

REGION 3 - FINGER LAKES

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The winter weather that began early in the Finger Lakes Region in 1995 continued through December. At least an additional 10 inches of snow fell to add to the 30 inches already on the ground. Furthermore, temperatures were 4-5 degrees below normal which continued the cooler trend which began in November. January brought a mixed bag of winter weather; heavy snowfall, extreme cold, unseasonable warmth, heavy rain, and severe flooding all occurred during the month. Probably the most important factor during the month was the extended "January thaw" on the 18th and 19th when temperatures were 8 to 9 degrees above normal, and the snow pack rapidly melted. Interestingly, by the time January ended, both precipitation, and temperatures were at or only slightly below average. After the variety of weather conditions brought to us in January, it was nice to have a fairly uneventful February. February temperatures were normal for the month, but precipitation was slightly below normal.

The early snow cover had an effect on the number of over-wintering raptors and half-hardies seen through the winter period. When compared with 1995, a relatively mild winter, there were declines in reports of Northern Harrier (down 25%), Rough-legged Hawk (down 44%), and Short-eared Owl (down 64%). These declines may also be influenced by a cyclic drop in the rodent population. Conversely, Red-tailed Hawk numbers appeared similar to or higher than last year. Overwintering half-hardy passerines were reduced. Song and Swamp sparrow numbers were down dramatically, and there were no reports of Yellow-rumped Warbler for the period. Interestingly, an Eastern Phoebe made it through December to be recorded during the Ithaca Christmas Bird Count on 1 January. The "January thaw" seemed to have a dramatic impact on the Canada Goose numbers on Cayuga Lake. Prior to the thaw Canada Goose numbers seemed at or slightly below average, which is around 10,000. But after the thaw numbers skyrocketed to 14,000 on the 27th and

grew to estimates of up to 20,000 in February. The end of February ushered in the first of the returning migrants including Killdeer, blackbirds, and American Robin. Waterfowl also began pouring into the Region toward the end of the month, providing excellent viewing opportunities.

There were many bird highlights for the winter season. The deep areas of the south end of Seneca Lake hosted a rare Finger Lakes occurrence of both Harlequin Duck and Common Eider (J.J. O'Malley). With the influx of Canada Goose after the "January thaw", a Ross' Goose was present in the Cayuga Lake Basin. A rare western form of Red-tailed Hawk, a rufous morph was observed in Ithaca. The 1996 winter season was an excellent one for winter finches. All of the winter finches, except White-winged Crossbill were reported from the Region. Finally, Bohemian Waxwing, with one flock of 18, which is a very high count for the Finger lakes Region was observed in several locations in the Cayuga Lake basin.

Observers: Robert Amsel, Fred Bertram, John Bower, Jack Brubaker, Cayuga Bird Club, Chemung Valley Audubon Society, John Confer, Karl David, Sten Davies, Eaton Bird Club, John Fitzpatrick, John Greenley, Meena Haribal, Chris Hymes, Steve Kelling, Scott Mardis, Kevin McGowan, Tom Nix, Ralph Paonessa, Sandy Podulka, Bard Prentiss, Ken Rosenberg, Dave Russell, Larry Springsteen, Laura Stenzler, Jeff and Allison Wells.

Abbreviations: CL - Cayuga Lake, GE - Geneva, MP - Myers Point Lansing, SL - Seneca Lake, SP - Stewart Park Ithaca, DL - Dryden Lake.

LOONS-DUCKS: **Red-throated Loon:** two MP 20 Dec (KD). **Com. Loon:** max 734 Taughannock State Park 2 Dec; singles CL, SL thru January. **Pied-billed Grebe:** 14 SL 29 Dec; 12 Ithaca 1 Jan, good counts for winter. **Horned Grebe:** scattered CL, SL thru. **Red-necked Grebe:** singles CL, SL thru; nine reports. **Double-crested Cormorant:** SL thru; SP 6 Dec. **Great Blue Heron:** scattered entire Region thru Jan; max nine Cayuga 28 Jan. **Tundra Swan:** max 36 MNWR 1 Jan; CL thru. **Mute Swan:** Jan-Feb CL, an expanding presence. **Snow Goose:** singles SL, CL thru. **ROSS' GOOSE:** one ad CL 11-21 Feb (RP, mob, NYSARC). **Canada Goose:** SL, CL thru; max 14096 CL 27 Jan. **Wood Duck:** four IT 1 Jan; arr. SP 29 Feb. **Green-winged Teal:** two WG 15 Dec. **Am. Black Duck:** SL, CL thru; max 1307 CL 27 Jan. **Mallard:** SL, CL thru; max 10650 GE 17 Dec. **N. Pintail:** scattered CL thru. **N. Shoveler:** Union Springs 22 Jan (BP), good description). **Gadwall:** SL, CL thru; max 30 CL 27 Jan. **Am. Wigeon:** throughout Region thru; max 17 CL 1 Jan. **Canvasback:** SL, CL thru; max 100 MP 16 Jan. **Redhead:** SL, CL thru; max 7000 SL 22 Feb **Ring-necked Duck:** CL

thru; max 12 Sheldrake 27 Jan. **Greater Scaup** SL, CL thru; max 50 MP 16 Jan. **Lesser Scaup**: 25 MP 16 Jan; max 186 Geneva 17 Dec; three DL 28 Feb. **COM. EIDER**: one female WG 29 Dec-29 Jan (JO, mob, NYSARC). **HARLEQUIN DUCK**: one male WG 10 Dec-26 Feb (JB, mob, NYSARC). **Oldsquaw**: two GE 21 Jan. **Black Scoter**: SP 2-6 Dec. **Surf Scoter**: SP 2-7 Dec; two Canandaigua Lake 14 Jan. **White-winged Scoter**: SP 2 Dec-1 Jan. **Com. Goldeneye**: SL, CL thru; max 940 CL 21 Jan. **Bufflehead** SL, CL thru; max 190 CL 27 Jan. **Hooded Merganser**: SL, CL thru; max 49 IT 1 Jan. **Com. Merganser**: SL, CL thru; ten CL 27 Jan; 11 Chemung River 28 Feb. **Red-breasted Merganser**: CL thru; max 14 CL 27 Jan. **Ruddy Duck**: seven GE 17 Dec; one GE 14 Jan; 1 Kashong Pt. SL 14 Jan.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: **Turkey Vulture**: arr Ludlowville 27 Feb. **Bald Eagle**: five reports, ad. and imm. north end CL thru; one ad EL 28 Feb. N. **Harrier**: only six reports! thru; max 12 GE 17 Dec. **Sharp-shinned Hawk**: eight reports thru; max seven IT 1 Jan. **Cooper's Hawk**: nine reports thru; max six IT 1 Jan. N. **Goshawk**: singles, eight reports thru. **Red-shouldered Hawk**: arr Dryden 8 Feb. **Red-tailed Hawk**: numerous over entire Region; max 66 IT 1 Jan. **Red-tailed "Rufous-morph" Hawk**: Reynolds Game Farm Dryden 29 Feb (KM, mob, NYSARC). **Rough-legged Hawk**: low numbers thru; max seven IT 1 Jan. **Am. Kestrel**: max 19 GE 17 Dec. **Merlin**: one IT 28 Feb. **Ring-necked Pheasant**: scattered GE, IT. **Ruffed Grouse**: max 30 IT 1 Jan. **Wild Turkey**: numerous over entire Region; max 163 IT 1 Jan. N. **Bobwhite**: one GE 1 Dec, probable escape. **Am. Coot**: SL, CL thru; max 337 SL 14 Jan. **Killdeer**: last MP 20 Dec; arr MP 28 Feb. **Bonaparte's Gull**: two GE 17 Dec, late. **Ring-billed Gull**: max 568 CV 30 Dec. **Herring Gull**: max 500 Seneca Falls 21 Jan. **Iceland Gull**: SP 30 Jan-8 Feb. **Glaucous Gull**: 1st winter MP 4 Feb; ad. near SP 8 Feb. **Great Black-backed Gull**: SL, CL thru; max 30 IT 1 Jan.

DOVES-WOODPECKERS: **Rock Dove**: max 1384 IT 1 Jan. **Mourning Dove**: max 797 IT 1 Jan. **E. Screech-Owl**: max 22 IT 1 Jan. **Great Horned Owl**: max 17 IT 1 Jan. **Barred Owl**: one IT 1 Jan; one Dryden 6 Feb, only reports!. **Short-eared Owl**: six reports, scarce; max seven Seneca Falls Airport 22 Dec. N. **Saw-whet Owl**: one Canoga 21 Jan- 17 Feb; one Trumansburg 18 Feb. **Belted Kingfisher**: scattered reports thru; max three IT 1 Jan. **Red-headed Woodpecker**: one MNWR 23 Feb, good description. **Red-bellied Woodpecker**: max 86 IT 1 Jan. **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**: Cayuga Lake Basin thru Jan. **Downy Woodpecker**: max 345 IT 1 Jan. **Hairy Woodpecker**: max 107 IT 1 Jan. N. **Flicker**: scattered across Region until 21 Jan.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLING: **E. Phoebe:** one IT 1 Jan, very late. **Horned Lark:** max 100 King Ferry 29 Dec. **Blue Jay:** max 611 IT 1 Jan. **Am. Crow:** max 2000 GE 29 Jan. **Fish Crow:** four IT 1 Jan. **Com. Raven:** ten reports southern part of Region thru. **Black-capped Chickadee:** max 2076 IT 1 Jan. **Tufted Titmouse:** max 225 IT 1 Jan. **Red-breasted Nuthatch:** max 62 IT 1 Jan. **White-breasted Nuthatch:** max 308 IT 1 Jan. **Brown Creeper:** max 36 IT 1 Jan; widespread. **Carolina Wren:** five reports; max 4 IT 1 Jan. **Winter Wren:** four reports; max 2 IT 1 Jan. **Golden-crowned Kinglet:** four reports; max 42 IT 1 Jan. **E. Bluebird:** seven reports; max 51 IT 1 Jan. **Hermit Thrush:** IT 1 Jan; IT 25 Feb. **Am. Robin:** three reports; max 20 King Ferry 8 Feb. **N. Mockingbird:** scattered reports; max 21 IT 1 Jan. **Bohemian Waxwing:** two Long Point State Park six Dec; 18 Mt Pleasant 23 Jan-4 Feb. **Cedar Waxwing:** max 150 Mt Pleasant 23 Jan. **N. Shrike:** 21 reports!; max seven IT 1 Jan, very high. **European Starling:** max 4631 GE 17 Dec.

VIREOS-WARBLEDERS: no reports.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: **N. Cardinal:** max 451 IT 1 Jan. **Am. Tree Sparrow:** max 270 IT 1 Jan. **Field Sparrow:** one Queen Catherine Marsh 28 Dec; one IT 1 Jan. **Savannah Sparrow:** one MP 21 Feb. **Song Sparrow:** a few thru Dec, then rare; max 16 IT 1 Jan. **Swamp Sparrow:** one Queen Catherine Marsh 29 Dec; 1 IT 1 Jan. **White-throated Sparrow:** scattered reports; max 35 IT 1 Jan. **Dark-eyed Junco:** max 357 IT 1 Jan. **Lapland Longspur:** six reports; six Pine Valley 1 Jan; six Varick 18 Feb; five King Ferry 29 Dec. **Snow Bunting:** 14 reports; max 1000 King Ferry 29 Dec. **Red-winged Blackbird:** last Chemung Valley 30 Dec; arr King Ferry 26 Feb. **E. Meadowlark:** four Fayette 24 Dec; three Montezuma 1 Jan. **Com. Grackle:** arr King Ferry 26 Feb. **Brown-headed Cowbird:** arr DL 28 Feb. **Pine Grosbeak:** one Hi-Tor WMA 25 Dec; four Union Springs 9 Feb. **Purple Finch:** 12 GE 17 Dec; five Chemung Valley 30 Dec; six IT 1 Jan, only reports!. **House Finch:** max 1474 IT 1 Jan. **Red Crossbill:** six IT 1 Jan; one Hammond Hill 17 Feb; 18 IT 29 Feb. **Com. Redpoll:** 26 reports; flock size typically <100. **Pine Siskin:** six reports; max 15 GE 17 Dec. **Am. Goldfinch:** max 168 IT 1 Jan. **Evening Grosbeak:** 12 reports; max 306 IT 1 Jan. **House Sparrow:** max 1211 IT 1 Jan.

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