

REGION 5 — ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

GENE HUGGINS

It was a very long and bleak winter generally made worse by low numbers of birds. The average temperature for the three months was 25.2°F, near normal for the period. At the end of February, 125.5 inches of snow had fallen, 36.8 inches above normal. There was more ice and snow with no late winter thaw to herald the arrival of Canada Goose, Red-winged Blackbird and Com. Grackle. Little did we know it would get worse before it got better.

Observers reported 31 species of water birds including two noteworthy records for the Region, fourth Regional record of **Northern Fulmar** and the Region's eighteenth record of Harlequin Duck. Unfortunately, waterfowl populations were substantially down. The Federation Waterfowl Count indicated a poor total for the following species: Am. Black Duck 377, Greater Scaup 333, Com. Goldeneye 1812 and Com. Merganser 1190. In fact, it was the lowest record ever for Greater Scaup. Oldsquaw were at ridiculously low levels. Other water birds of interest include a record high seasonal count of Double-crested Cormorant at Oswego Harbor and on the waterfowl survey. Great Blue Heron are now appearing with increasing regularity on smaller rivers in the southern highlands through early January. The upper drainage systems of both the Unadilla and Sangerfield Rivers now have from 1 to 2 birds a season. No Common Snipe were found, largely due to the fact that most shallow wetlands were frozen early.

It was a very poor season for gulls. Large populations were not evident especially after the second week in January. At least two reasons can be attributed to the decline, the closure of landfills and the sustained buildup of ice along the Seneca and Oswego Rivers. The entire harbor at Oswego was clogged with ice from late January through the end of the period. White-winged gulls were noticeably scarce with only one report of Iceland Gull and four reports of Glaucous Gull. Three Black-legged Kittiwake at Derby Hill was the only unusual gull for this winter.

Among raptors, at least eight Bald Eagle were found along our major waterways. Rough-legged Hawk were few in number with only four reports all from OSWE. In regards to color morph of the Rough-legged Hawk, observers found six light morph and twelve dark morph birds. A **Merlin** was again found in the same city park for the third year in a row and established a first for the Syracuse CBC. Short-eared Owl went unreported from places near Scott Swamp and the fields south and east of Oneida Lake. On a more positive note was a Long-eared Owl observed near an active feeder on the campus of the SUNY College of

Environmental Sciences on 15 Jan. Perched only a few feet from the sidewalk, it was an unique opportunity to view this bird at close range. Only four Northern Shrike were observed, quite a decline from the average of 16 seen in three previous winters.

Half-hardy species such as American Robin, Song Sparrow and Red-winged Blackbird were down in total numbers. Concentrations of no more than fifty American Robin per day were the norm for localities near New Hartford ONEI and Cicero ONON. Compared to the 49 Song Sparrow reported last year, 34 were seen this year. American Tree Sparrow were scarce with no more than eight per day, except at Clay Marsh where almost 50 were noted in early February. Equally unimpressive were counts for both White-throated Sparrow and Dark-eyed Junco at 20 per day for each species. With the onset of more snow accumulation toward the end of February, good numbers of Horned Lark and Snow Bunting were noted in the southern highlands. Among the flocks that fed along the edge of roads and in manured fields, only one Lapland Longspur was found. A Ruby-crowned Kinglet was noteworthy both from the perspective of season and location. Pompey, where the bird was seen is a windswept hamlet amid some of the highest elevations in ONON. Eastern Bluebird continued to increase in the number of reports, compared to an average of nine in two previous winters. Encouraging were the approximately 200 Purple Finch reported from across the Region. In the southern portion of the Adirondacks, fair numbers of Pine Siskin and Evening Grosbeak were seen, but these species seldom were located elsewhere.

One of the outstanding events for this winter was the minor incursion of both Red and White-winged Crossbills. Except for ones and twos of Red Crossbill at scattered locations, the highest count was found in the reforested hills south of Fabius ONON. As of 28 Feb, six males were actively singing and displaying, with observers assuming that females were on the nest. The same behavior occurred in White-winged Crossbill, of which over thirty were seen near Boylston OSWE situated on the Tug Hill Plateau.

Observers in the Region reported 114 species during the winter. The most unusual of these were **Northern Fulmar**, Harlequin Duck and **Merlin**. Other notable species reported were Red-throated Loon, Red-necked Grebe, Tundra Swan, Mute Swan, Ruddy Duck, Bald Eagle, Purple Sandpiper, Black-legged Kittiwake, Long-eared Owl, Gray Jay, Com. Raven, Boreal Chickadee, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Com. Yellowthroat, Rufous-sided Towhee, Red Crossbill and White-winged Crossbill.

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Abbreviations: Adks - Adirondacks; DH - Derby Hill, OSWE; LSB - Fairhaven, Little Sodus Bay and vicinity, CAYU; LOL - Lake Ontario Littoral, OSWE; NPT - northern Pompey Township, ONON; OnonL - Onondaga Lake, ONON.

Winter reports: **Red-throated Loon:** one Oswego H 7 Jan. **Com. Loon:** last Adks 2 Dec, max four Oswego H 20 Dec, none after 24 Jan. **Pied-billed Grebe:** singles Oswego H 20 Dec to 4 Feb, Oswego R 1 7 Jan to 8 Feb, LOL 10 Jan. **Horned Grebe:** last five LOL 17 Jan. **Red-necked Grebe:** singles Oswego H 1 Jan, Fulton 1 7 Jan. **N. FULMAR:** one DH 3 Dec (JH). **Double-crested Cormorant:** max 59 Oswego H 20 Dec, last there 7 Feb; 34 on waterfowl survey 16-23 Jan. **Great Blue Heron:** 27 reports, max 11 Syracuse 19 Dec. **Tundra Swan:** ten Oneida L 19 Dec to 9 Jan. **Mute Swan:** imm OnonL 17-20 Jan. **Canada Goose:** max 800 LSB 17 Jan. **Wood Duck:** two Oswego H 1 Jan, Mohawk R 1 8-23 Jan, six reports. **Green-winged Teal:** max 17 Hookway Tract Syracuse 12 Dec, overwintered. **Am. Black Duck:** max 130 OnonL 15 Jan, four Dart's L and Big Moose L Adks all winter, *intro*. **Mallard:** max 1054 Oswego R 17 Jan. **N. Pintail:** two Hookway Tract Syracuse 12 Dec to 16 Jan, Seneca R 17 Jan, Chenango R 18 Jan. **Gadwall:** 31 reports, max 22 OnonL 20 Feb. **Canvasback:** two Oswego H 9 Jan, seven LSB 17 Jan. **Redhead:** 33 reports, max 16 Skaneateles L 16 Jan. **Ring-necked Duck:** singles LSB 1 Jan, Oswego H 9 Jan, OnonL 1 7 Jan. **Greater Scaup:** max 474 LOL 3 Dec; *intro*. **Lesser Scaup:** eight Skaneateles L 16 Jan, two Nine Mile Pt 7 Feb, one Oswego H 10 Jan. **Harlequin Duck:** imm male Oswego R at Phoenix 7-27 Jan, eighteenth Regional record. **Oldsquaw:** max 25 Oswego H 20 Dec, declined to eight a month later. **Surf Scoter:** one Oswego H 8 Dec. **White-winged Scoter:** one Oswego H 21 Jan. **Com. Goldeneye:** max 1037 LOL 17 Jan, *intro*. **Bufflehead:** max 140 Oswego R 21 Feb. **Hooded Merganser:** 62 reports, max 15 Skaneateles L 16 Jan. **Com. Merganser:** max 800 LOL 1 Jan, low. **Red-breasted Merganser:** max 92 LOL 10 Jan. **Ruddy Duck:** one OnonL 20 Jan.

Bald Eagle: two ad, one imm Phoenix 9 Jan to 27 Feb; ad and imm LOL 9 Jan to 20 Feb; two Big Moose L to end of period; imm Seneca R 27 Feb. **N. Harrier:** seven reports. **Sharp-shinned Hawk:** 26 reports.

Cooper's Hawk: 18 reports. **N. Goshawk:** singles T Lee 14 Dec, Syracuse 19 Dec, Fabius 26 Jan. **Red-tailed Hawk:** max 27 NY Thruway Canastota to Weedsport 17 Feb. **Rough-legged Hawk:** max six s ONON and MADI 9 Jan, *intro*. **Am. Kestrel:** 17 reports, max five Syracuse 19 Dec. **MERLIN:** one Onondaga P Syracuse 19 Dec-9 Feb. **Ring-necked Pheasant:** 18 reported for the period. **Wild Turkey:** max 110 s HERK 15 Feb. **Am. Coot:** two LSB 8 Dec to 1 Jan, two OnonL 15 Feb. **Purple Sandpiper:** one LSB 8 Dec. **Bonaparte's Gull:** singles OnonL 19 Dec, Oswego H 20 Dec. **Iceland Gull:** one Oswego H 4 Feb, only report. **Glaucous Gull:** ad, imm Oswego H 10 Jan to 26 Feb; singles Phoenix 10 Jan, OnonL 19 Dec-17 Jan. **Great Black-backed Gull:** max 616 OnonL 23 Jan. **Black-legged Kittiwake:** three DH 3 Dec (JH).

Mourning Dove: max 80 T Elbridge 2 Jan. **E. Screech-Owl:** eight reports. **Snowy Owl:** one Hancock Airport N Syracuse after 19 Dec. **Barred Owl:** five reported. **Long-eared Owl:** *intro*. **Short-eared Owl:** none. **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** singles Erieville 9, 20 Jan, Baldwinsville 16 Jan. **N. Flicker:** 44 reports, max two s ONON 2 Jan.

Horned Lark: max 140 Fabius 28 Feb. **Gray Jay:** one N Branch Moose R mid Dec. **Am. Crow:** max 280 s ONON 2 Jan. **Com. Raven:** ten Old Forge 18 Dec, two Moss L 2 Dec. **Black-capped Chickadee:** max 62 Clay Marsh and Liverpool 10 Feb. **Boreal Chickadee:** two Old Forge 18 Dec. **Tufted Titmouse:** 31 reports, max two Camillus Valley 2 Jan. **Carolina Wren:** 13 reported. **Winter Wren:** singles Syracuse 19 Dec, Camillus Valley 2 Jan. **Golden-crowned Kinglet:** max five Beaver L 11 Feb. **Ruby-crowned Kinglet:** one Pompey 25 Feb. **E. Bluebird:** 20 reports, max seven Chittenango 8 Jan. **Am. Robin:** max 46 Cicero 9 Feb. **N. Mockingbird:** 14 reports, max four Dewitt 7 Jan. **Cedar Waxwing:** max 189 T Brookfield 19 Feb. **N. Shrike:** *intro*.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: singles Syracuse 19 Dec, Skaneateles 2 Jan. **Com. Yellowthroat:** one Oswego-Fulton CBC 20 Dec.

Rufous-sided Towhee: singles Clay Marsh 6 Jan, Pompey 28-30 Jan. **Am. Tree Sparrow:** max 49 Clay Marsh 10 Feb. **Song Sparrow:** *intro*. **Swamp Sparrow:** one T Elbridge 2 Jan. **White-throated Sparrow:** max 21 Syracuse 4 Jan. **White-crowned Sparrow:** singles Herkimer, Erieville 15 Dec, Oneida 7 Feb. **Dark-eyed Junco:** max 20 OSWE 20 Dec; "Oregon" type singles Hastings 23 Dec to end of period, Skaneateles 2 Jan. **Lapland Longspur:** one Fabius 14 Feb. **Snow Bunting:** max 800 Canastota 6 Feb. **Red-winged Blackbird:** max 55 T Sterling 28 Jan. **Com. Grackle:** two Dewitt 18 Jan; singles Syracuse 19 Dec, Holland Patent 17 Feb. **Brown-headed Cowbird:** max 31 NPT 12 Dec. **Purple Finch:** max 43 Fabius 15 Dec, *intro*. **Red Crossbill:** arr Fabius 15 Dec, max 14 there after 26 Dec, *intro*; two T Brookfield 28 Dec, two

Georgetown 28 Feb; one Erieville 15 Dec. **White-winged Crossbill**: max 37 Boylston OSWE after 22 Dec, *intro*; 13 Selkirk Shore SP 5-15 Dec. **Pine Siskin**: max 50 Old Forge 18 Dec, almost absent outside Adks. **Am. Goldfinch**: max 84 Erieville 9 Jan. **Evening Grosbeak**: max 32 Old Forge 18 Dec, eight Boylston 27 Dec, one Hastings 4 Jan.

CORRIGENDA: Vol. 41(3):198. **N. Harrier**: date of max should read 27 Mar, *not* 27 May. Vol. 42(3):176. **Red-throated Loon**: Torpy Pd is in T Georgetown, *not* T Nelson. Vol. 42 (3):177. *Delete* **Turkey Vulture** arrival date as it had already arrived T Verona ONEI 28 Feb. Vol. 42(3):179. **N. Shrike**: last three Mexico S Apr should read 5 Apr.

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