

REGION 5 — ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

DOROTHY W. CRUMB AND JIM THROCKMORTON

This was a chilly fall season with temperatures averaging below normal every month. September was 1.5°F below normal; October was a chilly 2.5° below normal and November was 1.9° below. Precipitation was slightly less than normal, although a Halloween snow storm dropped from six to eighteen inches of snow around the area, the heaviest snowfall ever for that early in the season. The cold and early snowfall did not keep the 28 contributors from reporting 231 species plus 2 exotics and 2 subspecies, up from 227 last year.

After four years of hits and misses, this fall season finally produced a real northern invasion. All the winter finches were observed at least once during the season. Most abundant was Common Redpoll, which was noted by eleven observers in five widely scattered areas. There were flocks of 200 or more along Lake Ontario and in Pompey. The birds seem to prefer weedy fields or larch groves, but were occasionally observed feeding in birch trees that had retained catkins. Single *Hoary Redpoll* were picked out of the busily feeding Common Redpoll at three sites, marking the first time since 1959 this frosty visitor has been noted

for the fall season and the first record of any kind for Hoary Redpoll since January 1989. Pine Grosbeak was widespread for the first time since 1985. Two Bohemian Waxwing were at Verona Beach on 2 Nov and several flocks, up to 18, were observed along Lake Ontario through the end of the period. Also seen during the period were both crossbills, Evening Grosbeak and Pine Siskin. Strangely, there were only four sightings of Purple Finch.

Adding to the winter invasion records were good flights of Black-capped Chickadee and Red-breasted Nuthatch, with many of the latter appearing at feeders and remaining through the period. Also reported was Snowy Owl in five locations, including three individuals at Syracuse's Hancock Airport, one of which was struck and killed on a runway. Tufted Titmouse seem to be permanently entrenched in its northern habitat, with almost every observer reporting them. The seven seen at Beaver Lake are a record high for the fall season.

Unusual raptors included eight records of Merlin. The one seen chasing pigeons in downtown Syracuse is undoubtedly the one seen roosting in nearby Onondaga Park for the fourth year in a row. Peregrine Falcon continue to increase, with nine reports including five in one day by Bill Purcell on 29 Sep. Dave Cesari saw a very dark, almost black peregrine at Delta Lake on 17 Sep. An apparently very hungry Sharp-shinned Hawk was seen engaging in what seemed like a waste of energy chasing a kinglet on 10 Oct at Nine Mile Point, Lake Ontario. A Northern Goshawk was observed in Oswego catching a squirrel and crashing into a window (spm RCBFS).

A Ruby-throated Hummingbird was seen doing its ritual U-shaped display in Pompey on 3 Sep—a little late to attract a female. Comment from one report: "Brown-headed Cowbird: Sandy Pond, 5 September. Juvenile being fed by a Red-eyed Vireo—YUCK!" A record late Vesper Sparrow was spotted.

The gull flight was very light and late along Lake Ontario this season in spite of several favorable northwest wind days. Appreciable numbers of gulls didn't appear until 22 Oct, which is pretty much past the time for rare gulls. Even Iceland Gull was missed. There was only one sighting of Parasitic Jaeger. Black-legged Kittiwake was only reported twice, possibly the same bird on 12 Nov at Oswego Harbor and Derby Hill. This was the second poor flight year in a row along the southeastern corner of the lake. In his report, Bill Purcell noted, "It should still be considered speculation, but the improving water quality

of Lake Ontario may well be leading to a decrease of gulls on the lake."

The swallow flight was very light. The sixty Barn Swallow noted on 2 Sep at Sandy Pond was the only swallow count over 50 for any species. Two large American Crow roosts continue to be used. One, on the south side of Syracuse near Community Hospital, was host to thousands of birds each night at dusk in spite of the cutting of many trees over the past few years. The other is in Pompey in a large stand of spruce and shelters well over a thousand birds. There was a relatively poor flight both kinglets. The fall migration of warblers and shorebirds can only be described as normal. Twenty-five species of warblers were reported, but with the exception of Magnolia (max 10), Yellow-rumped (max 79) and Black-throated Green (max 15) Warblers, all sightings were single digit counts. The final big warbler push was the last ten days of September with the biggest numbers found on favorable winds 24 Sep. A Yellow-breasted Chat was seen for the second straight fall, although it has not been reported in summer since 1987. There were also twenty-five species of shorebirds reported. John Hanyak found two Buff-breasted Sandpiper in a plowed field north of Phoenix on 12 Sep. They stayed through 16 Sep, affording many good looks. The ten Hudsonian Godwit at Sylvan Beach on 10 Oct were the most observed since the fall 1976 season. There were no reports of Western or Stilt Sandpiper, Short-billed Dowitcher, Prairie or Cerulean Warbler. Several observers reported low numbers or no House Sparrow at their feeders and are questioning whether the increase in House Finch is related to this decline.

John Hanyak also located the season's only Glossy Ibis, the first fall report since 1985. A record late Black-crowned Night-Heron was observed. One of the most interesting reports is Steve Rulison's possible calling *Yellow Rail* on Howland's Island 20 Sep. The diagnostic ticking call was heard from the reeds and grasses along the bank of a small pond. The only other recent record was a dead bird found in 1992 (*Kingbird* 42:14). Two probable escaped waterfowl were found this season: a Mute Swan continues on Onondaga Lake and a male Ruddy Shelduck was found at Sylvan Beach on 14 Nov.

The first confirmed sighting of the soon-to-be-recognized Bicknell's (Gray-cheeked) Thrush in the Region occurred at Nine Mile Point on 26 September. Paul DeBenedictis described the bird as follows: "immature Bicknell's seen almost too close to focus binoculars. It was a small *Catharus* thrush, olive-backed with a rufous-tinged tail, faint wingbar on greater upperwing coverts, breast heavily spotted with no buffy suffusion, faint narrow gray eye ring, dark cheeks: no calls, no wing and tail flipping even when spished at; legs and bill were dark."

Contributors: Sue Adair, Sue Boettger, Joe Brin, Patrick Burns, Dave Cesari, Dorothy Crumb, Paul DeBenedictis, Dave Eichorn, Robert Evans, Craig Fosdick, Don Feuss, William Gruenbaum, John Hanyak, Elva Hawken, Gene Huggins, Mary Alice Koenek, Gary Lee, Bob Long, David Nash, Bill Purcell, Paul Richardson, Steve Rulison, Margaret Rusk, Maureen Staloff, Jim Throckmorton, Judy Thurber, Judy Wright, Ken Zoller.

Abbreviations: Bid - Biddlecum, n of Phoenix, OSWE; CIM - Clay Marsh, ONON; DeL - Delta Lake, ONEI; DH - Derby Hill, OSWE; LOL - Lake Ontario Littoral, OSWE; LSB - Little Sodus Bay, Fair Haven, and vicinity, CAYU; NMP - Nine Mile Point, OSWE; NPT - northern Pompey Township, ONON; OneiL - Oneida Lake; OnonL - Onondaga Lake; RCBFS - Rice Creek Biological Field Station, OSWE; SPd - Sandy Pond, OSWE; TRGMA - Three Rivers Game Management Area, OSWE.

Fall reports: **Red-throated Loon:** seven reports, max four LSB 13 Nov and 11 LSB 21 Nov. **Com. Loon:** max 100 NMP 31 Oct. **Pied-billed Grebe:** 11 reports, max 16 TRGMA 17 Oct. **Horned Grebe:** max 20 OnonL mid-Nov, continuing scarce. **Red-necked Grebe:** four each LOL 23 Oct, 17 Nov and OnonL mid-Nov; one Howland's I 20 Sep, early. **Great Egret:** max nine OnonL early Sep, others Rome, W Monroe and DeL; last 11 Oct. **Green Heron:** only report two Rome 6 Sep. **Black-crowned Night-Heron:** imm Bid 14 Nov, record late. **Glossy Ibis:** one SPd 8 Sep (JH). **Tundra Swan:** eight DeRuyter 16 Nov; 12 LSB 3 Nov, 24 OneiL 29 Nov, record fall high; high numbers. **Brant:** record early 15 DH 29 Sep; poor flight, max 689 DH 10 Oct. **Canada Goose** max 1081; low. **Wood Duck;** max 160 W Monroe OSWE 4 Sep. **Green-winged Teal:** Eurasian race near Oswego 13 Oct (CF). **N. Pintail;** max 80 OneiL 23 Nov. **Gadwall:** max 144 LSB 21 Nov. **Am. Wigeon:** max 350 LSB 2 Nov. **Greater Scaup:** max 1200 LOL 7 Nov. **Oldsquaw:** poor flight, max 75 SPd 31 Oct. **Ruddy Duck:** max nine Beaver L ONON 25 Nov; four SVB 13 Nov, unusual location.

Bald Eagle: six reports of single imm, one from DeL, others from LOL, 6 Sep-21 Nov. **N. Harrier:** max 46 SPd 31 Oct. **Sharp-shinned Hawk:** *intro.* **N. Goshawk:** *intro.*; seven reports LOL 25 Sep-25 Nov, one CIM 20 Oct, good fall flight. **Red-shouldered Hawk:** only report one LOL 2 Nov, late. **Rough-legged Hawk:** max 6 SPd 31 Oct. **Am. Kestrel:** max 42 LOL 18 Sep. **Merlin:** *intro.* **Peregrine Falcon:** *intro.* **Yellow Rail:** *intro.* **Am. Coot:** max 225 LSB 2 Nov. **Black-bellied Plover:** max 18 DeL 20 Sep. low, but more scattered reports than usual. **Am. Golden-Plover:** max 66 Bid 25 Sep. **Greater Yellowlegs:** one LOL 14 Nov late. **Hudsonian Godwit:** *intro.*; one DeL 16 Oct. **Least Sandpiper:** max 15 DeL

7 Sep. **Buff-breasted Sandpiper**: *intro*. **White-rumped Sandpiper**: only three single reports. **Baird's Sandpiper**: max three SPd 4 Sep; two DeL 16 Sep. **Pectoral Sandpiper**: max 84 DeL 17 Sep, good flight. **Purple Sandpiper**: three DH 22 Oct; three LSB 6 Nov; one SPd 7 Nov and one LSB 26 Nov. **Red-necked Phalarope**: one DeL 6 Sep, one Lysander 6 Sep. **Red Phalarope**: three DH 7 Nov. **Parasitic Jaeger**: five chasing gulls off Nine-mile Pt OSWE 30 Oct. **Glaucous Gull**: two singles LSB 21 Nov and LOL 28 Nov. **Black-legged Kittiwake**: *intro*.. **Forster's Tern**: imm SVB 4-5 Sep.

Mourning Dove: max 200 Van Buren ONON 18 Sep. **Black-billed Cuckoo**: only one SPd 17 Sep. **Snowy Owl**: *intro*. **Short-eared Owl**: only report one LOL 17 Nov. **N. Saw-whet Owl**: one Syracuse 14 Nov being harassed by crows (Ann Scheider). **Com. Nighthawk**: last DeL 24 Sep, late. **Whip-poor-will**: one CIM 29 Sep, unusual after calling ceases. **Ruby-throated Hummingbird**: *intro*.

Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: only two reported SVB 19 Sep. **Least Flycatcher**: only one Erieville 5 Sep. **E. Phoebe**: max 12 CIM 22 Sep, ties record high; last Erieville 18 Nov. **E. Kingbird**: only report two NPT 8 Sep. **Barn Swallow**: *intro*. **Blue Jay**: max 312 Hastings 30 Sep. **Am. Crow**: *intro*. **Com. Raven**: two returned to old nest site n Constantia after 18 Nov (PB). **Black-capped Chickadee**: max 80 Brookfield 4 Sep. **Tufted Titmouse**: *intro*. **Red-breasted Nuthatch**: *intro*. **Winter Wren**: max nine Brookfield 9 Sep; last Erieville 17 Nov. **Marsh Wren**: max 13 CIM 22 Sep; last two CIM 10 Nov. **Golden-crowned Kinglet**: max 45 LOL 10 Oct. **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**: max 30 LOL 10 Oct. **Gray-cheeked Thrush**: five singles; *intro*. **Bohemian Waxwing**: *intro*. **N. Shrike**: singles only in four locations LOL, poor flight.

White-eyed Vireo: imm DH 3 Oct, rarely seen in fall. **Red-eyed Vireo**: *intro*. **N. Waterthrush**: only report one SVB 18 Sep. **Yellow-breasted Chat**: one CIM 15 Sep (DN).

Scarlet Tanager: one W Winfield 8-11 Nov, well described, record late. **Chipping Sparrow**: max 47 LOL 18 Sep and 60 T Clay 21 Sep. **Vesper Sparrow**: one near Baldwinsville 21 Nov (JB), record late. **Fox Sparrow**: ones and twos only, scarce. **White-throated Sparrow**: low counts except for max 150 LOL 29-30 Sep. **Dark-eyed Junco**: very low max 54 Pratts Falls P ONON 31 Oct. **Snow Bunting**: good flight LOL, max 200 on 30 Oct. **E. Meadowlark**: continued in low numbers, max 14 T Richland 10 Oct. **Brown-headed Cowbird**: *intro*. **Pine Grosbeak**: *intro*: arr LOL 5 Nov, max 14 LOL 27 Nov; only location away from LOL five

NPT after mid Nov. **Purple Finch**: virtually disappeared by mid Nov. **Red Crossbill**: only two singles reported; one Albion 14 Nov; one Syracuse 16 Nov. **White-winged Crossbill**: male at feeder DeWitt 26 Oct-27 Nov (K. Zauter), 100 NPT 23 Nov, only reports. **Com. Redpoll**: *intro*. **Hoary Redpoll**: singles Pompey 26 Oct, Verona Beach 3 Nov, DH 12 Nov. **Pine Siskin**: max 31 Erieville 30 Oct, low numbers for winter finch year, none persistent. **Evening Grosbeak**: started out in good numbers, max 50 Erieville 20 Nov, then only flocks max 10. **House Sparrow**: *intro*.

Corrigenda: Vol 43: 238—Derby Hill Hawk migration totals: Heading for 4th column should read "Last." Heading for fifth column should read "90% Date Range." **Sora**: should read "12 May." Vol 43:241—Lapland Longspur: should read "last Fabius ONON 22 Mar." Snow Bunting: should read "last LOL 27 Mar."

3983 Gates Road, Jamesville, New York 13078