

REGION 1 - NIAGARA FRONTIER

STEPHEN W. EATON

The weather this period was much like 1987-88. December was mild and dry but with some extremes. On 12 December it was -9° in Buffalo, -21° at Jamestown and Amity Lake and -23° at our sugar house near Vandalia in Cattaraugus County. The average temperature for the month, nevertheless, was 30° at Buffalo, 1.8° above normal. It was sunny with 35 percent of possible sunshine, compared to the norm of 26 percent. Our low water table was not improved as only 2.15 inches of rain (normally 3.42 inches) and 10.8 inches of snow (normally 22.8) fell in Buffalo, 19.75 inches in Jamestown. Eight inches of light snow at Amity Lake on 10 Dec, and considerably more snow fell, as usual, in the snow belt in the lee of Lakes Erie and Ontario. January, according to the *Buffalo News*, was "one long January thaw here in western New York," continuing the trend of recent years. It was the warmest in 36 years and the least snowiest in 45 years at Buffalo. Total precipitation was 1.77 inches as rain (normally 3.02) and 5.4 inches as snowfall (normally 24.8) at Buffalo, 3.5 inches at Jamestown. Seven inches fell at Amity Lake on 6 Jan but soon melted. Temperatures averaged almost 8° above average for the month and there was 41 percent of possible sunshine (32 percent is normal). Winds were generally strong at Buffalo, gusting to 60 mph on 8 Jan. These two warm months with little snow appeared to allow more water birds, raptors and shorebirds to attempt to winter and many well stocked feeders helped half-hardy passerines with their attendant raptors.

February was the only winter-like month. The jet stream, which had been flowing north of us, slipped to the south and produced a month with an average temperature of 22.7° (24.5° is normal) and 29.6 inches (normally 17.7) of snow at Buffalo, and 15 inches at Jamestown. Six inches of snow on the ground on 7 Feb at Amity Lake and 5 more fell on 27 Feb but the ground was almost bare in between. Lake Erie finally reached 32° on 8 Feb and much of it remained free of ice, allowing water birds to survive in a wider area than normally. Often Dunkirk Harbor has about the only open water in our area of the lake.

The open winter increased the observation of many species which normally move further south. Loons, grebes, Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, Brant, Wood Duck, Northern Harrier, Sharp-shinned Hawk, Red-shouldered Hawk, Merlin, Northern Flicker, Eastern Bluebird, Hermit Thrush, American Robin, Gray Catbird, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow all were reported, some in unusual numbers.

Certainly the most constant question asked was, "where are the winter finches?" Only the American Goldfinch was widespread and common. Three widely scattered reports totaling ten Evening Grosbeak in the whole Region, only two reports totaling four Pine Siskin after their abundance the previous year, and only a few Purple Finch reports typifies the poor cardueline finch show.

The sight of an adult Bald Eagle on the nest at the Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge was heartening; perhaps they will nest successfully again this year. A Ruby-throated Hummingbird reported by Bob Sundell to be coming to a feeder last period in Jamestown showed distress on 10 Dec and was netted and taken to a veterinarian, but died the next day of a respiratory problem. Bull (*Birds of N.Y. State*, 1974) records one at Riis Park, Queens County from 26 Nov to 13 Dec 1961, so this is the second latest record, the latest inland. A feeder stocked by Georgiana Gould near South Dayton, Cattaraugus Co., attracted a male and a female plumaged Rose-breasted Grosbeak in January and they were still present at the end of February. Unfortunately details have not yet been submitted.

Allen Benton's feeder survey published in the *Evening Observer*, Dunkirk-Fredonia, New York, showed some interesting trends. He summarized occurrence of 51 species at 93 feeding stations during January. The most interesting reports, not verified by the Buffalo Ornithological Society, were Pine Warbler (at one feeder) and Common Redpoll at eight feeders (species not authenticated by Benton). Flicker, Tufted Titmouse, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow and Common Redpoll were seen at nearly twice as many feeders reported to Allen this year as in January 1988.

Trumpeter Swan, a new bird for the Region (and the State), was first spotted 24 Dec in Dunkirk Harbor by Joe Gula, Sr. and Jr. There were two adults marked with patagial tag numbers 86 and 87. They were raised in captivity by their own parents in 1987 and released with six wild caught Trumpeter Swans at Long Point, Ontario, in March 1988 (data courtesy Harry G. Lumsden, Wildlife Research Section, Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources). An immature also was reported from the Niagara River at Ft. Erie from 24 to 28 February. The Buffalo Ornithological Society's statisticians thought it best not to accept the species as an official addition to the Regions list of species until and if it becomes better established although they encourage further monitoring of the species (Andrle and Rew, *Prothonotary* 55(1):5; 1989). A wintering **Merlin** along Lake Erie's shore, a late **Sandhill Crane**, and a Bohemian Waxwing round out a rather birdless but eventful period.

Contributors: Allegany County Bird Club, Dan and Eileen Anderson, Robert Andrle, Wavel Barber, Bellerby, Allen Benton, William Bogacki, Betsy Books, Lois Buck, Buffalo Ornithological Society, William Burch, Doris and Lou Burton, Cattaraugus County Bird Club, Kenneth Cohen, Dick Collins, Don and Jane Clark, D'Aloisio, William D'Anna, Joseph DiDomenico, Steve Eaton, Michael Galas, Georgiana Gould, Joe Gula, Sr. and Jr., Thomas Harper, Jamestown Audubon Society, Walter and Harriet Klaubunde, Lake Erie Bird Club, Terry Mahoney, Terry and Judy Mosher, Robert Peterson, Vivian and Raymond Pitzrick, Betsy Potter, Fran Rew, Gerry Rising, Donald Robertson, Olga Rosche, Art Schaffner, David Suggs, Robert Sundell, Joe Thill, Don Tiller, Regina and Jim VanScoy, William Watson, Marie Wendling, Michael Zebehazy.

Abbreviations: ACBC - Allegany Christmas Bird Count, 17 Dec; BCBC - Buffalo Christmas Bird Count, 18 Dec; BISP - Beaver Island SP; BH - Buffalo Harbor, BOS - Buffalo Ornithological Society, CBC - Christmas Bird Count; CCNS - Canadaway Creek Nature Sanctuary; D-FCBC - Dunkirk-Fredonia Christmas Bird Count, 31 Dec; DH - Dunkirk Harbor; INWR - Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge; LBSP - Lakeside Beach SP; LE - Lake Erie; NF - Niagara Falls; NR - Niagara River; SCBC - Scio Christmas Bird Count, 17 Dec; SBCBC - St. Bonaventure Christmas Bird Count, 17 Dec; TBB - Times Beach, Buffalo; TFNP

- Tifft Farm Nature Preserve.

LOONS-DUCKS: Red-throated Loon: one mouth NR 27 Dec, 1 Jan; one DH 24, 25 Feb, two on 27 Feb. Com. Loon: one near Peace Bridge, NR 1-8 Jan, only report. Pied-billed Grebe: three wintered DH. Red-necked Grebe: one mouth NR 11 Feb. Double-crested Cormorant: singles BISP 17 Dec and 29 Jan, BH 24 Jan, rare in winter. Great Blue Heron: seven reports BOS region Jan, max 31 Grand I, NR 20 Feb more than unusual. **Trumpeter Swan**: *intro*. Brant: one BH 3 Dec, one DH 21 Dec-28 Feb. Canada Goose: 1437 BCBC; 100 in beautiful "V" headed SE at 1000 ft, calling, over Ten Mile Rd, Carrollton, 11 Dec, seldom seen migrating so late, if in fact they were. Wood Duck: one-two Cassadaga 7-22 Jan, two Clarence 31 Dec, unusual in winter. Am. Black Duck: two SCBC, 352 BCBC, 70 D-FCBC, 13 Randolph 18 Feb, species on decline. Mallard: 3005 BCBC, most in 60 years. Canvasback: 4736 BCBC, three D-FCBC. Redhead: 94 BCBC, three D-FCBC, last two species severely reduced by drought in west. Greater Scaup: 606 BCBC, 21 D-FCBC. King Eider: one NF 3 Dec-4Feb; one shot by hunter DH 26 Dec (JG Jr & Sr), sixth CHAU record. Com. Goldeneye: 2390 BCBC, 14 F-DCBC. Com. Merganser: 3307 BCBC 18 Dec, increase over counts in 1940's and 1950's; seven males Amity Twn ALLE 29 Jan, continue as permanent resident CATT and ALLE. Red-breasted Merganser: 97 BCBC, low compared to counts of 1950's. Ruddy Duck, one BCBC, third record in 12

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Bald Eagle: *intro*. N. Harrier: one INWR 10, 23 Dec; seven reports lake plain Jan (BOS), six from lake plain and Sheridan Twn CHAU 7-25 Feb. Sharp-shinned Hawk: nine reports Dec, ten reports Jan, five reports Feb (BOS), regular in winter last several years, due to increase in feeders or perhaps another greenhouse effect? Red-shouldered Hawk: one or two Arkwright Dec, two Sheridan Twn 7, 26 Jan, one Ellery Twn CHAU 15 Feb, wintering perhaps due to warming trend of recent years. Rough-legged Hawk: 12 D-FCBC, three BCBC, two SCBC; 12 CHAU and CATT 18 Feb; also reported Java Twn and n and e of Buffalo (BOS), a good flight year. Am. Kestrel: 39 BCBC, 12 D-FCBC; six ACBC, one SBCBC. **Merlin**: ad female Pt Gratiot, L Erie 19, 31 Dec (RP); one Dunkirk 28 Feb (JG, Sr & Jr.), very rare in winter. Ruffed Grouse: six ACBC, six SBCBC, four D-FCBC, populations up. Wild Turkey: 176 D-FCBC, high, 64 ACBC, 30 SBCBC, populations sharply up. Am. Coot: max 50 DH 1 Dec-14 Jan, one BH 27 Dec-2 Jan, local in open winters. **Sandhill Crane**: two INWR 15-22 Dec (DT, mob). Killdeer: one Alfred Twn 3 Dec, one NF 4 Jan, one Goat I, NR 18-21 Jan. Purple Sandpiper: three NF 6 Dec-7 Jan, max nine Goat I, NR 20 Feb. Dunlin: one DH 1-6 Dec. Com. Snipe: one Towerville 28 Jan. Little Gull: max six mouth NR 27 Jan, max four DH 29 Dec. Bonaparte's Gull, 4500 mouth NR 9 Jan, 7700 D-FCBC. Ring-billed Gull: about 15,000 DH 28 Feb. Iceland Gull: 10 reports NR after 3 Dec (BOS), one to two NR Jan-Feb. Lesser Black-backed Gull: one Adam Beck Hydro, NR 4 Dec, two 26 Jan. Glaucous Gull: arr Adam Beck Hydro 4 Dec, ten reports NR 2-28 Jan, three Feb. Black-legged Kittiwake: one NR 3 Dec.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Rock Dove: 2049 BCBC, most in 60 years. Mourning Dove: 520 BCBC, 275 D-FCBC, 270 SCBC, 50 SBCBC, becoming even more a feeder bird; 78% of 93 persons reporting to Allen Benton in the Dunkirk-Fredonia area reported feeding this species. Snowy Owl, one DH 8 Dec, one Wheatfield Twn NIAG 8 Dec, one BH 24 Dec, 11 Feb, seven reports from lake plain area Jan, one LaSalle P, Buffalo, 4 Feb. Long-eared Owl, max six Porter Twn NIAG 1 Jan. Short-eared Owl: two Stockton Twn 31 Dec, five Porter Twn NIAG 1 Jan, 7 Feb, max seven Alexander Twn 4, 14 Feb, two Wheatfield Twn NIAG 5 Feb, one Java Twn 10 Feb. N. Saw-whet Owl: one Wilson Twn 22 Jan, recent roadkill. Ruby-throated Hummingbird: *intro*. Red-headed Woodpecker: one FNBP 26 Dec, four LBSP 29 Jan, two LBSP 20 Feb, two Porter Twn CHAU 25 Feb. Red-bellied Woodpecker: four reports lake plain Dec (BOS), max four INWR 21 Jan, 18 Feb, six other reports lake plain (BOS); five BCBC, most in 60 years, 16 ACBC, two D-FCBC, one SBCBC, increasing in valleys and on lake plain. N. Flicker, 18 BCBC, nine D-FCBC, two ACBC, two SBCBC, another species wintering in greater numbers.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Horned Lark: 200 Ridgeway Twn 21 Jan. Com. Raven: one Carrollton Twn 8 Dec. Tufted Titmouse: four Amity L ALLE through most of period, four Carrollton Jan-Feb, three other reports Jan and one other Feb (BOS), two BCBC, two D-FCBC, two SBCBC, 14 SCBC., most in about 20 years, a good year for this bird in S. Tier; seem to increase on a good beechnut year; Allen Benton reported them at 13% of his feeders (7% in 1988), *intro*. Red-breasted Nuthatch: nine BCBC, five SBCBC, max 11 Ward Twn ALLE 21 Jan. Carolina Wren: three BCBC, one Pt Gratiot, L Erie, 1,28 Jan, one CCNS 1, 28 Jan, only reports. Winter Wren: one TFNP 21 Jan, only report. Golden-crowned Kinglet: 15 BCBC, ten D-FCBC; 11 SCBC, 13 SBCBC., good numbers following slump in 1976-77. E. Bluebird: one Eden Twn 31 Dec, three Kennedy 28 Jan, one Amity L 21 Jan, 2, 7 Feb, three Lewiston 11, 20 Feb, *intro*. Hermit Thrush: one Pt Gratiot, L Erie, 4 Dec, one Sheridan Twn 31 Dec, one LESP 31 Dec, none after, *intro*. Am. Robin: 140 BCBC, five D-FCBC, eight SCBC, one SBCBC, max 165 Porter Twn NIAG 25 Feb, *intro*. Gray Catbird: one TFNP 12 Jan. N. Mockingbird: one Alfred Twn 1 Dec-15 Feb, one Amity Twn ALLE 17 Dec, four other reports NR and lake plain Dec, 12 reports lake plains Jan, five reports Feb (BOS), rebounding well. Brown Thrasher: one TFNP 24 Dec, 1 Jan, 22 Feb, one Tonawanda Twn 7-21 Jan, 3-28 Feb. Bohemian Waxwing: one INWR 28 Jan.(DE). Cedar Waxwing: max 160 Amity L 13 Feb. N. Shrike: three reports Dec, six reports Jan, one Feb (BOS).

VIREOS-WARBLED: Yellow-rumped Warbler: one LESP 30 Dec, max five LESP 16, 22 Jan; one Portland Twn 22 Jan. Pine Warbler: *intro*.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: N. Cardinal: 279 BCBC, highest in 60 years; 69 D-FCBC; 77 SCBC; 32 SBCBC, second highest since 1976, recovering well from slump 1976-77. Rose-breasted Grosbeak: *intro*. Rufous-sided Towhee: one Sheridan Twn 31 Dec, one Darien 31 Dec-28 Feb. Am. Tree Sparrow: 451 BCBC, 183 D-FCBC, 114 SCBC, 21 SBCBC. Chipping Sparrow: one Darien Twn 4 Dec. Field Sparrow: three TBB 24 Dec. Swamp Sparrow: singles Pomfret Twn CHAU 26, 31 Dec, INWR 10 Jan, TFNP 21, 22 Jan, Lewiston Twn 11 Feb, inconspicuous winterer. White-crowned Sparrow: one Pomfret Twn CHAU 22 Jan, one Ridgeway Twn 28 Jan. Lapland Longspur: max five Shelby Twn, three other reports Ontario Lake Plain, usually with Snow Buntings. Brown-headed Cowbird: max 1000 Tonawanda Twn, an unfortunate number. Purple Finch: one Darien 15-31 Dec, one Scio 31 Dec, five reports from BOS region Jan, three in Feb. Com. Redpoll: *intro*. Pine Siskin: *intro*. Evening Grosbeak: *intro*.

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REGION 2 - GENESEE

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If winter weather is not one of your favorite things, this winter was for you! The highlight for me was the fact that I didn't have to shovel my driveway very often. The bulk of the season was mild and lacking in snow. December's temperatures averaged 0.4° above normal but the real story was the snowfall, which was nearly 15 inches below normal. Total precipitation was less than half of the normal amount at 1.11". January continued the trend. The average temperature of 30.3° was a whopping 6.7° above normal, while the precipitation reading of 1.18 inches was 1.12 inches below normal. Snowfall remained below average with only 15 inches compared to the norm of 23. In February winter returned. The average temperature of 22.5° was 1.9° below normal, while