

in isolated groves of trees, further complicating efforts to find and observe it.

A large grackle present at Rochester was identified as Boat-tailed, with a full report including photographs to NYSARC. If confirmed, this represents a truly bizarre occurrence, for the species is virtually unknown north of Florida away from coastal salt marsh habitat. Boat-tailed Grackles have been slowly spreading north along the coast this past decade and have possibly bred on Long Island where they remain rare, with an average of three to four reports annually over the last five years.

The highlight of the season was an "invasion" of Ivory Gulls with up to four individuals reported. Immatures were observed in late December at Niagara Falls, mid-January at Newburgh on the Hudson River, and late January at Rochester, and an adult in mid-January at Newburgh. The immatures were noted on non-overlapping dates and all photographed but the photographs have not yet been compared to ascertain whether the same individual was responsible for two or more of the reports. The distribution of these Ivory Gulls and lack of reports from New England suggests these birds emanated from the Hudson Bay region in central Canada.

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REGION 1 – NIAGARA FRONTIER

VIVIAN MILLS PITZRICK

The cold, cold December did "make cowards of us all" and we continued to shake through January into the first week of February, fearful lest this winter be even worse than those such a short time ago. While December temperatures averaged 3.9° F. (2.2° C.) below normal, and Lake Erie froze during the last week, about a week early, the mean for January was 6.1° F. (3.4° C.) below normal. Rivers closed more than usual and ice on Amity Lake measured 22 inches (59 cm.) in midwinter. As the cold finally broke during the second week of February, temperatures to the end of the period brought the month's average to 8.1° F. (4.5° C.) above normal. The drought of summer and fall persisted through January, with total precipitation nearly 2 in. (5 cm.) below normal with little snow except in the snow belt, which had 3 in. (7.6 cm.) above average. When at last relief from the prolonged cold arrived in February, most of the inch-

above-normal precipitation came in the form of warm rains which removed frost from the ground and partially replenished the water table. Ponds began to open and as expected there were ice jams with flooding along some streams. (Weather Data: Wellsville, WIVB-TV Buffalo, Alfred and Olean).

Perhaps because of an excellent wild food supply and low wind velocities, especially in January, many species overwintered, including a few Common Crows and Common Flickers, a horde of American Robins, several Red-winged Blackbirds and an abundance of White-throated Sparrows. The spring migration began one to two weeks early, with an enormous flight taking place February 28th, among which were Whistling Swans, Canada Geese, American Goldfinches and record icterid numbers.

Although Turkeys survived well, they had a difficult time during the extended cold period with some coming for oil seed and oats to a Cattaraugus County feeder. One apparently died from blackhead disease here in January. Pheasants develop a resistance to this disease and through droppings become carriers of the protozoan *Histomonas meleagridis*. As grouse are susceptible to the illness too, stocking of pheasants should be avoided in good turkey and grouse range (Eaton).

Winter positives include 1) about a dozen scattered Great Blue Herons thru the season, 2) many observers still "fond of humble things," grinding out regular reports in spite of the expensive gasoline situation and the drawing power of Super-TV and other sophistications of modern life, 3) slightly better Black Duck numbers, 4) Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks holding steady, a few Red-tailed Hawks all season, an incursion of Rough-legged Hawks and better counts of Marsh Hawks, 5) a good Ruffed Grouse population, 6) a great gull season, including eye-popping upstate Black-legged Kittiwake numbers, 7) regular appearance of the Belted Kingfisher and widespread reports of the Hairy Woodpecker, 8) fair numbers of Horned Larks and continued improvement in the status of Tufted Titmice and Mockingbirds, 9) an invasion of Red-breasted Nuthatches and a sprinkling of Brown Creepers, 10) a wintering Brown Thrasher, a few Eastern Bluebirds arriving O.K. and lots of Cedar Waxwings, 11) a fine finch flight—best of "northerns" in three years—now and then a Purple Finch, continued increase of House Finches and a record for goldfinches, and 12) a handful of Rufous-sided Towhees and White-crowned Sparrows with here and there a Song Sparrow.

Negatives for the winter include 1) scarcity of loons and grebes, 2) very few kestrels, 3) low numbers of Ring-necked Pheasants and coots, 4) owls poorly reported (too few owl prowls?) and a poor Snowy Owl year, 5) Carolina Wrens still in trouble, no Winter Wrens and little change for Golden-crowned Kinglets and shrikes, 6) no Yellow-rumped Warblers, 7) almost no Eastern Meadowlarks and only small numbers of Cardinals.

Rarities include Brant, Barrow's Goldeneye, Harlequin Duck, Goshawk, Golden Eagle, Bald Eagle, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Black-headed Gull, Ivory Gull, Black-legged Kittiwake, Common Raven, Bohemian Waxwing, Pine Warbler, European Goldfinch (escapee?) and Fox Sparrow.

Abbreviations: ACC—Allegany County Census, Jan. 3, of birds outside the Scio Audubon circle; BOS—Buffalo Ornithological Society; CC—Audubon Christmas Bird Census (St.

Bonaventure [StBon hereafter], Dec. 20; Scio, Jan. 3); GMA or WMA—Game or Wildlife Management Area; NC, NP or NS—Nature Center, Preserve or Sanctuary; NWR—National Wildlife Refuge; Res—Reservoir; SF or SP—State Forest or Park; SPA—State Power Authority.

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LOONS—DUCKS: As usual, winter loons were scarce with the only report one Com. Loon on Navy Island Dec. 7. It was nearly the same pattern for grebes: two Red-necked at Dunkirk Harbor Jan. 25; a single Horned Grebe on the ACC at Cuba L. (AnS), that took to the air from solid ice (!), plus max two at Dunkirk Harbor Jan. 25 and Feb. 28; and single Pied-billed Grebes at Belfast Dec. 12 and Niagara Falls Jan. 1 to 3, and max four at Dunkirk Harbor Jan. 25 and Feb. 28. Best of a beautiful Whistling Swan flight was 400 at Cuba L. Feb. 28; many arrived over Olean and Salamanca the same day, only four days later than the former earliest date (1976) for Cattaraugus Co. (SE). Canada Geese were reported all winter with max 5000 at Iroquois NWR Feb. 23 and flock after flock passed over the Region in the big Feb. 28 migration; the Clarks at Farmersville Sta. have now had their wild pair in residence five years. Not due until May was the **BRANT** discovered on Grand Island Feb. 26 (AS). Noteworthy duck reports include: Mallard, max 915 at Iroquois NWR Feb. 17; Black Duck, 10 on the StBonCC, max 40 at Iroquois NWR Feb. 17, plus 44 others, total, from four locations; Gadwall, max 20 at Grand Island Feb. 26; Pintail, max 60 at Iroquois NWR Feb. 22; Redhead, one on the ACC and 21 on Grand Island Feb. 26; Greater Scaup, max 1500 at Niagara Falls Dec. 14; Lesser Scaup, one at Navy Island Jan. 3; Com. Goldeneye, six from early Jan. thru the season on the Genesee R., max 13 on the Allegheny R. Jan. 12, and six at Iroquois NWR Feb. 20; a **BARROW'S GOLDENEYE** at Niagara Falls, staying on from fall thru Feb. (HA, AS, RA+); **HARLEQUIN DUCK**, one at Niagara Falls gorge Jan. 10 (Duncan); White-winged Scoter, singles at Niagara Falls Dec. 14 and at Shadigee Jan. 24; Hooded Merganser, max two at Niagara Falls Dec. 14 and Jan. 3, and max five at Iroquois NWR Feb. 27; Com. Merganser, max 14 on the Genesee R. Jan. 30, max eight on the Allegheny R. Jan. 29, six at Iroquois NWR Feb. 18, and 31 on a gravel pit pond near Allegany Feb. 24; and Red-breasted Merganser, max 150 at Dunkirk Harbor Feb. 14.

HAWKS—ALCIDS: Single **GOSHAWKS** were found on the ScioCC, in Allen Twp, during Dec. (Andrews *vide* KP), and in Amity Twp. Jan. 1 (MH). Resident single Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks were widespread thru the winter, the sharpies being found in ten locations and the latter in 20. Other notable hawk reports include: Red-tailed Hawk, max of flight, 13 over Evans Feb. 13; Red-shouldered Hawk, one over Pinehurst Feb. 28; Rough-legged Hawk, 15 on the ScioCC where the previous high was five in both 1966 and 1967, ten on the ACC, and two dozen birds counted thru the season from 20 widespread areas; **GOLDEN EAGLE**, one near Andover Jan. 20 and 29 (L. Palmiter); **BALD EAGLE**, one in Friendship Twp. Feb. 27 (Comptons); and Marsh Hawk, one on the ScioCC and 16, total, from nine spots. The only Am. Coot reports were from Dunkirk Harbor with max nine on Feb. 28. A Com. Snipe was spotted along the Genesee R. on the ScioCC (CK), and a Purple Sandpiper was found at Niagara Falls Jan. 10 (Duncan). Our "Gull Capital of the World" boasts some beauties this season, all from Niagara R. gorge unless otherwise noted: Glaucous Gull, max four from Dec. 14 thru Feb. 8 and one at Buffalo Harbor Jan. 25; **LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL**, one Jan. 1 (RA, HA+), possibly the same bird as seen here in Nov.;

BLACK-HEADED GULL—very rare—one at Black Rock Canal, Buffalo, Dec. 13 (RA+) as well as the next day (AS+); Bonaparte's Gull, max 4000 on Dec. 14; an immature **IVORY GULL**—exceedingly rare—one Jan. 1 (RA, HA+); this bird was photographed by M. Gustafson of Cleveland, O., on the Canadian side of the Niagara R. gorge on Dec. 22, 1980 but not recorded on the U.S. side until Jan. 1; and **BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE**, 21 imm. at Iroquois NWR Feb. 21 (AS)—an unprecedented number for upstate.

PIGEONS—WOODPECKERS: Can it be that our only regional Screech Owls were the singles at Alfred Sta. Dec. 25 and Farmersville Sta. Feb. 6? Few Snowy Owls came south, with singles only at Buffalo Dec. 7, Grand Island Dec. 14 and near Alfred Feb. 14. Although no Long-eared Owls were reported, some of the less common Short-eared were: two on the ACC, one at Clarence Dec. 13 (AM, WM) and three in Sheldon Jan. 11 and 16 (RA+). Noteworthy woodpecker sightings include: Red-bellied, one on the ScioCC, 22 on the ACC and seven, total, from four locations on the Lake Plains in Jan.; Red-headed, nine counted from six areas; Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, one on the ScioCC and one in Hume Twp. Jan. 5 to 17; and Hairy, regularly reported and with 16 on the ScioCC, 74 on the ACC and six on the StBonCC.

FLYCATCHERS—STARLINGS: Horned Larks appeared in slightly better numbers with max: unidentified subspecies, 100 at Strykersville Dec. 28; and *Eremophila alpestris alpestris*, 29 in Pendleton Jan. 17. Two **COMMON RAVENS** were located near Alfred Jan. 21 (EB, Raynor), and max flocks of Com. Crows were 150 on Dec. 10 and 300 on Dec. 26 near Alfred as well as 100 north of Franklinville Jan. 23. Two Tufted Titmice were counted on both the ScioCC and the ACC while eight other reports noted a total of 14 birds. Single Carolina Wrens appeared in Spring Brook Dec. 4 to Jan. 22, and at Lewiston Jan. 17 and Hamburg Jan. 18, with none showing up in Feb. Seven Mockingbirds, all singles, were noted for the winter, and a Brown Thrasher spent most of Dec. at the Gills' feeder in Olean (FM). Robins, robins everywhere—well almost—were wintering all over the Region, sometimes in huge flocks, particularly on the lake plains, with max: 150 in Alabama Jan. 20, 200 at Wanakah Jan. 3, and 430 on Jan. 10 building to 800 on Jan. 26 at Iroquois NWR. A Hermit Thrush was found at Evangola Jan. 10. Up to five E. Bluebirds possibly wintered at Iroquois NWR, being seen Jan. 24 and 25 and Feb. 25 (JM+), while first arrivals were three at Amity L. Feb. 20 (VP, RP). With four on the ScioCC, 13 on the ACC and one on the StBonCC, other Golden-crowned Kinglet reports totaled ten birds from four locations. Since flocks of the Cedar Waxwing were more numerous than usual with max 160 at Oak Orchard WMA Jan. 8, it is not surprising that a **BOHEMIAN WAXWING** was discovered at Olcott Jan. 17 (AM, WM, Fessler). Single No. Shrikes were found on the ScioCC, the ACC, and the StBonCC and in seven areas on other reports.

VIREOS—WARBLERS: Although the Yellow-rumped Warbler was absent, a **PINE WARBLER** visited a Hamburg feeder Dec. 19 to 22 (Brandes)—very unusual for winter.

WEAVERS—SPARROWS: Highlights from the icterid flight are: E. Meadowlark, singles only at Sturgeon Point and Yates in Jan.; Red-winged Blackbird, max 962 over Pinehurst Feb. 28; Rusty Blackbird, two at Evans Feb. 28, the only report; and Com. Grackle, 15,039 over Evans Feb. 28 (Powers)—a record regional spring flight. Evening Grosbeak numbers varied little from last winter, the max feeder count being 100 at both Holland (ESB) and Wales (Rosche); tallies were 410 on the ScioCC, 889 on the ACC and 47 on the StBonCC; and bandings for the season totaled 203 at Alfred Station (EB), 92 at Farmersville Sta. (DC) and 70 at Limestone (RV). The House Finch continues its take over, tallying 233 on the ScioCC and ACC, and 20 on the StBonCC, with regional max of other reports 70 at Eggertsville during Jan. (AM, WM). Other finch findings of note include: Pine Grosbeak, one on Jan. 19, and 14 on Jan. 21 near Alfred (EB); **EUROPEAN GOLDFINCH** (escapee?), one at a Jamestown feeder several times Jan. 6 to 23 (FE+); Com. Redpoll, a big flight, with one on the ACC and max 14 at Depew Jan. 5 thru Feb. 28 (Barbers); Pine Siskin, widely reported all season with 56 on the ScioCC and ACC, and regional max 44 at Lewiston during Jan.

(HK, WK); Am. Goldfinch, 1682 over Evans Feb. 28 (Powers)—a record regional flight; Red Crossbill, singles at Eggertsville Jan. 24 (Hulls) and at Pendleton Jan. 25 (AM, WM); and White-winged Crossbill, one at Darien Center Jan. 29 (Harper). A Rufous-sided Towhee wintered at Amity L; singles also were seen in four other areas in Dec., in Elma in Jan. (DD, Forsberg), and at Spring Brook in Feb. (DD), while four appeared in Evans Feb. 1 (Powers). Other interesting sparrows include: Tree Sparrow, max 44 at Amity L. Feb. 5; Field Sparrow, one on the ACC and one at Jamestown Dec. 1 (Beal); White-crowned Sparrow, 26 on the ScioCC and ACC, two at Belmont all season (DB, LB), singles at Little Genesee Dec. 2 (DeGroat) and at Spring Brook Jan. 12 (DD), and two at Jamestown Jan. 3 and 14 (FE); White-throated Sparrow, max of the many wintering, 46 in Evans Feb. 1 (Powers); FOX SPARROW, late; one on the StBonCC and another at Farmersville Sta. to Dec. 14 (DC); and Swamp Sparrow, singles in Alexander Jan. 4 (Seamans) and in Newstead Jan. 11 (AM, WM). A few Lapland Longspurs were identified: five in Amity Twp. Jan. 3 (VP), included on the ScioCC, singles at Iroquois NWR Jan. 5 (Olsen) and in Alabama Jan. 7 (Seamans), and four in Yates Jan. 24 (RA+). Snow Buntings numbered 1324 on the ScioCC and ACC with regional max of other reports 500 near Shadigee Jan. 18 (DH).

Amity Lake, Belmont, New York 14813

REGION 2 — GENESEE

ROBERT SPAHN

This winter has been nearly the reverse of last, cold through late January with considerable snow, then moderating to above normal temperatures for the last half of February with no snow. Recapping, we find: December—temperatures 3.7° F (2.0° C) below normal, precipitation 0.14" (.26 cm) below average, and snowfall 31.80" (80.8 cm), 12.8" (32.5 cm) above average; January—8.2° F (4.6° C) below average, precipitation 1.24" (3.1 cm), 1.01" (2.6 cm) below normal, and snowfall 31.5" (80.0 cm), 10.0" (25.4 cm) above average; and February—temperatures about average, precipitation 3.13" (8.0 cm), .71" (1.8 cm) above average, and snowfall 9.3" (23.6 cm), 10.5" (26.7 cm) below normal. The early cold locked up most of the lakes and ponds in a thick layer of ice well before Christmas Bird Count (CBC) time. By contrast, the long warm spell in February opened everything up again, far ahead of normal dates.

The effects of the cold and snow were not as straightforward as one might expect. All the local CBC's recorded numbers of species well below last year, almost entirely due to lack of waterfowl. However, there were still substantial numbers of vagrants and "half-hardies" present right through the season. American Robin and White-throated Sparrow set new highs and maintained substantial numbers throughout. Gulls saw the greatest changes over last year, with this year's numbers below average and far below last year's incredible highs. The winter finches remained present, but only Common Redpoll and Pine Siskin were seen in good numbers.

December climaxed the most fantastic bird-finding year in regional history with 296 species seen and verified. This next year should serve to test the alternate hypotheses, that this was an unusual year in which strange weather patterns