

REGION 2 - GENESEE

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I guess you would have to say that it was one of the more interesting winters. The early part of the season gave us a hint of some wintry weather and winter species, but the bulk of the season turned out to be anything but wintry. December was a warm month with an average temperature of 31.2°F . This was 2.1 degrees above normal. But the real story for December was the snowfall. By the end of the month 26.5 inches had fallen. This represented a total that was about 5 inches above normal. Combined with the November snows, it was the largest amount of snow ever recorded by the end of December. Some of the heavier snows fell south of the city, but snowfall for the month was generally widespread. Overall precipitation was at 2.88 inches, which was a scant 0.15 inches above normal. As birding went, it was a pretty decent month. The lakewatch continued into the month and produced some good waterfowl totals as well as gull reports. Birding near the lake on the whole was good during the month. One of the interesting things for December was the appearance of decent numbers of winter finches. Conditions were not great for the three area Christmas Bird counts, but the Rochester count inched ever closer to that "100-species" mark with 99 tallied. This included a first-for-the-count Common Raven spotted by Robert McKinney.

January was a warm month. The average temperature of 31.6°F was a whopping 8 degrees above normal. Along with that came 5.63 inches of precipitation for the 2nd wettest January in the 1900's. It was nearly 4 inches above normal. Snow cover still existed in some spots and the smaller bodies of

water remained ice covered during the period. None of these things stopped the now annual efforts of the "Big January" listers. Many hours were spent in the field by observers trying to amass a good list of species for the month. When all was said and done, a total of 141 species was tallied for the month. Mike Davids and Dave Tetlow found 140 species in a combined effort. The location of half-hardies combined with a good total of wintering species helped in reaching this mark.

The annual New York State Waterfowl Census was conducted between the 10th and 18th of January. It was not a stellar count but was about average for recent years. The rains had swollen many of the rivers, and the Genesee was pouring silt laden water into the lake. This may have tended to scatter some waterfowl species and to push them farther out into the lake. It also produced flooded fields everywhere to disperse the puddle ducks away from their normal sites of winter concentration.

The vole population (*Microtus* species) was quite healthy this year. The lack of heavy snow cover also made them more susceptible to predation. Still, raptor totals were not that impressive. The lack of really consistent snow cover served to spread the landbirds out also. There were plenty of open fields, so weed seed availability was good and kept the sparrows and redpolls scattered. The winter finches were scattered at the few sites with decent cone crops. All of the winter finch species were found, but in small numbers.

February continued the warm trend, with an average temperature of 32.6°F. This was again 8 degrees above normal. The warmest day was on the 10th, when the thermometer reached 53°F. Precipitation was 2.34 inches, which was a scant 0.24 inches above normal. Snowfall was only 9.1 inches. Normal snowfall for the month is 22.8 inches. Good coverage kept the species total up and provided a decent monthly total in a month when reports are often scarce. The warm trend did bring a smattering of early migrants, but waterfowl totals were poor. Bonaparte's and Little gulls remained into the month. This is generally not the case, but very good totals of particularly the latter were counted. Irruptive species and half-hardies were relatively scarce.

Loons were evident throughout the season. Red-throated Loons continued to be observed in greater numbers than usual. All the expected grebe species were accounted for, with Red-necked Grebe remaining in the Region throughout.

Double-crested Cormorants have been wintering in recent years, but the arrival of an immature Great Cormorant, discovered at Irondequoit Bay in January, was a real highlight. The bird was seen by many observers and was present through the end of the period. To make matters even more interesting, an adult was observed by William Symonds at Hamlin Beach and a second immature bird joined the one at Irondequoit Bay.

The waterfowl picture was also interesting, with the arrival of three Trumpeter Swans at Irondequoit Bay. One of the birds was wing-tagged,

allowing for tracing its origin. The bird was tagged at Wye Marsh on the southeast corner of Georgian Bay in Ontario, Canada. It was a product of the Canadian recovery project for that species. The appearance of four more south of Sodus Bay is suspected to be from the breeding efforts of a Wayne County private preserve. On the negative side was the unprecedented numbers of Mute Swans. Irondequoit Bay and Braddock Bay played host to large numbers for most of the season. Ducks in general were average to low, with most species located but with lackluster totals. Highlights included King Eider reports and multiple Barrow's Goldeneye sightings.

The raptor numbers for the season were on the low side. Cooper's Hawk sightings were decent, but that was about it for the season. Rough-legged Hawks were generally scarce. Red-shouldered Hawk in winter is always a good find. Merlin has become a rare but regular winter visitor.

The usual rails were found in January at traditional locations, but the Common Moorhen was a very rare find for this season.

A winter jaeger was also a good find. This season was generally good for gulls. As previously mentioned, it was a good season for Little and Bonaparte's gulls. Rarities reported were Franklin's, California and Lesser Black-backed gulls. White-winged gulls were scarcer this year with few reports.

Only one Snowy Owl was consistently reported, from Irondequoit Bay, and Short-eared Owls were seen in the usual spots. Bergen Swamp was the location of a N. Saw-whet report in January along with Long-eared Owl. The usual Red-headed Woodpecker haunt near Avon was nearly void of this diminishing species. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was once again reported but not with the usual sites of regular appearance in recent years.

The passerine picture was mixed. On the plus side was Common Raven, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Carolina Wren, and the fairly large number of Yellow-rumped Warblers at the fish hatchery in Caledonia. On the down side were sparrow numbers in general. The usual species were located but totals were poor. Chipping, Field, Savannah and Fox sparrows were reported but were scarce. Snow Buntings were found in some locations but not in high numbers. Longspurs were tough to find.

Blackbirds continued to occupy their roost at Mendon Ponds Park. Eastern Meadowlarks again wintered in the Retsoff area. Included in this year's observations were Rusty Blackbirds.

Winter finches never really lived up to the expectations enkindled by the fall flight. Perhaps they continued southward and will return on their way back north. Pine Grosbeaks were reported regularly from Webster Park and both crossbills were seen there and elsewhere from time to time. Purple Finches continued to be very scarce. Common Redpolls preferred the fields and were not evident at feeding stations. There were a few scattered reports of Hoary Redpoll. Pine Siskin and Evening Grosbeak numbers were poor this season.

Even with the minuses, we would still have to say that it turned out to be a pretty decent winter season. December's species total was 127 species followed by 141 and 111 for January and February, respectively. All three totals were significantly above their 10-year averages.

Abbreviations: BS - Bergen Swamp, BB - Braddock Bay, C - Caledonia, CH - Charlotte (Ontario Beach), CL - Conesus Lake, DE - Durand-Eastman Park, G - Greece, HB - Hamlin Beach, H - Holley, IB - Irondequoit Bay, L - Lima, LW - Letchworth State Park, L/SLCBC - Letchworth/Silver Lake Christmas Bird Count, MP - Mendon Ponds, NR - Nations Road (Avon), P - Perinton, RCBC - Rochester Christmas Bird Count, S - Sodus, SB - Sodus Bay, TP - Turning Point Park, WL - West Lakeshore, WP - Webster Park.

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LOONS-DUCKS

Red-throated Loon: max 461 HB 3 Dec.

Horned Grebe: max 300+ WL 12 Jan.

Red-necked Grebe: max 26 HB 11 Feb.

GREAT CORMORANT: 1 imm IB 24-31 Jan, 1-28 Feb (BE,RMa,RS); 1 ad HB 8 Feb (WS).

Double-crested Cormorant: max 2 IB 11-31 Jan.

Great Blue Heron max 12 Genesee River 11 Jan.

Turkey Vulture: 1 H 6 Dec, uncommon in winter; max 24 LW 2 Jan.

Snow Goose: 1 G 18-21 Dec; 1 BB 2 Jan; unusual in winter; max 500 Genesee Flats 21 Feb.

Brant: 1-2 IB 18 Dec, 1-28 Feb; 1 LW 15 Feb, unusual in winter.

Mute Swan: max 75 RCBC 21 Dec.

TRUMPETER SWAN: max 4 S 12 Jan; at least 7 other individuals reported in Region in Jan; see *intro* for origins.

Tundra Swan: arr 7 IB 15 Feb.

Wood Duck: arr 1 HB 27 Feb.

Gadwall: max 63 IB 11 Jan, good winter count.

N. Shoveler: max 11 G 21 Dec.

N. Pintail: arr 4 HB 11 Feb.

Green-winged Teal: max 2 MP 3 Jan.

Redhead: max 8000 CL 29 Jan.

Ring-necked Duck: max 112 CL 19 Dec.

Greater Scaup: max 15,000 G 21 Dec.

King Eider: max 5 HB 3 Dec; total of 13 individuals HB 1-20 Dec; 1 fem IB 1 Jan; 1 subad m HB 3 Feb male; 1 subad m DE 9 Feb; 1 imm m CH 22 Feb.

Harlequin Duck: 1 HB 12 Dec (WS), uncommon.

White-winged Scoter: max 8631 HB 9 Dec.

Oldsquaw: total 11,661 HB 1-20 Dec; max 5000+ DE 9 Feb.

Common Goldeneye X Hooded

Merganser: 1 SB 8 Feb (DS,MT).

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE: 1 G 1 Jan (R,S&CS), imm male; 2 imm m SB 2 Jan (DT,MD); 1 f SB 22,28 Jan (D&DT,BE).
Hooded Merganser: max 203 CL 21 Dec.
Ruddy Duck: 1 CL 21 Feb, scarce this winter.

HAWKS-ALCIDS

N. Goshawk: arr 1 BB 28 Feb.
Red-shouldered Hawk: 1 Dalton 21 Jan (DT), uncommon in winter.
Merlin: 4 reports Jan thru.
Virginia Rail: 1 MP 3,19 Jan.
Sora: 2 MP 30 Jan.
Com. Moorhen: 1 C 17,23 (DT), very unusual in winter.
Am. Coot: max 1000 CL 2 Feb.
Killdeer: 1 HB 13 Dec; 1 C 17 Jan; 1 G 18 Jan; unusual in winter.
Am. Woodcock: arr 2 W 28 Feb.
Dunlin: last 1 BB 26 Dec (P&JS), late.
Com. Snipe: 1 MP 26 Jan, uncommon.
phalarope species: 1 G 21 Dec (DT).
Pomarine Jaeger: 1 HB 1 Dec; 1 HB 16 Dec; uncommon in Dec; 1 HB 18 Feb (WS), unusual.
Parasitic Jaeger: 1 HB 3 Dec; max 2 HB 4 Dec; 1 HB 18 Dec; unusual in Dec.
jaeger species: 1 Point Breeze 31 Jan(DT,MD).
FRANKLIN'S GULL: 1 CH 12 Jan (RMa,DT), record late.
Little Gull: total 33 HB 1-20 Dec; max 19 CH-DE 26 Feb.
Bonaparte's Gull: total 17,391 HB 1-20 Dec.
CALIFORNIA GULL: 1ad DE 12 Dec (RMa); 1ad CH 6,10 Jan (DT,KG).
Iceland Gull: max 5 IB 17 Jan.
THAYER'S GULL: 1 P 19,31 Dec (DSh); 1ad HB 3 Feb (WS).
Lesser Black-backed Gull: 1 HB 14 Dec (ML); 1 CL 18 Dec (KF); 1 P 18 Dec (DSh); 1 IB 11 Jan (MD,DT); 1 CH 18 Jan (DT).
Glaucous Gull: arr 1-2 P 19,20 Dec.
Black-legged Kittiwake: last 2 HB 16 Dec.

DOVES-WOODPECKERS

Short-eared Owl: max 12-15 Lima 1-31 Dec.
N. Saw-whet Owl: 1 BS 3 Jan, only report.

Red-headed Woodpecker: 1 G 17 Jan, only report.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: 1 L 20-31 Dec, 1-2 Jan; 2 TP 2 Jan; 1 G 18 Jan, good total for season.

FLYCATCHERS-WAXWINGS

Com. Raven: 1 Penfield 21 Dec, new location; 2 Canadice 27 Dec; max 4 Springwater 10 Jan (DT); 1 Canadice 30 Jan (BE), good seasonal total.
Marsh Wren: 1 BB 26 Dec, 1-2 MP 19,30 Jan, uncommon in winter.
Ruby-crowned Kinglet: 1 SB 18 Jan, uncommon in winter.
Hermit Thrush: max 3 DE 3 Dec.
Gray Catbird: 1 MP 21 Dec; max 2 MP 21 Jan; 1 Webster 22 Jan; 1 MP 6 Feb.
Brown Thrasher: 1 Clarkson 20-28 Jan, only report.
European Starling: est 200,000 T of Richmond 27 Dec.
Am. Pipit: 1 IB 21 Dec, late.
Bohemian Waxwing: 1-2 var 1-19 Dec; one WP 1 Jan.

WARBLERS

Yellow-rumped Warbler: max 250 C 17 Jan (DT), unusually high total for Jan.
Com. Yellowthroat: 1 L/SLCBC 20 Dec; 2 BB 21 Dec, unusual in winter.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS

Chipping Sparrow: 1 Avon 17,21 Jan; 2 Rochester 1 Feb, unusual in winter.
Field Sparrow: 1 CL 27 Dec; 3 reports in Jan, uncommon.
Savannah Sparrow: NR 12-13 Dec, 30-31 Jan, .
Fox Sparrow: 2 Dalton 29 Jan, uncommon.
Dark-eyed "Oregon" Junco: 1-2 Henrietta 1,17,25 Jan.
Snow Bunting: max 660 Avon 25 Jan.
E. Meadowlark: max 8 Retsof 17 Jan.
Brown-headed Cowbird: max 40 MP 3 Jan.
Pine Grosbeak: 1-19 WP throughout the season.
White-winged Crossbill: max 40 sev 1 Jan.
Hoary Redpoll: max 2 Hamlin 3 Jan (KG,JB); 1 Livonia 10 Jan (MD,DT); 1 Hamlin 22 Jan (PS).