

## REGION 3 – FINGER LAKES

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The Northeast Regional Climate Center at Cornell University reported December temperatures averaging three degrees below normal. The early days of the month showed the warmest weather, with temperatures in the 40's and 50's. Strong cold fronts passed through on 2 and 13 December, and the remainder of the month had temperatures below the freezing mark. The first weeks of January remained quite cold, especially between the 7th and the 9th with temperatures zero or less. Beginning around 17 January, however, we had a period of much warmer than normal temperatures which extended into February. Indeed, the coldest temperatures of February were not really very cold compared to long-term averages.

Fruit and cone crops were strikingly different from the 1984-85 season. Overall, food crops of cones and fruits were scanty, in contrast to the abundant supply of food one year ago. Ornamental crabapples were an exception. Their abundant crop of fruits were heavily used by Pine Grosbeak, which would carefully extract seeds from the crabapple pulp. The first Pine Grosbeaks reported this season were observed on the ground eating a scant crop of Partridgeberry. Many observers reported Blue Jay as scarcer than usual, while others reported them as more conspicuous at feeders this year, gorging their crops with seed. Last year's complaints of a lack of Northern Cardinals at feeders eased this year, with many reports of up to a dozen Cardinals per feeder. Could the response of these two species owe to the low mast and seed crop this year? There was little production of cones. Red-breasted Nuthatch reports decreased sharply in December after frequent reports during the fall season. Crossbills and other cone specialists did not remain through the season. Common Redpolls were reported eating goldenrod and other weed seeds.

Among the reports of special interest are: An immature male Rose-breasted Grosbeak, reported throughout November and December at an Ithaca feeder (*fide* McIlroy), was also recorded for the 1 Jan Ithaca CBC and was last seen 23 Jan. A characteristically tame Northern Saw-whet Owl roosted at the Melin & Smith home on Turkey Hill Rd. on 22 Dec. A male **VARIED THRUSH** used a feeder near Slaterville Springs 1 Feb, and was observed several times until 6 Mar. A Gray Catbird using Multiflora Rose for food and shelter in Ithaca on 31 Jan was last seen 15 Feb. A **YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER** in Ithaca 26 Nov. (*fide* S. Sibley) was last seen 13 Dec. This bird appeared at a feeder during the first freezing temperatures of the winter, using a brushy south-facing slope in the yard for shelter. On 13 Dec, following a week of warmer than normal temperatures, a strong storm arrived and marked a major change in the weather including heavy snow and a significant drop in temperature.

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Abbreviations: ECBC – Elmira Christmas Bird Count; ICBC – Ithaca Christmas Bird Count; MCBC – Montezuma Christmas Bird Count; SCBC – Schuyler County Christmas Bird Count; CVCBC – Chemung Valley Audubon Christmas Count.

LOONS-DUCKS: Com. Loon: four ICBC, two SCBC. Pied-billed Grebe: two ICBC, three SCBC. Horned Grebe: reports scarce all season; one ICBC, three SCBC. Red-necked Grebe: max two ICBC. Double-crested Cormorant: single bird reported at Watkins Glen 4 Feb, a rare report for this season. Great Blue Heron: singles reported all season throughout Region. Tundra Swan: max 70 MNWR 4 Dec. Canada Goose: 275 ICBC, 363 SCBC, 984 MCBC. Wood Duck: one or two males present all season at Sapsucker Woods Sanctuary; no other reports. Green-winged Teal: last 2 Dec. Am. Black Duck: max 346 Cayuga Lake 12 Jan. Mallard: max 945 Cayuga Lake 12 Jan. No. Pintail: male at Union Springs 8 Jan, uncommon winter. Gadwall: present in small numbers all season. Canvasback: max 536 ICBC. Redhead: max 4886 Cayuga Lake 12 Jan. Oldsquaw: conspicuously absent. White-winged Scoter: only three reports. Com. Merganser: max 17 SCBC. Red-breasted Merganser: max 16 MCBC.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Turkey Vulture: one near Elmira 17 and 22 Dec, (*fide* M. Welles), late. Bald Eagle: Union Springs 8 Jan, in an area of extensive lake ice, open water, and waterfowl concentrations. Bald Eagles have been reported annually in this area since 1983. Red-tailed Hawk: max 70 ICBC. Rough-legged Hawk: max 18 CVCBC. Wild Turkey: increasing throughout Region, frequently reported, max 23 Ithaca NYSEG 16 Jan. Gulls: Ring-billed 230, Herring 344, Great Black-backed 38, all max, from ICBC. "White-winged" gulls: none.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: E. Screech-Owl: several reports, max three CVCBC. Great Horned Owl: six ICBC, seven CVCBC. Barred Owl: one report Ithaca 27 Jan. Short-eared Owl: one report Chemung Bridge & Rt. 17 22 Dec. Woodpeckers: Red-bellied 35, Downy 208, Hairy 60, N. Flicker 7, Pileated 11, all max from ICBC.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Horned Lark: max 176 ICBC. Fish Crow: arr Stewart Park 26 Jan. Red-breasted Nuthatch: max 19 ICBC. Carolina Wren: numbers appear to be at a relative high, following several mild winters since 1976-77, widespread, max six ICBC, three SCBC. Golden-crowned Kinglet: frequent fall reports of flocks along with Red-breasted Nuthatch; remained in unusually high numbers all season, max 85 ICBC, including one flock of over a dozen birds. Cedar Waxwing: scattered reports and not seen as regularly as last year, when the fruit crop was abundant and widespread. N. Shrike: total of eight reports from throughout Region.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: Am. Tree Sparrow: plentiful throughout Region, max 506 ICBC. Song Sparrow: fewer than usual wintered this year, although widespread in small numbers. White-throated Sparrow: present through Region, max 90 ICBC. White-crowned Sparrow: singles Newark 17 Dec, Ithaca 11 Jan. Lapland Longspur: four reports from throughout Region. Snow Bunting: flocks reported throughout Region, max 400 ICBC. Red-winged Blackbird: present all season in small numbers. Pine Grosbeak: flocks of six to a dozen birds reported by all contributors, max 87 ICBC, 50 Hector Forest 16 Feb. House Finch: numbers leveling off although still abundant, max 1104 ICBC. Com. Redpoll: five reports, max 100 (M. Lerch). Pine Siskin: scattered reports of five or less; none persistent. Evening Grosbeak: reported consistently all season, max 862 ICBC. House Sparrow: reported throughout Region as decreasing and less visible at feeders, but total numbers still substantial; max 1088 ICBC.

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[On behalf of the Federation, thanks to Dick Clements for the fine job he has done as Region 3 Editor for the past two years – The Editor.]