

REGION 2 – GENESEE

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The winter season was marked by a series of contrasting conditions, with significant variations throughout the period. Early December experienced normal to above normal temperatures, but the second half felt the crunch of a frigid, cold spell. Fortunately it held off long enough to prevent the complete freezing of some of the smaller water bodies for the Christmas Bird Counts. The average monthly temperature was 25° F which represented a 4° below normal reading. Measurable precipitation was 4.47" which was nearly two inches above normal. Rain dominated early December while snowfall dominated the latter half. Total snow accumulation was a near normal 19.6".

January continued the fluctuation patterns with some very cold days and some milder days. The coldness managed to override the mildness for a below average reading of 20.4° F. No major weather systems were experienced, but snow fell on the majority of the days and provided a nearly continuous ground cover. Snowfall amounted to 23.4" which was only a deviation of .1" from the norm. Measurable precipitation was a slightly below normal 1.62".

February epitomized the season with the most contrasting conditions of the season. Early February was near normal, but by the end of the second week temperatures had reached the 40's and didn't stop climbing until readings in the 60's had been attained. Just as thoughts of an early spring were engraving themselves on people's minds, the worst blizzard in two years struck the region. I'm not sure if anyone was able to give an accurate picture of avian life during the last three days, because it was nearly impossible to get out and travel. When all was said and done, February snowfall levels were at 27.8" which represented a total of 5.5" above normal. Measurable precipitation was up only .65" at 2.97", and the warm days compensated for the cold terminus to the month and recorded an average of 33.2° F. This reading was nearly 9° above normal, putting the finishing touches on the seasonal variations.

The conditions provided for some interesting observations on the season. Horned Grebes were up in numbers, continuing that positive trend. Waterfowl variety was excellent early in the season, while numbers themselves were average. Later in the season the variety decreased and the number of individuals increased for the recorded species. The recovery of Lake Ontario's fish population may reflect upon the healthy populations of diving ducks wintering in the region. The warm spell also brought about an early influx of waterfowl. Many species were arriving ahead of the normal schedule. Red-breasted Mergansers were in greater abundance than normal on the lake. Usually at this time of the year they are outnumbered by the Commons. While this still held true, the Red-breasted numbers were much closer to those of the Common than in recent years. The warming trend in late February also brought early hawk flights over the Braddock Bay Hawk Lookout. The lack of severity during most of the season fostered the wintering of populations of Killdeer and Virginia Rails. The early December mildness may also have contributed to the recording of Com. Snipe and Am.

Woodcock on the Rochester Christmas Bird Count (hereafter RCBC). Gull numbers were good with slightly higher numbers of wintering Little Gulls, which stayed later than normal. White-winged gulls were reported regularly, an upswing from recent years. Short-eared Owl numbers were higher than those of the last few years. The traditional haunts exhibited good numbers. This is generally an indication of increased rodent populations. The fall trend for Bohemian Waxwings carried on into the winter season. Numbers were quite good and the frequency of reports was very good. No. Shrikes put in a good showing with more than a dozen separate birds reported during the last few days of January. The winter food crop was not in great surplus, but winter conditions did allow for a few half-hardies early in the season. The wintering population of White-throated Sparrows was once again good, and a few White-crowned sparrows wintered in the region again. Dark-eyed Juncos were in good supply. The fields of the west lakeshore drew above average numbers of Lapland Longspurs and Snow Buntings. The warm days of February brought early concentrations of blackbirds. Pine Grosbeaks, while not in great numbers, lingered on during the season; and House Finches were as prominent as ever.

Great Blue Herons were not as predictable as in some years. With such dominant ice covering this was to be expected. Ring-necked Pheasants were less than plentiful, showing a continuation of recent trends. In contrast to recent winters, Snowy Owl reports were down. One previously stable group of Red-headed Woodpeckers, in the Nations Road area near Avon, appears to have either shifted locations or dissipated; this makes it much tougher to locate the species in our region. Swamp Sparrows were sparse. The anticipated "finch" winter never materialized. Crossbills and redpolls were nonexistent during the majority of the season. Pine Siskins were few in number. Again, optimistically, we can look at the negative side as being less intense than the positive side. This trend in itself is refreshing.

Rarities: Broad-winged Hawk, Lesser Black-backed Gull.

Abbreviations: B-Braddock Bay; C-Charlotte; CL-Conesus Lake; D-Durand-Eastman Park and adjacent Lake Ontario; EL-east lakeshore; G-Greece; H-Hamlin Beach State Park and vicinity; I-Irondequoit Bay; L-Letchworth State Park; M-Mendon Ponds; N-Nations Road, Avon; R-Rochester; RS-Russell Station; S-Sodus Bay; W-Webster; WL-west lakeshore.

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LOONS-DUCKS: In keeping with the pattern of recent years, loons again were reported during the winter season with sightings in each month. Red-throated Loon: max six R 18 Dec (RCBC). Com. Loon: a few on the lake. Grebes continued to be seen throughout the

period. Numbers were good in the fall and some birds remained in the area. Pied-billed Grebe: reports from Dec and Jan. Horned Grebe: max 60 CL 26 Dec, good winter total. Red-necked Grebe: one H 10 Dec (WS), one WL 7 Jan (MD), and two WL 21 Feb (PR). Double-crested Cormorants held on into the early part of the season with sightings through Dec, last report one RS 20 Jan. Great Blue Herons were reported each month. Tundra Swan: moved in early, nine G 19 Feb. Mute Swan: one S all season, one WL many sightings, origins unknown. Snow Goose: one B 24 Feb. Canada Goose: 300 B 19 Feb. Brant: four B 18 Dec (R & SS, KD). Duck populations were not consistent throughout. Puddle ducks were good early in the season, faded during the middle and returned in the latter part. Diving duck numbers in general were down, but some species were higher in number than usual. Wood Duck: one Honeoye L 10 Jan, three WL 15 Jan, not a regular winter visitor. Green-winged Teal: one W 29 Jan, one B 18 Feb, early migrant. No. Pintail: one Pultneyville 5 Jan, two B 13 Feb, early migrants. Blue-winged Teal: one CL 11 Dec, late. Gadwall: tarried along the lakeshore, 25 RCBC 18 Dec. Am. Wigeon: one-two W 1, 15 Jan, uncommon in winter. Ring-necked Duck: early this year, Harlequin Duck: one-four B 1-10 Dec (mob), good number; one S 1 Jan (DD, MD). Oldsquaw: good numbers out on the lake. Black Scoter: 1 R 18 Dec (RCBC). Surf Scoter: one EL 11 Feb, female (DD, KG). White-winged Scoter: present thru the season. Com. Goldeneye: present throughout the season, but numbers slightly lower than recent years. Bufflehead: numbers about normal. Hooded Merganser: 35 on Letchworth-Silver Lake Christmas Bird Count (hereafter LCBC), 13 on RCBC. Com. Merganser: about average numbers. Red-breasted Merganser: numbers up slightly for winter.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: One rather interesting surprise was a Turkey Vulture, one Henrietta 22 Jan (KM). Bald Eagle reports were good with two adults in Dec, two adults in Jan and up to five sightings of immes in Feb. Some of the sightings were of migrating birds. No. Harrier: good numbers thru the season. Accipiters were in good supply with Cooper's Hawk being the most numerous, but Sharp-shinneds and Goshawks could be found. **BROAD-WINGED HAWK:** the unprecedented report of an imm at L in Feb (DB) was a major find. It seems most interesting that a bird that normally winters south of the U.S. would winter in the region. They have nested in the area, but what prompted this individual to remain or migrate only this far? Good photographs of the bird were secured. Rough-legged Hawk: a few wintered here. Am. Kestrel: good winter populations. Merlin: one Silver L 17 Dec (MD), one R 7 Jan (MD, KG, RS). Ring-necked Pheasant: 26 Richmond 2 Jan (RG). Wild Turkey: Christmas Count totals were down, but up to 30 were seen regularly at L. Virginia Rail: up to three were seen at M, a traditional wintering location. Am. Coot: max 300 CL 11 Dec, until lake froze. While this is not normally a shorebird season, there were some interesting sightings. Killdeer: seven reports in Dec; one B 13 Feb, first migrant. Com. Snipe: one G 18 Dec (KG), one Penfield 1 Jan (JL, A, D, D & BS), one Spencerport 15 Jan (WS). Am. Woodcock: one W 16 Dec (DS), one G 18 Dec (KG), and one Victor 23 Feb, this seemed to be a large number of sightings for the season with the Feb bird most likely a migrant. Gull populations were good along the lakeshore with some good white-winged gull observations. Little Gull: max 15 D 18 Dec (RCBC), four to nine D 1-18 (mob), stayed later than usual, two B 19 Feb (MD, ST). Bonaparte's Gull: max 606 R 18 Dec (RCBC). Iceland Gull: one imm from Dec, 11 reports from Jan, and one in Feb. Glaucous Gull: one Dec sighting, five in Jan and up to nine reports for Feb, mostly imm. **LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL:** one adult RS 5 Jan (DD, KG), carefully studied bird in direct size comparison with Ring-billed and Herring Gulls. Great Black-backed Gull: very good winter population. Black-legged Kittiwake: one D 16 Dec (CC), uncommon winter bird.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Snowy Owl: one S thru the period, two G thru the period, both G birds returned to nearly the same locations as birds reported last year. Barred Owl: two CL 26 Dec Little Lakes Christmas Bird Count (hereafter LLCBC). Long-eared Owl: one WL 12 Feb (RO), only report. Short-eared Owl: good populations in the N area with

a max of 25, other reports along the lakeshores. No. Saw-whet Owl: one Victor 10-11 Jan (RS), picking off rodents below a feeder at night. Red-headed Woodpecker: numbers down, previous stronghold appears vacated, imm along WL. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: winter reports up, one imm Lima 17 Dec, two adults W. Rush Dec (AW), one L 11 Jan (DB), one I 23 Jan (L & NM).

FLYCATCHER-STARLINGS: Horned Lark: many flocks in and around area fields. Tufted Titmouse: max 74 R 18 Dec (RCBC). Red-breasted Nuthatch: max 9 R 18 Dec (RCBC), meager winter total. Brown Creeper: a number of winter reports. Carolina Wren: doing well, many reports. Winter Wren: one D 3 Dec (RS), late. Ruby-crowned Kinglet: uncommon in winter, but two reports, one B 18 Dec; one W 25 Feb. Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 12 R 18 Dec (RCBC). E. Bluebird: max 13 LCBC. Hermit Thrush: few wintering reports. Am. Robin: found regularly all season. No. Mockingbird: still hanging on, reports up. Brown Thrasher: one Pittsford 22 Jan (MT), uncommon winter bird. Water Pipit: one 26 Richmond (LLCBC), late sighting; two B 12 Feb, migrating birds. Bohemian Waxwing: continuation of fall influx, max 30 G 12 Dec (WL), reports from each month of the season. Cedar Waxwing: max 900 W 21 Jan. No. Shrike: many reports, max 6 WL 29 Jan (WS). Loggerhead Shrike: one S 29 Jan (M & JT), early migrant.

VIREOS-WARBLED: Yellow-rumped Warbler: one R Dec (RCBC), one WL 25 Feb, other reports from traditional wintering locale, Mendon.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: An uncommon winter visitor was Rufous-sided Towhee: one Honeoye Falls 13 Dec (RG), one EL 28 Dec (RO). Am. Tree Sparrow: good totals this season. Chipping Sparrow: one R 18 Dec (RCBC), uncommon winter sighting. Field Sparrow: two R 18 (RCBC). Song Sparrow: a number of wintering individuals. White-throated Sparrow: good seasonal totals continuing recent trend. White-crowned Sparrow: one Point Breeze 2 Jan, one Livonia 30 Jan, uncommon in winter. Dark-eyed Junco: quite numerous. Longspurs and buntings could be found in a number of locations. Lapland Longspur: max 120 WL 21 Jan. Snow Bunting: max 5000 N 29 Jan. Red-winged Blackbird: some in region thru the season, began staking territory early. E. Meadowlark: three-four N 7-29 Jan; one G 23 Feb, first migrant. Rusty Blackbird: three R 27 Dec, one R 29 Dec, and one R 7 Jan. No. Oriole: one Avon 1-31 Dec (LB), uncommon wintering species. Pine Grosbeak: good numbers for a "non-finch" winter, max 12 W Dec and Jan. House Finch: numbers still expanding. Com. Redpoll: one Richmond 18 Dec (FD), one G 14-15 Feb (FD), not a very good year. Pine Siskin: reported throughout the season, numbers low. Am. Goldfinch: present, but numbers slightly down. Evening Grosbeak: decent totals away from the lakeshore.

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