

## REGION 3 — FINGER LAKES

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The winter was mild during the months of December and January, with warmer temperatures than average, and average snowfall and overall precipitation. A strong Nor'easter hit New York State on 11 and 12 Dec, but its effects were felt most severely in the southeastern part of the state and on Long Island, with no unusual birds appearing in Region 3 as a result. December and January brought the usual snow flurries, with the Region reporting 2 to 6 inches of snow on the ground by the end of January. February was colder than average with average to slightly above average amounts of precipitation. By the end of February, 6 to 10 inches of snow covered the ground across Region 3.

Most observers commented that this winter season was unremarkable, even downright dull. There were few reports of white-winged gulls, waterfowl numbers seemed about average, numbers of raptors were low, and winter finches were virtually absent for the second winter in a row. All three accipiter species appeared at feeders scattered throughout the Region the entire season. In mid February, members of the Cayuga Bird Club, led by Ned Brinkley, conducted the second Finger Lakes Region Short-eared Owl Census, confirming a general impression that raptor numbers were relatively low this winter. A total of 25 Short-eared Owl was counted (down from 76 last year), along with 13 Rough-legged Hawk (56 last year), 13 Northern Harrier (49 last year), 21 American Kestrel (15 last year), and 39 Red-tailed Hawk. This is a good 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 continue in future years. Other bird clubs around the state might consider a similar winter project.

There were several reports of Common Raven from the region, with sightings of this species any time of year becoming increasingly likely for the alert observer. Particularly noteworthy observations for the period include **Sandhill Crane**, Iceland Gull, and Glaucous Gull.

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**Abbreviations:** CHWMA – Connecticut Hill Wildlife Management Area; CLSP – Cayuga Lake State Park; MNWR – Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge; MtP – Mt. Pleasant, near Ithaca; QCM – Queen Catharine Marsh, Watkins Glen; SML – Seneca Meadows Landfill; SSW – Sapsucker Woods Sanctuary, Ithaca; TFSP – Taughannock Falls State Park; WGSP – Watkins Glen State Park.

**Winter reports:** **Com. Loon:** Cayuga L and Seneca L all winter. **Pied-billed Grebe:** Cayuga L and Seneca L all winter. **Horned Grebe:** max ten Cayuga L 16 Dec. **Red-necked Grebe:** one s end Seneca L 29 Dec. **Double-crested Cormorant:** one s end Seneca L mid Dec to mid Jan. **Great Blue Heron:** very small numbers all winter, max eight near MNWR. **Tundra Swan:** max 12 Cayuga L 21 Feb. **Snow Goose:** four Seneca L 17 Jan, six Cayuga L 19 Jan, one Cayuga L 13 Feb, only reports. **Brant:** one s end Seneca L to 3 Dec. **Canada Goose:** max 13,514 MNWR 1 Jan. **Am. Black Duck:** max 811 Cayuga L 18 Jan. **Mallard:** max 394 Cayuga L 18 Jan. **N. Pintail:** 10+ Cayuga L throughout period. **N. Shoveler:** two Seneca R 12-13 Feb. **Gadwall:** max 16 Union Springs 18 Jan. **Redhead:** max 2400 Keuka L mid Jan. **Oldsquaw:** six Seneca L 17 Jan. **White-winged Scoter:** one Cayuga L 23-25 Jan. **Com. Goldeneye:** max 580 Cayuga L 18 Jan. **Bufflehead:** 14 Cayuga L 18 Jan. **Com. Merganser:** max 506 Cayuga L 18 Jan. **Red-breasted Merganser:** six Seneca L 17 Jan, three Cayuga L 18 Jan.

**Bald Eagle:** ad near Ithaca 8 Dec; one MNWR 18 Jan; ad Elmira 11 Feb. **N. Harrier:** *intro*. **Red-tailed Hawk:** *intro*. **Rough-legged Hawk:** *intro*. **Merlin:** one Elmira 3 Dec, one Ithaca CBC 1 Jan, ad Seneca Falls 9 Jan, two Canandaigua mid Feb, one near Flint 15 Feb; exceptional number of reports. **Wild Turkey:** two first-year males at feeder near Dryden throughout Feb; widespread flocks of 25-30 frequently reported. **SANDHILL CRANE:** one King Ferry 19-22 Jan (D. McIlroy, mob). **Killdeer:** one Myers Point on Cayuga L 1 Dec, 2 CLSP 17 Jan. **Ring-billed Gull:** max 8011 Cayuga L 18 Jan. **Herring Gull:** 146 Cayuga L 18 Jan. **Iceland Gull:** two (one Kumlien's) SML 20 Jan, one Cayuga L 24 Jan, one CLSP 25 Jan. **Lesser Black-backed Gull:** one Cayuga L 21 Feb. **Glaucous Gull:** one SML 20 Jan, one Cayuga L 24 Jan. **Great Black-backed Gull:** nine Seneca L 11 Jan, 187 Cayuga L 18 Jan, one-five Chemung R all winter.

**E. Screech-Owl:** several reports of one-two birds. **Great Horned Owl:** nesting QCM late Feb. **Snowy Owl:** scattered singles throughout period. **Long-eared Owl:** two near Ithaca all winter, one SSW 20 Jan, one TFSP 19 Feb. **Short-eared Owl:** *intro*. **N. Saw-whet Owl:** one calling CHWMA late Feb.

**E. Phoebe:** one Chemung Valley CBC 2 Jan, very late. **Com. Raven:** two Elmira 1 Dec, 3 and 9 Feb; one MtP 1 Jan; two Hector 4 Feb; one WGSP 14 Feb. **Carolina Wren:** Elmira and Ithaca all winter. **E. Bluebird:** small flocks all winter. **Am. Robin:** several flocks reported all winter. **Brown Thrasher:** one overwintered Plum Pt, s Dresden. **N. Shrike:** singles near Sugar Hill 27 Dec, FLNF late Jan, Hector 4 Feb, only reports.

**Yellow-rumped Warbler:** six near Aurora 8 Dec, one near MNWR 1 Jan.

**Rufous-sided Towhee:** singles at Wellsburg, Horseheads and near Dresden all winter. **Am. Tree Sparrow:** max 50 Canoga 20 Feb. **Fox Sparrow:** one Southport after 12 Dec. **Swamp Sparrow:** several overwintered. **White-crowned Sparrow:** six near Fayette mid Dec, one at feeder Canoga 20 Dec. **Lapland Longspur:** one MNWR 1 Jan, 14 near Lodi 14 Feb, only reports. **Snow Bunting:** max 1000 near King Ferry 20 Jan. **Red-winged Blackbird:** small flock MNWR 25 Jan. **E. Meadowlark:** at several locations all winter. **Purple Finch:** scattered individuals and small flocks all winter. **Red Crossbill:** six FLNF 14 Feb (FB). **Pine Siskin:** two Elmira throughout period.

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