

REGION 3 - FINGER LAKES REGION

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Overall, winter 1998-99 was warmer than normal, with average temperatures for December 6.3°F warmer than normal, January 1.2° warmer than normal, and February 5.5° warmer than normal. The first three weeks of December were 10.5° warmer than normal. Record highs were set on 2, 6, and 7 December and tied 4 December with temperatures in the 60s. This period, however, was followed by a three week period that was several degrees colder than normal resulting in widespread freezing of ponds and marshes. This was the period in which most of the Christmas Bird Counts and the Federation Waterfowl Count were held. Precipitation was well below normal in December and February, but well above normal in January when 23.9 inches of snow fell and all but five days had a measurable snow cover.

The early winter warm spell may have influenced water birds to linger through the winter. Nearly all species of ducks showed increases over last year, as did grebes, cormorants, coots, and most gull species. Bald Eagles were reported from several sites away from Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge. Several Killdeer lingered through December. Several species of water birds were reported this winter that were not reported at all last year: eleven duck species, two gull species, Sandhill Crane, Dunlin, and Am. Pipit. In contrast, Am. Black Duck, Com. Goldeneye, and Herring Gull reports declined. Snow Geese and Canada Geese were reported in numbers far less than the previous winter.

In addition to the increase in Bald Eagles, N. Goshawks and Rough-legged Hawks also increased over last year. Most other raptors showed little change, Red-tailed Hawks appeared to be down in numbers.

Some woodland species: such as Downy Woodpecker, Blue Jay, and Red-breasted Nuthatch showed declines from last year. Pileated Woodpeckers were very scarce. Golden-crowned Kinglets increased dramatically from last year.

Open field birds such as Horned Larks, Lapland Longspurs, and Snow Buntings were reported in much higher numbers than last year. This may be due in part to the persistent snow cover in January, which helped to concentrate these birds in manured fields and made them easy for birders to locate.

Songbird species lingering in significantly greater numbers were E. Bluebird, Am. Robin, Cedar Waxwing, and Yellow-rumped Warbler. Several Ruby-crowned Kinglets and Hermit Thrushes were reported as well. White-throated Sparrows were relatively scarce. Red-winged and Rusty blackbirds, and Brown-headed Cowbirds were also present in larger numbers, but Com. Grackles were fewer this winter. N. Shrikes, nearly absent the previous winter, were reported from many locations this winter. Am. Tree Sparrows decreased. Winter finches were virtually absent, with only three individual Evening Grosbeaks reported. Purple Finches were up. Am. Goldfinches were down. Southern species - Tufted Titmouse, N. Mockingbird, Carolina Wren, and N. Cardinal—showed no change. Introduced species - Rock Dove, European Starling, House Finch, and House Sparrow—were all reported in lower numbers.

The season featured many rarities. Geneva hosted **Greater White-fronted Goose**, **Black Scoter**, and **Peregrine Falcon**, as well as the **Barrow's Goldeneye** which returned to spend its second winter there. Montezuma NWR and vicinity produced early winter records of **Ross's Goose**, **Blue-winged Teal**, and **Sandhill Crane**. The Montezuma CBC included a **Thayer's Gull** report. The detailed description will undergo NYSARC scrutiny. **King Eider**, **White-winged Scoter**, **Golden Eagle**, and **Yellow-headed Blackbird** appeared in the Cayuga Lake Basin. The Chemung Valley hosted several American Pipits and produced a mid-winter report of **Golden Eagle**.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CaL - Cayuga Lake, Cana - Canandaigua, CLB - Cayuga Lake Basin, CLSP - Cayuga Lake State Park, CLWC - Cayuga Lake Waterfowl Count, CLSWMA - Cayuga Lake State Wildlife Management Area, GCBC - Geneva Christmas Bird Count, HoHo - Hog Hole TOMP, ICBC - Ithaca Christmas Bird Count, KHAMO - Kestrel Haven Avian Migration Observatory SCHU, LPSP - Long Point State Park, MTSP - Mark Twain State Park, MCBC - Montezuma Christmas Bird Count, MNWR - Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, MyPt - Myer's Point TOMP, SaMu - Savannah Mucklands SENE, SeL - Seneca Lake, SLSP - Seneca Lake State Park, SML - Seneca Meadows Landfill SENE, TCAH - The Center at Horseheads CHEM, BiFl - Big Flats, Cana - Canandaigua, Hors - Horseheads, Sout - Southport, Vet - Veteran CHEM, WCBC - Watkins Glen Christmas Bird Count, WDan - West Danby.

LOONS-DUCKS

Com. Loon: max 3 MyPt 6 Dec.
Pied-billed Grebe: max 8 ICBC.
Horned Grebe: max 7 Aurora Bay 8 Dec.
Red-necked Grebe: 1 SeL 31 Jan; 1 SeL 4 Feb, only reports.
Double-crested Cormorant: max 4 MyPt 14 Jan (MMe J&KMc), high; 2 Dresden thru.
Great Blue Heron: max 34 MNWR 15 Dec (G&JHO), high.
Turkey Vulture: arr 1 Ovid 3 Feb (MJT), very early; 1 Dryden 11 Feb; 1 Danby 11

Feb; 1 KHAMO 12 Feb; 1 Reading 20 Feb; 1 Covert 22 Feb; 1 Elmira 24 Feb; all early.

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE: SLSP 13 Feb (CR CSa FB).

Snow Goose: max 300-400 MNWR 15 Dec; 3 ICBC record high; arr 300 Frontenac Pt SENE 26 Feb.

ROSS'S GOOSE: 1SaMu 15 Dec (GPh).

Canada Goose: max 31,578 CLWC 16 Jan.

Mute Swan: max 4 CLB 15 Dec; 4 MyPt 25 Jan; 1 ICBC, first record.

Tundra Swan: max >700 MNWR 15 Dec (MY), high; 21 ICBC, record high.
Trumpeter Swan: max 6 Seneca Falls 15 Feb (J&SGg), high; 4 Tyre 15 Dec.
Wood Duck: max 4 CaL 14 Feb.
Gadwall: max 36 CLWC 16 Jan, high; many reports, normally rare.
Am. Wigeon: max 15 CLSP 15 Dec; several reports, normally rare.
Am. Black Duck: max 1609 CLWC.
Mallard: max 2001 CLB 15 Dec; 680 ECBC, record high.
BLUE-WINGED TEAL: 1 SaMu 15 Dec (MY), late.
N. Shoveler: max 60 CLB 15 Dec (MY), high; last 1 CLB 22 Dec.
N. Pintail: max 51 Tyre 1 Dec (MY), high; 1 ECBC, third record; many reports, normally rare.
Green-winged Teal: max 25 SaMu 15 Dec (MY), high; 4 Union Springs 16 Jan; 2 TCAH 28 Jan; 1 WCBC, first record; several individual reports; normally rare.
Canvasback: max 701 CLB 15 Dec.
Redhead: max thousands HoHo 31 Jan; 146 WBCBC, record high.
Ring-necked Duck: max 38 CaL 22 Feb (JK); 12 ICBC, record high; 1 ECBC, third record; several reports; rare.
Scaup sp.: max thousands HoHo 31 Jan (JMc KK), high.
Greater Scaup: max 30 HoHo 16 Jan.
Lesser Scaup: max 31 HoHo 16 Jan; numerous reports, normally rare.
KING EIDER: 1 MyPt 13 Jan-6 Feb (CTH mob).
White-winged Scoter: 1 CaL 15 Dec (MY).
Black Scoter: 1 GCBC, only report.
Oldsquaw: max 3 Dryden L 8 Dec; 1 ICBC, second record.
Bufflehead: max 301 CaL 8 Dec (MY), high.
Com. Goldeneye: max 103 CLWC 16 Jan.
BARROW'S GOLDENEYE: 1 SLSP after 20 Dec (EBS mob).
Hooded Merganser: max 101 CLB 15 Dec (MY), high; 6 ECBC, record high.
Com. Merganser: max 1256 SLSP 17 Jan (FB), high.
Red-breasted Merganser: max 31 CLB 15

Dec (MY); several records, normally rare.
Ruddy Duck: 1 MyPt 30 Jan (fide CTH), only report.

HAWKS-ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: max 2 MNWR thru; 2 Chemung River thru.
N. Goshawk: max 2 Groton 17 Jan.
Red-tailed Hawk: max 60 ICBC.
Rough-legged Hawk: max 11 ICBC.
GOLDEN EAGLE: last 1 Mt. Pleasant TOMP 11 Dec (MY); 1 CCBC (B&JO); arr Tompkins-Cortland Community College TOMP 12 Feb (MY), early; max 2 Red Jacket Yacht Club SENE 22 Feb (JK!); rare.
Merlin: 1 Geneva Lakefront ONTA 24 Dec; 1 Elmira 7 Jan; 1 Seneca Falls 8 Jan; 1 Sapsucker Woods TOMP 14 Jan; 1 Groton 31 Jan; 1 Dryden 3 Feb; 1 Elmira 7 Feb.
PEREGRINE FALCON: 1 Geneva to Penn Yan 3 Jan-1 Feb (GL BGu).
Ruffed Grouse: max 5 ICBC; 3 ECBC; 1 WCBC, scarce.
Wild Turkey: max 114 ICBC; 97 ECBC; 72 WCBC; 51 Trumansburg 5 Feb; rebounding.
Virginia Rail: 1 TCAH 25 Feb.
Am. Coot: max 520 WCBC, record high; 445 ICBC, record high; 301 MyPt 15 Dec.
SANDHILL CRANE: 1 MNWR thru 2 Dec.
Killdeer: max 4 Elmira 21 Dec; 2-3 Elmira to 30 Dec; 3 MyPt 6-8 Dec; several other reports, normally rare.
Dunlin: 1 MNWR 11-14 Dec.
Am. Woodcock: arr 1 Brooktondale 28 Feb, only report.
Ring-billed Gull: max 1000+ KHAMO 1-9 Dec; 649 ECBC, record high.
Herring Gull: max 614 MCBC; 500 SML 29 Jan.
Bonaparte's Gull: max 4 Elmira Dam CHEM 30 Dec (BO); 3 CLSWMA SENE 9 Dec; 1 WCBC; 1 HoHo 5 Jan (BE); rare.
THAYER'S GULL: 1 MCBC 1 Jan (CSa!, NYSARC).
Iceland Gull: max 2 GCBC 1 Jan; 2 SML 26 Jan-22 Feb; 2 Seneca Landfill ONTA 27 Feb; several reports of individuals.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: max 3 CLSP 22 Dec; 3 VanCleave L SENE 29 Jan; 2 CLSP 14 Dec; 2 SML 29 Jan; increasing.
Glaucous Gull: 1 LPSP 2 Dec; 1 Watkins Glen 14 Dec; 1 SML 26 Jan-6 Feb.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS

Rock Dove: max 1129 ICBC, record high.
Mourning Dove: max 358, ECBC.
E. Screech-Owl: max 14 ICBC, record high.
Great Horned Owl: max 8 ECBC.
Snowy Owl: 1 Fayette 18 Jan (FB), only report.
Barred Owl: 1 ICBC; 1 Sout 7 Jan; 1 HHSP 14 Feb.
Short-eared Owl: max 7 Ledyard 14 Dec.
N. Saw-whet Owl: 1 WDan 11 Dec- 7 Jan; 1 Corning Community College STEU 14 Jan; 1 HHSP; 1 Dryden 18 Feb; 1 Dryden 27 Feb; only reports.
Red-headed Woodpecker: 1 Cana 3 Jan (fide JH), only report.
Red-bellied Woodpecker: max 46 ICBC; 4 KHAMO 31 Jan.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: 2 ICBC; 1 WCBC; 1 Salmon Creek TOMP 3 Jan; 1 HoHo 6 Jan; 1 Phelps 6 Jan; only reports.
Downy Woodpecker: max 156 ICBC; 6 Chemung 27 Feb.
Pileated Woodpecker: max 6 ICBC, low.

FLYCATCHERS-WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: max 2 Summerhill CAYU 26 Dec; several individuals.
Blue Jay: max 302 ICBC, low.
Am. Crow: max 25,000-75,000 Auburn 9 Dec; 1269 ECBC, record high; 1150 Ithaca 22 Jan.
Fish Crow: 6 Stewart P TOMP 6 Dec; 4 BiFl 13 Dec; 2 Elmira 17 Dec.
Com. Raven: max 4 ECBC; 4 CCBC; 4 ICBC, record high.
Horned Lark: max 300 ECBC, record high; 123 Vet 2 Jan.
Red-breasted Nuthatch: max 21 ICBC; 5 HHSP 3 Feb.
Winter Wren: 1 Cornell University 23-24 Jan; 1 Buttermilk Falls SP 27 Feb.
Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 46 ICBC; 10 HoHo 6 Jan.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: 1 ICBC; 1 LPSP 4 Jan, 20 Feb; 1 Aurora 18 Jan; 1 MyPt 30 Jan; only reports.

E. Bluebird: max 44 ICBC; 8 KHAMO 6 Dec; 8 Ledyard 24 Jan; 8 BiFl 7 Feb.

Hermit Thrush: max 3 ICBC, record high; 1 KHAMO 31 Dec; 1 WCBC; only reports.

Am. Robin: max 800 Lansing 21 Feb; 350 KHAMO 30-31 Jan; 276 MCBC.

European Starling: max 3094 ICBC; 300 Chemung 27 Feb.

AMERICAN PIPIT: max 3 Vet 2 Jan (DRu); 1-2 Elmira 21 Dec-15 Jan (mob); 1 Chemung 16 Jan (DCI); rare.

Cedar Waxwing: max 202 ICBC; 100 Dryden 12 Feb.

WARBLERS

Yellow-rumped Warbler: max 32 MCBC 1 Jan (SK); 20 Ledyard 30 Jan; 12 Genoa 6 Feb; 5 LPSP 29 Jan-20 Feb.

Com. Yellowthroat: 1 MCBC; 1 HoHo 6 Jan (BE), only reports.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS

E. Towhee: 1 ECBC; 1 ICBC, only reports.

Am. Tree Sparrow: max 490 ICBC; 11 MTSP 12 Dec.

Field Sparrow: 1 Sout 15-17 Jan (DCI), only report.

Savannah Sparrow: 1 Cana 3 Jan (fide JH), only report.

Fox Sparrow: arr 1 Newfield 18 Feb; 1 23 Feb BiFl, early.

Swamp Sparrow: max 6 ECBC, record high; 3 ICBC; 1 Hall 27 Dec, only reports.

White-throated Sparrow: max 6 ECBC.

Dark-eyed Junco: max 751 ICBC; 18 MTSP 12 Dec.

Lapland Longspur: max 5 Cana 3 Jan; 3 Genoa 17 Jan; 3 Lansing 17 Jan; 3 Vet 30 Jan.

Snow Bunting: max 500 Cana 17 Jan; 454 MCBC; 451 Ledyard 19 Jan.

Red-winged Blackbird: arr 1 BiFl 13 Feb; several reports across Region 14 Feb; max 1000 Route 79 Burdett 20 Feb (JK); 85 ICBC, record high; 75 Hors 2 Jan.

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD: 1

Canoga 5-16 Jan (EP mob).

Rusty Blackbird: max 17 ICBC; 6 Vet 16 Jan; 3 Phelps ONTA 6 Jan; 2 Covert SENE 18 Jan.

Com. Grackle: max 51 CLB 16 Jan; 10 Elmira 1 2REVJan; arr 1 BiFl 27 Feb.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 51 CLB 16 Jan; 50 Hors 1-2 Jan; arr 2 Dryden 14 Feb.

Baltimore Oriole: max 2 TOMP 18 Jan (AG fide MaRe).

Purple Finch: max 19 ICBC; 1-3 WDan 22 Jan-21 Feb; 2 SuSF 19 Feb; 1 MCBC, only reports.

House Finch: max 321 ICBC, lowest in 18 years; 50 Connecticut Hill 18 Feb.

Am. Goldfinch: max 180 ICBC; 15 Shindagin Hollow TOMP 11 Feb.

Evening Grosbeak: max 2 Groton 17 Jan; 1 Dryden 31 Jan, only reports.

House Sparrow: max 759 ICBC.