

REGION 2 - GENESEE

KEVIN C. GRIFFITH

61 Grandview Lane, Rochester NY 14612

The winter season had its usual interesting conditions. The typical seesaw in temperatures was noticeable during the bulk of the season. For the most part it was cold. A couple of periods of thawing, primarily in January and February, made it bearable. December's average temperature was 25.3°F, which was 3.8° below normal. January averaged 0.1° above normal at 23.7°F, and February's average of 24.6° was 0.1° below normal. Precipitation was not drastically different from normal. December showed the greatest deviation from the norm with 1.5", 1.23" below normal. January was just over an inch above normal at 3.18", and February was only slightly below normal at 1.72".

A key word for this winter must be snow. The continuous snowfall

was expected to severely impact the variety of bird species and numbers of individuals this season. December had a total of 20.5", January totaled 36.9", and February added 14.1" If you combine that with the overall impression of a poor wild food crop, then a dismal season was in the offing. This proved not to be the case. The total number of species was very high. The combination of the Christmas Bird Counts and another big January push by a number of area birders produced a very impressive list of species. The snow and cold seemed not to deter the birders.

The CBC results were about normal in terms of the number of species. The Letchworth-Silver Lake (16 Dec), Rochester (17 Dec), and Little Lakes (30 Dec) CBC's tallied 70, 94, and 72 species, respectively. A low-point was the lack of waterfowl due to the nearly complete freezeup of lakes, bays and ponds. Fortunately the days were pleasant enough to produce good numbers of other species.

It also seems that we are becoming better at finding birds in winter. As has been the case in recent years, Dave Tetlow and Mike Davids pursued Big January lists. Don and Donna Traver also pushed for a big total. These groups, along with the other regional observers, produced a record total of 133 species for January. This included seven species which do not even appear on our regular checklist.

The waterbird picture was actually quite good. Both loons and all the regular grebes were reported, plus an Eared Grebe was found by Allan, Dan and David Strong on Conesus Lake on 26 Dec. It was an unusual time of the year for this species which occurs here sporadically. An immature Northern Gannet at Hamlin Beach on 8 December was spotted by Brett Ewald and William Symonds. This followed several sightings in the fall. Most ducks were reported, with the highlight being a regional first Tufted Duck found by Mike Davids on 24 Dec in the Genesee River at Charlotte. The bird remained in the area for the season and provided many observers with an opportunity to see this species for the first time. Other waterfowl highlights included a Common Eider found by Mike Davids and Dave Tetlow at Oklahoma Beach on 21 Jan, two adult King Eider spotted by William Symonds at Hamlin Beach on 16 Feb, a Harlequin Duck discovered at Manitou by Richard O'Hara and Robert and Susan Spahn on 2 Dec, and three Harlequin Duck found at Sodus Point by Don and Donna Traver on 13 Jan. These latter, very cooperative birds, stayed through the month. Also of interest was a Trumpeter Swan which appeared at Irondequoit Bay in January. This is the second year in a row that an immature has wintered in the Region. The origin of this bird is still unknown. It is suspected that both birds have come from a reintroduction program in Ontario, Canada.

A Black Vulture was discovered roosting with Turkey Vulture at Letchworth State Park in December. This bird was observed into January. The raptor season was characterized by good reports of accipiters as well as above normal numbers of sightings of Peregrine Falcon and Merlin. Bald Eagle was well reported, but Rough-legged Hawk was noted only in the Retsoff area. Sora was reported only in February, Virginia Rail in both December and January. The latter has become a regular occurrence. It was a dismal winter for shorebird reports. Common Snipe was the only species reported. There were no late lingerers and not even a winter Killdeer report. Gulls on the other hand were plentiful. Bonaparte's Gull was reported in small numbers and Little Gull was fairly easy to find off of Durand-Eastman Park in December and even into January. There were two reports of Lesser Black-backed Gull in January and two in February. White-winged gulls were well represented this year. A max of 32 Glaucous Gull was counted at Charlotte by Bob Marcotte and Dick O'Hara from the 8-11 of Jan. A fish kill at the Russell Station power plant caused by a warm water discharge brought a high concentration of gulls in early February. Black-legged Kittiwake reports continued the fall trend, with three immatures being observed on the Rochester CBC by William Symonds. It was a first for that count. A single immature was discovered by Mike Davids at Irondequoit Bay on 28 Dec.

The owl picture was highlighted by the discovery of a dead Boreal Owl near the town of Perry in January by Dave Tetlow and Mike Davids. Snowy Owl was scarce and Short-eared Owl also seemed down. The Davids and Tetlow team found five species of owls in Bergen Swamp on the first of January. This included Long-eared and Northern Saw-Whet owls. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was once again visiting feeders in the area. One was reported for the eighth year in a row, at times joined by a second, in Irondequoit and another was seen in Penfield.

Half-hardy passerine species were few this year. Those that were found were represented by single individuals. There were two Eastern Phoebe reported in December and one of those was seen again in early January. The first was seen at Hamlin Beach State Park on 2 Dec and the other was reported from the Conesus Lake area on 30 Dec. It is doubtful that they survived the winter. Winter Wren, Marsh Wren, Hermit Thrush and Brown Thrasher were also reported. A Ruby-crowned Kinglet in February was unusual. Bohemian Waxwing continued to be reported throughout the season. There were good numbers of Northern Shrike.

Sparrow reports included: Eastern Towhee at Hamlin Beach and in Perinton in December and January; Chipping, Field, and Savannah sparrows all located in January; good numbers of American Tree Sparrow;

and unusually high totals for White-crowned Sparrow, often outnumbering White-throated Sparrow. Observers also remarked that Snow Bunting and Lapland Longspur were easy to find and present in decent numbers.

Rusty Blackbird, Eastern Meadowlark, and a dead Baltimore Oriole found in Piffard in January were the only icterid records of special note. The expected finch winter never really materialized, though there were reports of most species. Pine Grosbeak was fairly consistent in Webster Park, and two Red Crossbill were found in Durand-Eastman Park on 15 January by Dave Tetlow. Hoary Redpoll was observed in a number of locations, with two visiting my feeder in Greece during January.

All in all, you'd have to say that it was a pretty good winter season.

Contributors: John Boettcher, Braddock Bay Raptor Research (Jeff Dodge, Brian Sullivan), Carolyn Cass, Belma Cerosaletti, Gary Chapin, Anne Clarridge, Jerry Czech, Mike Davids, Colleen Dox-Griffith, Brett Ewald, Jeanine & Kurt Fox, Roy Grau, Kevin Griffith, Lucretia Grosshans, Ralph Guenther, William Hallahan, Harriet Hamilton, Greg Hartenstein, Jim Kimball, Allan & Sandy Klonick, John Lehr, Gerry Leubner, Bob Marcotte, Richard Mather, Robert McKinney, Richard O'Hara, Tom Painting, Mike Peter, Bill & Betty Powell, Dominic Sherony, Bob & Ruth Shone, Robert, Susan & Cathy Spahn, Paul, Sue, Dave & Jeff Spindler, Allan, Dan, David & Grace Strong, William Symonds, Dave Tetlow, JoAnn, Mike, Justin & Glenn Tetlow, Don & Donna Traver, Ann Watson.

Abbreviations: BB - Braddock Bay, CH - Charlotte, CL - Conesus Lake, DE - Durand-Eastman Park and adjacent waters, G - Greece, HB - Hamlin Beach State Park, IB - Irondequoit Bay, LP - Letchworth State Park, P - Perinton, R - Retsof, SB - Sodus Bay, W - Webster WL - West Lakeshore.

LOONS - DUCKS: **Red-throated Loon:** max 407 HB 3 Dec. **Com. Loon:** one HB 13 Jan, few reports this year. **Pied-billed Grebe:** one SB 1,14-15 Jan, uncommon in winter. **Red-necked Grebe:** last two HB 15 Dec. **Eared Grebe:** CL 26 Dec (A,D,& DS). **N. Gannet:** one imm 8 Dec (BE,WS), late. **Double-crested Cormorant:** one G 21 Dec; one IB 22-26 Jan, late. **Tundra Swan:** max 74 CL 10 Dec. **Green-winged Teal:** singles Penfield, East Lakeshore, and CL various Jan dates, uncommon. **Mallard:** max 2000 Elba 1-31 Jan. **Redhead:** max 5000+ Canandaigua Lake 13 Jan (RO'H). **TUFTED DUCK:** male CH 24 Dec thru (MD,mob), first regional record. **Greater Scaup:** max 11,388 HB 7 Dec. **COM. EIDER:** Oklahoma Beach 21 Jan (MD,DT). **King Eider:** two ad HB 16 Feb (WS). **Harlequin Duck:** three Sodus Pt. 13 Jan D&DT,mob), rare. **Oldsquaw:** max 1477 HB

26 Feb. **Black Scoter**: one WL 25 Jan. **Surf Scoter**: one SB 24 Feb; one BB 25 Feb, scarce. **White-winged Scoter**: max 1590 HB 26 Feb. **Hooded Merganser**: max 100 CL 10 Dec. **Ruddy Duck**: one C 1-4 Jan.

HAWKS - ALCIDS: **Turkey Vulture**: max 29 LP 29 Dec. **Black Vulture**: one LP late Dec- Jan, a first wintering record for the Region. **Bald Eagle**: 10 reports for the season, good total. **Red-shouldered Hawk**: one imm DE 26 Jan (DT), uncommon in winter. **Rough-legged Hawk**: max 81 BB 24 Feb (BS). **Golden Eagle**: one BB 24 Feb (BS), early. **Merlin**: one R 16 Dec (J&KF); one IB 29 Dec (MD). **Peregrine Falcon**: first one G 26 Dec (MD). **Sora**: one Brighton 8 Feb (CC), very rare in winter. **Virginia Rail**: one G 17 Dec, uncommon. **Am. Coot**: max 127 IB 30 Dec. **Killdeer**: arr one Parma 28 Feb. **Com. Snipe**: one Hamlin 26 Jan; one IB 28 Jan, regular but uncommon. **Little Gull**: max 10 DE 31 Dec (DSh). **Iceland Gull**: max four P 10-31 Dec. **Lesser Black-backed Gull**: one ad IB 8,13,14 Jan (sev); one ad P 11 Jan (MP). **Glaucous Gull**: max 32 C 8-11 Jan (BM,Ro'H). **Great Black-backed Gull**: max 512 IB 28 Feb. **Black-legged Kittiwake**: three imm Rochester 17 Dec (WS); one imm IB 28 Dec (MD).

DOVES - WOODPECKERS: **Snowy Owl**: one Hamlin 6-11 Jan (KG, et al), scarce. **Long-eared Owl**: *intro*. **Short-eared Owl**: max 14 R 7 Jan. **BOREAL OWL**: one dead Perry 1 Jan (MD,DT). **N. Saw-whet Owl**: *intro*. **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**: *intro*.

FLYCATCHERS - STARLINGS: **E. Phoebe**: one DE 2 Dec; one CL 26 Dec - 1 Jan, *intro*. **Horned Lark**: max 400 HB 23 Feb. **Am. Crow**: max 20,000 Rochester 18 Feb (CC,RM). **Com. Raven**: one Springwater 31 Jan (DT). **Winter Wren**: several reports Jan. **Marsh Wren**: one IB 3 Dec (J&KF); one G 9 Dec (MD). **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**: one BB 21 Feb (MD), only winter report. **Hermit Thrush**: max five R 16 Dec. **Brown Thrasher**: one Hamlin 2,11 Jan (MD,DT); one W 11 Jan (D&DT), uncommon in winter. **Bohemian Waxwing**: max 22 Hamlin 13 Dec (BM). **N. Shrike**: *intro*.

VIREOS - WARBLERS: **Yellow-rumped Warbler**: one Mendon Ponds 15 Jan (BM), first of the year.

TANAGERS - WEAVERS: **E. Towhee**: *intro*. **Am. Tree Sparrow**: max 202 WL 27 Dec. **Chipping Sparrow**: one Irondequoit 17 Dec; two Jan reports, unusual. **Savannah Sparrow**: one LP area 10 Jan (DT), only report. **Field Sparrow**: several thru. **White-crowned Sparrow**: max 19 R 3 Feb. **Lapland Longspur**: *intro*. **Snow Bunting**: max 1500 Caledonia 11 Jan. **E. Meadowlark**: max 11 R 31 Dec. **Rusty Blackbird**: one WL 11-12 Jan

(D&DT, et al), only report. **Pine Grosbeak:** max 20 WP 29 Dec (MD). **Red Crossbill:** two DE 15 Jan. **Hoary Redpoll:** one G 1,16 Jan; several Feb (CD-G, KG).