

REGION 1 — NIAGARA FRONTIER

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Aside from the paralyzing ice storm the first of the month, there was little to separate the men from the boys in December's near-normal weather, and Lake Erie froze 12 January, about a week late. However, the rest of the season was an endurance test, and although actual number of species was down, the good records below are proof of the "sterner stuff" of which birders are made. For January, precipitation was only 1.1 in. above normal, but temperatures averaged 5.2° F. (2.9° C.) below normal, and every weekend was too atrocious, even dangerous, for birding: the first,—rain and 72 mph. winds; the next three,—vicious blizzards with high winds and cold, cold temperatures; the last,—freezing rain and a severe ice storm. Even though February temperatures averaged near normal and precipitation .9 in. below, "the most unkindest cut of all" was the ICE as more ice storms early in the month increased the thick glazing on roads, driveways and snow cover where it persisted all month. With winter holding steady through the period, it was somewhat surprising to have even a few of the usual late-February migrants coming through.

This was another year for grebe fallout. Each winter as the larger lakes and waterways freeze, these birds are forced to hunt food elsewhere and are often grounded by storms and die because they need open water from which to take off. In the *Buffalo Evening News*, 27 January this year, Dave Bigelow writes that at least eight Horned Grebes were downed 19 January on the lake plains, but most of them were rescued and released on open water.

Scattered fields of unharvested ear corn were used all season by the fine Turkey population; 21 January some of these birds began coming regularly to the feeder on Ten-Mile, Cattaraugus County, and appeared as well on top dressings and open slopes and at spring runs; the good snow crust aided their mobility to the end of the period. Although the mast crop was poor, there was a good supply of both Black and Yellow Birch seed as well as Hemlock (Eaton). By mid-January wild foods such as fruits of wild grape and Box Elder were nearly exhausted, but the number of rabbits and squirrels was the best in years.

A new book, *Birds of Cattaraugus County New York*, by Doctor Stephen W. Eaton of Saint Bonaventure University, was published in December by the Buffalo Society of Natural Sciences. This scholarly work is of interest not only for the annotated list of birds, but also for the description of good county birding areas and of the general topography of our region. The Turkey, Professor Eaton's favorite study, receives lengthy attention.

Winter positives include 1) a baker's dozen widespread Great Blue Herons, and small numbers of Mallards, Black Ducks, Common Goldeneyes and Common Mergansers appearing on the Allegheny and Genesee Rivers following the freeze up of Lake Erie, 2) many records of Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks, and a good Rough-legged season, particularly in February, 3) splendid grouse and turkey populations, 4) more than usual Short-eared Owls, a good sprinkling of wintering flickers, steady numbers of Hairy Woodpeckers, and lots of Red-bellied Woodpeckers, 5) small flocks of crows moving in late February, high

feeder counts of Black-capped Chickadees, Tufted Titmice doing well, many White-breasted and an invasion of Red-breasted Nuthatches, and a scattering of Brown Creepers, 6) encouraging numbers of Mockingbirds, here and there a wintering robin, and a few Northern Shrikes, 7) two to 20 redwings braving the elements all season, 8) Cardinals, Evening Grosbeaks and Purple Finches doing O.K., 9) House Finches in usual abundance, 10) a fair winter finch season with an incursion of Common Redpolls from mid-January on and from one to 26 widespread Pine Siskins, and 11) some interesting sparrows including several White-throats with a couple or so overwintering.

Winter negatives include 1) few loons, grebes, cormorants and night herons, 2) almost no Marsh Hawks and few kestrels, 3) not many larids, 4) no Barn and few Screech Owls, and a poor Snowy Owl season, 5) a low count for the Belted Kingfisher, and no Red-headed Woodpeckers, 6) Horned Larks doing poorly, 7) a scarcity of Winter and Carolina Wrens as well as of Golden-crowned Kinglets, 8) meadowlarks nearly missing, 9) small numbers of Common Grackles thru early January, and 10) very few Tree Sparrows in most areas.

Rarities: Eared Grebe, Gannet, White-fronted Goose, Barrow's Goldeneye, Goshawk, Bald Eagle, Black-legged Kittiwake, Common Raven, Boreal Chickadee, Varied Thrush, Rose-breasted Grosbeak, Hoary Redpoll and "Oregon" Junco.

Abbreviations: ACC—Allegany County Census, 2 Jan, of birds outside the Scio Audubon census circle, compiled by D. Burton; BOS—Buffalo Ornithological Society; CC—Audubon Christmas Bird Census: of St. Bonaventure (StBon hereafter), 19 Dec, compiled by T. Baird, of Jamestown (Jmst hereafter), 20 Dec, and of Scio, 2 Jan, compiled by D. Burton; EEC—Environmental Education Center; GMA or WMA—Game or Wildlife Management Area; NC, NP or NS—Nature Center, Preserve or Sanctuary; NWR—National Wildlife Refuge; OTH—*Olean Times Herald*; SF or SP—State Forest or Park; SPA—State Power Authority.

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Corrigendum: In *The Kingbird* Vol. XXXI, No. 4 Fall 1981, page 235 line 28 should read, "... E. Bluebird ... production was good; near Amity L. 11 pairs produced 54 fledglings (VP) ..." (instead of 45 fledglings).

LOONS—DUCKS: Following the usual winter pattern, only three Com. Loons were reported, all from the Lake Erie and Niagara Falls areas, where, except for the Horned Grebes mentioned above and a Pied-billed on the StBonCC, all grebes occurred: Red-necked Grebe, one at Dunkirk Harbor 6-20 Feb (FR, RS+); up to eight more Horned Grebes; an EARED GREBE, at Dunkirk Harbor 29 Jan (AS, TM), and five more Pied-billed. A GANNET caused

great excitement at Dunkirk Harbor 5 Dec (WB, mob), and again 6 and 13 Dec (FR); it apparently stayed in the area until Christmas Day, was much photographed and is only the second record for Chautauqua Co. (RS). Single Double-crested Cormorants appeared at Dunkirk Harbor, an imm. 1-30 Dec (mob), at Buffalo 8 Feb (Klips) and on Grand Island 28 Feb (WB, Rosche). Unusual for winter were the two Black-crowned Night Herons spotted at Niagara Falls 3 Jan (HA+). The only Whistling Swans reported were 42 on the JmstCC and six at Dunkirk Harbor 6-21 Jan (Bowser, AB). Wintering were about 100 Canada Geese in Allegany Co. and nearly two dozen in Chautauqua Co.; the two at Farmersville Sta. have been there now for six years; high count for the season was 1000± n. of Barker in Dec. Two **WHITE-FRONTED GEESE** were found at Williamsville 15 Jan (Wendling). Noteworthy among duck reports were: Black Duck, 14 on the StBonCC, two on the ScioCC, 25 on the JmstCC and max 12 in Amity Twp., Allegany Co., 28 Jan; Am. Wigeon, two at Dunkirk Harbor 30 Jan (RS); Gadwall, max 12 at Dunkirk Harbor 29 Jan to 13 Feb; No. Shoveler, a female at Dunkirk Harbor 16 Jan (Carlson, AB, TM+), only second winter record for Chautauqua Co. (RS), and two, early, at the same place 13 Feb (FR, RS) and an ad. male, also early, at the outlet of Chautauqua L., Jamestown, 21 and 26 Feb (RS); Wood Duck, one on the JmstCC; Redhead, 12 on the JmstCC and max 117 at Dunkirk Harbor 15 Jan (TM+); Greater Scaup, 17 at Celoron 21 Feb (RS); Lesser Scaup, three on JmstCC; Com. Goldeneye, max 160 at Celoron 21 Feb; **BARROW'S GOLDENEYE**, one at Niagara Falls 12 Feb (RA+), a visitor to our region for the third successive winter; King Eider, one at Niagara Falls 13 Dec (WB+); White-winged Scoter, max eight at Dunkirk Harbor 27 Jan; Black Scoter, one at Derby 12 Dec; Ruddy Duck, two on the JmstCC; Hooded Merganser, one at Dunkirk Harbor 10 Jan; and Com. Merganser, max 1500 at Dunkirk Harbor 31 Jan and about 20 wintering from mid-Jan on the Genesee River.

HAWKS—ALCIDS: Single **GOSHAWKS** were reported on the StBonCC, feeder watching at Farmersville Sta. irregularly 14-24 Jan (DC, JC), and near Wellsville 16 Feb (Babcock *vide* EL). Both Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks appeared in fair numbers, with the sharpies numbering two on the ACC and two on the JmstCC with singles in 11 areas, and the Cooper's, two on the StBonCC, one on the ScioCC, one on the ACC and six on the JmstCC plus a total of 18 from 17 other reports. On the ScioCC, 13 Red-tailed Hawks was highest count ever. Other interesting raptor reports include: Rough-legged Hawk, seven on the ScioCC, five on the ACC, three on the JmstCC and 23 others counted from 18 sites, including the one, "completely melanistic," at Fredonia airport 16 Jan (AB); **BALD EAGLE**, single ads. (same bird?) in Amity Twp., Allegany Co., 29 Jan (DB, MJ) and at Scio 2 Feb (D. Jordan) and another (age?) in Angelica Twp., Allegany Co., 12 Feb (Stevens *vide* DB); Marsh Hawk, one on the Scio CC, one on the JmstCC and one at Iroquois NWR 7 and 12 Jan (JM, OO). High count of the Am. Coot was 10 at Dunkirk Harbor 2 and 29 Jan. Unusual for the Dec. counts were two Killdeer on the ACC and one on the JmstCC, a late Am. Woodcock on the St.BonCC, and two Com. Snipe on the ACC as well as eight on the JmstCC. A Com. Snipe was also seen at Towerville (wintering?) 6 and 13 Feb (RS+). The poor larid season may be a reflection of the wretched birding weather, particularly for Jan and Feb, with best reports: Glaucous Gull, at least eight on Lake Erie and along the Niagara River; Iceland Gull, all along the Niagara River: *Larus glaucooides kumlieni*, one on 6 and 13 Dec (RA+), and undesigned subspecies, one to two on 9 and 29 Jan (Barbers, FR+), and three on 13 Feb (HA); Bonaparte's Gull, at Dunkirk Harbor, a decrease from 1200± at the beginning of the season to one 30 Jan; Little Gull, one at Fort Niagara SP 23 Dec (Thills), up to five at Dunkirk Harbor 6-25 Dec (RA+) and one at the latter location 15 Jan (TM+); and **BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE**, one at Dunkirk Harbor 13 Feb (FR) and again 14 Feb (FR, RA).

PIGEONS—WOODPECKERS: The two Screech Owls on the ScioCC were noted again in Amity Twp. 5 Jan (SH), one appeared for the JmstCC as well as at Farmersville Sta. 20, 21 Feb (DC), and one was banded at Alfred 14 Jan (EB), but perhaps the most unusual was the one that spent hours at a Wellsville feeder regularly 20 to 26 Jan (MB). A total of only eight Snowy Owls was reported this season, all at areas near Jamestown, Fredonia and Buffalo

from 14 Dec to 28 Feb. In Allegany Co. up to six Short-eared Owls were seen in Hume Twp. irregularly 21 Dec thru 31 Jan (M+E Smith *vide* KP, KP, VC); up to five were found in the Fredonia-Dunkirk area 5-27 Jan (Carlson+), and at least four more appeared in the Town of Porter 13 and 14 Feb (HK, WK, Cooper). A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was found near Alfred 24 Jan (Jevromovic *vide* EB).

FLYCATCHERS—STARLINGS: Horned Larks were scarce, with max: of *Eromophila alpestris alpestris*, 17 in Amity Twp. 16 Jan; of *E. a. praticola*, 29 near Arcade 12 Feb; and of undesigned subspecies, one on the JmstCC and 75 at Elma 5 Feb. Single **COMMON RAVENS**, both in previously documented Allegany Co. areas, were found in Ward Twp. 12 Dec (EB) and in Genesee Twp. 24 Feb (Dunning *vide* DB). Making a first winter appearance since 1976 were two **BOREAL CHICKADEES** at Cheektowaga 1 Jan (Rennings). Wrens were few, with but single Winter Wrens on the JmstCC and at Spring Brook 1 Dec (DD); two Carolina Wrens showed up at Spring Brook all season thru 22 Jan (DD) while singles appeared on the ScioCC and in Hume Twp. 21 Dec thru 13 Feb (Gilman *vide* KP). Single Mockingbirds were seen in six scattered locations in addition to one on the ScioCC, two on the ACC and one on the JmstCC. A rare **VARIED THRUSH** came to a Williamsville feeder 27 Feb (Klepfer, Busch). The only reports of Golden-crowned Kinglets were from the Alfred area with max 10 during Dec (EB), while the No. Shrike, although showing up in six scattered locations, numbered but eight plus one on the JmstCC. 87,000 Starlings wintered at the Peace Bridge, Buffalo (FM).

VIREOS—WARBLERS: One to two wintering Yellow-rumped Warblers were noted at Spring Brook, in Hume Twp., at Houghton, at Orchard Park and at Lake Erie SP.

WEAVERS—SPARROWS: Can it be that the E. Meadowlark is this scarce in winter, with the only report three birds at Wales 29 Dec (Rosches)? Individual Rusty Blackbirds appeared in Belmont 6 Dec (DB, LB), at Darien Center 3-17 Jan (Harper) and at Iroquois NWR 30 Jan (OO). Although there were good numbers of Cardinals, with 139 on ACC, 30 on StBonCC, and 426 on JmstCC, 32 on ScioCC was lowest ever; max of other reports was 16 in Willing Twp., Allegany Co., 30 Jan (Babcocks *vide* EL). An imm. male **ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK** frequented the feeder on Peck Settlement Rd., s. of Jamestown, 16 Dec to 16 Jan (R. M. Wilcox, M. Scott), including the JmstCC, and was critically studied 35 min. on 27 Dec to eliminate the possibility of Black-headed Grosbeak (RS). Influx of the Evening Grosbeak was slightly greater this season with 452 on ScioCC, 1232 on ACC, 61 on StBonCC and 324 on JmstCC with max feeder count 125 at both Jamestown and Wales; bandings for the winter were 504 at Alfred Sta. (EB) and 103 at Farmersville Sta. (DC). The House Finch continues to prosper: 86 on the ScioCC, 107 on the ACC, 19 on the StBonCC and 275 on the JmstCC with max for the season 95 at Jamestown 10 Dec (DG). Other notable finch reports include: Pine Grosbeak, one near Alfred, singing, 31 Dec (EB), three s. of Franklinville 9 Jan (EsB) and five at a Scio feeder 11 Jan (CJ); **HOARY RED-POLL**, one at a Depew feeder 5 and 6 Feb (Barbers); Com. Redpoll, a real incursion, with reports frequent in Jan but abundant in Feb, with max 180 at Orchard Park 6 Feb (RA, MF) and max of bandings, 136 at Alfred Sta. during Feb (EB); Red Crossbill, three on the ACC, with max, from five areas, 50 on Potter Rd. near Chautauqua Institution 25 Dec (Price); and White-winged Crossbill, 14 on the ScioCC, 10 on the ACC and 16 on the St BonCC, with max, from nine locations, 40 in the Alfred area 8 Dec (CK). A Rufous-sided Towhee appeared on the ACC and singles were also in Friendship Twp. 1-15 Dec (Hatrick *vide* Compton) and near Canadea all Feb (HH). An ad. male "**OREGON**" **JUNCO** was watched at Jamestown 19 Dec (DG). Other noteworthy sparrows include: Tree Sparrow, regional max 50 at Farmersville Sta. during Jan (DC) and bandings, total for the season, 64 at Alfred Sta (EB) and 193 at Farmersville Sta (DC); Field Sparrow, five on the ScioCC and one on the ACC; White-throated Sparrow, max 28 at Derby 1-31 Dec (DP), and wintering, two at Belmont (DB, LB) and one at Farmersville Sta. (DC); and Swamp Sparrow, one on the JmstCC and one at Iroquois NWR 13 Jan (OO). The only reports of Lapland Longspurs were one on the JmstCC, one in the Town of Pomfret 30 Jan (RS, DG), three at Elma 5

Feb (EsB) and 20 in the Town of Porter 13 Feb (HK, WK). Snow Buntings numbered 205 on the ScioCC, 190 on the ACC and 75 on the JmstCC with max of other reports 800+ in the Town of Porter 13 Feb (HK, WK).

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REGION 2 – GENESEE

ROBERT SPAHN

This season was the most dismal birding season in the region in at least the past ten years. The weather was cold, windy, and snowy and the birds generally scarce or hard to find when birders could reasonably venture forth. December was cold and snowy with most water, except for the larger lakes, frozen before Christmas Bird Count (CBC) time. By month's end, 49.0" of snow had fallen for the season. Fortunately, a thaw during the last week of the month melted virtually all of this snow before the onslaught of January. January was one of the harshest months in history. Temperatures averaged 7.9° F (4.3° C) below normal. Winds averaged 15 mph above normal, with 50 mph or above occurring on five days. Snowfall was 43.6", 22.3" above normal, falling on 28 of the month's 31 days. Record lows were tied or set on four days. In February, the cold continued except for a brief break near the middle of the month. Snowfall of 14.9", while below normal, brought the season's total to 107.5". By season's end there was still no sign of Spring.

Birding declined dramatically after the first of the new year. In early December, half-hardies not noted since October popped up across the region. The three local CBC's, Letchworth-Silver Lake (LS), Rochester (R), and Conesus-Hemlock or Little Lakes (LL), recorded relatively low species totals at 56, 72, and 75 respectively, but each was run in snow and wind for some or even all of the count day. The late December thaw improved spirits and after observations during the first weekend in January, some people were talking of aiming at record species counts for the month. Then, the next *five* weekends were fit for neither man nor beast to venture out-of-doors. Reports plummeted and interest waned. From that point on, there were not even any feeder rarities to rekindle interest. The only glimmers of hope were reports of possible Bewick's Wren and Hawk Owl, neither verified. From late January into February, the active birders chased off into Region 3 in search of reported rarities. The local field trips which were not cancelled found birds scarce with but few exceptions.

Given the above account, amazingly, there were positive notes for the season. Turkeys were reported in good numbers in all three months, exceeding both Ring-necked Pheasant and Ruffed Grouse on the LSCBC. Short-eared Owls were found in several locations, with good numbers present all season near Avon and Retsof. Carolina Wren and Mockingbird reports continued in good numbers in spite of the severe winter weather. Northern Shrike numbers were at their best in several years. House Finches reached record highs on all CBC's and were found to be much more numerous than expected in a banding study in Greece. Winter