

REGION 3 — FINGER LAKES

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In general, the winter season for Region 3 was mild, with warmer temperatures than average, less than average snowfall, and overall precipitation 1 to 3 inches less than usual. Temperatures for December, January, and February consistently were 3-4° above average for the Region, with seasonal snowfall amounts averaging 10 inches less than normal.

Overall, it was an interesting winter, characterized by high numbers and good varieties of waterfowl, raptors, and gulls, while winter finches, including Evening Grosbeak, remained relatively scarce. On a trip around Cayuga Lake on 31 Dec, David Russell counted 56 individual birds of prey, including Bald Eagle, Northern Harrier, Red-tailed Hawk, Rough-legged Hawk, and American Kestrel. On 22 Feb, members of the Cayuga Bird Club, led by Ned Brinkley, conducted the first Finger Lakes Region Short-eared Owl census. A total of 81 Short-eared Owl was counted, along with 56 Rough-legged Hawk, 49 Northern Harrier, 15 American Kestrel, "many" Red-tailed Hawk, and one each of Sharp-shinned Hawk, Cooper's Hawk, and Northern Shrike. Sixty-eight of the Short-eared Owl were found in the farmlands north and south of the Seneca Army Depot, between Seneca and

Cayuga Lakes. This is an excellent example of the kind of project that can contribute to a better understanding of the distributions and abundances of birds in winter. Hopefully, this survey will be repeated in future years and possibly even expanded to a general survey of winter raptors. Other bird clubs around the state might consider a similar winter project.

Ned Brinkley also led an effort to identify and count gulls at landfills and lakeshore sites in the Cayuga Lake Basin during the winter. As a result of more than thirty visits to the Seneca Meadows and North Spencer landfills and to Stewart Park at the south end of Cayuga Lake, seven species of gulls were identified, along with possible Glaucous X Herring and Lesser Black-backed X Herring hybrids. Consistent checks of local landfills in the future may reveal that "white-winged" gulls occur in winter in the Region more frequently than previously thought.

The relatively mild winter no doubt contributed to observations of Red-shouldered Hawk, Killdeer, Common Snipe, Red-headed Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Eastern Phoebe, numerous Carolina Wrens, Winter Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, numerous Eastern Bluebirds, Hermit Thrush, Field Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, and Rusty Blackbird. Once again, there were several reports of Common Raven from the Region, with sightings of this species at any time of year becoming increasingly likely for the alert observer. Particularly noteworthy observations for the period include **Common Crane** (probably an escape from captivity), **Golden Eagle**, **Lesser Black-backed Gull**, **Iceland Gull**, **Glaucous Gull**, **Thayer's Gull**, **Barn Owl** and **Common Yellowthroat**.

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Abbreviations: CHWMA - Connecticut Hill Wildlife Management Area; CL - Cayuga Lake; DL - Dryden Lake; EBSWC - Eaton Birding Society Waterfowl Count, 12 and 19 Jan; ECBC - Eaton Birding Society CBC, 29 Dec; ICBC - Ithaca CBC, 1 Jan; MNWR - Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge; MtP - Mt. Pleasant, Ithaca; QCM - Queen Catharine Marsh, Watkins Glen; SL - Seneca Lake; SML - Seneca Meadows Landfill, SENE; NSL - North Spencer Landfill, TOMP; SSW - Sapsucker Woods Sanctuary; StP - Stewart Park, Ithaca; WG - Watkins Glen; WGCBC - Watkins Glen CBC, 28 Dec.

LOONS-DUCKS: Red-throated Loon: one found stranded on land near Elmira 6 Dec, released same day. Com. Loon: CL and SL throughout period. Pied-billed Grebe: max 22 EBSWC. Horned Grebe: max 21 EBSWC. Red-necked Grebe: one s end SL 28 Dec. Great Blue Heron: one-three throughout the period. Tundra Swan:

max 15 CL 11 Jan. Mute Swan: ad with imm Shelldrake CL 25-26 Jan. Snow Goose: one CL 3 Feb, 6 CL 25 Feb. Canada Goose: max 54267 EBSWC; first noticeable spring migration WG 21 Feb and Elmira 22 Feb, coincident with a period of warm, southerly winds and warming temperatures. Wood Duck: max 28 QCM 23 Feb. Green-winged Teal: one SL 4 Dec and 19 Jan, one near Horseheads until mid Jan. Am. Black Duck: max 3515 EBSWC. Mallard: max 19,121 EBSWC. N. Pintail: one-five StP Jan and Feb. N. Shoveler: one Shelldrake CL 15 Dec. Gadwall: max 110 CL 11 Jan. Am. Wigeon: one-three CL and SL throughout period. Canvasback: max 690 EBSWC, most on Canandaigua L. Redhead: max 6811 EBSWC, most on Canandaigua L. Greater Scaup: max 80 CL 19 Feb. Lesser Scaup: max 8 CL 3 Feb. Oldsquaw: one Shelldrake CL 3 Feb, only report. White-winged Scoter: one Reeder's Creek SL 29 Dec, only report. Com. Goldeneye: max 311 EBSWC. Bufflehead: max 269 EBSWC. Hooded Merganser: max 44 EBSWC. Com. Merganser: max 52 EBSWC. Red-breasted Merganser: max 13 EBSWC. Ruddy Duck: one WG 7 Dec, only report.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Turkey Vulture: one near Ithaca 28 Feb (AB). Bald Eagle: two ad MNWR throughout period. **Golden Eagle**: imm DL 23 Feb (MR). N. Harrier: *intro*. Merlin: one Elmira 10 Dec and 11 Jan, two ICBC, ad near Ludlowville 15 Jan, ad near Ithaca 22 and 26 Jan. Sharp-shinned Hawk: numerous reports at feeders throughout Region all winter. Cooper's Hawk: numerous reports at feeders throughout Region all winter. N. Goshawk: several reports throughout Region all winter, including imm eating a Rock Dove downtown Ithaca 30 Jan. Red-shouldered Hawk: two ICBC. Red-tailed Hawk: record max 87 ICBC. Rough-legged Hawk: *intro*. Wild Turkey: max 37 WGCBC, additional reports of flocks of 30-35 birds throughout Region. Am. Coot: max 468 EBSWC. Killdeer: one Trumansburg 18 Dec, one Elmira 22 Feb, 16 migrating WG 23 Feb. Com. Snipe: one ECBC, only report. Bonaparte's Gull: one SL at WG 1 Dec (JB). Ring-billed Gull: max 1000+ StP 28 Feb. Herring Gull: max 2700 NSL 10 Jan and 2700 SML 30 Jan. **Thayer's Gull**: one first-winter NSL 10 Jan (AB, NB) and one first-winter (possibly same bird) StP 11 Jan (AB, NB, mob); one first-winter SML 30-31 Jan (AB, NB, ph, NYSARC); first Regional observations. **Iceland Gull**: max six *kumlieni* SML 30 Jan, one-two StP throughout Feb (AB). **Lesser Black-backed Gull**: one first-winter StP 10-11 Dec (NB), two ad StP 17 Dec (AB), one ad StP 20 Jan (AB), one first-winter SML 30 Jan (NB). **Glaucous Gull**: one SL at WG 18 Jan (JB); singles SML 10 and 17 Jan, and two on 30 Jan (NB); one StP 11-14 Jan (mob). Great Black-backed Gull: max 375 SML 30 Jan.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: **Barn Owl**: one (possibly more) Armstrong Road e Keuka L throughout period (BH). E. Screech-Owl: several reports of one-two birds throughout Region all winter. Great Horned Owl: max 20 ICBC. Snowy Owl: several singles throughout Region all winter. Long-eared Owl: two at Red Jacket Yacht Club CL 11 Jan, one Cornell Campus 30 Jan. Short-eared Owl: *intro*. N. Saw-whet Owl: one Sutton Rd. west of Geneva 24 Feb. Red-headed Woodpecker: ad at feeder Southport 7 Dec, one near Phelps throughout Jan. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: one Aurora 16 Dec, one ECBC, one near Ithaca 14 Feb.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLING: E. Phoebe: one Keuka Outlet Trail 22 Jan (RM), one ICBC, late. Com. Raven: one Elmira 14 and 18 Dec (DC), one Elmira 5 Feb (DR), two downtown Elmira 28 Feb (DC), one CHWMA 12 Dec, two CHWMA 15 Dec, two NSL 10 Jan, one NSL 17 Jan. Fish Crow: one-two StP throughout the period. Carolina Wren: record max 31 ICBC, with most observers commenting on their being relatively common. Winter Wren: one at Larch Meadows near Ithaca Jan and Feb. Ruby-crowned Kinglet: three ICBC. E. Bluebird: record max 29 ICBC, with most observers commenting on their being relatively common. Hermit Thrush: one Elmira 30 Dec. Am. Robin: max 108 WGCBC, with several flocks reported throughout the Region all winter. N. Mockingbird: max 41 ICBC. Cedar Waxwing: max 251 Ithaca CBC, with several flocks reported throughout Region all winter. N. Shrike: several singles throughout Region all winter.

VIREOS-WARBLED: Yellow-rumped Warbler: singles QCM 27 Dec, ICBC, and Aurora 22 Jan, scarce given the mild winter. Com. Yellowthroat: one near Ithaca 26 Jan (DC).

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: Com. Grackle: first migratory flocks 22 and 23 Feb, coincident with a period of warm, southerly winds. Rusty Blackbird: five ICBC. Field Sparrow: two Elmira CBC 28 Dec, one ECBC, one Montezuma CBC 1 Jan (BP). Savannah Sparrow: one-two near Burdett 28 and 29 Dec (JB, EG), late. Swamp Sparrow: singles QCM 28 Dec and 1 Jan. Snow Bunting: max 140+ MtP 26 Jan, scarce. Purple Finch: scattered singles throughout Region all winter, max 21 ICBC. Pine Grosbeak: six at feeder Horseheads 5 Dec (DC), only report. Com. Redpoll: one near Ithaca 12 Feb, only report. Pine Siskin: max 37 WGCBC. Evening Grosbeak: max 66 ICBC.

EXOTICS: Com. Crane: ad Watts Road s Seneca Falls 22-25 Feb (AB, NB, mob), assumed to be the same bird that spent the Fall on Otisco Lake and pictured in *American Birds* (Summer 1991), an escapee from a collection in the Catskills.

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