26; the skin has been preserved; there are 2 previous sight records for this region in recent years.

GOATSUCKERS—STARLINGS: Kingfishers were reported every month this winter, but migrants had not appeared even at the end of March. Flickers were very common again with a combined total of 63 birds on the two CC, Pileated, Red-bellied and Red-headed Woodpeckers were all recorded every month this winter with an interesting report of 2 Pileated on February 16 from near DEP (E&M Barnitz); also unusual was a single Pileated at HBP on March 19 (WCL); they are not usually noted on the flat open country of the West *Lakeshore*. The best count of Red-headed was 8 on February 27, Nations Road, Geneseo (J&RA). The last Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was a RCC record on December 19.

Horned Larks were widely observed in good numbers all winter. Some years they are quite scarce for a few weeks from late December to late January or early February. Our CC totals for Crow are now sad compared to a few years ago; it is hard to account for the decrease, but 15,000 birds formerly has now been reduced to less than 1/10 that number; do other regions note the same decline? few Crows have yet moved along the lakeshore either.

Red-breasted Nuthatches have been scarce or absent since fall; even in DEP and HBP very few have been seen this winter. A single Winter Wren was in DEP on

February 6 (GOS), otherwise absent after January 1. Carolina Wren is unreported to date.

Two Catbirds attempted to winter in DEP but were last noted on January 2 (PW). A Brown Thrasher was seen in the same place in mid-December but not afterwards (JD). Robins were again numerous with 51 and 72 noted on the CC. Hermit Thrush was also seen on both counts with a good total of 5 birds; 1 of these was still present in DEP on February 2 (PW). Bluebirds were noteworthy with reports of 1 — 8 birds in 5 separate locations.

Golden-crowned Kinglets seemed rather scarce, but Cedar Waxwings were common as usual. 6 Pipit were seen in Clarkson on the early date of March 23 (R. Clark et al). Northern Shrike seemed rather widely distributed in the early weeks of winter but scarce after February 1.

VIREOS—WARBLERS: The only species noted in this group were Myrtle Warblers and Ovenbird. A group of 8 Myrtles were seen at MP on January 4 (GP) and 6 were still there on March 25 (J. Dille). The Ovenbird remained at a feeder in Irondequoit from December 1 — 4 (L&NM); this is the latest date for the species of which I am aware.

BLACKBIRDS—SPARROWS: Eastern Meadowlark was reported every month from several different places and in numbers ranging from 1 to 6 birds; very few migrants were noted, however, until the very end of March. Similarly all the common blackbird species — Redwing, Rusty, Grackle and Cowbird — were reported quite frequently this winter. Rusty Blackbirds and Grackles were in small numbers, i.e., 1 to 8 birds, and Cowbirds seemed less common than recent winters. Only Redwings were frequent as migrants until the last of March when Grackles were beginning to appear more frequently in the flocks flying east along the lakeshore and elsewhere.

A well-marked male Dickcissel appeared in Webster on January 9 and remained until the 27th (RK); it was seen by m. ob. during this period.

To many people, the finches were the outstanding feature this winter. Several species appeared frequently at feeders, sometimes in rather large numbers, and attracted widespread notice. In most places Evening Grosbeaks were not really common, and they were less regular than in some recent winters; nevertheless, they were well-reported with the best count being 125 at HBP on January 8 (B&GP); the LLCC total of 251 was also good. Purple Finches, while nowhere in really large numbers, were more frequent than usual, especially in the last half of winter; it was almost like 20–30 years ago when this bird seemed much more regular during winter in our parks.

The House Finch which nested on St Paul Blvd last summer is still being reported there (RL); so far it has not become established at any other place in this region so far as we know. Pine Grosbeak appeared first on the LLCC January 2, 7 birds, and subsequently 3 times at scattered locations; the best count was 9 at HBP on March 11 (GP), but there were also 8 at BB on February 12 (J&JT et al) and 1 on January 3 in DEP (RJ&MC). Goldfinches were widespread and common even at feeders within the city.

Pine Siskins after a heavy fall flight remained in good numbers until February when they became more infrequent and irregular; in March, however, they began to appear again and were frequently noted at feeders sometimes along with Redpolls and Goldfinches; numbers were not large after the end of December when 135 were noted on RCC.

When Siskins dropped off, the Redpoll came on strong; with the cold of February and March, they moved in from more remote sections; it is fascinating to find that only 6 appeared on RCC December 19 but 1,284 were in the hills south of the lake plain on January 2; at the same time 75 were in MP on December 23 (GP); by

January 10 they were in the city and subsequently seen everywhere in good numbers; these birds were still appearing at feeders at the end of March.

White-winged Crossbill appeared frequently this winter; the best December count was 24 at HBP (M&TT); counts steadily diminished then until only 1 and 2 birds at a time were being noted in February and March. The Red Crossbill seemed to increase in mid-winter and reached a peak with a count of 100 in Webster on February 2 (J&TM).

The only Towhee report came from Honeoye Falls, 1 bird on February 6 (RJ). Juncos stayed in very good numbers, perhaps because the early winter was light and open; the count of 676 on RCC seems particularly high. 1 Oregon Junco was noted at BANS on January 3 and January 4 (GP). Tree Sparrows were also abundant with very good numbers on both CC and elsewhere.

A very unusual Chipping Sparrow was well observed at a feeder in Honeoye Falls on February 1 (RJ) along with Tree Sparrows and other species. 1 even more unusual Harris' Sparrow was with a large flock of other sparrows at Lakeville, N.Y. on the LLCC (R. Clark et al); this is only about the 4th record for the species here. A single Field Sparrow came to a feeder in Fairport on February 11 (BL).

Several wintering White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows were observed, usually at feeders where they are no longer really unusual; most noteworthy perhaps were 7 White-crowned Sparrows all through March at Walworth (JE). A single Fox Sparrow was seen at Con L January 16 (J&RA). Swamp Sparrows were unreported all winter except on the CC in very small numbers. Song Sparrows had begun to sing and were quite conspicuous by early March in spite of cold weather and were widespread by late March.

While Snow Bunting were rather uncommon in early winter, they became much more frequent, or at least more frequently observed, after the snow became deeper in mid-February; a flock of 400 near CL on February 21 seemed noteworthy (RO) until some 2000 were located in Hamlin on March 18 (B&GP). A few Lapland Longspurs were with this large flock, but otherwise Longspurs seemed very scarce all winter.

265 Carling Road, Rochester, New York 14610

REGION 3 — FINGER LAKES

DOROTHY MCILROY AND SALLY HOYT SPOFFORD

December and most of January were mild, temperatures averaging 3 to 5 degrees above normal. There was moderate snowfall, but little snow cover stayed on the ground. In late January came an abrupt drop in temperature accompanied by heavy snowfall, one of the heaviest on record in the Ithaca area between Jan. 25 and March 2. There was less snow north of Ithaca. March temperatures averaged 2 to 3 degrees below normal. Snowfall was normal, but it was March 30 before there was much bare ground. Montezuma Refuge did not freeze over completely until Dec. 21, when most waterfowl left. The pools were still 50 percent frozen as of April 1.

Although few Canada Geese stayed in the Refuge, an unprecedented 20,000 wintered in the Cayuga Lake Basin. Only 9,277 were counted on the Waterfowl Count (previous high 258 in 1967) Jan. 16, perhaps because a sudden temperature drop that blanketed the lake with steam, coupled with a high wind, made it impossible most of the day to see birds out on the lake. Partially offsetting this, frozen ground and no snow made access to the lake shores easier than usual. High winds