

REGION 1 – NIAGARA FRONTIER

STEPHEN W. EATON

The unusually warm weather of the fall season continued on into winter making 8 December the warmest in 114 years of records at Buffalo. Temperatures averaged nearly seven degrees above normal and ranked second to the warm December of two years ago. Seasonal snowfall up to New Year's Eve was 12.6 inches, the lowest since 1948 and much behind the 69.7 inches logged by the same time last year. Rain averaged 3.67 inches, about a quarter of an inch above normal. The region was on the fringes of storm systems, with the jet stream taking a northward sweep just to the west and allowing the Bermuda High to influence our weather. This certainly was one of the factors keeping birds in the fields and woods away from feeders but the abundance of wild foods, the lack of snowstorms and an increase in accipiters – both Cooper's and Sharp-shinned, must also be considered.

Over much of the region south of Buffalo, January was fairly typical but Buffalo itself in the lee of unfrozen Lake Erie was hit by a vicious lake-effect blizzard on the 19th when 15.6 inches of snow occurred and two days later when 14.9 inches hit. These finally drove birds to feeders where they seemed in relatively short supply through the rest of the month. Sixty-six inches of snow fell in Buffalo during January, which was the second greatest monthly total recorded in 100 years – just short of the 68 inches of January 1977. To the south and east in the region, away from the area of lake-effect snows, snow depths were near normal. Lake Erie froze over 22 January and apparently concentrated more water birds in Dunkirk Harbor as well as other open water.

February began with arctic air and frequent light snowfalls, but a thaw developed on the 11th after 34 days of below freezing weather which began the snow melt. The average temperature for the month was slightly above normal at 24.8° F. and Lake Erie remained frozen at 32° F. The amount of possible sunshine was 19%, the lowest sunshine total ever recorded. Heavy rains occurred over the region on the 23rd and 24th with rapid snow melt as temperatures climbed into the 50's. Rain coupled with the snow melt resulted in much flooding in low-lying areas. Birds left the feeding stations again as soon as the thaw occurred.

The mild December produced many late fall or winter records for species normally wintering farther south. N. Flicker, E. Bluebird, Hermit Thrush, Am. Robin, Brown Thrasher, Cedar Waxwing, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Rufous-sided Towhee, and E. Meadowlark were all reported in the region and most in goodly numbers. Am. Woodcock, Com. Snipe and Black-throated Blue Warbler were reported from Jamestown in mid-December and later, and White-crowned Sparrows, becoming regular winter visitors on the lake plain, were found there in three localities, with five on the Scio Christmas Count. A Chipping Sparrow was seen on the Fredonia CC 1 January and later. Wintering Rusty Blackbirds are not common in the region but one was seen 9 January in Chautauqua Co.

The Southern Tier counties, Chautauqua, Cattaraugus, and Allegany, have

traditionally hoped for the influx of carduline finches and have always been puzzled at their unpredictability. Almost no large numbers of these birds appeared but there were small numbers of most species. Several observers spoke of one Evening Grosbeak female one day, which makes one wonder if she was just making the rounds. A few Pine Grosbeaks appeared but no large incursion, a few Pine Siskins (one report of a large flock), and a few crossbills of both species. Goldfinches were fairly common but not in large flocks as in 1983-84. Purple Finches seemed to be more common than usual, particularly later in the winter. Large junco flocks of up to 100 wintered and appeared to be mostly males, feeding on the abundant hemlock seeds scattered on the snow after every wind and snow.

Dunkirk Harbor has become a mecca for water birds in winter and these have attracted many birders. The most interesting species were Laughing Gull and Harlequin Duck, at least three species of grebes, ten species of ducks, Canada Goose and Tundra Swan. Snow Buntings with a few Lapland Longspurs were reported in good numbers in the central and northern part of the region. Gulls of at least seven species were reported from the Niagara River and Dunkirk Harbor. The thaw in late February produced first reports of migrating Tundra Swans, Canada Geese, N. Pintails, Gadwalls, Turkey Vultures, Killdeer, Common Grackles, and Red-winged Blackbirds.

Abbreviations: Allegany-A; Bird Club-BC; Christmas Count-CC; Dunkirk Harbor-DH; Fredonia-F; Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge-INWR; Jamestown-J; St. Bonaventure-SB; State Park-SP.

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LOONS-DUCKS: Red-throated Loon: two DH 15 Feb (TM) and 16 & 20 Feb. (AS *et al.*). Com. Loon: one or two DH 8-25 Dec., 13-18 Jan. and 10-20 Feb. indicates wintering successfully. Pied-billed Grebe: winters fairly regularly on the Allegheny R. but seldom elsewhere in the region, so one to four DH 1-29 Jan. and 10-26 Feb. is interesting. Horned Grebe also found DH as a winter haven after the blizzards when 40 were seen 3 Feb. (RA *et al.*); 75 max 10 Feb. (DG) and 22 on 23 Feb. (PH). Red-necked Grebe: usually very rare in winter according to Beardslee & Mitchell, but one to two appeared at DH just before the blizzard 17 Jan. (TM, DG) and reported there as late as 3 Feb. (RA *et al.*). Double-crested Cormorant: one and two showed up late at DH 18 and 24 Dec. (TM). Great Blue Heron was reported from several areas about region in Dec. and Jan. but reports dwindled to one at Belmont 16 Feb. (L & DB). Tundra Swan first moved into region when one appeared in Twn. Kiantone, Chaut. Co. 28 Feb. (DD). Snow Goose: one SBCC Olean 15 Dec. (FM); two Burgeson Sanc. 23-31 Dec. (DC, DC, Jr.). Tundra Swan: first migrants Twn. Kiantone, Chaut. Co. 28 Feb. (DD). Though Canada Geese were reported through the period they were probably locals; migrants first over Amity L. and Dunkirk 23 Feb. Green-winged Teal: two Orchard Park, Erie Co. 21 Dec. (DF) and one Niagara Falls 29 Dec. (HA *et al.*).

Am. Black Duck: one of special concern, seen in fair numbers on CC's: 19 FCC, 13 SBCC, 77 JCC. Mallard on CC's: 221 FCC; 556 JCC; 9 SCC; 38 SBCC. Pintail: wintered in region at DH, INWR and Buffalo. Gadwall: first 29 Jan. DH (TM *et al.*) and perhaps first migrants INWR 26 Feb. (DE). Am. Wigeon: five 26 Feb. INWR first (DE). Canvasback: no reports away from Niagara R. where several thousand were around end of year. Redhead: 80 DH 16 Feb. first migrants, 120 DH 20 Feb. (AS *et al.*). Ring-necked Duck: one Red House L. 2 Dec. (TB); two SBCC at Olean 15 Dec.; three JCC 16 Dec. were unusual Dec. records; first spring one DH 15 Feb. (TM). Greater Scaup: no reports. Lesser Scaup: one Amity L. 29 Dec. (VP); four FCC 1 Jan.; five DH 16 Feb. (AS *et al.*), probably migrants. King Eider: three Ft. Niagara SP 13 Jan. (Collins). Harlequin Duck: that beautiful duck of northern and western trout streams at nesting time showed up DH 5 Feb. as the Rosches dined at The Gallery Restaurant. What an appropriate name! Oldsquaw: one DH 26 Jan.; one 29 Jan. (DG, RS). All three species of scoters moved into DH after the blizzard. Black Scoter: two 30 Jan. (FR *et al.*). Surf Scoter: one 29 Jan. (TM, BC). White-winged Scoter: two 29 Jan. (TM, BC). Com. Goldeneye: 230 JCC 16 Dec.; 25 DH FCC. 1 Jan.; one Red House L. 23 Dec. and Quaker L. 6 Jan. (TB) reflects the late freezing of these waters; the species wintered in small numbers on the Allegheny R.; too common to be noteworthy about Buffalo. Bufflehead: 30 JCC 16 Dec.; 14 FCC and 26 All. Co. 15 Dec. Hooded Merganser: six ASP 2 Dec. (TB); one Allegheny R. 27 Jan. (TB); five DH 11 Jan. and one 29 Jan.; 402 JCC 16 Dec.; Feb. records DH and INWR. Com. Merganser: wintered on Allegheny and Genesee Rivers and on small lakes until freeze-up after mid-Jan. Red-breasted Merganser: eight FCC 1 Jan. Ruddy Duck: one DH 19 Jan. (FR, TMy).

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Turkey Vulture: one INWR 25 Feb. (DE) first. Bald Eagle: one adult Allegheny Res. 4 Dec. (VW); one imm lower Niagara R. 17 Feb. (BF, BOS). N. Harrier: reported from five localities on lake plain in Dec. and Jan. and one Twn. Angelica All. Co. 9 Feb. (CK). In Dec., Jan. and Feb. there were more reports of Sharp-shinned Hawks than Cooper's—some switch from a decade ago. Perhaps the abundant feeders are to blame. Chickadees fattened up on sunflower seeds must make a "sharpie's" day. I've always felt our locally breeding Goshawks move out in winter, so records in Jan. and Feb. are assumed to be migrants from the north or dispersals from forested country; one Eggertsville 14 Jan. (AM); one Wales 17 and 28 Jan. (A & OR); one Dunkirk 20 Feb. (AS, GS). Red-tailed Hawk: wintering fairly commonly now Allegheny plateau. Rough-legged Hawk: reported from All., Catt. and Chaut. Cos. along Southern Tier Expressway and Niagara Co. in Dec., Jan. Feb. Wild Turkey: the reported harvest in spring and fall 1984 showed a downward trend, reflecting poor productivity over the region and state as a whole (JG). Am. Coot: ten JCC 16 Dec.; 51 FCC DH 1 Jan.; 30 DH 29 Jan. (RS, DG); also DH 16 and 20 Feb. (AS *et al.*); one Celoron Chaut. L. 24 Feb. (DG); two INWR 26 Feb. (DE). Killdeer: first one Twn. Stockton, Chaut. Co. 17 Feb. (DG, DD). Purple Sandpiper: two Niagara R. 10 Jan., four 13 Jan. (Collins, HA); one DH 18 Jan. (MS); five Niagara Falls 16 Feb. (Collins). Am. Woodcock: one JCC 16 Dec. (KY) was a new count species. Com. Snipe: one Dolloff Rd., Jamestown area 9 Dec. (DG). **LAUGHING GULL**: one first seen DH 29 Jan. (RS, *et al.*) and later until 16 Feb. (AS, Walker), a first winter record for the region. Little Gull: one DH 8 Dec. (TM); one 5 and 13 Jan. (FR, LBk); three lower Niagara R. 3 Feb. (RB, BOS). Iceland Gull: one DH 5 and 13 Jan. (FR, LBk); one and three Adam Beck Hydro 10 and 16 Jan. (Collins); six Niagara R. 13 Jan. (HA); one Goat Island 10 Feb. (WD, BP). Lesser Black-backed Gull: one Adam Beck Hydro 26-31 Dec. (HA *et al.*), also next day. Glaucous Gull: first winter report Adam Beck Hydro 23 Dec. (Collins, HA); several reports Niagara R. Jan. and Feb. **RAZORBILL**: one Ft. Niagara 2 Jan. (HA *et al.*), a second record for region and third state inland record (Vivian Pitzrick, *Kingbird*: 33: 116).

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Snowy Owl: six locality records from the lake plain near Buffalo and one from Mayville, Chaut. Co. Records from 1 Dec. to 26 Jan. Long-eared Owl: one Youngstown, Niagara Co. 9 Dec. (WD, BP); one Wheatfield 12 Jan. (WD, BP). Short-eared Owl: one Lockport, Niagara Co. 1 Jan. (PH). Red-bellied Woodpecker: several

reports from lake plain and one from All. Co. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: one Lewiston 22 Dec. at various times to 15 Feb. (WK), unusual winter visitor. N. Flicker: reported from all parts of region through period but most commonly on lake plain; nine JCC 16 Dec.; six FCC 1 Jan.; 3 SCC 15 Dec.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Horned Lark (*Eremophila alpestris alpestris*) max 150 Twn. Pomfret, Chaut. Co. (DG). Com. Raven: one ASP 30 Dec. (TB). Tufted Titmouse: seen on all Southern Tier CCs except Fredonia but seen there during week of count; three SBC 15 Dec.; three JCC 16 Dec.; two SCC 15 Dec.; reported from lake plain INWR, Lewiston, and Orchard Park. Red-breasted Nuthatch: BOS records for period; two Alfred 4 and 5 Jan. and seven and three Alfred 1 and 16 Feb. (EB); two Orchard Park 15 Dec. and 18 Feb. (GO); two Twn. Pomfret 24 Dec. (TM); 12 JCC 16 Dec. indicated locally common presence but not a big year. Carolina Wren: one Lakewood, Chaut. Co. at feeder until 26 Jan. (CW); one Ashville, Chaut. Co.; two Twn. Humphrey, Catt. Co. at feeder during Jan. (AC). Winter Wren: these fellows in winter require luck or persistence around brush piles near water. Two of our observers persevered; one Pt. Gratiot, L. Erie 14 Jan. (TM) and one Amity L. 11 Feb. (VP). Ruby-crowned Kinglet: one Lakewood 12 Jan. (RS, TM); a rare winter visitor. E. Bluebird: four INWR 19 Dec. (DE); two Lawson Rd., Busti, Chaut. Co. 16 Dec. (EP); six Prosser Hill Rd., Chaut. Co. 3 Jan. (RH); four Riverside Rd. and Conewango Creek 24 Dec. (DC); two Fentonville, Chaut. Co. 7 Jan. (JP); no Feb. reports but first migrant Amity L. 1 Mar. (VP). Am. Robin: 300 Burgeson Sanc. 5 Dec. (DG); 49 JCC 16 Dec.; three SBCC 15 Dec.; two SCC 15 Dec.; 24 INWR 19 Dec. (DE); 136 FCC 1 Jan.; 120 max for Jan. L. Erie SP 5 Jan. (T & JM); 25-70 Fredonia 8-14 Jan. (JG); 90 Twn. Stockton 9 Jan. (TM); 70 Canadaway Nat. Sanc. 14 Jan. (TM); 50 Dunkirk 29 Jan. (RS, DG); 54, 59, 35 INWR 1, 11, 13 Feb. (DE); 250-300 INWR 9 Feb. (G & DS); two-49 Amity L. 20-28 Feb. (VP); 145 L. Ontario plain 21 Feb. (WK) these last perhaps migrants. N. Mockingbird: five records from lake plain and one near Jamestown. Brown Thrasher: one Bemus Pt., Chaut. Co. 5 Dec. (BB). Cedar Waxwing: 154 SCC 15 Dec.; 149 SBCC 15 Dec.; 238 JCC 16 Dec.; 295 FCC 1 Jan.; 15-60 Wales 1-31 Dec. (OR); 68, 19, 23 Twn. Amity, All. Co. 2, 7, 25 Jan. (VP); small numbers through most of Feb. until 285+ and 200+ Twn. Amity 26, 27 Feb. (VP). This species and Am. Robin most abundant through period in many years. N. Shrike: one ASP 2 Dec. (TB); one Farmersville Sta. 6 & 7 Dec. (DC); one Alfred 15 Dec. (EB, PG); one Silver Creek 26 Dec. and one Sheridan 26 Dec. (DF); one Grand Island 31 Dec. (PH); one Stockton, Chaut. Co. 12 Jan. (TM); one Twn. Lewiston 13 Jan. (WK); one Darien 21 Jan. (TH); one Twn. Evan 30 Jan. (FR *et al.*); six single birds reported to BOS in Feb. well scattered over region.

VIREOS-WARBLEDERS: Yellow-rumped Warbler: two east of Falconer, Chaut. Co. 9 Dec.; one INWR 19 Dec. (DE); one Twn. Pomfret 21 Dec. (TM); one FCC 1 Jan.; five L. Erie SP 5 Jan. (T & JM); 28 max Twn. Portland Chaut. Co. 13 Jan. (FR, LBK); one Burgeson Sanc. 19 Jan. (DG) and one near Jamestown 19 Jan. (HR) were last reports and one wonders if the storm which arrived on 19th may have done them in. Only other species for this section reported this quarter was Black-throated Blue Warbler: one male and one female Jamestown 12 Dec. (C & LD).

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: N. Cardinals left their normal haunts in late fall but a few returned to feeders after heavy snows. Were they out in the woods? Did they have a poor reproductive year or did accipiters or disease trim them down? 17 SCC 15 Dec.; six SBCC 15 Dec.; 68 JCC 16 Dec.; 13 FCC 1 Jan.; all these represent numbers well below normal. Rufous-sided Towhee: two SCC 15 Dec.; one Orchard Park 9 Dec., 10 and 18 Feb. (GO); one Twn. Pomfret 21 Dec. (TM); at least one appeared to survive winter. Am. Tree Sparrow: reported in the Southern Tier Cos. in normal numbers but late; only five banded Farmersville Sta. Dec. (DC); poorest Dec. banding he could remember. Chipping Sparrow: one FCC 1 Jan. and two Fredonia 9-18 Jan. (JG). White-throated Sparrow continues to winter in good numbers as well as White-crowned Sparrow: five SCC 15 Dec.; five Twn. Pomfret

17 Jan. and four same place 7 Feb. Dark-eyed Junco: although not noted by BOS in their noteworthy records, the Southern Tier Cos., particularly the forested unglaciated part, experienced unprecedented numbers; flocks of 100 individuals are common on migration but these flocks were present through Dec. & Jan. and until a thaw in late Feb. They visited feeders after snows but took to the woods as winds blew down more hemlock seeds on snow surface; 512 along road berm in 26 km ASP 13 Jan. (TB); 100+ Ten Mile Rd., Catt. Co. (SE). Snow Bunting: 500 max Twn. Alabama 13 Jan. (Collins); 500 Fredonia 28 Jan. (BC); with these a few Lapland Longspurs. Red-winged Blackbird and other icterids, along with Eur. Starlings moved into the region following the thaw 23 Feb. Rusty Blackbird: some wintered on lake plain but 15 at feeder Burgeson Sanc. 12-14 Feb. (DD) probably very early migrants. Pine Grosbeak: two Alfred 15 Dec. (EB). Purple Finch: six SBCC 15 Dec.; 33 SCC 15 Dec.; 23 JCC 16 Dec.; four FCC 1 Jan. were numbers a little above normal. House Finch: 527 JCC 16 Dec. a max – still on increase. Red Crossbill: one ASP 13 Jan. (TB); four Alfred 22 Feb. a max (CK). White-winged Crossbill: one Alfred 1 Feb. (EB). Pine Siskin: 90+ Amity L. 4 Dec. (VP). Am. Goldfinch: 120 SCC 15 Dec.; 47 SBCC 15 Dec.; 143 JCC 16 Dec.; 9 FCC 1 Jan. Evening Grosbeak: one Alfred 15 Dec., three and two 18 & 26 Jan., 10 on 22 Feb. (CK); 32 ASP 30 Dec. (TB); one Wales 13, 15, 29 Jan. (OR); one-20 Amity L. 20-31 Jan., one-31 through Feb. (VP); one Ten Mile Rd., Catt. Co. 28 Jan. (SE); one Farmersville Sta. 8 Feb. (DC); seven Fentonville, Chaut. Co. 21 Feb. (JP); 65 Whitesville, All. Co. a max 17 Feb. (H. Ward).

Ten Mile Rd., Allegany, New York 14706

REGION 2 – GENESEE

KEVIN C. GRIFFITH

It appeared as though winter was going to bypass us this year. December's average temperature was a sultry 35.9°. That was a staggering 6.9° above average. Precipitation was only .72" above normal, but warm temperatures provided spring-like conditions for the Christmas Bird Counts. Just when it appeared as though winter might not arrive, reality set in and it began to snow, and snow, and snow. Not a day went by in January without some snowfall. The average temperature was 21.9°, and the measurable precipitation was 2.49". The persistent snow made birding difficult and uncomfortable. The snow continued into February but subsided by the end of the month as quite often is the case. The monthly average temperature was 25.6°, and the precipitation amounted to 1.78". Both figures were slightly above normal.

The season featured some interesting highlights and noteworthy observations. The warm spell produced some surprisingly late individuals and may have contributed to some of the ones that wintered here. One of the most fascinating wintering birds was the immature Black-crowned Night-Heron. The warm waters from a power station provided an ideal wintering spot. Wintering waterfowl species were generally typical with good numbers of Oldsquaw. Great Black-backed Gulls continued their mercurial rise with good numbers everywhere along the lakeshore. Once again Snowy Owls were predictable with at least three separate birds frequenting traditional haunts. There were also numerous reports of other individuals. N. Saw-whet Owl reports seemed up with a report from a known nesting area. The return of Red-headed Woodpeckers was most