

REGION 3 - FINGER LAKES

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Winter 1999-2000 was something of a mixed bag, both in temperature and in precipitation. Overall, temperatures were well above normal. The first two weeks of January were the second warmest in the last fifty years. Nevertheless, the third and fourth weeks of January were the third coolest in the last fifty years. February averaged 4.8 degrees warmer than normal, but was still the coolest February in the last four years.

Precipitation varied with location. With the help of lake-effect snow, Ithaca had above normal precipitation in January and February, while Elmira had below normal precipitation every month. Snow covered the ground in Ithaca for 51 days, including an unbroken string of 43 days from 13 Jan through 24 Feb.

The extended period of snow cover experienced from mid January through mid February benefited birders by concentrating flocks of Horned Larks, Lapland Longspurs and Snow Buntings, on manure spreads and in wind scoured fields, and by keeping Common Redpolls at feeders. Snow cover combined with severe cold was the probable cause of a few deaths of Canada Geese observed in scattered locations in the Region. As shallows froze over, Mallards again compensated by actively diving in the Chemung River, and also in the Union Springs Mill Pond.

The mild weather of the first half of the winter season may have been at least partly responsible for the wide variety and large numbers of waterfowl passing the winter in the Finger Lakes Region. This appeared to be the case last winter as well. Nevertheless, many species' numbers were up significantly over last year. For a few species-Tundra Swan, Green-winged Teal, Redhead, and Ring-necked Duck-this was the second consecutive winter in which their numbers were up significantly over the previous year. In the case of Redhead, the increase in numbers did not occur until a late January influx of the birds.

Two species whose large global populations are of public concern, the Snow Goose and Canada Goose, were both up significantly over last year.

Rare species of waterbirds in the Region included Eared Grebe, Greater White-fronted Goose, and White-winged Scoter. Barrow's Goldeneye appeared on both Seneca and Cayuga lakes.

Cooper's Hawk, Red-tailed Hawk, and American Kestrel were all reported in higher numbers this winter. The rarest raptors were Red-

shouldered Hawk, reported from three different sites, and Peregrine Falcon, seen again in the Canandaigua area. Among upland game birds, only the Ruffed Grouse had a significant change in its numbers. Reports indicate that it is in an upward swing of its cyclic population.

Birders reported fewer Ring-billed Gulls, but more Herring Gulls. Rarer gulls included several reports of Iceland, Lesser Black-backed, and Glaucous gulls. Robb Brumfield, Tom Nix, Ken Rosenberg, and Matt Young collaborated on the identification of an adult Thayer's Gull at the Seneca Meadows Landfill.

All of the introduced species, Rock Dove, European Starling, House Sparrow, had significant increases in numbers reported. The House Finch seems to have begun recovery of its population from the negative effects of conjunctivitis.

Among the more sedentary native species, none of the owls demonstrated any changes in population or detectability by birders. Several woodpecker species, however, were found in significantly greater numbers. The reason for an increase in Red-bellied Woodpecker, Downy Woodpecker, N. Flicker, and Pileated Woodpecker is worthy of speculation. N. Flicker, the one migratory species in the group, may have been induced to stay in larger numbers because of the mild early winter weather. Perhaps the dry weather of the past breeding season was a factor. Might low humidity have an effect on the nesting success of cavity nesting species? Another result of the dry summer appears to have been an increase in the availability of many fruits. Perhaps the attraction of woodpeckers to wild grapes, apples, and other fruits simply drew them into areas where birders could find them more easily. Pileated Woodpeckers were very scarce last winter, but did not seem to be low in numbers during the following spring. This indicates that size of population was not a factor for the low number of reports that winter. Apparently, the birds were just harder for birders to find.

Corvids known to be expanding their ranges, surprisingly were not reported in significantly greater numbers this winter. Blue Jays, however, were up and Am. Crows were down. The latter assessment is probably because no one offered an estimate of the entire population of Am. Crows in the huge roost at Auburn this year. Woodland foragers, Black-capped Chickadee, the nuthatches, and Brown Creeper, were all reported in significantly greater numbers this winter. Golden-crowned Kinglets were quite scarce compared to last year.

Among the southern songsters, only the Carolina Wren showed a significant change, with many more reported this winter. E. Bluebirds and Cedar Waxwings both increased, probably in response to the widely

available fruit, but Am. Robins were about the same. Field foragers showed significant changes. Lapland Longspurs were up, Horned Larks and Snow Buntings were down. Several sparrow species were up significantly: Am. Tree, Song, White-throated, and White-crowned. Dark-eyed Junco, however, was the only species of bird to show a significant decrease for the second consecutive winter. The dry summers of the last two years may have had some adverse effects on the junco's nesting success. George Kloppel reported a Fox Sparrow at his feeder in December. Ben Fambrough and Matt Medler discovered a Savannah Sparrow in Covert in February.

Common Redpolls, Pine Siskins, Am. Goldfinches, and Evening Grosbeaks were reported in larger numbers this winter. Common Redpolls were especially numerous in much of the Region, with several people reporting flocks in excess of one hundred at their feeders. Wes Hochachka and Ken Rosenberg turned in the only report of a Hoary Redpoll in the Region. Redpolls were virtually absent from the Chemung River Valley.

Under miscellaneous, observers reported more Mourning Doves and fewer Yellow-rumped Warblers. The four Common Yellowthroats found on the Montezuma CBC was an unusually high number for this infrequent straggler. James Manley found another in the Big Flats Bird Sanctuary.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

AuB - Aurora Bay, CaL - Cayuga Lake, CCBC - Corning CBC, CLB - Cayuga Lake Basin, CLSP - Cayuga Lake State Park, CLWC - Cayuga Lake Waterfowl Count, CPF - Cornell Pheasant Farm, EBCB - Elmira CBC, ELD - Elmira Dam, GCBC - Geneva CBC, ICBC - Ithaca CBC, KeuL - Keuka Lake, KH - Kestrel Haven Avian Migration Observatory, MNWR - Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge, MCBC - Montezuma CBC, SML - Seneca Meadows Landfill, StP - Stewart Park TOMP, TCAH - The Center at Horseheads.

LOONS-DUCKS

Red-throated Loon: 2 Dryden 11 Dec, only report.

Com. Loon: max 13 Dryden 11 Dec; 6 StP 14 Jan.

Pied-billed Grebe: max 15 ICBC 1 Jan, six year high; 6 Village Marina SCHU 5 Feb.

Horned Grebe: max 21 CLB 29 Jan, six year high; 11 AuB 12 Feb.

EARED GREBE: 1 AuB 9-16 Jan (mob).

Double-crested Cormorant: max 2 CaL 30 Jan (BF); 1 ICBC 1 Jan; 1 CLB 29 Jan; 1 Champlin Beach STEU 6 Feb.

Great Blue Heron: max 22 MCBC 1 Jan (Fide BPu).

Turkey Vulture: arr 1 Ithaca 23 Feb; 1 Pine City 26 Feb; only reports.

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE: 1 Covert 20 Feb (GB, MH), only report.

Snow Goose: max 1793 MCBC 1 Jan, six year high; several hundred Covert 28 Dec.

Canada Goose: max 32228 MCBC 1 Jan; several thousand CLSP 15 Jan.

Mute Swan: max 7 MCBC 1 Jan, six year high.

Tundra Swan: max 501 Cayuga Lake State Wildlife Management Area 27 Feb (D&SGo).

Trumpeter Swan: 1 MNWR 12 Jan (GP), only report.(origin?)

Wood Duck: 1 Myers Point TOMP 22 Jan (BF, MMe, MWi, MY), only report.

Gadwall: max 67 CLWC, six year high; 24 GCBC 2 Jan; 1 KeuL 17 Feb.

Am. Wigeon: max 21 CLB 9 Jan (GK, PL, MY), six year high; many other reports from the CLB; 1 TCAH 8-9 Jan.

Am. Black Duck: max 1308 MCBC 1 Jan.

Mallard: max 12732 MCBC 1 Jan.

N. Shoveler: max 4 CLB 9 Jan; 2 MNWR 4 Dec; 1 Mill Street Pond CHEM 5-12 Feb.

N. Pintail: max 20 Savannah Mucklands SENE 27 Feb; 20 MCBC 1 Jan.

Green-winged Teal: max 100 MCBC 1 Jan (Fide BPu), very high; 4 Union Springs Mill Pond CAYU, 22 Jan.
Canvasback: max 1000 Hog Hole TOMP 12 Feb.
Redhead: max 8000 Hog Hole TOMP 12 Feb, six year high.
Ring-necked Duck: max 50 KeuL 17 Feb; 42 Myers Point TOMP 5 Feb.
Greater Scaup: max 159 CLB 29 Jan.
Lesser Scaup: max 501 CLWC, six year high.
White-winged Scoter: max 2 AuB, CaL 24 Jan (BF, MWi), rare in winter.
Oldsquaw: max 4 CLB 29 Jan, six year high; 1 Lodi Point Marine SP 5 Feb.
Bufflehead: max 195 CLB 29 Jan; 52 KeuL 17 Feb.
Com. Goldeneye: max 1466 CLB 29 Jan, six year high.
BARROW'S GOLDENEYE: max 2 CaL 11-12 Feb (BF, MWi); 1 Seneca Lake SP 25-29 Jan.
Hooded Merganser: max 125 MCBC 1 Jan, six year high; "lots" StP 15 Dec; many reports, normally scarce in winter.
Com. Merganser: max 500 StP 15 Feb; 73 Chemung River CHEM 21 Feb.
Red-breasted Merganser: max 17 CLWC; 12 Lodi Point Marine SP 12 Feb.
Ruddy Duck: max 21 MNWR 4 Dec; a few others in scattered locations.

HAWKS-ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: max 4 MCBC 1 Jan; 2 CLSP 15 Jan; 2 MNWR 6 Feb; sev other scattered reports.
N. Harrier: max 18 MCBC 1 Jan, six year high; 3 MNWR 4 Dec.
Sharp-shinned Hawk: max 7 ICBC 1 Jan, tied six year high.
Cooper's Hawk: max 10 ICBC 1 Jan; 10 ECBC 1 Jan; six year high.
N. Goshawk: 1 CCBC 18 Dec; 1 ECBC 1 Jan; 1 Dryden 30 Jan.
RED-SHOULDERED HAWK: 1 Dryden 10 Dec, 22 Jan (RN); 1 Sapsucker Woods TOMP 16 Jan (Who) & 4 Feb (RM CTH); 1 MNWR 4 Feb (SS); rare in winter.
Red-tailed Hawk: max 98 ICBC 1 Jan, six year high; 85 MCBC 1 Jan; 26 CPF, including the annual rufous morph report.

Rough-legged Hawk: max 14 MCBC 1 Jan; 4 KH 1 Jan (J&SG).
Am. Kestrel: max 29 GCBC 2 Jan, six year high.
Merlin: 14 reports of individuals scattered thru Region.
PEREGRINE FALCON: 1 Canandaigua 6 Jan (SS); 1 Hopewell 23 Feb (SS), only reports.
Ring-necked Pheasant: max 2 ECBC 1 Jan; 2 GCBC 2 Jan.
Ruffed Grouse: max 11 ICBC 1 Jan; 4 Gleason Meadows CHEM 23 Feb.
Wild Turkey: max 110 Dryden 19 Jan; 50 Varick.
Am. Coot: max 651 ICBC 1 Jan, six year high; 310 Village Marina SCHU 5 Feb.
Killdeer: 2 AuB 2 Jan; 1 GCBC 2 Jan; arr 1 Newfield 23 Feb; max several Mt. Pleasant TOMP 27 Feb.
Am. Woodcock: arr 2 Hector 25 Feb, early.
THAYER'S GULL: 1 ad SML 12 Feb (RBr TN KR MY).
Iceland Gull: max 7 SML 12 Feb, six year high; 6 CaL 12 Jan.
Lesser Black-backed Gull: max 4 CaL 7 Jan; 3 CLB 9 Jan; 3 CaL 12 Jan.
Glaucous Gull: arr 1 CLSP 15 Jan; 1 CaL 7, 11 Feb; last 1 SML 20, 22 Feb.

FLYCATCHERS-WAXWINGS

E. Screech-Owl: max 21 ICBC 1 Jan; 3 West Elmira Riverine Forest CHEM 1 Jan.
Great Horned Owl: max 10 ECBC 1 Jan.
Snowy Owl: 1 Bath 20 & 27 Feb (JLe), only reports.
Barred Owl: max 2 Dryden 10 Dec, 16 Feb.
Long-eared Owl: 1 Ithaca 18 Dec; 1 ICBC 1 Jan.
Short-eared Owl: max 6 Ledyard 30 Jan; 3 Savannah Mucklands SENE 12 Jan.
N. Saw-whet Owl: 1 Dryden 28 Dec; 1 Newfield 20 Feb.
Belted Kingfisher: max 6 ICBC 1 Jan.
Red-bellied Woodpecker: max 81 ICBC 1 Jan.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: max 3 ICBC 1 Jan (CaBC), six year high; sev other individuals thru Region.
N. Flicker: max 34 ICBC 1 Jan; 3 Elmira 8 Dec.

Pileated Woodpecker: max 27 ICBC 1 Jan, six year high.
N. Shrike: max 9 ICBC 1 Jan, six year high; many reports throughout Region.
Am. Crow: max 10,902 MCBC 1 Jan.
Fish Crow: max 8 ICBC 1 Jan; 4 EID 15 Feb; 4 CPF 30 Jan.
Com. Raven: max 8 ICBC 1 Jan; 6 EID 7 Dec; 5 CCBC 18 Dec.
Horned Lark: max 336 MCBC 1 Jan, six year high; >100 Dryden 18 Jan; >100 Genoa 4 Dec, 22 Jan.
Black-capped Chickadee: max 2284 ICBC 1 Jan.
Tufted Titmouse: max 55 ICBC 1 Jan, six year low.
Red-breasted Nuthatch: max 55 ICBC 1 Jan.
White-breasted Nuthatch: max 321 ICBC 1 Jan, six year high.
Brown Creeper: max 27 ICBC 1 Jan.
Carolina Wren: max 20 ICBC 1 Jan, six year high; 12 ECBC.
Winter Wren: 1 KH 13 Jan (J&SG), only report.
Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 10 ICBC 1 Jan, six year low.
E. Bluebird: max 97 ICBC 1 Jan, six year high; 12 Lansing 6 Feb.
Hermit Thrush: 1 ICBC 1 Jan (CaBC), only report.
Am. Robin: max 416 ICBC 1 Jan, six year high; 400 Groton 19 Feb.
N. Mockingbird: max 16 ICBC 1 Jan; 7 TCAH 10 Dec.
Am. Pipit: arr 1 AuB, CaL 26 Feb (MY), only report.
Cedar Waxwing: max 408 ICBC 1 Jan; 60 KH 10 Dec.

WARBLERS

Yellow-rumped Warbler: max 6 MCBC 1 Jan; 5 Long Point SP 24 Jan; 1 Ledyard 22 Jan; only reports.
Com. Yellowthroat: max 4 MCBC 1 Jan (fide BPu), six year high; 1 Big Flats Bird Sanctuary CHEM (JMa) 8 Jan.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS

Field Sparrow: 1 ICBC 1 Jan (CaBC); 1 ECBC (CVAS); 1 Fayette 29 Jan (TN MY).
SAVANNAH SPARROW: 1 Covert 6 Feb

(BF, MMe), only report.
FOX SPARROW: 1 West Danby 19 Dec (GK).
Swamp Sparrow: max 8 ICBC 1 Jan (CaBC), six year high.
White-throated Sparrow: max 34 ICBC 1 Jan; 6 TCAH 10 Dec.
White-crowned Sparrow: max 52 MNWR 6 Feb (OCV), six year high; 2 CLB (GP); rare in winter; 2 Montezuma Wetlands Complex 12 Feb (TN MY); 1 GCBC.
Lapland Longspur: max 70 Genoa 28 Dec, six year high; 2 Route 89, Ovid 13 Feb; 2 Triangle Diner CAYU 5 Feb; singles reported thru Region.
Snow Bunting: max 601 Dryden 21 Feb; 300 MNWR 5 Dec; 300 Genoa 28 Dec; 300 Southport 17 Feb.
Red-winged Blackbird: max 1000 KH 27 Feb, tied six year high; 74 ECBC 1 Jan; reports thru.
E. Meadowlark: 1 Veteran 22, 29 Jan (D&JC), only reports.
Rusty Blackbird: max 55 ECBC 1 Jan (CVAS), six year high; 1 ICBC 1 Jan.
Com. Grackle: max 40 MCBC 1 Jan; arr 1 Southport 25 Feb; 2 EID 25 Feb.
Brown-Headed Cowbird: max 223 MCBC 1 Jan, six year high; 21 CPF 30 Jan.
Purple Finch: max 8 ICBC 1 Jan; 7 Summerhill State Forest CAYU 5 Dec.
House Finch: max 909 ICBC 1 Jan; four year high; 336 ECBC 1 Jan.
White-winged Crossbill: max 2 CCBC 18 Dec, only report.
Com. Redpoll: max 713 ICBC 1 Jan; 250 Dryden 5 Dec; 230 KH 15 Dec.
HOARY REDPOLL: 1 Sapsucker Woods TOMP 6 Feb (WHo KR!).
Pine Siskin: max 22 ICBC 1 Jan; 20 Dryden 28, 30 Jan; scattered reports thru Region.
Am. Goldfinch: max 476 ICBC 1 Jan, six year high; 18 Newfield 11 Dec.
Evening Grosbeak: max 136 ICBC 1 Jan; 111 Summerhill State Forest CAYU 5 Jan.
House Sparrow: max 720 ICBC 1 Jan, five year low.
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