

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-WOODDPECKERS: Snowy Owl: max four SB Feb, as many as ten reported during season. Short-eared Owl: max 29 Avon-Retsoff 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

to four inches of snow on 8 and 9 Feb, but this was the only significant precipitation until 22 Feb. Cold temperatures and sunny skies were the predominant weather features for February. An arctic cold front from 13 through 17 Feb broke record low temperatures throughout the state. On 15 Feb, Ithaca broke their record with -18° . Following this front, temperatures returned to more seasonal levels for the remainder of the month.

The highlight of the season for many observers was the unusually high numbers of raptors which feed on meadow mice. There were frequent sightings all season of Northern Harrier, Rough-legged Hawk, Snowy Owl, and Short-eared Owl. Observers who walked across the fields where these raptors were feeding could easily observe the abundant tunnels and nests created by meadow mice, as well as observing mice scurrying on top of the snow. One could collect dozens of regurgitated pellets containing the remains of these mice. Northern Harrier were reported throughout the Region all season, with a maximum of eight on the Montezuma Christmas Bird Count. Rough-legged Hawks were well represented on all Christmas Bird Counts, with a maximum of 9 at Ithaca. Snowy Owl, which had been reported early in November at several locations, persisted through December, especially at Hayts Corners and Seneca Lake State Park. After December, reports of Snowy Owl declined. Short-eared Owls were located and observed by many, especially at Hayts Corners and Levanna Road near Aurora. As many as 9 birds were observed at one time, foraging, resting, and vocalizing. Although the owls often were difficult to locate because of their coloration and their habit of sitting on the ground, they were reported consistently through the entire season.

Bald Eagle was well represented on Christmas Counts. Other species present all season throughout the Region were Sharp-shinned, Cooper's, and Red-tailed Hawks, as well as Am. Kestrel. There were very few reports of N. Goshawk. Three owls were reported only on the Ithaca Christmas Count. They were E. Screech-Owl, Barred Owl, and two N. Saw-whet Owls near Dryden, the first ever on this count.

The relatively mild weather early in the season provided Christmas Count observers with an opportunity for waterfowl species counts. Several species of gulls were well represented on Regional Christmas Bird Counts, and there also was a single report of an Iceland Gull. In contrast, Pied-billed Grebe were scarcer than usual, present all season but not more than one per report. As usual, the only report of Wood Duck came from Sapsucker Woods, where three birds overwintered. Oldsquaw once again were conspicuously absent from the Region.

Ruffed Grouse and Ring-necked Pheasant were well represented on Christmas Counts while Wild Turkey was scarce. The Ithaca Christmas Bird Count provided maxima of many species which also were reported regularly all season throughout the Region. These were Great Horned Owl, and Red-bellied, Downy, Hairy, and Pileated Woodpeckers, as well as Northern Flicker. The only reports of Yellow-bellied Sapsucker were from the Ithaca area, where it was reported regularly all season. Blue Jays were present all season, but appeared at feeders more as the season progressed; J. & K. Confer had over 75 at their feeders most of the season. Carolina Wren was reported all season in the Ithaca area, even after the heavy snows and cold spells. However, there was only one report of Carolina Wren

outside the Ithaca area, where a maximum of 9 were found on the Christmas Bird Count. Species reported only on the Region's Christmas Bird Counts included Field Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Common Grackle, and Brown-headed Cowbird. Rounding out the winter season were a trickle of Common Redpoll early in the season, which developed into a substantial 707 on the Montezuma Christmas Bird Count. Redpolls gradually drifted southwards through the Region in ever increasing numbers for a maximum of 1,000 birds 15 Feb at Hayts Corners, and remained in numbers even in southern parts of the Region through the end of February.

The great rarity of the season was a belated Yellow Warbler. Other highlights include White-fronted Goose, Brant, Green-winged and Blue-winged Teal, and Eurasian Wigeon. Christmas Bird Count highlights include Fish Crow, Gray Catbird and Northern Shrike.

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Abbreviations: CCCBC-Cayuga County Christmas Bird Count; ICBC-Ithaca Christmas Bird Count; MCBC-Montezuma Christmas Bird Count.

LOONS-DUCKS: Red-necked Grebe: three reports from Cayuga Lake in Feb. Great Blue Heron: max 16. Tundra Swan: max 23. Greater White-fronted Goose: one Cayuga Lake 20 Dec. Brant: one Aurora 25 Feb. Canada Goose: max 20,510 MCBC. Green-winged Teal: one Myer's Point 22 Feb. Am. Black Duck: max 293. Mallard: max 1261. N. Pintail: singles MCBC and ICBC. Blue-winged Teal: ad. male Owasco Lake on CCCBC. Eurasian Wigeon: two ad males Aurora 5 Feb. Redhead: max 2133. Greater Scaup: max 445. Hooded Merganser: max 15. Com. Merganser: max 39.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Bald Eagle: three MCBC. Ruffed Grouse: ten on both ICBC and MCBC, high. Ring-billed Gull: max 805 ICBC. Herring Gull: max 973 ICBC. Great Black-backed Gull: max 43 ICBC.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: *intro*.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Fish Crow: three Stewart Park ICBC. Black-capped Chickadee: max 1711 ICBC. Tufted Titmouse: max 74 ICBC. Red-breasted Nuthatch: max 32 ICBC. Brown Creeper: max 42 ICBC. Carolina Wren: *intro*. Winter Wren: one Ithaca 28 Jan. Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 72 ICBC. Ruby-crowned Kinglet: one Freeville 28 Feb. E. Bluebird: max 11 ICBC. Am. Robin: max 11 ICBC. Gray Catbird: one near Dryden on ICBC. Cedar Waxwing: max 410 ICBC. Northern Shrike: singles ICBC and CCCBC. European Starling: max 3643 ICBC.

VIREOS-WARBLES: **YELLOW WARBLER**: present near Trumansburg 28 Nov- 5 Dec; normal departure is late September, and the previous record late is 11 Nov 1970 at MNWR (H. Axtell). Yellow-rumped Warbler: several reports throughout Region, max six CCCBC; also present at B. Hamilton's bayberries and feeders in Cayuga Heights through Feb.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: Rufous-sided Towhee: singles Newfield 4 Jan, Ellis Hollow 21 Jan, and Interlaken 26 Jan. Am. Tree Sparrow: max 188 ICBC, low. Savannah Sparrow: four near Ovid 1 Feb, early if not wintering. Song Sparrow: max 14 ICBC. White-throated Sparrow: max 158 ICBC. Dark-eyed Junco: max 226 ICBC. Purple Finch: max 54 ICBC. House Finch: max 2008 ICBC. Pine Siskin: max 48 ICBC. Am. Goldfinch: max 301 ICBC. Evening Grosbeak: max 742 ICBC. House Sparrow: max 784 ICBC.

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