

REGION 3 — FINGER LAKES

C. K. MELIN

December 1987 was warmer than normal with average precipitation. The only outbreak of really cold air occurred on the final two days of the month. There was up to 7 inches of snowfall from 3 through 5 Dec, followed by mild weather and clear skies through 11 Dec, when a low pressure system from the West brought up to 5 inches of snow to the Region. By 18 Dec, another 4 to 7 inches of snow had fallen, following a major storm from the Midwest. The first day of winter, 22 Dec, was warmer than normal, and temperatures remained above normal until the last few days of December, when a coastal storm brought approximately 10 inches of snow to the Region. Following this storm, temperatures fell to below zero throughout the Region and the rest of New York State and remained low through 5 Jan, when an Arctic cold front dropped up to 4 inches of snow in the Finger Lakes. Temperatures during this period were 10 to 15° colder than normal and blustery winds made for bitterly cold wind chills. After 10 Jan, and another 5 inches of new snow, temperatures moderated for a few days. Warmer temperatures in the 30's and 40's prevailed from 16 to 24 Jan. A second thaw from 28-31 Jan brought highs in the 40's to 50's. February 1988 began with this warm weather, followed by a heavy snowfall, very cold air and high pressure on 4 Feb. A second winter storm from 11-13 Feb brought several inches of snow. A period of warm weather followed from 14 to 19 Feb, with temperatures in the 30's and 40's. During this period, Brown Creepers were heard singing in Sapsucker Woods Sanctuary. On 19 Feb, temperatures dropped again, snow fell, and the weather remained seasonably cold temperatures with occasional snowfall for the remainder of February.

At Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, maximum waterfowl numbers all occurred in December, before cold weather froze the pools for the remainder of the season. However, many of these waterfowl species subsequently were reported throughout the Season on Cayuga Lake, although in less spectacular numbers. Maximum numbers for the Region at Montezuma were: 20 Tundra Swan, 20 Snow Goose, 48,000 Canada Goose, 100 Wood Duck, 87,000 Mallard, 300 Pintail, 35,000 Gadwall, 560 Hooded Merganser, and 1,000 Common Merganser. It was estimated that up to 50,000 Canada Geese wintered on Cayuga Lake this season. Common Loon, Pied-billed Grebe, and Horned Grebe were reported regularly all Season on Cayuga Lake. There were no reports of Green-winged Teal, Brant, Ruddy Duck, and all three scoter species.

Early in January, Montezuma NWR manager Gene Hocutt announced the successful relocation of the Bald Eagle nest at the Refuge. The nest had been the summer home of the adult eagles which successfully produced two eaglets in 1987 and was one of only two successful nests in New York State in 1987. It was the first successful Bald Eagle nesting at Montezuma since 1956. The relocation was taken to prevent the almost certain loss of the nest, which was precariously perched some 50 feet up in a rotten, dead elm tree that was virtually certain to fall during winter storms, or lost while eggs or young eaglets were in the nest. Experts generally agree that second-year nesting success for relatively inexperienced birds is enhanced if the preceding year's nest is still intact. Bald

Eagles use the same nest year after year, adding new sticks to the nest each spring. To relocate this nest, a 75-foot pole was installed by NYSEG employees only 6 feet away from the nest and nest tree. A "cradle" was positioned and bolted into place at the 50-foot level of the pole. The supporting limbs of the nest were cut loose, and the nest was secured to the new platform. Three adult Bald Eagles were present at MNWR all Season, and were observed sitting on the newly relocated nest, as well as on the Osprey nest at the Refuge. Bald Eagles were also reported outside the Refuge in the vicinity of the N.Y.S. Barge Canal.

Temperatures were seasonably cold for Christmas Counts in the Region, but a lack of substantial snow cover made many birds harder to find, as they were not concentrated at feeding stations. However, there were many highlights worth noting. At southern locations in the Region, there were record-breaking high counts of Wild Turkey: 65 in Watkins Glen, 38 in Ithaca, and 58 in Elmira. Also counted in record high numbers throughout the Region were Mourning Dove (max 648 at Elmira) and Great Black-backed Gull (max 47 at Ithaca). Other Christmas Bird Count highs for the Region included 47 Gadwall and 1,800 Redhead at Auburn, and 206 Greater Scaup and 16 Fish Crow at Ithaca. There were many Christmas Count reports of relatively uncommon winter residents: Red-bellied Woodpecker, Eastern Bluebird, American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, Rufous-sided Towhee, Field Sparrow, and Rusty Blackbird. Cedar Waxwing was very scarce, and observers noted a corresponding lack of appropriate food crops.

Short-eared Owls were present all Season at Hayt's Corners near Ovid. They had previously wintered in this area, so the site was carefully checked each weekend after early November 1987. The Short-eared Owls were first sighted 6 Dec, when 5 were counted one mile due west of Hayt's Corners. Short-eared Owls were reported from this location each weekend until 10 Jan, when birders discovered them flying out of their roosting site, a partially collapsed abandoned house. For the remainder of the Season, up to a dozen Short-eared Owls were present at or near this site, and were observed roosting, foraging, vocalizing, and driving off Northern Harriers in the area. Other raptors present at Hayt's Corners were Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Great Horned Owl, and American Kestrel.

There were many species widely reported all Season throughout the Region. These included: Great Blue Heron, American Black Duck, Common Goldeneye, Bufflehead, Ring-necked Pheasant, Ruffed Grouse, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned, Cooper's, Red-Tailed, and Rough-legged Hawks, Great Horned Owl, and Downy, Hairy, and Pileated Woodpeckers. Observers commented that Red-bellied Woodpeckers seemed more abundant than usual. There were approximately a dozen locations in the Region for Carolina Wren. In agricultural areas, Horned Larks and Snow Buntings were present all Season. Pine Siskins were abundant this Season at feeding stations in Elmira, Ithaca, and Watkins Glen, but were not present elsewhere in the Region. Other winter irruptives — Pine Grosbeak, crossbills, and redpolls — were very scarce or absent. Small numbers of Icterids, including Red-winged and Rusty Blackbirds, Eastern Meadowlark, Common Grackle, and Brown-headed Cowbird, were present all season. Highlights for the Winter Season were: **Ovenbird, Gray Catbird, and Chipping Sparrow.**

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Abbreviations: ACBC-Auburn Christmas Count; CH-Connecticut Hill Game Management Area; CL-Cayuga Lake; ECBC-Elmira Christmas Count; ICBC-Ithaca Christmas Count; MNWR-Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge; NYSEG-New York State Electric & Gas Corporation; SL-Seneca Lake; WGCBC-Watkins Glen Christmas Count.

LOONS-DUCKS: Red-necked Grebe: two Aurora 13 Dec. Double-crested Cormorant: one Sheldrake 17 Jan. Oldsquaw: only report Aurora 28 Feb.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: N. Goshawk: one Burdett 2 Jan, one CH 24 Jan. Red-shouldered Hawk: single report, ad Mt. Pleasant Ithaca 28 Feb. Am. Coot: many hundreds SL, CL all season. Killdeer: one MNWR 1 Jan, one Big Flats 17 Jan. Am. Woodcock: single report Ithaca 28 Feb. Bonaparte's Gull: last two Stewart Park 2 Jan. Ring-billed Gull: abundant throughout Region; max 1120 MNWR 1 Dec. Herring Gull: present throughout Region; max 38 MNWR 8 Dec. Iceland Gull: one Stewart Park 9 Jan, 1 Feb, 29 Feb. Glaucous Gull: none.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: E. Screech-Owl: reported only from s part of the Region; max 14 WGCBC; one roosting in a Wood Duck nest box Pine City 28 Feb. N. Flicker: present but scarce all Season throughout Region.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Am. Crow: present and increasing throughout the Region; max 1684 ICBC, many hundreds all season in the vicinity of a traditional roost Mt. Pleasant Ithaca. Com. Raven: no reports. Red-breasted Nuthatch: present in small numbers all Season. Winter Wren: two reports; one SL 2 Jan, two Aurora 24 Jan. **Gray Catbird:** one W. Dryden Rd. 4-14 Jan, one Sheldon Rd, Ithaca 6 Jan. N. Shrike: two reports; one ECBC, one Ledyard 23-31 Jan.

VIREOS-WARBLEDERS: **Ovenbird:** one in a hedge on S Plain St, Ithaca, 7 Dec (Sibley); only previous winter record, Dec 1951. Yellow-rumped Warbler: single report Aurora 31 Jan.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: Am. Tree Sparrow: not as abundant as usual; max 138 ECC. **Chipping Sparrow:** one Aurora 11 Jan. Song Sparrow: present in small numbers throughout the Region. White-crowned Sparrow: ad Dryden 11 Dec; also two ICBC, one ACBC. Lapland Longspur: only report seven ICBC.

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REGION 4 — SUSQUEHANNA

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December at Binghamton was quite warm with the average mean temperature for the month 3.4° above normal. In 19 of the first 28 days of the month mean temperatures ranged from 3 to 18° above the norm. For the second consecutive winter there was no white Christmas, but the month's total of 18.9 inches of snow gave area residents a taste of winter. On 29 Dec the weather turned bitterly cold, windy, and snowy and remained arctic-like well into January. January was slightly colder than usual with an average mean temperature 0.7° below normal and had 17.4 inches of snow, two inches below average. The first half of January