

Dec. 15 Owego. Carolina Wren: 4 BCC; 3 TCC; 1 found dead reported to Binghamton Press in mid-Jan.; 2 at Vestal at least thru Jan. 30; 1 at Delancey, in Delaware Co., Jan. 4. Mockingbird: 1 OCC; 14 GCC; 6 TCC; all winter at 3 Triple Cities localities and Delhi and in Jan. at Owego; 1 at Choconut Center looking over suet but not really eating it. GRAY CATBIRD: 1 Owego Jan. 4 (RB), good description and details. Brown Thrasher: 1 Delhi Jan. 27 and all winter (M, LMcD). Am. Robin: 5 OCC; 1 GCC; 3 BCC; 1 TCC; 6 Candor Jan. 18 and a dozen other winter reports until migrants Feb. 25. E. Bluebird: TCC, within count period; 1 Hancock Feb. 27. Golden-crowned Kinglet: 4 GCC; 17 BCC. Ruby-crowned Kinglet: Dec. 11 Owego. Cedar Waxwing: 1 GCC; 25 TCC; very few reported. Northern Shrike: 2 GCC; 1 Jan. 4 Choconut Center caught a small bird that glanced off a window; 4 other reports. Starling: 915 OCC; 700 GCC; 8320 BCC; 1075 TCC.

VIREOS—WARBLERS: YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER: 1 OCC (MD).

WEAVERS—SPARROWS: House Sparrow: 332 OCC; 300 GCC; 580 BCC; 714 TCC. E. Meadowlark: 2 GCC; 20 BCC; 6 TCC. Red-winged Blackbird: Dec. 27 and into Jan. Owego and a few earlier Dec. records, but then none until Feb. 13 and numerous migrants Feb. 21. Rusty Blackbird: 2 TCC. Common Grackle: 2 OCC; 3 TCC; then none until Feb. 21; only a few migrants before the end of Feb. Brown-headed Cowbird: 2 OCC; 2 BCC; 15 TCC; small numbers all winter. Cardinal: 42 OCC; 11 GCC; 122 BCC; 89 TCC. Evening Grosbeak: 1100 OCC; 200 GCC; 437 BCC; 415 TCC; plentiful, but not overwhelming, all period. Purple Finch: 10 OCC; 3 GCC; 31 BCC; small numbers all winter. House Finch: 78 BCC; regular at several Triple Cities feeders all winter, as has become usual; a single bird at Delhi Dec. 22 to Jan. 31 (LMcD); 1 on Dec. 8 and a pair regularly from Jan. 9 on at one Oneonta locality and 1 at another Jan. 31. Pine Grosbeak: 18 OCC; 12 TCC; other scattered reports thruout period. Common Redpoll: 175 GCC; 217 BCC; 63 TCC; first reported Dec. 17 Vestal; after Christmas seen everywhere, max. count 200 Sherburne Jan. 15. Pine Siskin: 10 OCC; 2 BCC; max. 16 Binghamton Jan. 1 but present all period. Am. Goldfinch: 5 OCC; 42 GCC; 198 BCC; 106 TCC. Red Crossbill: 8 Oneonta Dec. 13, the only report. White-winged Crossbill: 9 BCC; 80 or more in 2 flocks near Hartwick Jan. 31. Dark-eyed Junco: 86 OCC; 42 GCC; 253 BCC; 213 TCC. Tree Sparrow: 178 OCC; 170 GCC; 350 BCC; 213 TCC. Field Sparrow: 1 regularly at Owego during Dec. (W,LD). White-throated Sparrow: 6 OCC; 65 BCC; 16 TCC; wintering birds more common than usual. Fox Sparrow: 1 TCC; Feb. 28 Choconut Center. Swamp Sparrow: 6 OCC; 2 TCC; the only reports. Song Sparrow: 41 OCC; 2 GCC; 7 BCC; 12 TCC. Snow Bunting: 50 BCC; 1525 TCC; only 5 other reports, all late Dec. thru Jan.

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REGION 5 — ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

FRITZ G. SCHEIDER

For winter birding this past season, Region 5 birders were best advised to go to the coast—or better yet, to Corsica or Cozumel or Costa Rica—any place but central New York. Lord, it was a dull, dull, deadly dull winter for birds, a season made worse by the severe cold (January was 9.1° F (5° C) colder than average) and deep snow (18-24 inches (.46-.61 m) of persistent ground snow thru January) that began with the local Christmas Counts and didn't let up until mid-February. The local graybeards described it as "an old-fashioned winter" and they can have it. The severe icing over of the rivers and lakes forced out most of the December-early January waterfowl, particularly the less hardy dabblers; the lack of mice coupled with persistent deep snow squeezed out the residue of raptors that had tried

to remain locally; the deep snow and extended cold killed off most of the half-hardy species by late January; the seed and berry crop was exhausted or snow covered about the same time so most of the winter finches wisely shifted elsewhere. This exodus of major groups of wintering species plus an already thin population of winter woodland birds (woodpeckers, jays, chickadees, nuthatches, creepers, kinglets) made early and mid-February birding an exercise in endurance linked with futility; if the local birder was morose and atrabilious then, believe me, he had just and adequate cause. No wonder the first migrants (Canada Goose, Am. Robin, Icterids) were greeted with wide-eyed enthusiasm when spring sprung on February 21-22.

The few positives for the winter include 1) better numbers of wintering Gadwall, Ring-necked Duck, Canvasback, Greater Scaup, and White-winged Scoter; 2) a fair flight of Glaucous and Iceland Gulls; 3) an irruption of Bohemian Waxwings and, to a lesser extent, of Boreal Chickadees and Northern Shrikes; 4) a December flight of winter finches, unfortunately not sustained into January or augmented in February; and 5) early return of numbers of migrants, particularly Canada Goose, Pintail, and Icterids.

Negatives are many: 1) few wintering dabblers; 2) much reduced numbers of the true "winter" ducks, especially Bufflehead, Oldsquaw, and all three mergansers; 3) scant hawk numbers, probably secondary to the combination of little prey and much snow; 4) a paucity of winter woodland birds; 5) a near wipe-out of half-hardies locally; 6) some attrition in the ranks of the southerners, most marked in Carolina Wren and Tufted Titmouse; 7) much reduced wintering sparrows, including both the half-hardy species and the normally wintering Tree Sparrows and Dark-eyed Juncos.

Rare species for the season include Harlequin Duck, King Eider, Golden Eagle, Bald Eagle, Spotted Sandpiper, Boreal Chickadee, Eastern Bluebird, Bohemian Waxwing, and Northern Oriole.

Abbreviations: DH—Derby Hill near Texas; FH—Fair Haven, Cayuga Co.; SSSP—Selkirk Shores State Park near Port Ontario; SRF—Seneca River flats near Montezuma; WFC—Waterfowl Census; HIGMA—Howland's Island Game Management Area near Port Byron.

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LOONS—DUCKS: Horned Grebe: 17 on state WFC, primarily from Skaneateles L. Double-crested Cormorant: three-five wintering at Oswego Harbor, most unusual as heretofore singles only were the rule.

Mute Swan: adult present to Jan. 1 at SSSP when freeze-up there forced it out. Canada Goose: first arrivals Feb. 21 with 2000+ at Syracuse; max. 10,000+ at Seneca River flats Feb. 28-29. Black Duck: up slightly on state WFC—206; not present as a wintering species at either Brewerton or Baldwinsville where it has been entirely displaced by the welfare state Mallards. Gadwall: max. wintering 55 Jan. 11 at Oswego Harbor, an excellent winter tally. Wood Duck: three individuals, all females, wintered—two at FH, one at Fulton.

Redhead: Feb. max. 360 FH—SRF Feb. 29; all winter tallies less than 100. Ring-necked Duck: 17 on state WFC, much above average. Canvasback: 808 on state WFC at Skaneateles L. must have moved out by Jan. 31 as the open water of that lake had been reduced to only a few duckless acres by the severe freezing in mid and late January.

Bufflehead: miserable counts thru winter—max. 70 Feb. 28 DH-FH. Oldsquaw: like Bufflehead, a terrible winter for this species—max. only 182 Oswego Harbor Feb. 1. HARLEQUIN DUCK: a female and an immature male Feb. 1 and Feb. 8 respectively at Oswego Harbor. KING EIDER: only reports one Jan. 11 FH and two Jan. 30 Oswego Harbor—

scarce. White-winged Scoter: max. 110 Feb. 8 Oswego Harbor, a very high count, particularly so considering the severity of the winter. Common Merganser: much, much reduced—max. only 1250 Feb. 1 Oswego Harbor; in severe winters heretofore, the counts there have reached 4000 to 5000.

HAWKS—ALCIDS: Goshawk: very scarce—Dec. six, Jan. four, Feb. none away from DH. Sharp-shinned Hawk: 12 for the period, up somewhat.

Red-tailed Hawk: 32 on Oneida Christmas Count; daily tallies three-13/day, not a large number for the species locally. Rough-legged Hawk: quite scarce this winter—usually one-three/day; max. only six Dec. 21 Clay Swamp-Onondaga L. **GOLDEN EAGLE:** first year bird Jan. 1 **HIGMA.** **BALD EAGLE:** an adult Jan. 18 north of Port Ontario only report. Marsh Hawk: few in Dec., none in Jan. and Feb., probably the negative combination of few mice and deep snow. American Kestrel: scarce—only three-nine/day until migrants appeared in last ten days of February. Ring-necked Pheasant: continues scarce—only five-nine/day and some sectors of the various Christmas Counts found none this year.

SPOTTED SANDPIPER: Nov. thru Dec. 2 one Holland Patent (J&E VanDresar); also one Dec. 7 near Eaton (G&M Church), both amazingly late dates as the species is normally gone by Oct. 10.

Glaucous and Iceland Gulls: fair flight—max. seven Glaucous and 13 Iceland Feb. 1 Oswego Harbor, actually rather poor numbers considering the severity of the winter. Great Black-backed Gull: winter max. 370 Feb. 1 Oswego Harbor. Herring and Ring-billed Gulls: winter max. 8000 Herring Jan. 1 Oswego and 7500 Ring-billed Feb. 28 at FH—Little Sodus Bay; counts of thousands (1000-2500) of Ring-billed Gulls persisting thru Jan. at Oswego Harbor were unusual as the species normally evacuates that area in mid-Jan. in severe winters, returning again in mid to late Feb.

PIGEONS—WOODPECKERS: Mourning Dove: up on most Christmas Counts, e.g. 466 on Oneida Christmas Counts; however, much scarcer during the severe cold of Jan., and away from feeders, almost rare in Feb. Snowy Owl: only three individuals for season, a non-flight year. The marked scarcity of mice is locally reflected in the total absence of reported Long-eared, Short-eared, and Saw-whet Owls.

Common Flicker: max. 12 near Camillus Dec. 28; scarce thru Jan. and Feb. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: immature at Oneida in Jan. is the only winter report.

FLYCATCHERS—STARLINGS: Horned Lark: 100+ Jan. 1 near Oriskany and 125 Feb. 24 near Pompey; otherwise very scant, particularly in Feb. when numerous migrant flocks might be expected. Blue Jay: quite scarce locally with 10-12/day the usual counts; a group of 77 Jan. 7-8 Fabius is an exception; Adirondack numbers apparently fairly good—68 at Big Moose Jan. 2. **BOREAL CHICKADEE:** one-three/day in dense spruce plantations at Shackleton Point, SSSP, and Highland Forest; not noted on the few Adirondack reports. Red-breasted Nuthatch: very scarce and confined to conifer plantations with one-two/day only reported.

Carolina Wren: numbers present thru Dec.; the few present at feeders at Syracuse survived but the birds at peripheral locations (FH, SSSP, Pulaski, Marietta) seem to have been wiped out by the severe cold and deep persistent snow of Jan. Winter Wren: present in Dec. but like most of the half-hardies virtually eliminated by the cold and snow of Jan.

Mockingbird: present in DeWitt, N. Syr., Syr.—seems to have survived better than the other "southerners," Tufted Titmouse and Carolina Wren. American Robin: small flocks (10-75/day) in the southern valleys but numbers way down from the last few years. **EASTERN BLUEBIRD:** five Jan. 1 **HIGMA,** one of the few local wintering records. Golden-crowned Kinglets: extraordinarily scarce—two-four/day only and many conifer plantations, though populated with some Black-capped Chickadees, had no kinglets whatever.

BOHEMIAN WAXWING: an impressive irruption which crested (?waxed) in Dec. waned in Jan.—100 Dec. 13, 115 Dec. 14 near Port Ontario with lesser numbers there until the end of the month; however, the flight quickly moved on as berries became snow covered and Jan. and Feb. tallies were of the one-two/day type and usually noted in small groups of Cedar Waxwings. Northern Shrike: 22 individuals in Dec., 12 in Jan., and 8 in Feb., a perfect reflection of their decline thru the season here with the loss of mice and the rising snow.

WARBLERS—VIREOS: Yellow-rumped Warblers and Common Yellowthroat reported in Dec. on the earlier Christmas Counts but none survived to be recorded in Jan.

WEAVERS—SPARROWS: NORTHERN ORIOLE: adult male in breeding plumage Dec. 7 near SSSP, the landbird equivalent of those crazy Dec. Spotted Sandpipers. First influx of migrant Icterids (Red-winged Blackbird, Common Grackle, Brown-headed Cowbird) Feb. 19-21 with 85,000+ Feb. 29 at Onondaga L. Rusty Blackbird: one-three/day at marsh springs and sewage seeps in Fayetteville-DeWitt area.

Winter finches were varied and moderately abundant thru Dec. but Jan. and Feb. tallies, aside from Evening Grosbeak and Common Redpoll, were wretchedly low. High tallies for Evening Grosbeak were 125 Dec. 12 and 27 and for Common Redpoll 200+ Jan. and Feb., all at Pompey. Pine Grosbeaks in variable numbers—77 Jan. 25 near Brookfield, 125 Jan. 2 near Fabius, “large flocks” at Holland Patent; however, scarce (six-25/day) on the Ontario lake plain. Other winter finches very scarce—Purple Finch usually singles, one flock of 15; Pine Siskin max. 36 Jan. 17 near Pompey; American Goldfinch 75 Dec. 17-Jan. 1 Pompey; Red Crossbill 43 Dec. 14 SSSP; White-winged Crossbill none.

Wintering half-hardy sparrows severely reduced by the persistent cold and deep snow of Jan. and early Feb.—peak field, i.e., non-feeder, numbers for comparison are White-throated Sparrow—Dec. 16, Jan. eight, Feb. one; for Swamp Sparrow—Dec. five, Jan. two, Feb. none; for Song Sparrow (usually the toughest of the lot)—Dec. 21, Jan. nine, Feb. four.

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REGION 6 — ST. LAWRENCE

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Winter of 1975-76 was more severe than the previous three years. Temperatures ranged from a minus 40° F (4.4° C) to an unheard of 61° F (16° C) in February. Sub-zero temperatures were the rule and snowfall was a little behind last year's with up to 40 inches (1 m) at higher elevations at the end of the period—even with rain and thaws.

Winter finches were a disappointment to say the least, but many late hangers-on made up for the slack in finches. Ducks were better than last year and gulls in Massena just keep increasing.

Some real gems that upped enthusiasm if not the temperature were Red-necked Grebe, Long-eared & Short-eared Owl, and Bohemian Waxwing.

Localities: B-D—Brownville-Dexter; DH—Dry Hill; PP—Pillar Point; PtP—Pt. Peninsula; RMPD—Robt. Moses Power Dam; SB—Sherwins Bay; WI—Wellesley Island; WCC—Watertown Christmas Count.

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LOONS—DUCKS: Com. Loon: 1 SB Dec. 14. **RED-NECKED GREBE:** 1 Lewis Co.