

REGION 5 - ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

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The winter 1983-84 came in like a lion and went out like a lion, showing its kittenish side only briefly during February. December and January both averaged 2-3 degrees colder than normal. December had about normal precipitation, much of it coming as ice and freezing rain immediately prior to the Christmas bird counts. Ground feeding birds were quickly restricted to feeders and protected areas, although a large variety of species survived into January. January was brutally cold and dry. Snowfall was only about two-thirds normal at the end of the month. Similar weather prevailed in early February, and then spring came, slowly but surely, until the entire snow pack had melted and Syracuse had experienced a high of 67° on 23 February. The period ended with an abrupt return of winter.

Normally mid-February is the dead of winter. This season these conditions held in mid-January. Waterfowl were scarce, but none of the expected species was absent. Many dabblers were unreported after the weekend of 18-19 January. Great Blue Herons and Belted Kingfishers, mostly singles, remained widespread through the season. Gull concentrations in the Oswego and Oswego River areas were in typical mid-winter composition and numbers by mid-January. Ring-billed Gull numbers held very well given the cool weather. Both Red-tailed and Rough-legged Hawks were seen in good numbers in central Oswego Co., where mouse populations were high. Snowy Owls were reported from two sites only, one for just a brief stay. Four Northern Saw-whet Owls are about three-and-a-half more than our mid-winter average, and one photographed near Oswego was discovered to be a Boreal Owl after the film was processed!! Northern Shrikes were present in good numbers after a slow start this fall. Winter finches were scarce. Most of the rarer species are enumerated below. House Finch populations continue to increase, and American Goldfinch was somewhat more numerous than average. Evening Grosbeak was considerably below its average for recent years on Ben Burt's feeder surveys.

Spring, part one, at the end of February, was marked by exceptionally warm weather and widespread arrivals of early migrants. Gerald Smith covered Derby Hill Bird Observatory for much of this period. He recorded about 180 raptors, nearly 1,300 Horned Larks, 20,000 American Crows, 2,000 European Starlings and about 7,000 icterids before the heat turned off. Elsewhere, geese arrived in numbers, including a new regional record max for Snow Goose in central Cayuga County. Most observers noted influxes of Canada Geese, Ring-billed Gulls, American Robins, icterids, and Eastern Bluebirds were widespread during this period.

The only great rarities reported were a Boreal Owl and a most unseasonal White-eyed Vireo. Our nearly annual Thayer's Gull was well documented this season. Several Bald Eagles were discovered, and a Black-legged Kittiwake on Oneida Lake is perhaps expected after last fall's influx. A single Boreal Chickadee and Bohemian Waxwing, remnants of last fall's flight, were noted. The only surprising miss of the season was Hermit Thrush. A total of 123 species plus one morph and one hybrid was reported.

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Abbreviations: arr-arrival; CBC-Christmas Bird Count; DH-Derby Hill, Oswego Co; FH-Fairhaven, Little Sodus Bay and vicinity, Cayuga Co; LOL-Lake Ontario littoral, Oswego Co; NYSARC-report submitted to New York State Avian Records Committee; Onon-Onondaga; ph-photographed; SP-Sandy Pond, Oswego Co; Syr-Syracuse.

LOONS-DUCKS: Red-throated Loon: last DH 15 Dec. Com. Loon: last Skaneateles L 14 Jan. Pied-billed Grebe: three Baldwinsville through mid-Jan, one Oswego 12 Feb. Horned Grebe: to five per day. Red-necked Grebe: last Oneida L 8 Dec. Double-crested Cormorant: one Oswego 9 Feb (FGS, JH) first mid-winter record since 1976. Great Blue Heron: singles widespread thru season. Mute Swan: one FH last seen 3 Dec. Snow Goose: arr 76 Snow, 464 Blue SFR 25 Feb; 1,775 Snow Geese, including 1,600 "Blue Geese" near Port Byron 26 Feb triples previous record max. Brant: last LOL 3 Dec. Canada Goose: mid-winter max 532 Skaneateles L mid-Jan; arr about 17 Feb, 16,000 SFR 25 Feb. Wood Duck: one Baldwinsville to 16 Jan. Green-winged Teal: last Oneida L 8 Dec. Am. Black Duck: arr widespread 17 Feb. Mallard: ditto. No. Pintail: two Eaton 14 Jan only mid-winter report; arr SFR 17 Feb. No. Shoveler: last 15 FH 15 Dec also a high count for recent years. Gadwall: last two Oswego 19 Jan, arr Syr 18 Feb. Am. Wigeon: last FH 15 Dec, arr Brewerton 16 Feb. Canvasback: mid-winter max 73 Skaneateles L, arr. ca. 17 Feb. Redhead: mid-winter max 84 Skaneateles L, arr ca. 17 Feb. Ring-necked Duck: two Baldwinsville thru 19 Jan, arr SFR 17 Feb. Greater Scaup: max 1,019 Oswego 29 Jan. Lesser Scaup: to ten/day Oswego. King Eider: two-three Oswego thru 18 Dec, female there 25 Feb. Oldsquaw: max 50 Oswego mid-Jan, low. Black Scoter: last LOL 13 Dec. Surf Scoter: single Oswego 22 Jan is a rare mid-winter record. White-winged Scoter: record max 112 Oswego 22 Jan, numerous all winter. Com. Goldeneye: max 280 Oswego mid-Jan low. Barrow's Goldeneye: female Oswego 9 Feb (FGS, JH). Bufflehead: max 75 Oswego mid-Jan. Hooded Merganser: last high counts 17 Dec, only one-two per day afterwards. Com. Merganser: max 1,380 Oswego 17 Jan. Red-breasted Merganser: max 71 Oswego 17 Jan. Ruddy Duck: last 31 Onon L 17 Dec.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Turkey Vulture: arr DH 23 Feb. Bald Eagle: imm SP 3 Dec, one-two near Fulton 18 Jan-16 Feb, one Chittings Pond 24 Feb, one DH 23 Feb. No. Harrier: last DeWitt 8 Jan, arr DH 17 Feb. Cooper's Hawk: arr DH 23 Feb. No. Goshawk: six reported mid-winter, eight past DH after 17 Feb. Red-tailed Hawk: mid-winter max 29 Phoenix area, arr DH 17 Feb. Rough-legged Hawk: max 19 Phoenix area, arr DH 17 Feb. Am. Kestrel: mid-winter max four, low. Am. Coot: singles Syr 14 Jan, Baldwinsville mid-Jan. Killdeer: last Carpenter's Brook Fish Hatchery 14 Jan, arr DH 19 Feb. Com. Snipe: last Baldwinsville 19 Jan. Bonaparte's Gull: last Oswego 2 Jan. Ring-billed Gull: mid-winter max 4,000 Oswego. Herring Gull: mid-winter max 1,800 Oswego. **THAYER'S GULL**: imm Fulton 15/28 Jan (FGS, DWC, Barbara Spencer, ph, NYSARC). Iceland Gull: arr LOL 11 Dec, max 5 Oswego mid-Jan, none in Feb. Glaucous Gull: max 12 Oswego good showing, none in Feb. Great Black-backed Gull: max 400 Oswego. Black-legged Kittiwake: adult Sylvan Beach 5 Dec (LA) is one of the few regional reports away from Lake Ontario.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Snowy Owl: one near Peterboro all winter, single Syr airport irregularly 17 Dec to 19 Feb. Long-eared Owl: single FH 18 Feb. No. Saw-whet Owl: four singles during winter include one incarcerated after entering a Utica home in mid-Jan. **BOREAL OWL**: one photographed Snake Swamp 5-15 Feb (LH, NYSARC), is the fourth regional record. Red-bellied Woodpecker: one overwintered Rome (DC), very far east. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: one Oswego CBC 18 Dec, one Chittenango after 21 Jan, very unusual in winter.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Horned Lark: arr DH 17 Feb, nearly 1,300 passed by

during warm spell. Am. Crow: about 4,900 over DH after 17 Feb. Boreal Chickadee: one near Cazenovia 4-11 Feb (RK, JH) only report outside Adirondacks. Tufted Titmouse: widespread. Red-breasted Nuthatch: less than a half-dozen reported. Winter Wren: one Woodmans Pond to 14 Jan (MSR). Carolina Wren: two Dec reports only. E. Bluebird: about a dozen reports from five localities after 5 Feb. Am. Robin: mid-winter max 45 Otisco L 28 Jan, a few migrants after 17 Feb. Gray Catbird: one town of Onon 2 Jan (JH). Water Pipit: 15-20 Rome 24 Feb (DJC) record early by almost a month. Bohemian Waxwing: one Kirkville 25 Jan (JL). No. Shrike: one-three per day all season, very widespread. Eur. Starling: near 2,000 past DH after 17 Feb.

VIREOS-WARBLEDERS: **WHITE-EYED VIREO**: one Fulton 18 Dec (FGS, G. Ward, NYSARC) absolutely unexpected anywhere in New York at this time of year.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: No. Cardinal: very numerous at feeders. Rufous-sided Towhee: one in Old Forge killed by dog in mid-Jan. Am. Tree Sparrow: max 50 per day. Field Sparrow: last Cazenovia 5 Jan. Swamp Sparrow: last SP 3 Dec. White-crowned Sparrow: imm Howland's Island 22 Jan, adult Carpenter's Pond Fish Hatchery 11 Feb, one at feeder in Wampsville in Feb. Lapland Longspur: several reports in Jan, max ten. Red-winged Blackbird: mid-winter max ten, arr 9 Feb Syr, 6,130 past DH after 17 Feb. E. Meadowlark: last Cazenovia 5 Jan. Rusty Blackbird: four overwintered DeWitt. Com. Grackle: very few overwinter, widespread arr 17 Feb, only a few past DH. Brown-headed Cowbird: very scarce mid-winter. Pine Grosbeak: scattered small flocks reported LOL, Holland Patent after mid-Jan. Purple Finch: only one reported outside CBC period. House Finch: almost every observer distant from Syracuse commented on how common they had become this winter. Red Crossbill: two Pratts Fall 23 Jan-2 Feb (DWC). Com. Redpoll: one Rome 4 Dec, then none until 6 Feb; five others reported. Pine Siskin: four reported through mid-Dec and one Holland Patent 11 Feb, only reports away from Adirondacks. Evening Grosbeak: subaverage numbers all season.

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