

REGION 1 – NIAGARA FRONTIER

STEPHEN W. EATON

The *Buffalo News* called it . . . "the gloomiest stretch ever in Buffalo, or anywhere in the U.S." December records at Buffalo showed at least a trace of snow on 29 days, the heaviest occurring from 13 to 19 Dec. It was a month of record snowfall, officially 68.4 inches, mainly due to snow bursts off Lake Erie when the winds were WSW and off Lake Ontario when the winds were from the North. Genesee, Wyoming, southern Cattaraugus and Allegany Counties had much smaller snowfalls. The month's sunshine total was 10% of the possible. On 2 Dec 50-60 mph winds drove Lake Erie levels to record heights and caused much erosion along the lake shore.

January was relatively mild. Average temperatures were two degrees above normal and an unusual January thaw kept the ground nearly free of snow, except in snow belt areas, from 16 to 26 Jan. Only one inconvenient snow of 3-6 inches occurred on 5 Jan. Total snow for the month was 17.3 inches, seven inches below normal. A peak gust of 53 mph occurred on the 5th. February was still gloomy with about 22% possible sunshine compared to a normal of 38%. There was one major snowstorm of 7 inches at Buffalo on 7 Feb. Peak wind gusts of 40 mph occurred on 15 Feb. Total snow at Buffalo International Airport was 17.3 inches, about normal.

Although the weather was gloomy, temperatures remained relatively mild. The lowest at Buffalo was -3° but -20° at Jamestown and Olean—on 15 Jan. At Belmont in the Genesee Valley the lowest temperature was -3° on 7 Jan. The relatively mild winter produced some interesting records of birds which apparently survived the winter in this rather exposed part of the State, in the lee of Lake Erie and on the High Plateau: a Great Blue Heron in Amity Township on 8 Feb; Wood Duck, Ring-necked Duck, American Coot, and Tundra Swan at Dunkirk Harbor all winter; a Common Snipe in Chautauqua Co. on 17 Jan, 16 Feb and 22 Feb; and a Hermit Thrush at Lake Erie State Park on 15 Jan (DG). Unusual numbers of American Robin, Yellow-rumped Warbler and Field Sparrow were reported as well.

Referring to Dunkirk Harbor in February, Terry Mosher said, "The harbor's been jumping." Eight species of gulls there, including Laughing, Iceland and Glaucous, and many interesting waterfowl were reported. Both Glaucous and Iceland Gulls also were reported from the Niagara River through the period but in modest numbers. Both Little Gulls and Lesser Black-backed Gulls were scarcer than in several years. One adult **COMMON BLACK-HEADED GULL**, the only true rarity, was seen on the lower river at Lewiston most of December and January. Common Merganser and Mallard were the commonest waterfowl on the annual Waterfowl Census. No rare ducks were seen on the Niagara River.

From Allegany and Cattaraugus Counties people wondered where the Blue Jays had gone. Land birds generally seemed scarce to Terry Mosher and Fran Rew in Chautauqua County. Bob Sundell said that, except for Dunkirk Harbor, birding was mediocre. Vivian Pitzrick said February was a slow month and that no migration had started by the end of the period.

Very poor seed production by trees and shrubs of the Southern Tier counties may have been responsible for the general lack of land birds. Feeders were more attractive to birds than in 1985. A Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Red-bellied Woodpeckers, Red-headed Woodpeckers, and Pileated Woodpeckers were all reported at feeders.

Winter finches came into the Region in fair numbers. A few Lapland Longspurs joined the large Snow Bunting flocks. A few Pine Grosbeaks appeared but numbers were nothing like the big flight of 1961, more like 1973. Common Redpolls also came south, but not in the numbers as in the winter of 1976-77. Evening Grosbeaks, those garrulous frequenters of feeders, came to the Southern Tier counties in about normal numbers.

Rare species reported were Eared Grebe, Pomarine Jaeger, Laughing Gull, Black-headed Gull, and Bohemian Waxwing.

Contributors: Allegany County Bird Club, Adams, Robert Andrie, Tim Baird, Bellerby, Elizabeth Brooks, Lou and Doris Burton, Buffalo Ornithological Society, Cattaraugus County Bird Club, Don and Jane Clark, Dave Dister, Stephen Eaton, Dave Gagne, Gardiner, Jamestown Audubon Society, Carl Johnson, Walter and Harriet Klabunde, Lake Erie Bird Club, Terry Mahoney (TMA), Terry and Judy Mosher, Bob Peterson, Vivian and Raymond Pitzrick, Fran Rew, Art Schaffner, Robert Sundell, Joe Thill.

Abbreviations: BOS – Buffalo Ornithological Society, DH – Dunkirk Harbor, FCBC – Fredonia Christmas Bird Count, JCBC – Jamestown Christmas Bird Count, SBCBC – St. Bonaventure Christmas Bird Count, SCBC – Scio Christmas Bird Count.

LOONS-DUCKS: Com. Loon: last Niagara Falls 14 Dec. Pied-billed Grebe: max 17 DH 26 Jan, unusual concentration. Horned Grebe: max three Ft. Niagara SP 1 Dec. Red-necked Grebe: max three DH 11 Feb. **EARED GREBE**: one DH 8 Dec (DG), about twelfth record for Niagara Frontier. Double-crested Cormorant: last DH 28 Dec. Black-crowned Night-Heron: one DH 8 Jan; one Grand Island 27 Jan. Tundra Swan: max 68 Mayville 6 Dec; one DH entire period, wounded?; arr nine Lakewood 5 Feb (CK). Mute Swan: DH entire period. Snow Goose: one DH after 10 Feb. King Eider: max four mouth Niagara River 1 Dec. Oldsquaw: over 15,000 mouth Niagara River 20 Dec (Bellerby), unprecedented number. White-winged Scoter: max 500 mouth Niagara River 22 Jan. Hooded Merganser: fall concentration decreased to 330 Mayville 8 Dec, and 144 JCBC 22 Dec. Red-breasted Merganser: max 1750 DH 29 Dec. Ruddy Duck: max 95 DH 29 Dec.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Osprey: one JCBC 22 Dec, late. Bald Eagle: max three JCBC 22 Dec; one adult Salamanca 11 Jan; im with green wing tag Lewiston 12 Jan; two im mouth Niagara River 21 Jan. Killdeer: max three Prendergast Pt 8 Dec; one SBCBC 21 Dec, unusually late. Com. Snipe: three Kiantone 22 Dec. Purple Sandpiper: max four Niagara Falls 1 Dec; one Goat Island 15 Feb. **POMARINE JAEGER**: one Bird Is, Buffalo 2 Jan (AS, RA). Parasitic Jaeger: one adult DH 15 Dec (*vide* RS; TMA, BP). **LAUGHING GULL**: one DH 20-27 Feb (TM), unusual on Great Lakes but increasing.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Snowy Owl: arr Wheatfield Twn 5 Jan; one Times Beach, Buffalo 28 Feb, not a flight year! Short-eared Owl: max three Wilson Twn 1 Jan; one Porter Twn 4 Jan, only reports. Red-bellied Woodpecker: singles in three areas frequenting feeders. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: one at feeder Lewiston 15-30 Dec, 5-30 Jan (W & HK). Pileated Woodpecker: one Amity Lake 15 Dec, eating sumac (*Rhus typhina*) (VP); also eating sumac brought to feeder (Adams).

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Horned Lark: *E. a. alpestris*, max 100 Pomfret Twn 8 Jan; *E. a. praticola*, 10 Pomfret Twn 26 Jan (TM), migrants. Com. Raven: two Vandermark

State Forest 7 Dec (EB); one over Allegany 13 Feb, attacked by pair of crows, circled up and flew S (SE). Am. Robin: max 125 Porter Twn 12 Jan; nine other reports from Region (BOS). Cedar Waxwing: 66 FCBC 21 Dec; 24 Lake Erie SP 15 Jan; three Amity L 28 Feb. **BOHEMIAN WAXWING**: two Porter Twn 1 Dec (Collins), an uncommon winter visitor seen also 27 Nov. N. Shrike: reported from 12 locations in Region during period, a flight year.

VIREOS-WARBLEDERS: Yellow-rumped Warbler: max 24 Portland Twn 15 Jan, in two flocks of 10 and 14; one Amity L 6 Jan, unusual away from lake plain in winter; six Portland Twn 16 Feb may have overwintered successfully.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: N. Cardinal: 275 JCBC (9.2/person); 68 FCBC (4.8/person); 27 SBCBC (2.7/person); 87 SCBC (2.7/person), illustrates influence of lake plain and large residential areas on presence. Chipping Sparrow: one Pomfret Twn 5 Dec (T & JM) late. Field Sparrow: one Darien 14 Dec to 12 Jan, at feeder; one Belmont 7-25 Feb (D & LB), becoming regular regional winter visitor. Lapland Longspur: max four Pomfret Twn 16 Feb, four other reports from lake plain. Snow Bunting: max 500 Kiantone 14 Feb; 300 Pomfret Twn 16 Feb; 50 Amity Twn 7 Feb; 50 Alfred 8 Feb; many flocks elsewhere, a good flight year. N. Oriole: one Stowe to 13 Dec, at feeder. Pine Grosbeak: max ten Alfred 4 Dec; five other smaller flocks reported in Region during period. House Finch: max 767 JCBC 22 Dec (527 in 1985); 245 FCBC 21 Dec; 33 SBCBC 21 Dec; 225 SCBC, still on increase. Com. Redpoll: max 159 Pomfret Twn 15 Feb, counted with telescope top of large willows (DG, TM); 13 other scattered reports, a fair flight year. Am. Goldfinch: max 55 Lewiston feeder Jan, scarcer than in 1984 and 1985. Evening Grosbeak: 11 reports Feb, 13 reports Jan and seven reports Feb (BOS noteworthy records); 472 JCBC 22 Dec; 145 FCBC 21 Dec; 44 SBCBC, 359 SCBC, most common S of Buffalo.

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REGION 2 – GENESEE

KEVIN C. GRIFFITH

This winter had a mixed bag of credentials. Weather systems and patterns were not typical and provided some interesting conditions. December blasted us with cold air. The average temperature was 24°, a full 4° below normal. There was snow of course, but the total precipitation was 1.13" below normal at 1.46". January, in contrast, proved to be warmer than usual, with an average temperature of 25°, 1.4° above the norm. Precipitation amounted to 1.63", 0.67" less than the average. Thus continued the dry weather. February's average temperature was very near normal at 24.5°, but precipitation reversed the earlier trend. It measured 2.46", 1.4" above the normal.