

REGION 3 – FINGER LAKES

DICK CLEMENTS

The period's weather started out as if we were going to have a wicked winter as early December cold and a 6-8 inch snowfall on the sixth sent us reeling. It didn't last however, as the rest of the month was very mild including a couple of record high temperatures. It was 60 degrees on 29 December at 11:00 p.m. in Pine City. The Elmira Christmas Bird Count was conducted on 1 January in a soaking rain, and mild temperatures with singing Am. Robins. December averaged six degrees above normal.

January on the other hand averaged three degrees below normal as most of the ponds froze over. From approximately mid-January to mid-February, the temperature never rose above the freezing mark. February was much better, averaging two degrees above normal despite the minus 15° reading around the sixth. The temperature rose above 60° F. on the 24th and the geese, blackbirds and robins returned in numbers.

Snowfall was hardly enough to notice as both Ithaca and Elmira registered paltry amounts. Ithaca had 31 inches, 20 inches below normal. The mild weather in December was no doubt responsible for more waterfowl observations and an increase in the number of lingering passerines. Some notable late or non-departers were Double-crested Cormorant, Green-backed Heron, Wood Duck, Spotted Sandpiper, Red-headed Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Marsh Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, Gray Catbird, Brown Thrasher, Water Pipit, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Rufous-sided Towhee, Savannah, Swamp, and White-crowned Sparrows, Rusty Blackbird.

A bird in a category all its own was the Yellow-throated Warbler spotted in Ithaca. This bird is very rare in our region, especially so late in the year. The bird cooperated nicely and even sang for the observers.

Most observers agree that birds were present in lower numbers at feeders. The No. Cardinal received the most "Where are they?" comments. Your editor usually has 10-15 of these birds at his feeders in Pine City around dusk, but this year only four-five. However, one was able to find many of these birds feeding on dogwood berries and multiflora rose hips in nearby open woods and fields. A pair of No. Mockingbirds usually found in our backyards were often seen in this same habitat "miles from home." Likewise, the abundant weed seeds and enormous cone crop kept many of our finches away. Some birders in the Watkins Glen and Ithaca areas were blessed with sightings of Pine Grosbeak, Red Crossbill, White-winged Crossbill and Pine Siskin. Most of us however missed out on our winter finches and weren't even granted a glimpse of an Evening Grosbeak. Selected species of waterfowl observed during the waterfowl count period are listed according to location sighted.

	Cay. L	Keu. L	Sen. L*	Can. L	Chem. R**
Com. Loon	6	11		4	
Pied-billed Grebe	2	4		2	
Horned Grebe	40	14	2		

	Cay. L	Keu. L	Sen. L*	Can. L	Chem. R**
Red-necked Grebe	1	2			
Am. Black Duck	970	147	70		20
Mallard	1512	484	1000 +	700 +	83
Gadwall	80	4			
Canvasback	302	734		24	
Redhead	1608	1054	23	1380	
Greater Scaup	115	1	485		
Lesser Scaup	9	6			
Scaup sp.	522				
Com. Goldeneye	354	60	98	3	7
Bufflehead	27	47	42	31	
Hooded Merganser	22	28		2	
Com. Merganser	200				3

* area near Watkins Glen, only available data.

** area near Elmira.

Abbreviations: Can-Canandaigua; Cay-Cayuga; Chem-Chemung; ECC-Elmira Christmas Count; ICC-Ithaca Christmas Count; Keu-Keuka; L-Lake; MCC-Montezuma Christmas Count; MNWR-Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge; QC-Queen Catherine Marsh; Schuy-Schuyler; SCC-Schuyler County Christmas Count; Sen-Seneca.

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LOONS-DUCKS: Com. Loon: three ICC. Pied-billed Grebe: one occasional Watkins Glen thru; four Myers Pt. 24 Feb; two Dresden 11 Jan. Red-necked Grebe: one Long Pt. 11 Feb. Double-crested Cormorant: one Watkins Glen Jan; two Lodi Pt. 27 Jan, one with wing tangled in fishing line, eventually died. Great Blue Heron: several sightings throughout our area during the period. **GREEN-BACKED HERON**: one ICC, first record. Tundra Swan: 40 MNWR 15 Dec; five MCC; one Keu L. Jan; seven Geneva 28 Feb. Mute Swan: a possible feral family seen Cay L. thru Feb. Snow Goose: two MCC. Brant: one Long Pt. 1 Dec. Canada Goose: many wintered; first migratory flights around 20 Feb. Wood Duck: three QC 18 Dec. Am. Black Duck: 153 SCC 29 Dec, new high. No. Pintail: six SCC, first record. Blue-winged Teal: MCC. No. Shoveler: five Cay L. 3 Dec. Gadwall: 120 Cay L. 15 Dec; 100 MNWR 12 Dec. Am. Wigeon: 28 MNWR 21 Dec; four SCC. Ring-necked Duck: 200 MNWR 12 Dec; 30 Cay L. 15 Dec. Greater Scaup: 485 Sen L. 11 Jan. Oldsquaw: one Elmira 11 Dec; two Myers Pt. 15 Dec. White-winged Scoter: one Sheldrake 27 Jan; two Keu L. 27 Jan. Com. Goldeneye: sighted in all areas thru. Hooded Merganser: 200 Cay L. 12 Dec; 350 MNWR 12 Dec. Red-breasted Merganser: 158 Cay L. 15 Dec; two MCC.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Bald Eagle: one imm. tagged with blue and yellow streamers Hibiscus Harbor 13 Dec; one Union Springs 24 Dec reportedly released Tupper L. region 1981; one imm. with yellow tag Sen L. in Jan. No. Harrier: many reports Ithaca area thru; present thru Schuy Co.; three Elmira 26 Jan. Sharp-shinned Hawk: three ICC plus other reports thru; one ECC. Cooper's Hawk: reported in all areas including one found dead in Horseheads with no apparent injuries. No. Goshawk: one adult Connecticut Hill 27 Jan; one S. Darby 14 Feb. Red-tailed Hawk: numbers down Watkins Glen area; building new nest after losing old one to a Great Horned Owl near Phelps; seven ECC; 20 ICC; both low. Rough-legged Hawk: seen in all areas but very few except the 11 spotted near Aurora 10 Dec. Am. Kestrel: scarce but regular; feeding on suet and possibly "other things" near Phelps. Ruffed Grouse: good numbers Schuy Co.; ten ICC. Wild Turkey: gradually increas-

ing around Phelps and Penn Yan areas; none ICC; only two ECC. Am. Coot: 88 SCC, new high. Killdeer: two ICC; two Cay L. area late Feb. Spotted Sandpiper: one East Corning 1 Dec. Bonaparte's Gull: Sheldrake 26 Jan. Iceland Gull: two ICC. Great Black-backed Gull: present thru Ithaca and Watkins Glen; one Elmira 19 Jan, first winter report since 1978.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: E. Screech-Owl: four ECC and regularly calling thru; one found dead south of Ithaca holding dead Blue Jay 8 Feb. Great Horned Owl: four ICC; present QC thru; on nest Phelps 14 Feb. Snowy Owl: one Dresden Dec and Jan; one Branchport Jan; one emaciated bird brought to the Cornell Laboratory of Ornithology 3 Feb, eventually died. Barred Owl: one S. Darby 28 Jan; one near Sapsucker Woods 14 Feb. Short-eared Owl: 15 Penn Yan thru; two near Aurora 16 Jan. **NO. SAW-WHET OWL:** one Ithaca 16 Jan; one calling S. Darby 20 Feb. Belted Kingfisher: four ECC; six ICC. Red-headed Woodpecker: one at suet feeder Phelps area thru. Red-bellied Woodpecker: down in numbers Schuy Co. but regular at QC; regular Phelps area. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: one imm. Pine City; one imm. Corning 18 Dec; one Odessa Jan and Feb; one ICC and two Jan and Feb reports from Ithaca. Hairy Woodpecker: numbers down. No. Flicker: 26 ICC; five QC thru; up in numbers in most of region. Pileated Woodpecker: numbers holding steady.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Horned Lark: no large flocks reported; several displaying and singing at Watkins Glen Race Track 28 Feb. Blue Jay: conflicting comments but most agree numbers at feeders up this year; an amazing 40 plus at feeder in S. Darby. Fish Crow: three ICC. Red-breasted Nuthatch: nine ECC, high; not an incursion year for our region. Brown Creeper: five ECC; 27 ICC, high. Carolina Wren: present Ithaca thru; two regular QC; one at feeder Pine City 1 Feb. Winter Wren: one QC thru; one Hammondsport Jan; absent from ECC. Marsh Wren: one QC, present until 29 Dec. Golden-crowned Kinglet: favorable reports from all areas; "always easy to find," Elmira. Ruby-crowned Kinglet: one ECC; one ICC (5th record). E. Bluebird: wintered throughout most of our area with a max 14 near Penn Yan. Hermit Thrush: one ICC. Am. Robin: flock of 100 plus seen regularly in Schuy Co.; 20 ECC; six ICC; over 90 Penn Yan area thru. Gray Catbird: one Sapsucker Woods Rd. 3 Dec; one netted and banded Penn Yan 9 Dec. No. Mockingbird: observations down. Brown Thrasher: one ICC. Water Pipit: seen Ithaca area first week in Dec. No. Shrike: one Dundee, date unknown; Ithaca Dec and Feb; Watkins Glen 11 Dec.

VIREOS-WARBLEDERS: Yellow-rumped Warbler: five Aurora 2 Dec; seven Stewart Pk 2 Dec; small flock Penn Yan area Jan; **YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER:** one adult male Stewart Pk 1-2 Dec (P. Hunt, S. Lang).

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: No. Cardinal: numbers down everywhere. Rufous-sided Towhee: one to two at feeders in Phelps thru; one ECC; Ithaca area intermittently thru. Field Sparrow: max three QC thru. Savannah Sparrow: Myers Pt. 9 Dec last report. Swamp Sparrow: several QC thru; one ICC. White-throated Sparrow: no large flocks but enough to make feeder areas more interesting. White-crowned Sparrow: max six at feeder in Phelps area during Jan; one Sen Falls 10 Jan thru 21 Jan. Lapland Longspur: Ithaca area Dec. and Jan. Snow Bunting: over 200 Schuy Co 6 Jan; 200 plus Ithaca area early Dec; present in Elmira, Penn Yan and Canandaigua areas. Red-winged Blackbird: 25 ICC: few individuals elsewhere until late Feb. E. Meadowlark: one ICC: one Elmira 26 Jan. Rusty Blackbird: four ICC, second record; five QC 19 Jan; 13 QC 5 Feb. Com. Grackle: 100 SCC; one ECC; one ICC. Brown-headed Cowbird: 31 ICC. Pine Grosbeak: ten S. Darby 24 Dec. Purple Finch: flocks of 15-20 Ithaca early Jan; 20 Elmira late Jan; regular in conifers Watkins area thru; scarce Penn Yan. Red Crossbill: eight Hector Land Use Area 14 Jan; five reports in Ithaca area including a foraging flock on Cornell Campus in Feb. White-winged Crossbill: Hammond Hill Rd. 16 Feb. Redpolls: none. Pine Siskin: one ICC; 30 Monterey 12 Jan. Am. Goldfinch: present in conifers Schuy Co. Evening Grosbeak: regular in state forests in western Schuy Co.; low numbers or completely absent in most of our region.

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