

REGION 3 – FINGER LAKES

W. E. BENNING

Temperatures, December thru February, were appreciably warmer and snowfall lighter than normal. March was colder but with little snow. There was only one-third the normal number of below-zero nights.

The mild and open winter probably explains the lack of birds at feeders except after the infrequent snowfalls. Late February warmed up enough to produce a small hawk flight. Red-tails and a possible Sharp-shinned, at Elmira on the 21st. The next day Canada and Snow Geese, ducks, and icterids poured into the region. Killdeer came along with an early Woodcock and Savannah Sparrow and a very early Phoebe. The mild weather may also explain the several widely distributed Ruby-crowned Kinglet reports, and the Carolina Wren build up no doubt aided by the weather.

But where were the normal overwintering icterids? Several observers mentioned their absence until the February 22 push. And where were the winter finches? Nonexistent, except for Evening Grosbeaks and a few late period Purple Finches.

On the plus side the Snow Geese continue to increase at MNWR. Arriving early on February 22 they mushroomed to an unheard of 8,000 birds by mid-March. I note the May 1959 *Kingbird* mentions 7 Snows and 1 Blue, a 1000% increase!

Rarities include Raven, Fish Crow and Grasshopper Sparrow.

We were saddened by the death of Prof. Frank Guthrie, our long time area compiler from Keuka Park. We shall miss him and his excellent reports.

Abbreviations: CC—Christmas Count preceded by E for Elmira (Dec. 18), G for Geneva (Dec. 28), I for Ithaca (Jan. 1) and M for Montezuma (Jan. 1); Co—County; Cay—Cayuga; L—Lake; MNWR—Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge; WFC—Federation Waterfowl Count; SAD—Seneca Army Depot; Sen—Seneca.

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LOONS—DUCKS: The following table shows the March peak figures for waterfowl at MNWR and the Jan. 12 WFC figures. Last year's counts are in parenthesis.

	MNWR		WFC	
Common Loon			8	
Horned Grebe			219	(94)
Pied-billed Grebe	8		26	(29)
Whistling Swan	18	(8)		
Canada Goose	75,000	(50,000)	11,479	(1,680)
Snow Goose	8,000	(500)		
Mallard	3,000	(6,000)	3,175	(2,996)
Black Duck	2,500	(6,500)	1,646	(1,027)
Gadwall	400	(100)	3	(14)
Pintail	3,500	(7,000)	5	(4)
Green-winged Teal	500	(800)	2	
Blue-winged Teal	400	(100)		
American Wigeon	150	(400)		(16)
Shoveler	50	(1,000)		

	MNWR		WFC	
Wood Duck	300	(100)	3	(2)
Redhead	30	(10)	6,398	(7,424)
Ring-necked Duck	20	(400)	19	(8)
Canvasback	5		2,107	(1,459)
Greater Scaup			598	(1,063)
Lesser Scaup	15	(80)	51	(427)
Scaup sp.			224	
Common Goldeneye	50		747	(705)
Bufflehead	10		305	(316)
Oldsquaw			81	(22)
White-winged Scoter				(1)
Common Scoter			1	
Ruddy Duck	10			
Hooded Merganser	40	(100)	17	(22)
Common Merganser	200	(100)	173	(219)
Red-breasted Merganser	2		19	(5)
Coot	350	(20)	963	(772)

Whistling Swan: 2 Jan. 2 Ithaca (JG); 1 Feb. 20 Farley's Point Cay. L. (PD). Canada Goose: arrived early, Feb. 20 at Watkins, Feb. 22 Elmira and MNWR and Feb. 23 at Niles; estimate of 100,000 in mid-March on north end of Cay. L. (RSJ); such enormous numbers force them to travel long distances to feed as 5500 Mar. 24 feeding at Phelps 20 miles away (BH). Gadwall: an unprecedented 225 plus stayed on at the north end of Cay. L. into early Jan.

HAWKS-OWLS: Goshawk: 3 reports from Lansing, Caroline, Ithaca; 2 GCC. Sharp-shinned Hawk: singles at Ithaca, Odessa, Phelps, Seneca Falls, Waterloo; several along east side of Cay. L. and at Elmira. Red-shouldered Hawk: 1 Jan. 19 Connecticut Hill; 1 Mar. 14 and 2 Mar. 27 Ithaca; 1 Mar. 15 MNWR; 1 Mar. 28 Treman State Park. Rough-legged Hawk: excellent flight early in period diminishing after Jan.; many dark-phase birds. Bald Eagle: 1 Jan. 26 Ithaca (P. Trail). Marsh Hawk: wintering birds at King Ferry (2); Canoga, Union Springs, Watts Rd. quarry Sen. Co. (2); migrants in Mar. at MNWR, Niles and 4 at Elmira.

Virginia Rail: Dec. 28 Ithaca (T. Howe). Killdeer: wintered at Elmira, Ithaca (2), Myers Point (2); early migrants 1 Feb. 22 Clifton Springs (JWa), 1 Feb. 23 Seneca Falls (RSJ). American Woodcock: 1 Feb. 23 Etna (Jim and Judy Stewart) 2 weeks early. Common Snipe: 1 GCC. Dunlin: 1 Jan. 1 and a few mid-Mar. at Ithaca no confirming details. Glaucous Gull: 1 Jan. 12 Ithaca (PD). Iceland Gull: 1 ICC no report filed. Great Black-backed Gull: 12 Jan. 2 Ithaca; 40 MCC. Bonaparte's Gull: 3 Mar. 24 Elmira. Barn Owl: 1 Dec. 6 Burdett appeared ill and died the next day. Snowy Owl: 1 Dec. 19 Caton; 1 Dec. 21 to Feb. 1 Elmira; a bird resembling this one was seen at the same spot Mar. 25-26. Short-eared Owl: present all winter; reached maximums in mid-Feb. of 15 at Watts quarry Sen. Co. 20 at King Ferry and 3 at Sampson State Park; 1-3 in Dec. Elmira.

GOATSUCKERS-STARLINGS: Red-headed Woodpecker: 2 wintered Reeds Creek Sen. Co. (BH). Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: 1 Feb. 7 Ithaca (J. Cook). Phoebe: immature Dec. 20-31 Elmira (Carl Wood); 1 Feb. 23 Ithaca (J. Van Dyk) month early. Common Raven: 1 Mar. 28 Treman State Park (JG) field note to be published; 2 Mar. 31 Monterey (JB) see *Kingbird* XXIV no. 4 p. 193. Fish Crow: 1 Mar. 1 Ithaca (C. Mullin & L. Hahn) see field note *Kingbird* XXIV no. 3 p. 124. Tufted Titmouse: becoming more firmly established in the northern part of the region as it has been in the southern part for some years; 10 reports north of Rts. 5 & 20. Red-breasted Nuthatch: reported only from Elmira,

Ithaca, Watkins and Newfield. Winter Wren: 3 Watkins Glen Christmas Count; 1 Feb. 2 & 16 Readers Creek Sen. Co. (BH); 1 Clifton Springs Dec. 21 (J Wa). Carolina Wren: recent mild winters have allowed this bird to build up again; reports of over 25 birds received from all parts of the region.

Mockingbird: 8 reports (20 plus birds) well distributed over the region. Gray Catbird: 1 Jan. 24-28 Clyde (WEB) ; 1 Feb. 7 Ithaca (Bill Hamilton). Brown Thrasher: 1 early Jan. at feeder in Elmira (C. Burke). Hermit Thrush: 1 Dec. 28 Elmira (M. Smith fide MW) , 1 GCC. Eastern Bluebird: reports in Dec. of 10 birds at Burdett, Watkins Marsh, Clyde; 1 Jan. 5 Newfield; migrants in Mar. at Mecklenburg, Treman State Park, Stanley. Ruby-crowned Kinglet: 1 wintered near Trumansburg at P. Joseph's feeder; 1 GCC; 1 Jan. 2 Big Flats; 1 Feb. 14 Ithaca. Water Pipit: 1 Mar. 17 Ithaca (JG) early; 6 Horseheads Mar. 25 (WH). Northern Shrike: 3 GCC; 2 MCC; 1 ICC.

VIREOS-WARBLED: Yellow-rumped Warbler (Myrtle): 12 GCC; 10 ICC. Common Yellowthroat: 1 ICC. Yellow-breasted Chat: one reported in Howard Utter's doorway west of Geneva on Feb. 2 and 3. Oral and written verification appears credible but, in the absence of a good photograph or specimen, it will have to remain unconfirmed.

BLACKBIRDS-SPARROWS: Icterids arrived a week early in all parts of the region coming between Feb. 22 and 26. Evening Grosbeak: widespread and continuing to the end of the period; "hundreds" south of Ithaca (JG). Purple Finch: the few reports were all after Feb. 8. House Finch: increasing at Elmira and Ithaca; 1 Mar. 16 and 2 Mar. 18 Odessa at B. Strath's feeder. Pine Grosbeak: 1 report of a bird at Elmira. Common Redpoll: 1 Central Cayuga Christmas Count. Pine Siskin: only report is 1 Feb. 9 Ithaca. Red Crossbill: 1 ECC; male Feb. 15 Elmira.

Savannah Sparrow: 1 Feb. 22 Ithaca (K. Rosenberg). Grasshopper Sparrow: 1 Dec. 28 Town of Seneca Dump near Flint (R. Foxall & K. Bond) . Field Sparrow: 2 reports Dec. Watkins Marsh; 2 GCC; 4 ICC; 1 wintered at Ithaca feeder. White-crowned Sparrow: 2 ICC. White-throated Sparrow: the trend toward more overwintering birds continues. Fox Sparrow: 2 MCC; 1 Jan. 14 at Elmira feeder. Swamp Sparrow: 15 Watkins Glen Christmas Count; 1 Jan. 5 Owasco (TR); 4 MCC. Song Sparrow: 100 in a 1 acre plot Mar. 22 Ithaca (PD) is indicative of the flood of this species that came in at that time. Lapland Longspur 2 GCC; 2 ICC. Snow Bunting: 9 reports of flocks of 70-500 birds were all before Jan. 8 except 400 Feb. 16 King Ferry.

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REGION 4 — SUSQUEHANNA

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It was a mild winter with some rather erratic temperature variations. The highest temperature recorded was 62°F. Jan. 11. The low of -5°F. came 10 days later.

Whether in response to the generally mild temperatures or not, wintering Mourning Doves, Tufted Titmice, Carolina Wrens, Mockingbirds, cowbirds and White-throated Sparrows were up in numbers. There were even Dec. bluebirds and a Catbird lasted until at least mid-Jan. However winter Red-winged Blackbirds were down and robins, meadowlarks, grackles and towhees were little if any better than average. Except for Evening Grosbeaks and goldfinches, winter finches were a disaster; no crossbills or Pine Grosbeaks at all and