

state's two southernmost regions: Long-billed Dowitcher, Ruff, Parasitic Jaeger, Western Kingbird, Swainson's Thrush, and Blue-gray Gnatcatcher.

A litany of rarities includes a Black Guillemot in the Finger Lakes Region, one of very few inland reports; a Harlequin Duck in Region 4, well away from its normal Great Lakes-Atlantic Ocean wintering habitat; the previously-reported Lesser Black-backed and California Gulls at Rockland Lake in Region 9; a Burrowing Owl wintering on the prairie-like habitat of JFK International Airport, Long Island, survived winter's worst in a man-made niche, a storm sewer pipe; and a Wheatear made a brief appearance on Staten Island. The BOTS award was unanimously awarded to the Great Gray Owl, the headliner of this report.

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REGION 1 – NIAGARA FRONTIER

VIVIAN MILLS PITZRICK

To appreciate the spring, one needs a bit of winter's chill—but why this excess for three consecutive winters? The season began reasonably enough with near normal December temperatures. Then those praying for a white Christmas overdid it and, along with much of the Southern Tier, were snowbound for the day by a record twenty-two to thirty-six inches. Although brief thaws and a few rains occurred during January, temperatures for the month averaged 4.2° F. (2.3° C.) below normal and precipitation was 2.5 inches (6.4 cm.) above the expected. A four to twenty-one inch snow cover persisted from early January through February, burying food and protecting the mouse and vole population as well as hampering birders. Between the bitter days of February 9th and 20th, temperatures dropped below 0° F. (-17.8° C.) every day except the 15th and broke the five-day record cold spell set in February 1899. In spite of warmer weather the final eight days of the month, bringing the average temperature up to 10° F. (5.6° C.) below normal, it was the coldest February this century except for 1934. Lake Erie reached the freezing point on January 4th, and by February 16th Lake Ontario was 70% ice covered—the most ice ever recorded here—and shortage of food sent waterfowl overland seeking open water. Miserable ice storms, especially during December and January, brought birds to feeders but caused power outages and hazardous road conditions.

Results of the State Waterfowl Census, conducted by the Department of Environmental Conservation January 4th to 19th, showed the fewest birds since

the beginning of the survey in 1949, with nearly 43% less than the previous thirty-year average. The low figures are consistent with the observations of many veteran birders, not just in relation to waterfowl but also as to numbers of birds generally for the season. These findings are surprising in view of the bounty of wild foods, such as grapes, white ash fruit, wild berries and sumac. As mentioned above, snow did bury food, and the scarcity of rabbits, noted during the fall, continued.

Positives for the winter include 1) more than usual Common Loons, a good December flight of Whistling Swans, Canada Geese coming or going *all season*, and an increase in scoter numbers; 2) fair numbers of accipiters, many at feeders; 3) a few more Ruffed Grouse and several small Turkey flocks apparently wintering well; 4) better reports of the Belted Kingfisher from northern parts of the Region and more than usual wintering Common Flickers; 5) Horned Larks doing fairly well; 6) an abundance of Blue Jays and Black-capped Chickadees and a widespread invasion of Red-breasted Nuthatches; 7) the Tufted Titmouse doing better and Mockingbirds holding their own; 8) numerous wintering robins near the Great Lakes, many Cedar Waxwings and a big invasion of the Northern Shrike; 9) an excellent wintering population of Purple Finches and American Goldfinches and continued spread of House Finches; and 10) many White-throated Sparrows present all season.

Winter negatives include 1) very little spring movement in late February; 2) low counts of Black Ducks, Redheads, scaups, Common Goldeneyes, Oldsquaws and Common Mergansers; 3) a very light Rough-legged Hawk flight and scarcity of Red-tailed and Marsh Hawks as well as fewer Am. Kestrels; 4) paucity of pheasants; 5) a poor Snowy Owl year, and near absence of Screech Owls; 6) a thinning population of the Belted Kingfisher in the Southern Tier; 7) no Winter Wrens, very few Carolinas and near absence of Golden-crowned Kinglets; 8) not many Eastern Meadowlarks and Brown-headed Cowbirds; 9) fewer Cardinals; 10) a poor northern finch year with even Evening Grosbeaks less plentiful; and 11) low counts for juncos and Snow Buntings.

Regional rarities rarely were so rare: Goshawk, Broad-winged Hawk, Red Phalarope, Black-headed Gull and Common Raven.

Abbreviations: ACBC—Allegany Co. Bird Club; BOS—Buffalo Ornithological Society; GMA or WMA—Game or Wildlife Management Area; NP or NS—Nature Preserve or Sanctuary; NWR—National Wildlife Refuge; Res—Reservoir; SF or SP—State Forest or Park.

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LOONS—DUCKS: Although scarce in winter for years, this season at least nine Com. Loons stayed on into early Dec., two at Chautauqua L. and seven in the Niagara R. area. Single Red-necked Grebes, helpless on land, were picked up Feb. 14 or 15 at Portville,

Olean, Belmont and Eden. The first two were taken to the Fornesses' rehabilitation center on Haskell Rd. near Cuba and later released on the Allegany R., and the Belmont bird was freed by Doris Burton on the Genesee R. near Belmont, both rivers having suitable open stretches. Reports of Great Blue Herons were scanty with only three birds noted for Dec. and two for Jan. Maxima of the Whistling Swan flight were 500 at Chautauqua L Dec. 3 and 85 over Cheektowaga Dec. 9. Canada Geese were seen regionwide all season with most reports during Jan. and highest count, 200 in Hume Jan. 8. The pair of Canadas at Farmersville Sta. have now spent three years with the Clarks. In general, the duck situation was discouraging and Black Ducks, in particular, were even more scarce than usual, the only reports being: on the Allegany R. from Portville to Vandalia, max 22 Dec. 26 through Feb. 12, and one on the Genesee R., two at Hume Jan. 3 and one at Transit Jan. 14. Other notable duck reports include: Gadwall, one at S. Buffalo Harbor Dec. 13 and five at Goat Is. Dec. 26, 30; Pintail, max 29 at Goat Is. Dec. 30; Green-winged Teal, max seven at Goat Is. Dec. 26, 30, one at Medina Dec. 27-28, and four at Niagara Falls Feb. 25; Am. Wigeon, one at Goat Is. Jan. 28; Wood Duck, one in Hume Jan. 15 (found dead three days later); Redhead, 15 totaled during the season from three Great Lakes areas; Lesser Scaup, max ten on L. Ontario shore Jan. 28; Com. Goldeneye, up to 14 wintering from late Dec. on the Allegany R. and eight from Feb. 5 through the season on the Genesee R.; White-winged Scoter, a max 100 at Ft. Niagara Feb. 24; Surf Scoter, one at Niagara Falls gorge Dec. 2; Ruddy Duck, 65 at Niagara Falls Res. Dec. 9, the only report but a good one; Hooded Merganser, regional max 200 at Mayville Dec. 3 and a single straggler at Dunkirk Harbor Jan. 14; Com. Merganser, no less than 33 feeding on open waters of the Genesee and Allegany Rivers in Scio, Amity, Hume and Portville-Vandalia areas from Jan. 23 through Feb., after the freezing of Lakes Erie and Ontario made fishing poor.

HAWKS—ALCIDS: The only **GOSHAWK** report for the season was one at Amherst Jan. 8-Feb. 18 (DF, Taheri+). The regional total of 16 Sharp-shinned and 20 Cooper's Hawks, usually single birds, was down slightly. Irregular in winter, single Red-shouldered Hawks appeared at Hamburg Dec. 28, at Perrysburg Jan. 13 and in Eden Feb. 24, but even less common and very late was the **BROAD-WINGED HAWK** at Hamburg Dec. 30 (AM, WM). It was a wretched Rough-legged Hawk flight, numbering but 11 scattered birds, while the only Marsh Hawks reported were single individuals in Holland, Amity and Somerset. Although less than the thousands sometimes concentrating here, the 100 Am. Coots on Chautauqua L. Dec. 3 was the best winter count in four years.

A **RED PHALAROPE** was seen late at Youngstown Dec. 6 (AS) and another, probably the same bird, appeared at Fort Niagara Dec. 9 and 10 (DF, MF, RA+). Highlights from the delightfully exciting larid season, all from Niagara Falls gorge unless otherwise noted, include: Glaucous Gull, no less than seven during Dec.; Iceland Gull, one on Dec. 9 and one at Dunkirk Harbor Feb. 18; Great Black-backed Gull, max 79 on the Niagara R. Jan. 28; **BLACK-HEADED GULL**—very rare here—Dec. 2 (DF); Franklin's Gull, one on Dec. 2 and 3; Bonaparte's Gull, max 17,000 (!) on the Niagara R. Dec. 2 (DF+); and Little Gull, one at Niagara Falls Dec. 9 and four at Fort Niagara Jan. 28.

PIGEONS—WOODPECKERS: With the exception of the Great Horned Owl, owls were almost unreported. Interesting for the season were: Screech Owl, one in Amity Feb. 23 (MH), the only report; Snowy Owl, singles at Times Beach, Blasdell, Buffalo Harbor and Wheatfield; and Short-eared Owl, no less than five at Grand Is. irregularly Jan. 20-Feb. 11 (MF+). The Red-bellied Woodpecker is becoming better established in Lake Plains areas with two being seen at Medina Dec. 28, two at Hamburg Dec. 30 and singles at Derby Jan. 13 and Iroquois NWR Feb. 11. Uncommon in winter were single Red-headed Woodpeckers in Wellsville Jan. 28-30, at Busti Jan. 27 and in Yates Jan. 28. and a Yellow-bellied Sapsucker at Belmont Dec. 6.

FLYCATCHERS—STARLINGS: Although numbers of Horned Larks were down a bit compared with last winter, there is hope for them in max counts of 75 unidentified sub-

species in Sheldon Feb. 27, 48 *Eremophila alpestris alpestris* on the L. Ontario shore Jan. 28 and at Eden Feb. 28, and 12 *E. a. praticola* in the Somerset-Carlton area Feb. 24. Two COMMON RAVENS were identified at the entrance to Phillips Cr. SF near Alfred Dec. 20 (VP, RP) and one was found here again Jan. 5 (A. Klingensmith *vide* CK). For the season, nine scattered locations reported Tufted Titmice with a total of 15 birds. Belmont, Hume and Spring Brook noted single Carolina Wrens, and one or two Mockingbirds were seen at Orchard Park, Medina and on the L. Ontario shore. Single Gray Catbirds were at Middleport Dec. 1 and at S. Wales Dec. 2-28, and a Brown Thrasher was spotted at Spring Brook Dec. 31. Unusually large numbers of Am. Robins were seen throughout the winter in areas near the Great Lakes and four E. Bluebirds were found at Iroquois NWR Jan. 19 (Olsen). (We hope they made it through the rough weeks ahead of them.) Two E. Bluebirds arr at the Tonawanda Indian Reservation Feb. 24 (MZ). The total regional count of Golden-crowned Kinglets was a sorry 19 from only five locations, but Cedar Waxwings were found in better numbers than usual with max 250 at Holland Dec. 9.

VIREOS—WARBLERS: Only one Yellow-rumped Warbler was located for the season, at Buckhorn Is. SP Jan. 11 (Nutting).

WEAVERS—SPARROWS: E. Meadowlarks again were scarce with a total of ten birds noted from two areas, and Brown-headed Cowbird numbers also were low with regional max 20 at Cheektowaga Dec. 1-31. Although Evening Grosbeaks arrived as usual, flocks were smaller than common with max 75 at Limestone Feb. 13, and reported winter banding totals, 116 at Alfred Sta. (EB), 58 at Limestone (RV) and 23 at Farmersville Sta. (DC). House Finches continue to spread, reaching a max 92 in Eggertsville during Feb. (AM, WM) and three finding a new area near the Alfred-Almond school Dec. 3 (EB). The only Com. Redpolls for the season were ten at Stannards in early Jan. (HG) and two in Belmont Feb. 9-12 (Jordan *vide* DB). 14 Pine Siskins were counted from five areas. Notable sparrows include: a half dozen Rufous-sided Towhees wintering at feeders, a Field Sparrow at Beaver Meadow Jan. 6, a White-crowned Sparrow at Belmont Dec. 1-Jan. 1, and a Swamp Sparrow at Wilson Dec. 26. White-throated Sparrows were present in good numbers during Dec. and Jan., with a few reports for Feb., and max 70 birds at Irving Jan. 6. Unusually scarce were Lapland Longspurs with but 28 totaled from four areas, and Snow Buntings, too, were less common with regional max only 300 in Amity Feb. 8.

ADDENDUM: Results of the twelfth annual study of tower casualties from WGR-TV (Wales), WKBW-TV (Colden) and WIVB-TV (Colden) show a total of 359 birds (1397 in 1977) of 51 species (50 in 1977), the largest number, 168 birds, being found Sept. 22, 1978. High counts were: Blackpoll Warbler 44, Ovenbird 36, Swainson's Thrush 35, Red-eyed Vireo 25, Com. Yellowthroat 17, and 16 each of Gray-cheeked Thrush, Yellow-rumped Warbler and Bay-breasted Warbler. The count of individuals for 1978 is far below the 913 bird norm. A. R. Clark, compiler, reports that this year with one bird of each, the Olive-sided Flycatcher is new, the Least Bittern has been found once before, and the Pied-billed Grebe and Yellow-billed Cuckoo are only third records. (*The Prothonotary*, BOS publication, Vol. 44 No. 11, pp. 186 ff.)

Amity Lake, Belmont, New York 14813

REGION 2 — GENESEE

ROBERT SPAHN

Aside from a local feeder survey which reports numbers and variety of birds