

REGION 1 - NIAGARA FRONTIER

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December 1999 was another mild and dry month for the Buffalo area, with the exception of wintry conditions around the holidays, a trend which has continued for the last two years. After a mild first three weeks of the month, colder weather brought the lake-effect snowstorms from the 21st to the 28th averaging from about 8 inches in the city of Buffalo to about 20 inches in the south town areas. The average temperature for the month was 32°F, about 3 degrees above normal, with precipitation totaling just over 2 inches. The month saw only 5 sunny days. The Lake Erie temperature averaged 36°F, 1 degree above normal.

January of the New Year averaged what one might call a normal month, with normal temperatures and precipitation. This was reached through a very warm first half and a cold and snowy second half. While there were no particularly intense storms during the period, January will be most remembered for its abrupt change from lengthy unseasonable mildness to the longest stretch of rather severe cold in six years with an average temperature of 23.6° and total precipitation of 2.65 inches

February began on a wintry note and continued cold through the first three weeks. It ended with a final week that boosted average temperatures to well above normal. On 26 Feb the temperature rose to 71°F, the warmest February temperature ever recorded in Buffalo. Precipitation totaled 1.75 inches, slightly below normal. The big story of the month was the incredible warm-up of the final week. The record high temperatures during this period resulted in rapid melting, forming ice jams in many of the creeks discharging into Lake Erie and causing tremendous property damage. In summarizing the winter period, it can be stated that it was the 4th consecutive mild winter, the 16th warmest and the 8th driest in 57 years of record keeping. Meteorological data were obtained from the website of the National Weather Service *Monthly Weather Data and Summary* for Buffalo, NY.

The continued mild conditions of fall extended through the winter season here in western New York resulting in some late reports such as a Pine Warbler pair that remained at a feeder in the town of Pomfret in Chautauqua Co. from 1 Jan to 22 Mar. The birds were observed feeding on suet. In addition to this report, the expected *fringillidae* invasion predicted during November materialized with good counts of Common

Redpolls, Pine Siskins, and Evening Grosbeaks and appearances of cross-bills (primarily White-winged). Noticeably absent during the period were Pine Grosbeaks, which probably remained further north. A **Hoary Redpoll** was observed by Jim Wojewodzki at his thistle feeder in the town of Colden in Erie county from 20 - 23 Jan. While Common Redpoll counts reached as high as 200 in this Region, the numbers were not as impressive as those obtained from internet reports indicating higher counts from nearby areas. Also of interest was a report by Mike Galas and William Watson of 3 **Bohemian Waxwings** in the town of Somerset in Niagara County on 8 Dec.

Tim Baird reports 3 **Golden Eagles** in the Allegany reservoir and the Allegany State Park during December and January. Two of the birds were immature and one was an adult. Tim provides wonderful accounts of the sightings that he and Dr. Stephen Eaton recorded.

The Niagara River continued to produce its usual display of larids, with an adult **California Gull** observed by Willie D'Anna from 4 - 12 Dec thru and again on 1 and 2 Jan. The bird(s?) was spotted near the Robert Moses Power Plant, Lewiston. In addition, a **Black-headed Gull** appeared in the river at Lewiston in Niagara County on 27 Feb, reported by D'Anna and Mike Morgante. A report of a **Black-legged Kittiwake** from the river on 9 Jan was received from Mike Galas and William Watson, also from near Lewiston. Yet another good river sighting was a **Barrow's Goldeneye** discovered by Dean DiTommaso on 30 Jan. A gull sighting from further afield was an adult **Franklin's Gull** in Dunkirk Harbor on the south shore of Lake Erie in Chautauqua County. The bird was present from 6 thru 17 Feb. Peter Yoerg first identified the gull, which puzzled observers as its full summer hood was clearly visible. A check of Jon Dunn's narrative on the video of "The Small Gulls of North America" indicates that the Franklin's Gull usually retains a partial hood during the winter

Thanks to the efforts of David Neveu, the migratory movements of Rough-legged Hawks in the westernmost section of Region 1 are better understood. They were thought to follow the typical near lakeshore fall and spring migratory paths, but David's work has determined that they are actually found to be more numerous along a path about 20 miles inland.

Lastly, the Region 1 Christmas Bird Count compiler Jim Landau, reports new 10-year-high records for the following species: Double-crested Cormorant, Snow Goose, Tundra Swan, American Wigeon, Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Ruddy Duck, Rock Dove, Northern Flicker, and Red-winged Blackbird. Peregrine Falcon and Common Yellowthroat were reported for the first time in the ten year period. 10-year lows were

recorded for: Canvasback, Great Horned Owl, Golden-crowned Kinglet, and White-throated Sparrow.

This report concludes my short term as Region 1 Editor for *The Kingbird*. When I took this responsibility on, I envisioned a long tenure that would enhance my retirement years. However, many times life gives us warnings that we should not overlook. Just under four years ago, I experienced a major heart attack. Upon my return from the hospital I looked forward to returning to my job of 40 years, an activity from which I could not conceive of ever retiring. I analyzed and agonized the decision, and when I made my mind up to retire I found that it was not as hard to do as I always thought it would be. Once again I find myself faced with a similar decision, and you know what, it is not hard again. Many times as we age we try too hard to hold on to things too long and too seriously. We have a lot to give to future generations, and one of the greatest gifts we can give is the respect and understanding that they too can do the job we did. That is exactly what I am doing today. Replacing me will be Mike Morgante, who is an outstanding young man with a tremendous future in birding and, most importantly, in life. I am sure that the Region 1 birders will provide Mike with the same support and assistance they gave to me.

I want to take this opportunity to thank Willie D'Anna, Dick Rosche, Mike Morgante, Joe Thill, Vivian Pitzrick, David Neveu, David Suggs, Bob Andrie, Jim Landau, Gerry Rising, Bob Spahn, and Manny Levine for their input to these reports. Finally, a tremendous vote of appreciation is given to the many birders of Region 1 for the continuous supply of bird reports that made this job enjoyable and educational. Thank you.

CONTRIBUTORS

Tim Baird, Gordon Bellerby, Bill Burch, Bruce Chilton, Willie D'Anna, Mike Davis, Dean DiTommaso, Dr. Stephen Eaton, Mike Galas, Andy Guthrie, Barbara Henderson, Linda Holmes, Brendan Klick, Hans Kunze, Dick Miga, Mike Morgante, David Neveu, Tom O'Donnell, Susan O'Donnell, Vivian Pitzrick, Betsy Potter, Frances Rew, Gerald Rising, Richard Rosche, Dorothy Rosche, Jack Skalicky, David Suggs (Buffalo RBA), William Watson, Jim Wojewodzki, Peter Yoerg.



ABBREVIATIONS

ASP - Allegany State Park - CATT; BISP - Beaver Island State Park - Grand Island; BWWTP - Batavia Waste Water Treatment Plant GENE; BuSP - Buckhorn Island State Park - Grand Island; DH - Dunkirk Harbor, City of Dunkirk; FMSCP - Four Mile Creek State Park - NIAG;; GHSP - Golden Hills State Park - NIAG; INWR - Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge - GENE/ORLE; LBSP - Lakeside Beach State Park, ORLE; MHSF - McCarty Hill State Forest; NR - Niagara River; OOWMA - Oak Orchard Wildlife Management Area - GENE; SPNP - Sinking Ponds Nature Preserve, Buffalo

LOONS - DUCKS

Red-throated Loon: sev reports of 2 - 4 NIAG birds 7 - 27 Dec.
Pied-billed Grebe: 12 Mayville CHAU 11 Dec (DN).
Horned Grebe: 6 DH 5 Dec; 8 GHSP 8 Dec; 105 T Sheridan CHAU 12 Jan (DN).
Double-crested Cormorant: counts of 20 to 500 daily DH thru (DM, DN); peaks 600 DH 15 Feb and 500 DH 24 Feb are unprecedented inland winter counts.
Great Blue Heron: 35 Motor Island Niagara River 29 Feb (WW).
Black-crowned Night-Heron: 1 ad Buffalo 12 Feb (MM).
Mute Swan: 2 DH 28, 29 Dec (FR,WW).
Tundra Swan: sev reports of 24 to 92 BUSP and OOWMA 2 - 21 Dec; 179 BISP 20 Feb (BB).
Gadwall: 84 Mayville CHAU 11 Dec (DN); 16 BWWTP 2 Jan (WW).
Am. Wigeon: 11 Olcott NIAG 26 Feb (WW).
Am. Black Duck: 1600 OOWMA 12 Dec (BK); 14 BWWTP 2 Jan.
Mallard: 9100 OOWMA 12 Dec (BK).
N. Shoveler: 165 OOWMA 12 Dec (BK); 114 BWWTP 21 Dec (WW).
N. Pintail: 1 Goat Island NR 15 Feb (AG).
Canvasback: 7416 BISP 21 Jan.
Redhead: 185 Buffalo Harbor 26 Dec.
Greater Scaup: 7100 Buffalo 24 Jan.
Surf Scoter: 1 imm ? DH 23-29 Jan; 2 DH 8-21 Feb.
White-winged Scoter: 1150 Carlton

ORLE to Porte NIAG 15 Jan (WD); 1800 Somerset NIAG 13 Feb (WD,BP).
Oldsquaw: 60 Bird Island Pier Buffalo 4 Dec; 2000 lower Niagara River 23 Jan (JS,MD); 2290 NR 15 Feb (GB).
Com. Goldeneye: 1550 Niagara Falls 9 Jan (BK).
BARROW'S GOLDENEYE: 1 Buffalo 30 Jan (DD); 1 Bird Island Pier, Buffalo 4, 12, 15 Feb (PY).
Hooded Merganser: 75 Mayville CHAU 11 Dec.
Ruddy Duck: 44 BWWTP 21 Dec (WW).

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: 2 nest INWR 16 Feb (WD).
Red-shouldered Hawk: 1 INWR 16 Feb (?K).
Rough-legged Hawk: 8 South Dayton CHAU 24 Dec.
Golden Eagle: 3 (2 imm, 1 ad) ASP 26 Dec - 16 Jan (TB,SE).
Merlin: 1 - 2 birds U. Buffalo campus 15 - 21 Dec, 5 - 28 Jan, 1-17 Feb (PY,BK).
Peregrine Falcon: 1 Niagara Falls 4 -11 Dec (WD).
Wild Turkey: 2 Buffalo 16 Jan.
Am. Coot: 98 DH 28 Feb.
Am. Woodcock: 2 Amity Lake 26 Feb (VP), early.
FRANKLIN'S GULL: 1 ad DH 6-17 Feb (PY, mob).
Little Gull: 42 NR Lewiston NIAG 26 Feb (WW).
BLACK-HEADED GULL: 1 Lewiston NIAG 27 Feb (WD,MM).

Bonaparte's Gull: 10,000 NR 1 Jan (R&DR).

CALIFORNIA GULL: 1ad Robert Moses Power Plant NIAG 4-12 Dec, 1-2 Jan (WD).

Iceland Gull: 1 DH 4 Feb.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: 5-6 Niagara Falls 11, 26 Dec (MM,KF,BK); 3 Niagara Falls 2, 4 Jan (MM,GB).

Glaucous Gull: 1 Niagara Falls 4, 30 Dec; 1 DH 18 Jan.

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE: 1 Lewiston NIAG 9 Jan (MG,WW).

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

Snowy Owl: 1 Buffalo 4, 6 Dec (MM,BK); 1 - 2 Buffalo waterfront 9 -19 Jan (mob).

Long-eared Owl: 1 Porter NIAG 27 Dec (MM).

Short-eared Owl: many reports 1 - 10 various areas thru.

N. Saw-whet Owl: 1 FMCSP 27 Dec (BP).

Red-headed Woodpecker: 1 LBSP 14 Dec (MG,GR).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: 1 East Aurora ERIE 2 Feb (R&DR).

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: many reports of singles throughout Region thru.

Com. Raven: 1 - 7 CATT and ALLE Jan; 3 ASP 17 Feb (MG,PY).

Carolina Wren: singles Feb throughout Region.

Hermit Thrush: 1 T Porter NIAG 27 Dec (BP,DD).

Am. Robin: 405 Somerset NIAG 13 Feb.

Gray Catbird: 1 Dunkirk Airport CHAU 29 Dec (DN); 1 Snyder ERIE 29 Feb (BK).
N. Mockingbird: 1 Amherst ERIE 15 Dec (BC).

BOHEMIAN WAXWING: 3 T Somerset NIAG 8 Dec (MG,WW!).

WARBLERS

Pine Warbler: pair T. Pomfret CHAU 1 Jan - 22 Mar (mob), at feeder.

Com. Yellowthroat: 1 SPNP 6 Dec (LH).

TANAGERS - WEAVERS

Chipping Sparrow: 1 Warsaw WYOM 6 Dec (HK).

Savannah Sparrow: 1 Yates ORLE 23 Jan (PY).

Lapland Longspur: 45 T Yates ORLE 13 Feb (WD,BP)

Snow Bunting: 20 T Yates ORLE 6 Feb.

Red-winged Blackbird: 28 South Park ERIE 13 Feb.

E. Meadowlark: 1 Dunkirk Airport CHAU 24 Dec (DN).

Rusty Blackbird: 2 SPNP 26 Jan (LH).

Com. Grackle: 4 Tonawanda ERIE 24 Feb.

Purple Finch: 1 Colden ERIE 10 Feb.

White-winged. Crossbill: 1 T Porter NIAG 12 Dec (BK).

Com. Redpoll: many reports, 1 - 200 throughout Region thru.

HOARY REDPOLL: 1 T Colden ERIE 20-23 Jan (JW).

Pine Siskin: 1-4 ERIE 1-19 Dec.

Evening Grosbeak: 12 Amity Lake ALLE 4 Dec; 40 MHSF 19 Dec; max 40 Ellery CHAU 12 Feb.

