

REGION 5 — ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

GENE HUGGINS

Once again the winter in central New York was relatively mild. The average temperature for the three month period was 2.2° above the norm of 25°F. Temperature extremes ranged from a balmy 60°F near Syracuse on 9 Dec to a bone-chilling -26°F at Old Forge on 12 Feb. On 29 Feb, conditions were very cold, with a wind chill factor of at least -30°F in the southern Adirondacks. Precipitation in the form of rainfall for the three months was almost a tenth inch below the norm of 2.8 inches. In contrast, snowfall accumulation averaged out to be 11.8 inches above the average of 26.9 inches normally recorded for the same time period. A minor winter storm occurred during the first week of December, but melted entirely away by the following week. It was not until mid January that the area began to take on its familiar winter look with 38.6 inches of snow from 14 to 21 Jan. The highest snowfall for February was 7.51 inches on 4 Feb, with later snowfalls seldom exceeding an inch. Noteworthy was the lack of sunshine (less than 23% of the possible), which made February the gloomiest on record.

A good variety of waterfowl was reported. Nine species had above normal populations for the period. Lake Ontario littoral produced a record high seasonal count of Common Loon in early December along with another record high number of 13 on the waterfowl survey, 11-19 Jan. Other important observations include record high seasonal day counts for Double-crested Cormorant, Great Blue Heron, N. Shoveler, Ring-necked Duck and Common Goldeneye. Reports of thirteen Tundra Swan marked a seasonal high total for the Region. Large concentrations of both Greater Scaup and Common Goldeneye were found at the east end of Lake Ontario. The two species were easier to count than usual because of the lack of onshore ice buildup. Over 3000 Greater Scaup and Com. Goldeneye were observed on the waterfowl survey. The scaup total of 3856 was the best since 1974, and the total of 4301 Common Goldeneye was a record maximum for the survey. The 140 Red-breasted Merganser seen in early December was the same number observed on the waterfowl survey, the best count since 1961.

Irruptive raptors were scarce. Northern Goshawk was scarce and no more than six Rough-legged Hawk were seen at any one time. Among the seventeen Rough-legged Hawk observed as to color morph, nine were light morph and eight were dark morph birds. Unusual was the Region's second

winter record for Golden Eagle. An increase to 49 Am. Kestrel sightings was encouraging, compared to the previous winter when 29 were observed. For the second consecutive year two **Merlin** appeared in the same Syracuse city park, where they were seen and photographed from 14 to 17 Feb February and apparently present the entire winter. It was unquestionably a winter for owls and every birder including a wide TV audience had the unique opportunity to see the Region's seventh record of a **Northern Hawk Owl**. The owl remained adjacent to Route 5 halfway between Chittenango and Canastota from 1 to 29 Feb (S. McCombie, mob; ph, NYSARC). Short-eared Owl was again fairly common at localities south and east of Oneida Lake and the western edge of Peter Scott Swamp in the Town of Schroepfel.

It was an exceptional season for gulls. A **Laughing Gull** and a **Lesser Black-backed Gull** were noteworthy records from Oneida Lake and the Oswego River, respectively. Among the 12 Iceland Gull reported, three were adult *kumlieni*. In addition, Glaucous Gull were found in above average numbers, affording observers an opportunity to compare field marks with the smaller Iceland Gulls.

Half-hardy species such as American Robin were found in sizable flocks in the western and southern portions of Onondaga County. For the first time in three years, a Yellow-rumped Warbler was seen in the Town of Pompey on two separate dates. An increased number of Song Sparrows was evident with 49 reported, compared to last year's total of 21 reports. Mild, open winters with a lack of substantial snow cover and freezing temperatures have in all probability been factors in the upward trend of overwintering Song Sparrows. A **Bobolink** was observed at a feeder in the Town of Dewitt on 9 Jan and 2 Feb (K. Radway; ph, NYSARC). Equally amazing, this Bobolink was the second winter report for the Region, the first found in the winter 1971-72.

Negatives for the season include a poor winter for American Tree Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow and Dark-eyed Junco, with counts averaging no more than 20 per day. Despite the heralded appearance of hundreds of redpoll at the end of November only a few remained at scattered locations. Other members of the finch family were reported, but none in any substantial numbers.

One of the more interesting accounts this season comes from a gentleman who lives near Erieville. He came home one day to find a 10x14 inch window pane shattered, with glass all over his kitchen floor. When he walked into an adjoining room, a Cooper's Hawk suddenly flew up in front

of him. After a calming of the nerves, the individual was able to drape a sheet over the bird and release it out the front door.

Observers in the Region reported 124 species during the winter. The most unusual of these were **Merlin**, **Laughing Gull**, **Lesser Black-backed Gull**, **Northern Hawk Owl** and **Bobolink**. Other notable species reported were Red-throated Loon, Red-necked Grebe, Tundra Swan, Snow Goose, Ruddy Duck, Turkey Vulture, Bald Eagle, Red-shouldered Hawk, Golden Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Purple Sandpiper, Dunlin, N. Saw-whet Owl, Com. Raven, Boreal Chickadee, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Rufous-sided Towhee, Field Sparrow, Red Crossbill and White-winged Crossbill.

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Abbreviations: Adk - Adirondacks; DH - Derby Hill, OSWE; LSB - Fairhaven, Little Sodus Bay and vicinity, CAYU; LOL - Lake Ontario Littoral, OSWE; NPT - northern Pompey Township, ONON; SSSP - Selkirk Shores State Park, OSWE.

LOONS-DUCKS: Red-throated Loon: two Oswego H 1 Jan, singles LSB 8 Dec, Oswego H 4-5 Jan. Com. Loon: max 33 LOL 8 Dec, present all winter Oswego H; *intro*. Pied-billed Grebe: two LOL 8 Dec; seven reports. Horned Grebe: max 24 LOL 8 Dec, last ten there 12 Jan. Red-necked Grebe: two Onondaga L 14 Dec, two LSB 1 Jan. Double-crested Cormorant: ten Oswego H 9 Dec to 12 Jan, where at least eight overwintered; one T Brutus CAYU 25 Dec. Great Blue Heron: 43 reports, max 24 Oswego R 26 Jan. Tundra Swan: three LSB 1-12 Dec, nine Oneida L 14 Dec, last Oswego H 21 Dec and 1 Jan. Snow Goose: max 19 Earlville 29 Jan; two, one blue morph, LSB 8 Dec; five NPT 23 Feb. Canada Goose: max 1731 LOL 12 Jan. Wood Duck: four feeder canal Dewitt 2 Jan, nine reports. Green-winged Teal: max 20 Hookway Tract Syracuse 14 Dec, about eight overwintered. Am. Black Duck: max 180 Onondaga L, Phoenix 11 Jan; six Big Moose L all winter, exceptional for Adk. Mallard: max 1200 Oswego R 26 Jan. N. Pintail: four LSB 8-12 Dec, 15 reports. N. Shoveler: max 11 LSB 12 Dec. Gadwall: max 48 LSB 12 Dec. Am. Wigeon: eight LSB 12 Dec, three Brewerton 23 Feb, singles Onondaga L 18 Dec, Oswego H 23 Feb. Canvasback: max 35 Oneida L 14 Dec, 52 reported. Redhead: max 70 Skaneateles L 18 Jan. Ring-necked Duck: max 30 LSB 12 Dec. Greater Scaup: *intro*. Lesser Scaup: four Oswego H 21 Dec, one Onondaga L 11 Jan. Oldsquaw: max 78 Oswego H 4 Jan. White-winged Scoter: max 59 LOL 1 Dec, last Oswego H 5 Feb. Com. Goldeneye: *intro*. Bufflehead: max 73 Oswego R 19 Jan. Hooded Merganser: max 60 Oneida L 14 Dec. Common Merganser: max 2479 Onondaga L 11 Jan. Red-breasted Merganser: *intro*. Ruddy Duck: one LSB 8 Dec.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Turkey Vulture: arr T Verona ONEI 28 Feb. Bald Eagle: ad LOL 11 Jan-23 Feb; ad Dart's L, Big Moose L to end of period; imm Nine Mile Pt 23 Feb; singles Caughdenoy 1 Jan, LSB 12 Jan. N. Harrier: max three Oneida 21 Dec, 11 reports. N. Goshawk: five reports. Red-shouldered Hawk: ad Oneida 11 Feb. Rough-legged Hawk: max six and ONEI 19 Feb, *intro*. Golden Eagle: imm Larkin Road T Brookfield 2-3 Jan. Am. Kestrel: max three per day. **Merlin**: *intro*. Ring-necked Pheasant: 24 reported for the period. Wild Turkey: max 100+ Erieville 17 Jan. Am. Coot: max ten LSB 12 Dec, 21 reports. Killdeer: one Herkimer 14 Dec. Purple Sandpiper: one LSB 11-12 Dec, very late. Dunlin: one Elbridge 4 Jan, Regional record late. Com. Snipe: four reports. **Laughing Gull**: imm Oswego H 7-8 Dec, first Regional winter record. Bonaparte's Gull: max 31 Onondaga L 14 Dec, last Oswego R 21 Dec. Iceland Gull: arr Oswego R 21 Dec, max 12 there 16 Feb. **Lesser Black-backed Gull**: singles Oneida L 14 Dec (SA), Oswego R at Phoenix 6-9 Feb (mob). Glaucous Gull: arr Oswego R 21 Dec, max ten there 19 Jan. Great Black-backed Gull: max 1379 Oswego R 21 Dec.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Mourning Dove: max 41 Clay Marsh 24 Dec. E. Screech-Owl: 13 reports. Snowy Owl: max three LOL 5 Jan, ten reports. **N. Hawk Owl**: *intro*. Barred Owl: singles Howland I CAYU 1 Jan, Delta L area 10 Feb. Short-eared Owl: six T Verona ONEI 19, 25 Jan, two there 29 Feb; five T Schroepel OSWE 28 Jan-17 Feb; two T Vernon ONEI 7 Jan, one Howland I 2 Jan. N. Saw-whet Owl: singles Erieville 17 Jan, Baldwinsville 10 Feb. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: singles Holland Patent 6 Dec, Baldwinsville 2 Feb. N. Flicker: max four Clark Reservation ONON 7 Dec, Howland's I 1 Jan, 50 reports.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLING: Horned Lark: max 53 Mexico 9 Feb. Gray Jay: two N Branch Moose R 15 Dec. Am. Crow: max 292, ONEI, ONON 2 Jan. Com. Raven: four T Webb 1 Dec. Black-capped Chickadee: max 111 T Webb 18 Dec. Boreal Chickadee: two Limekiln Swamp 26 Feb. Tufted Titmouse: max five Howland's I 1 Jan. Red-breasted Nuthatch: max 28 T Webb 1 Dec. Carolina Wren: one Deansboro 2 Jan, new location; 20 reports, some survived coldest part of winter. Winter Wren: singles Clay Marsh 11 Dec, Deansboro 27 Dec. Golden-crowned Kinglet: max five Shackleton Pt 2 Feb. E. Bluebird: max three Chittenango 10 Jan, 11 reports. Am. Robin: max 128 Baldwinsville, Elbridge 11 Jan. N. Mockingbird: max four in Jan and Feb. Cedar Waxwing: max 155 Baldwinsville, Elbridge 11 Jan. N. Shrike: 18 reports for the period.

VIREOS-WARBLED: Yellow-rumped Warbler: one NPT 8 Jan and 18 Feb.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: Rufous-sided Towhee: one Eaton Feb. Am. Tree Sparrow: max 27 Clay Marsh 4 Dec. Field Sparrow: one Syracuse 14 Dec. Song Sparrow: *intro*. Swamp Sparrow: two Carpenter's Brook 2 Jan. White-throated Sparrow: max seven Oakwood Cemetery Syracuse 15 Feb, scarce. White-crowned Sparrow: one or two Dewitt 14 Dec-15 Jan, late. Dark-eyed Junco: max 30 Baldwinsville 1 Jan, scarce. Lapland Longspur: two Oneida 21 Dec, singles LOL 8 Dec, Mexico 9 Feb, Erieville 17 Feb. Snow Bunting: max 200 DH 2 Feb. **Bobolink**: *intro*. Red-winged Blackbird: arr Sangerfield 19 Feb, max 18 Cicero 28 Feb. E.

arr Clay Marsh 17 Feb, 14 reports. Brown-headed Cowbird: max 120 Pennellville 22 Feb. Pine Grosbeak: singles SSSP 22 Jan, Holland Patent 23 Jan. Purple Finch: max 28 Oneida 24 Feb. Red Crossbill: one T Webb Adk 1 Dec. White-winged Crossbill: ten Old Forge 17 Jan. Com. Redpoll: one-three per day to 23 Feb. Pine Siskin: max 62 Oriskany Falls 2 Jan. Am. Goldfinch: max 14 LOL 1 Dec. Evening Grosbeak: max 67 Erieville 21 Dec.

CORRIGENDUM: Vol. 41(3):198. Black Vulture: one DH 3 Apr was actually the *fourth* Regional record.

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