

To finish on a lighter note we return to many reader's starting point and consider the rarities. This season most are rare by virtue of date or are locally rare. Among those of special note not discussed above are: a very rare wintering, immature Broad-winged Hawk, photographed, in Region 2; a Boreal Owl in Region 5; a Greater White-fronted Goose in Region 9; and a Gyrfalcon in Region 10. However, the B.O.T.S. Award for the season must go to the White-eyed Vireos found in Region 5 on 18 December and Region 10 on 17 December, unprecedented for New York at this season, though populations do winter in the south in this country, so that vagrancy in the early, warm part of winter isn't a total shock.

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REGION 1 - NIAGARA FRONTIER

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With the exception of an abnormally warm 14-day period in February, it was a cold and snowy winter on the Niagara Frontier. A record 52 inches of snow was recorded at the Greater Buffalo International Airport in December, which was also the seventh coldest in 114 years of meteorological record keeping. The snow squalls which beset the area during the last few days of November continued into the first week of December, and a heavy snowfall on the 16th was followed by bitter cold weather which gripped the region until the end of the month. Record low thermometer readings were registered on 20 December (-7° F), 21st (-8° F), and 26th (-3° F). During the height of the squall activity in the last ten days of the month, many reports were received at the Buffalo Museum of Science concerning Horned Grebes forced down by the high winds and zero visibility in blowing snow, and landing with ice-caked wings on highways and other cleared surfaces, apparently mistaking them for open water. January was a very cold month with more record low temperatures on the 16th (-10° F) at Buffalo and on 21 January when readings between -25° F and -30° F were recorded in several localities in the Southern Tier counties. Snowfall at Buffalo in January measured only 13.4 inches for the month and a flow of warm gulf air in early February reversed the weather pattern, melting the snow cover and bringing many local streams and rivers to flood crest. In the 15-day period between 9 and 24 February, two record high temperatures of 61° F on the 13th and 62° F on the 23rd were recorded before the jet stream, which had been far north of its usual track, capriciously reversed itself again on the 25th. A deep low pressure system accompanied by high winds and heavy snow moved into the region on 27 February. 15 inches of snow brought by this system combined with heavy

squalls over Lake Erie and Lake Ontario to dump between 24 and 30 inches of snow on Buffalo and other communities along the Erie and Ontario plains to end the period on a decidedly wintry note.

Highlights of the season include weather-related avian mortality in December and January and the migratory activity induced by the "pseudo-spring" weather in February. In addition to the grebe mortality noted heretofore, the advent of a severe new outbreak of Arctic air in our area on 15 January plunged the overnight temperature to -8° F at Niagara Falls, causing a dense fog to form above the Horseshoe Falls. As the result of the zero visibility caused by the fog, an estimated 2,000 ducks were swept over the Falls, where their plight was discovered the following morning. Most of the ducks were Common Mergansers with a few Red-breasted Mergansers, Common Goldeneyes, and Canvasbacks. Many of these birds were uninjured and managed to fly out of the gorge during the day, but approximately 650 ducks, still alive, were left sitting on the ice bridge or swimming in a narrow lead of open water at the base of the Falls. These hapless creatures apparently perished from their injuries and exposure to the bitter cold weather. By 20 January only 190 Common Mergansers, three Common Goldeneyes and a Canvasback could be seen huddled forlornly on the ice.

The arrival of the first spring migrants coincided with the advent of unseasonably warm weather in February. Don Clark reported 13 Mallards arriving at his sanctuary in Cattaraugus County on 13 February and migrating grackles and blackbird flocks were here by the 17th. On 19 February migrating flocks of Canada Geese were seen or heard in every county in western New York. Steve Eaton reports that the ice went out of the Allegheny River at Olean on 13 February and by the 18th all of the creeks and runs were open. The first Tundra Swans made their appearance on 20 February, a prelude to the enormous flight passing through Region 1 on the 23rd, which Bob Sundell estimated to have exceeded 1,600 swans in Chautauqua County. The first Killdeer also appeared on the 19th as did a few Snow Geese of both color phases. The euphoric reaction of local birdwatchers to this bounty was rudely dashed by the return of severe cold and heavy snow on 27 and 28 February.

Otherwise, the highlights of the winter of 1983-84 in Region 1 were mostly negatives. There was no significant winter finch flight; there were virtually no records of Common Redpolls, Pine Grosbeaks or Lapland Longspurs and only a few Pine Siskins were seen at feeders. These feeders probably are the reason for the increasing number of records of both Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks wintering in the area, as well as the increase of White-throated Sparrow which is now one of our most common winter visitors.

Contributors: Organizations - Allegany County Christmas Count (ACCC), Buffalo Audubon Christmas Count (BACC), Buffalo Ornithological Society Christmas Count (BOSCC), Cattaraugus Bird Club Christmas Count (CBCCC), Fredonia Audubon Christmas Count (FACC), Jamestown Audubon Christmas Count (JACC).

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LOONS-DUCKS: The open waters of Dunkirk Harbor proved to be an oasis on the icebound south shore of Lake Erie this winter with most of the waterfowl and gulls in the area concentrated there in Dec. and Jan. On 18 Jan a rare and irregular winter visitor, a Red-throated Loon, was seen there (TM, BC). Only two reports of Com. Loons during the period, four on Chautauqua L on 10 Dec (RS, DCor, DG) and one in Dunkirk Harbor 5 Jan (TM). Large flight of Horned Grebes in Dec: 38 at Point Gratiot near Dunkirk 6 Dec (TM); 162 on Chautauqua L 10 Dec (RS, DG, DCor) and one in Dunkirk Harbor 5 Jan (TM). Two records in Jan; three 1 Jan and four 15 Jan, both in Dunkirk Harbor (FR). Only four reports of Pied-billed Grebe: one on Allegheny R at Olean all month of Dec (SE); one in Dunkirk Harbor 21 Dec (AS, TM); one in Allegany State Park 4 Dec (TB) and four in Dunkirk Harbor 13 Jan (FR). Up to seven Double-crested Cormorants wintered in Dunkirk Harbor in Dec with one to three still there in Jan (TM); fewer Great Blue Herons than usual this winter; one in Allegany State Park 18 Dec (TB) and five on Grand Island on that date (BOSCC); two in Town of Aurora 1 Jan (BOSCC) and one in Buffalo 4 Feb (PH). One imm Mute Swan reported from Dunkirk Harbor between 6 and 15 Jan (FR). Tundra Swan: 54 over Alfred 1 Dec, apparently remnant from big flight in Nov (EB); one in Dunkirk Harbor 9 Jan (JK); one at Amity L. in Allegany Co. 1 Feb (VP); eight first spring migrants on Iroquois NWR 19 Feb (DE) and during big flight day on the 23rd, 275 at Mayville (TM), 450 over Amity L. (VP, CK), 175 over Hamburg (MZ) and 170 over Falconer (RS). Canada Goose: big wintering population on the Niagara R.; record high count of 1,079 birds 18 Dec (BOSCC); 100 over Hume Twp. in Allegany Co. on 19 Dec (KP); 50 over Andover 9 Jan (EB) and eight wintering at Farmersville Sta. in Cattaraugus Co. during entire period (DC). First spring migrants in region 19 Feb including 147 birds at Allegany State Park (TB), 500 at Allegany Twp. 21 Feb (SE), and 18,000 at Iroquois NWR on 24 Feb. Snow Goose: one in Dunkirk Harbor, 16-24 Feb (TM, FR); two Allegany Twp. Cattaraugus Co. 23 Feb (SE); four Iroquois NWR 23 Feb (DE); two Wales Twp. Erie Co. 24 Feb (OR). Wood Duck: one record of two birds, presumably migrants, Randolph Twp. 26 Feb (FR). Green-winged Teal: flock of five at Niagara Falls 18 Dec part of annual winter group there (BOSCC). No. Pintail: 27 on Niagara R 18 Dec annual wintering flock (BOSCC); first spring migrants: 25 at Iroquois NWR 19 Feb (DE). Gadwall: fewer winter records than usual; up to 21 in Dunkirk Harbor 23-30 Dec (FR, LB); seven in Dunkirk Harbor 24 Feb (TM). Am. Wigeon: 60 on Niagara R 18 Dec (BOSCC); first spring migrants, six at Iroquois NWR 21 Feb (DE). Canvasback: wintering in large numbers on Niagara R; maximum count of 4,543 18 Dec (BOSCC). Redhead: larger than average wintering population on Niagara R; maximum count of 269 18 Dec (BOSCC). Ring-necked Duck: four reports of wintering birds; five Allegany State Park 11 Dec (TB); four at Riverside Marsh, Jamestown, 18 Dec (JACC); six at Dunkirk Harbor 23 Dec (FR, LB); one in Niagara R 2 Jan (AM, WM). Greater Scaup: wintering in large numbers in lower Niagara R and L Ontario; maximum count of 1,745 18 Dec (BOSCC); 150 in Dunkirk Harbor 25 Dec (JGul). Lesser Scaup: a few records of single wintering birds on the Niagara R; nine 18 Dec (BOSCC), two 6 Jan (JT, RA). **HARLEQUIN DUCK:** adult male seen at Niagara Falls from 29 Jan to 15 Feb (WB, MB, GO, RA). Oldsquaw: wintering flocks of 1,000 to 2,000 birds on Niagara R and L Ontario at Youngstown. Black Scoter: one record of eight birds in Buffalo Harbor 10 Dec (RK). White-winged Scoter: wintering in small numbers on Niagara R and Dunkirk Harbor; 16 on Niagara R 6 Jan (JT, RA); four in Dunkirk Harbor 15 Jan (FR); five on Niagara R 18 Jan (WDA, BF); four in Dunkirk Harbor 10 Feb (TM). Com. Goldeneye: wintering in large numbers on Niagara R and L Ontario; maximum count on river, 3,664 18 Dec (BOSCC).

Barrow's Goldeneye: adult male at Niagara Falls seen by many observers during period; believed to be eighth season as winter visitor. Bufflehead: wintering in average numbers on Niagara R; maximum count of 547 birds 18 Dec (BOSCC). Hooded Merganser: regular winter visitor in small numbers; one on Red House L, Allegany State Park 4 Dec (TB); 38 on Niagara R 18 Dec (BOSCC); one on Allegheny R 17 Dec (CBCCC); 80 at Riverside Marsh, Jamestown 18 Dec (JACC). Com. Merganser: most common wintering duck in region with 10,480 recorded on Niagara R 18 Dec (BOSCC); flocks of 230 and 80 at Allegany State Park 4 and 18 Dec (TB); 350 in Dunkirk Harbor on 22 Jan (JGul); first spring migrants, 20 in Allegany Twp 21 Feb (SE). Red-breasted Merganser: wintering on Niagara R and L Ontario in average numbers; maximum count 209 18 Dec (BOSCC). Ruddy Duck: one record of single bird on Niagara R 15 Dec (RK).

HAWKS-ALCIDS: There were many single records of No. Harriers in Region 1 this winter as numbers continue to increase as permanent breeding residents. Both Cooper's Hawk and Sharp-shinned Hawk frequent visitors at feeders during severe cold periods. One record of wintering Red-shouldered Hawk: a bird at Orangeville in Wyoming Co. on 22 Jan (RA). The Red-tailed Hawk continues to maintain its status as our most common raptor; maximum count 46 on 18 Dec (BOSCC). There were only a few reports of Rough-legged Hawks in the region and no Bald Eagle sightings. Am. Coot: several winter records; 34 in Dunkirk Harbor 21 Dec (AS, TM); 29 in Dunkirk Harbor 31 Dec (FACC); two in Niagara R 2 Jan (AM, BM). Killdeer: two in Dunkirk Harbor 2-9 Dec (FR, TM); first spring migrant Silver Creek 14 Feb (TW). Purple Sandpiper: six at Niagara Falls 18 Dec (BOSCC). Dunlin: one at Niagara Falls 18 Dec (BOSCC). Com. Snipe: one wintering bird Williamsville, Erie Co 16 Jan (PY). Red Phalarope: one in Dunkirk Harbor 3-17 Dec (TM, JM, PK, TMah). Little Gull: present in less than average numbers for second consecutive winter; three Lewiston 5 Feb (RFA). Bonaparte's Gull: most left area with onset of severe cold weather in Dec; 400 Dunkirk Harbor 21 Dec (AS, TM). Iceland Gull: four Niagara Falls 25 Dec (RK, PS); one Dunkirk Harbor 30 Dec (FR, LB); two Niagara Falls 10 Dec (WDA, BP). Glaucous Gull: six at Niagara Falls 18 Dec (BOSCC); three Niagara Falls 25 Dec (RK, PS); three Niagara Falls 7 Jan (FR); eight Lower Niagara R 7 Jan (RA). **BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE:** one at Niagara Falls (imm bird) 25 Dec (RK, PS).

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Great Horned Owl: 27 Aurora Twp. 1 Jan (BACC). Snowy Owl: virtually absent from region this winter; one Darien Center 15 Dec (TH); one Wheatfield Twp. Niagara Co. 16 Feb (WB). Short-eared Owl: two Pomfret Twp. 20 Dec (TM, BC); two Wheatfield Twp. 12 Jan (WDA), two Sheldon Twp. 22 Feb (MZ). No. Saw-whet Owl: one record for season: one Jamestown 3 Dec (RS, DG). Red-headed Woodpecker: conspicuous by its absence; no records from Niagara Co. locations where it is a permanent resident. Red-bellied Woodpecker: many records; maximum count 24 on 17 Dec (ACCC). Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: two birds, one female adult and one imm, Lewiston Twp. 1-31 Jan (WK). No. Flicker: very high winter population; maximum count 41 on 18 Dec (BOSCC).

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris alpestris*) two reports of this northern subspecies; 33 at Cassadaga in Chautauqua Co 16 Dec (FR, LB); four Jamestown 2 Jan (RS, DD). Com. Raven: three records of this rare corvid by reliable observers; one in Ward Twp., Allegany Co 7 Jan (EB); two at Allegany State Park one 22 Jan and one 19 Feb (TB). Black-capped Chickadee: large wintering population in Southern Tier counties; maximum count 782 Chautauqua Co 18 Dec (JACC). **BOREAL CHICKADEE:** one visiting feeder in Belmont from 11 Jan to 26 Feb (DB, LB). Red-breasted Nuthatch: larger than average numbers of wintering birds this season. Carolina Wren: holding its own in spite of severe winter; one reported all month of Dec in Alfred (EB); one at Jamestown 18 Dec (JACC); one at Canadaway Creek Nature Sanctuary in Chautauqua Co 31 Dec (FACC); one at Orchard Park 5 Feb (RA, RB) and one at Fredonia 14 Feb (TM, MJ). Winter Wren: unusual in winter! One on Grand Island 11 Feb (GO). Golden-crowned Kinglet: average numbers for wintering birds in Southern Tier counties. E. Bluebird: one

report of wintering bird seen at Orchard Park 22 Jan and again 9 Feb (GO). Am. Robin: some increase in numbers of wintering birds over last winter but still below average for last ten years. Gray Catbird: one record, Chautauqua Co 18 Dec (JACC). No. Mockingbird: several records for viable population in northern Niagara Co; three Chautauqua Co 31 Dec (JACC). Brown Thrasher: one wintering bird Portland Twp 1-31 Jan (TM). Water Pipit: one record, Dunkirk Harbor 9 Dec (FR, LB). No. Shrike: many records from all sections in region. Loggerhead Shrike: one most unusual winter record, Aurora Twp 1 Jan (WBo, BACC).

VIREOS-WARBLED: Yellow-rumped Warbler: six reported in Chautauqua Co 31 Dec (FACC) and one at Fredonia 9 Feb, two at same location 12 and 16 Feb (JG).

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: As noted, the severe winter weather in Dec and Jan failed to precipitate an irruption of northern finches in our region. The wintering White-throated Sparrow population continues to increase, apparently as a function of the increase in popularity of bird feeding stations, and it usually outnumbers the Song Sparrow by a big ratio at these sites. Rufous-sided Towhee: much lower than average: one record at Chautauqua Co 18 Dec (JACC) and one at Fredonia 24 Jan (JG). Am. Tree Sparrow: wintering in average numbers; maximum count 438 18 Dec (BOSCC). Chipping Sparrow: one wintering bird Chautauqua Co 18 Dec (JACC). Swamp Sparrow: two Chautauqua Co 18 Dec (JACC) and one Williamsville, Erie Co 23 Jan (PY); one at Fredonia 6 Jan (TM). Fox Sparrow: one wintering bird Olean 17 Dec (CCBC). Song Sparrow: average number of wintering birds; maximum count 26 on 18 Dec (BOSCC). White-throated Sparrow: common winter visitor; maximum count 231 Erie Co 18 Dec (BOSCC). White-crowned Sparrow: one bird all winter at feeder in Belmont (DB, LB); seven Chautauqua Co 31 Dec (FACC); one at Niagara Falls 16 Feb (WDA). Dark-eyed Junco: higher than average wintering flocks in Southern Tier counties; one adult male, apparently of the race *Junco hyemalis oreganus* was seen at a feeder in Kennedy in Chautauqua Co 21 Feb (RS). Lapland Longspur: few reports; three in Chautauqua Co 31 Dec (FACC); one in Cambria Twp. Niagara Co 31 Dec (DC) and six in Pomfret Twp. 26 Feb (AB, NB). Snow Bunting: present in average numbers; maximum counts 500 Wyoming Co 22 Jan (RA) and 1,200 East Shelby, Orleans Co 12 Feb (DE). Red-winged Blackbird: small flocks and single birds reported wintering in average numbers in region; first spring migrants five Wheatfield Twp. 16 Feb (WDA, BP); 5,300 Town of Hamburg 23 Feb (MZ). E. Meadowlark: first spring migrants two Stockton Twp 18 Feb (TM); nine Town of Hamburg 23 Feb (FR). Rusty Blackbird: two wintering birds, Chautauqua Co 31 Dec (FACC); first spring migrants one Pomfret Twp. 17 Feb and three Portland Twp. 18 Feb (FR). Com. Grackle: a few reports of single wintering birds appearing at feeders; first spring migrants, 200 Pomfret Twp. 17 Feb (TM); 500 Town of Hamburg 23 Feb (MZ). Brown-headed Cowbird: two wintering flocks reported from region: 15-50 birds, Dec and Jan Kenmore (JT) and 10-45 birds Dec and Jan Eggertsville (AM, BM); first spring migrants 18 Sheridan Twp. Chautauqua Co. 18 Feb (TM, RS); 48 Town of Hamburg 23 Feb (FR). Pine Grosbeak: only one report: four Olean 17 Dec (CBCCC). House Finch: many reports as this species continues to increase in our region; maximum count 292 18 Dec (JACC). Com. Redpoll: virtually absent this winter; six reported in Chautauqua Co 31 Dec (FACC) and one at feeder in Silver Creek 18 Feb (SC). Pine Siskin: only a few records for season; one Depew 9 Dec (WB, MB); four at Dewittville 10 Dec (RS, DC, DG); one at Darien Center, 1-8 Jan (TH); one at Amity L in Allegany Co 24 Feb (VP). Evening Grosbeak: present in good numbers in Southern Tier counties all winter; maximum count 173 Chautauqua Co. 31 Dec (FACC); maximum count at individual feeder 50-150 Wales Twp. Jan and Feb (OR, AR).

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