

REGION 2 – GENESEE

KEVIN C. GRIFFITH

If you are a fan of typical winter weather, then this wasn't your year. December was warm and wet, with above average temperatures most of the month and precipitation nearly an inch above normal. Snowfall measured only 9.3 inches, about half the average total. Early January continued warm until a cold snap hit about the middle of the month. Even so, the average temperature was 25.3°, 1.7° above average. Precipitation was 0.4 inches below average. Snowfall was up 6.6 inches but still left the season total below normal. February was the driest in 100 years. Precipitation totaled a paltry 0.66 inches compared to a norm of 2.32 inches. A few warm spells during the month kept the average temperature up and just slightly below normal.

The above average temperatures much of the season made birding relative easy and comfortable. It also provided for much open water. This obviously contributed to high numbers of Great Blue Heron and to a record late Green-backed Heron that was sighted in the Naples area on 1 Jan by Betty and Martin Baker. It also seemed conducive to wintering Wood Duck, which once again were evident in the Region. The open water did not appear to have much influence on the overall waterfowl population, for totals generally were down a little.

The minimal snow cover was attractive to birds of prey. There were excellent numbers of Snowy Owl, Short-eared Owl and Northern Shrike. Rough-legged Hawk was plentiful early in the season but diminished in numbers towards the latter part. American Kestrel also was found in good numbers. The light snow cover also proved beneficial to some open country birds. Common Redpoll, which often feeds in fields, remained away from feeders during most of the season but could be found working fields along the shore of Lake Ontario west of Rochester in large numbers. The open conditions also seemed to keep some species away from feeders. Even though it was relatively mild, there were not many half hardy species. Totals for some species were notably low. Hermit Thrush was conspicuously absent, Red-breasted Nuthatch numbers were a bit below recent winters and Purple Finch continued its downward trend in the Region.

The cold spell that hit in January had some impact on the season. Of note is the sudden disappearance of some of the Snowy Owls that were conspicuous earlier in the season. Interestingly enough, their numbers increased again after the cold snap. The cold provided some ice for observation of gull concentrations. However, gull counts in general were down from usual numbers. Iceland and Glaucous Gull reports were sparse in the first half of the season. One of the more interesting species to show reduced numbers was Great Black-backed Gull, which has been increasing in recent years. This season they seemed to drop in numbers and were not found in usual numbers along the shore of Lake Ontario.

The Regional Christmas Bird Counts were about average in terms of number of species but totals of individuals were low. The Rochester Count featured a Common Black-headed Gull, and Ruby-crowned Kinglet was a good sighting also. New high counts were established for Eastern Screech-Owl, Great Horned

Owl, Eastern Bluebird and White-winged Crossbill. House Finch continued its climb with a total of 762 but even more may have been present. The Little Lakes Count also included new highs for some species, including Common Loon, Gadwall and Black-capped Chickadee.

Although the total number of species sighted was very high, there were few early arrivals. This was especially true of waterfowl. Rarities included Western Grebe, Eurasian Wigeon, Black-legged Kittiwake, Varied Thrush and Hoary Redpoll while Green-backed Heron, Cape May Warbler were unexpected stragglers from the fall.

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Abbreviations: BB-Braddock Bay; CaL-Canadaigua Lake; CoL-Conesus Lake; DEP-Durand Eastman Park and adjacent water, Rochester; IB-Irondequoit Bay; LL-Little Lakes; SB-Sodus Bay; WL-shore of Lake Ontario west of Rochester.

LOONS-DUCKS: Red-throated Loon: singles WL 6 Dec, SB 14 Jan, CaL 1 Feb, scarce in winter. Com. Loon: max two SB 1 Jan. Pied-billed Grebe: several singles during the season. Horned Grebe: max 26 East Lakeshore 1 Jan, high for winter. Red-necked Grebe: singles Manitou 7 Jan and 28 Feb, probably the same individual. **WESTERN GREBE**: one off East Manitou Road, Greece, 6 Dec (RS) and off DEP 20 Dec (RS), first confirmed Regional record since 1965. Double-crested Cormorant: one Pultneyville 11-18 Jan, almost annual in winter now. **GREEN-BACKED HERON**: intro. Tundra Swan: Mute Swan: max 26 CoL 6 Dec. Snow Goose: one Letchworth SP 7 Feb, very unusual. Wood Duck: max Penfield 10 Jan. N. Pintail: one SB 1-7 Feb. N. Shoveler: two CoL 28 Dec (LLCBC). **EURASIAN WIGEON**: male SB 8-12 Feb *(DTe), first Regional winter record. Redhead: max 1000 CaL, high for winter. King Eider: im male Pt Breeze 1-16 Dec (WS), female IB 4 Dec (BK), female BB 7 Dec, im male IB 8-16 Jan (mob), im male BB 14 Feb (BK), plumages suggest several different males present, good total. Surf Scoter: single IB 18-19 Jan and 1, 10 Feb.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Turkey Vulture: one Newark 12 Dec, very late; one Avon 7 Feb, wintering? Bald Eagle: reports from CoL all winter, max two in Dec. N. Goshawk: max two Webster 1-31 Dec. Rough-legged Hawk: max 13 Kendall 16 Dec. Merlin: one Livonia all winter. Wild Turkey: max 7 Hickory Bottom 26 Dec; one Genesee Valley Park, Rochester, 11 Jan, new location. Virginia Rail: one Greece 21 Dec continues trend of winter records. Com. Moorhen: im Greece 12 Dec (RS), very late. Killdeer: four reports of wintering individuals. Com. Snipe: one CoL 28 Dec (LLCBC), one Chili 16-26 Feb. Little Gull: max 21 DEP 4 Jan, three there 3 Feb later than usual. **COM. BLACK-HEADED GULL**: intro. Iceland Gull: Basic II plumage IB 12 Dec, Basic I plumage Manitou 7 Jan,

Basic II plumage BB 16 Feb. Glaucous Gull: two IB 17-30 Jan, one Basic II plumage there 7-10 Feb; ad Greece 15 Feb. **BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE**: two ad Pultneyville 6 Dec (DTe), very unusual inland; im DEP 13 Dec.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Snowy Owl: max four SB Feb, as many as ten reported during season. Short-eared Owl: max 29 Avon-Resoff 25 Jan, secondhand reports of up to 30 WL. Long-eared Owl: one Honeoye Falls 13 Feb; one Manitou 27 Feb probably a migrant. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: one Hamlin 11 Dec, uncommon in winter.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLING: Winter Wren: one DEP 1 Jan. Ruby-crowned Kinglet: two Greece 21 Dec (RCBC), one visiting a feeder Brighton 10-28 Feb (JBR). **VARIED THRUSH**: female DEP 13 Dec (TPe, TK), third Regional record. Gray Catbird: singles BB 21-32 Dec, 3 Jan, CoL 28 Dec, Hamlin 3 Jan. N. Mockingbird: max four Pittsford 6 Feb, good winter total. N. Shrike: very good number throughout the season, found regularly in the field along WL.

VIREOS-WARBLED: **CAPE MAY WARBLER**: one Pittsford 6-25 Jan, good winter report. Com. Yellowthroat: max two Greece 21 Dec (RCBC) and CoL 28 Dec (LLCBC).

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: Rufous-sided Towhee: female Webster 28-31 Dec and 1-16 Feb, probably the same bird. Field Sparrow: max eight CoL 1 Jan, good total for winter. White-crowned Sparrow: im Hamlin 12 Feb, only winter report. Lapland Longspur: max 100 WL 24 Jan. Red-winged Blackbird: low max 26 Rochester 13 Jan. E. Meadowlark: one Hamlin 1 Feb. Rusty Blackbird: two BB 10 Jan, one Greece 21 Dec (DTe). Com. Redpoll: max 1250 WL 17 Feb (KG), excellent numbers this winter. Hoary Redpoll: one IB 24 Dec (J&PS!). Evening Grosbeak: max 104 Springwater 1-15 Dec.

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REGION 3 – FINGER LAKES

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December 1986 was exceptionally cloudy and warmer than normal. There was little if any snowfall during the month in the Finger Lakes. Ithaca, for example, had only 4 inches of snow for December, the least since 1934. There was no snow at all until the end of the month, and cold fronts early in December and at Christmas brought rain and freezing rain. Typical winter weather arrived in the Region late on 1 Jan, with 12 to 17 inches of snow reported in the eastern Finger Lakes. The weather remained seasonal until a monthly temperatures peaked in the 40's on 15 Jan. This was followed by two successive low pressure systems which brought heavy snowfalls of 4 to 8 inches on 19 and 22 Jan. Between 25 and 27 Jan, there were record-breaking low temperatures. Ithaca had a low of -13° on 25 Jan. The month closed with another snowfall on 29 Jan. Although January was sunnier than normal, it was quite snowy. For example, Ithaca recorded it's third greatest January snowfall total with 36.9 inches. February was exceptionally sunny and dry, with unusually cold temperatures. There were two