

## REGION 5 - ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

Bill Purcell  
281 Baum Road  
Hastings NY 13076

The season was quite mild with a total snowfall of 72.4 inches, about 11 inches below normal. There was rarely more than a foot of snow on the ground. Real winter weather did not begin until 16 Jan and persisted for only 5 weeks. The average temperature for December was 30.9°F, 2.6° above normal, with only 1.35" of precipitation, which was 1.85" below normal. Daily highs were above freezing for the first 3 weeks of the month and Oneida Lake did not freeze until the 24th. The January temperature was 21.3°F, 1.1° below normal. The first half of the month was very warm, with Oneida Lake reopening until winter began in earnest with a strong cold front on the 16th. Precipitation for the month was 0.38" above normal at 2.72".

The last week of February brought a warming trend that melted most of the snow on the ground. The average temperature for the month was 28.8°F, 4.8° above normal, with 2.46 inches of precipitation, 0.31" above normal. In northern Herkimer County the snow cover peaked at 32" in early February but was down to 8" as the season ended.

Despite the drought of 1999 there was abundant food, and the lack of snow cover for a large part of the season made food readily accessible. Gene Huggins supplied his notes on food stocks in the Dewitt area; there were ample quantities of Staghorn Sumac, European Buckthorn, Frost Grape, Highbush Cranberry and Multiflora Rose. The Adirondacks were an exception and production of fruit and cones was low and most birds went elsewhere.

The food supply had no effect on most waterfowl and associated species. Loon, grebe and cormorant sightings were more or less normal, and the two Great Cormorants were not seen after the 16 Jan cold front moved through. A single Ross's Goose made a brief appearance for a rare winter record. Snow Geese were reported on 2 early CBC's, and wintering Canada Geese were up sharply. Tundra Swan moved into and through the Region during the last three days of February. Unfortunately a report of over 200 on flooded mucklands could not be confirmed. Dabbling ducks lingered well into the season and were returning as the season ended.

Raptors did well with the open winter. Snow-sensitive species such as N. Harrier and Short-eared Owl were found in Oswego County snow

belt areas well into January. Red-tailed Hawks were noted by many observers to be pairing up during the mild weather in January. Rough-legged Hawks were not found in any concentrations but were present in the open areas where they are normally found. Killdeer often return in late February, but usually only a few are found along Lake Ontario. This year they were widespread. Am. Woodcock's February arrival is the earliest on record.

A jaeger was seen on strong northwest winds in Oswego in February. The bird was some distance out over Lake Ontario and thought to be a Pomarine, although identification as to species would have been a guess. Bonaparte's Gulls remained in large numbers into December and were last seen as the 16 Jan cold front moved through. It was a good year for Iceland and Glaucous gulls along the Oswego River, and at different times all four age classes of the two gulls were found. Herring and Great Black-backed gull numbers were not very high this year.

For the third consecutive year, Snowy Owls were scarce. Only one was reported, and the bird was found dead the following day. A large winter roost of Long-eared Owls went unreported until April when most had departed but the pellet evidence remained. Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers lingered into January, and a Red-headed Woodpecker wintered in Pompey. Northern Shrikes were seen in good numbers including two in the Adirondacks where they are unusual.

Three southern species at the edge of their ranges in the Region continue to do well. Tufted Titmouse numbers seem to increase every year. Carolina Wren continues to recover in lowlands of the Region roughly contiguous with the old Erie Canal. No. Mockingbird was well-reported through the winter.

The good food supply and sparse snow cover enabled large flocks of Am. Robins to winter in the Region. Record numbers of E. Bluebirds remained as well. Half-hardie species included Hermit Thrush, Gray Catbird, Marsh Wren, E. Towhee, Chipping, Swamp and White-crowned sparrows, and Rusty Blackbird. Some of the half-hardies even made it through the winter, an uncommon occurrence in most years.

Bohemian Waxwings were slow in arriving (or being found), but they were worth waiting for, with the highest single day count ever at a site near Lake Ontario and with good numbers in Onondaga County as well. Although not always easy to find, the Bohemians persisted at the two locations for over a month.

A Cape May Warbler was a lucky find on the Oswego-Fulton CBC. A Yellow-throated Warbler was seen at two feeders and photographed at one along Skaneateles Lake in December. A Pine Warbler lingered into

January at a Vernon feeder. In contrast it seemed odd that Yellow-rumped Warblers were not reported this season. A Dickcissel spent some time at a feeder in Oneida Castle, but winter sparrows were generally reported in only low numbers. Lapland Longspurs were more widely reported than most years, while Horned Larks and Snow Buntings were most widely reported when there was snow on the ground.

The winter finches were represented almost solely by Common Redpolls, with large flocks coming to feeders and foraging extensively on wild seeds as well. Hoary Redpolls were carried along with the irruption of their congeners. There were numerous reports and at least six were submitted to NYSARC. Given the very poor cone crop, it was not surprising that there were few reports of Purple Finches and Pine Siskins, single reports of Pine Grosbeak and White-winged Crossbill, and no reports of Red Crossbills. Evening Grosbeaks were found in a few locations, but were sometimes abundant at those sites.

The season's total was very good, 127 species plus one form and one hybrid. Highlights for the season were Great Cormorant, Ross's Goose, Purple Sandpiper, Am. Woodcock, jaeger species, Red-headed Woodpecker, Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Bohemian Waxwing, Cape May Warbler, Yellow-throated Warbler, Pine Warbler, Dickcissel, Hoary Redpoll, and many half-hardie species.

## CONTRIBUTORS

Brenda Best, Sue Boettger, Joseph Brin, Bernie Carr, Lee Chamberlaine, Dorothy W Crumb, Natalia Garcia, Bill Gruenbaum, Barbara Herrgesell, Gene Huggins, Bettye Hughes, Mary Alice Koenek, Gary Lee, John Moore, Margaret Napoleon, David Nash, Gerard Phillips, Matt Perry, Bill Purcell, Paul Radway, Marge Rusk, Mickey Scilingo, Dominic Sherony, Gerald Smith, Maureen Staloff, Matt Young, Ken Zoller.

## ABBREVIATIONS

Bvll - Baldwinsville, CM - Clay Marsh, DH - Derby Hill, DL - Delta Lake, FH - Fair Haven, Little Sodus Bay and vicinity, LOL - Lake Ontario Littoral, OnonL - Onondaga Lake, SVB - Sylvan and Verona Beach, Syr - Syracuse, TRWMA - Three Rivers WMA, UM - Utica Marsh, WPd - Woodman Pond, Eaton

## LOONS-DUCKS

**Red-throated Loon:** 4 singles thru 13 Dec.  
**Com. Loon:** max 10 SE Oneida L 13 Dec; last 2 LOL 23 Jan.  
**Pied-billed Grebe:** max 7 Oswego R 30 Jan.  
**Horned Grebe:** max 17 Oswego 12 Dec; last LOL 23 Jan.  
**GREAT CORMORANT:** 1 ad Oswego to 16 Jan, a second-year bird also there 9 Jan.  
**Double-crested Cormorant:** max 12 Oswego 8 Jan.  
**Great Blue Heron:** 15 on 5 CBC's; few reports after 2 Jan, low for an open winter.  
**Turkey Vulture:** arr 1 Van Buren 20 Feb.  
**Snow Goose:** max 1060 Utica 18 Dec, all flying south; last 1 Oneida 31 Dec; arr 85 DH 27 Feb.  
**ROSS'S GOOSE:** 1 Oswego 8 Jan, 4th Regional record (JB, NYSARC).  
**Canada Goose:** max 7,000 FH 12 Dec; 11,830 regionwide on Waterfowl Census 15-23 Jan, nearly double previous high.  
**Mute Swan:** max 3 Oswego 2 Feb; 7 others at 6 sites.  
**Tundra Swan:** 1 Phoenix after 30 Jan; arr & max 60 Fulton 29 Feb.  
**Wood Duck:** 3 Fulton 5 Dec; 1-2 Oswego R thru; arr & max 12 Dewitt 27 Feb.  
**Gadwall:** max 16 Oswego R 30 Jan.  
**Am. Wigeon:** max 12 WPd 4 Jan; last 2 WPd 22 Jan; arr 3 DH 23 Feb.  
**Am. Black Duck:** max 75 WPd 10 Jan.  
**N. Shoveler:** 3 FH 6 Dec, only report.  
**N. Pintail:** max 3 WPd 8 Dec; arr 2 DH 26 Feb.  
**Green-winged Teal:** last 2 Syr 8 Jan; arr 16 DH 27 Feb.  
**Canvasback:** max 5 FH 23 Feb.  
**Redhead:** max 140 LOL 31 Dec.  
**Ring-necked Duck:** max 14 FH 9 Jan.  
**Greater Scaup:** max 1660 LOL 16 Jan.  
**Lesser Scaup:** max 30 FH 16 Jan; 30 Oswego 22 Feb.  
**Surf Scoter:** 1 Mohawk R Utica 18 Dec.  
**White-winged Scoter:** max 71 DH 11 Dec; 1-2 per day LOL Jan & Feb.  
**Black Scoter:** last & max 2 LOL 29 Jan.

**Oldsquaw:** max 215 DH 11 Dec; to 50 per day Oswego thru.  
**Bufflehead:** max 46 Oswego 16 Jan.  
**Com. Goldeneye:** max 1400 Sandy Pd 4 Dec.  
**Hooded Merganser:** max 48 Oswego R 30 Jan.  
**Com. Merganser:** max 155 Oswego 19 Dec.  
**Red-breasted Merganser:** max 75 FH 12 Dec.  
**Ruddy Duck:** max 25 Minoa 10 Dec; last Otisco L 12 Jan.

## HAWKS-ALCIDS

**Bald Eagle:** 2 ad, 2 imm LOL and Oswego R most of season; 1 ad Barneveld 5 Feb.  
**N. Harrier:** many Dec and Jan reports from Lenox, Richland and Mexico, probably only a few individuals; first migrants DH 26 Feb; max 23 DH 27 Feb.  
**N. Goshawk:** TRWMA 27 Dec; Parish 5 Jan; FH 8 Jan; Boylston 23 Jan; 5 migrants DH after 23 Feb.  
**Red-tailed Hawk:** many observers noted pair formations during the mild first half of Jan.  
**Rough-legged Hawk:** widespread thru; max 3-4 per day; 121 DH 27 Feb, one of the best days ever recorded.  
**Merlin:** 2 Syr thru.  
**Ring-necked Pheasant:** 12 individuals for season.  
**Ruffed Grouse:** max 5 Selkirk Shores SP 4 Dec; 5 W Winfield 19 Feb; 21 other rep.  
**Wild Turkey:** max 285 T Western 5 Feb.  
**Am. Coot:** max 40 WPd 20 Dec.  
**Killdeer:** arr 7 DH 23 Feb.  
**Purple Sandpiper:** FH 2; 12 Dec; DH 11 Dec.  
**Am. Woodcock:** arr widespread 28 Feb, record early.  
**jaeger sp:** 1 Oswego 7 Feb (GP), distant bird thought to be Pomarine, second winter jaeger sighting.  
**Bonaparte's Gull:** 40 SVB 8 Dec; max 70 OnonL 18 Dec, high for winter; last 3 Oswego 16 Jan.  
**Ring-billed Gull:** max 7000 Oswego 5 Feb.

**Herring Gull:** max to 1200 per day  
Oswego R and Harbor.  
**Iceland Gull:** max 8 Oswego R 30 Jan.  
**Lesser Black-backed Gull:** 1 Oswego 8  
Feb.  
**Glaucous Gull:** max 3 Oswego 17 Jan  
thru.  
**Glaucous X Herring Gull** (Nelson's  
Gull): 1 SVB 13 Dec (GP).  
**Great Black-backed Gull:** max 600-700  
per day Oswego R and Harbor.

#### PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS

**Mourning Dove:** max 92 CM, Cicero 18  
Dec  
**E. Screech-Owl:** 12 reported at 10 sites.  
**Great Horned Owl:** 10 at 8 sites.  
**Snowy Owl:** 1 Oswego 28 Dec, found  
dead 29 Dec.  
**Barred Owl:** only 4 reports.  
**Long-eared Owl:** 10 in roost Chittenango  
late winter (fide DWC).  
**Short-eared Owl:** max 6 T's Richland,  
Mexico 17 Jan; 5 Verona 30 Dec thru; sin-  
gles 7 other locales including 4 in Feb.  
**Belted Kingfisher:** 19 total; 1 OnonL  
thru Feb.  
**Red-headed Woodpecker:** 1 imm  
Pompey thru (DWC).  
**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** singles Pratt's  
Falls early Jan (PR); Pompey 19 Jan  
(DWC).  
**N. Flicker:** max 13 Skaneateles 2 Jan; 4  
Feb reports.

#### FLYCATCHERS-WAXWINGS

**N. Shrike:** at least 28 individuals includ-  
ing 2 Adks.  
**Am. Crow:** 4193 Utica 18 Dec, continues  
increase of past 3 years.  
**Fish Crow:** 1 OnonL 30 Jan; 3 Woodlawn  
Cem Syr 29 Feb.  
**Com. Raven:** max 5 Redfield 2 Feb; 2 OF  
5 Feb.  
**Horned Lark:** max 64 Pompey 5 Dec,  
otherwise scarce until last half of season  
when flocks up to 50 were common.  
**Tufted Titmouse:** above average num-  
bers on 5 CBC's; wintering highlands  
above Delta L first time.

**Red-breasted Nuthatch:** ave on CBC's,  
mostly nonbreeding habitat; 5-6 per day  
along 2 miles of road in Boylston, breed  
locale.

**Brown Creeper:** max 10 Oneida CBC 31  
Dec.

**Carolina Wren:** 11 at 7 Syr sites, also  
Canastota, Marcellus, & New Hartford.

**Winter Wren:** 1CM 12 Dec; 1 Dewitt 24  
Jan.

**Marsh Wren:** 1 UM 3 Jan.

**Golden-crowned Kinglet:** scarce on  
CBC's, 1-2 per day where found.

**E. Bluebird:** max 14 E Syr 9 Jan; 9+ rep  
thru, record winter total.

**Hermit Thrush:** 2 Fayetteville 20 Jan; 1  
thru (PR).

**Am. Robin:** max 500 Dewitt 20 Jan;  
many counts of 50-100 thru.

**Gray Catbird:** 1 Utica 18 Dec; 1 CM 8  
Jan.

**N. Mockingbird:** 12-15 wintering Syr-  
Dewitt; also found in Scriba, Oswego, &  
Bville.

**Bohemian Waxwing:** max 270 Pulaski 15  
Jan; 200+ still in area 24 Feb (BP), record  
high count; 110 TRWMA 22 Feb, record  
for ONON (JB).

**Cedar Waxwing:** max 160 Sterling 9 Jan;  
well reported through winter.

#### WARBLERS

**CAPE MAY WARBLER:** 1 Fulton 19 Dec,  
2nd winter record (BP).

**YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER:** 1  
two feeders Skaneateles 13-18 and 23-27  
Dec, eighth Regional record (Robin  
Jowaisas ph, Linda Pietroski, fide DWC,  
NYSARC).

**Pine Warbler:** 1 Vernon feeder 31 Dec -  
22 Jan; 4th winter record (Dan Skinner,  
mob).

#### TANAGERS-WEAVERS

**E. Towhee:** 1 Dewitt 18 Dec (SB, BG).

**Am. Tree Sparrow:** up to 200 on Dec  
CBC's; low numbers mid Jan - mid Feb;  
max 60 Paris 22 Feb.

**Chipping Sparrow:** 1 Cato thru 26 Jan.

**Song Sparrow:** max 4 FH 9 Jan; scarce  
after 16 Jan.

**Swamp Sparrow:** 2 UM 15 Dec; 2 Skaneateles 2 Jan; 1 Bvllle 14 Feb.

**White-throated Sparrow:** 40 on 2 CBC's 18 Dec; scarce afterwards.

**White-crowned Sparrow:** 1 Elbridge 2 Jan.

**Dark-eyed Junco:** max 32 Skan 2 Jan;

**Dark-eyed "Oregon" Junco:** 1 Pompey after Jan 17.

**Lapland Longspur:** max 4 DH 11 Feb; 2 Paris 17 Jan; 1 Kirkland 4 Feb; 1 New Haven 21 Feb; 1 T Marshall 22 Feb, better reported than many years.

**Snow Bunting:** max 300 DH 6 Feb; 200+ Lenox 3 Dec; 200 Kirkland, Paris, Bvllle, & Richland all in Feb.

**DICKCISSEL:** male Oneida feeder 11 Dec - 2 Jan (AJ Wood, mob), third winter record.

**Red-winged Blackbird:** max 10 Syr 2 Jan; last 1 Dewitt 10 Jan; arr 5 Cicero 18 Feb; arr Adks 28 Feb, early.

**Rusty Blackbird:** 1 Dewitt 25 Dec, 1 UM 3 Jan; 1 Bvllle 23 Jan.

**Com. Grackle:** 1 Dewitt 12 Dec; 5 Oneida CBC 31 Dec; arr DH 26 Feb.

**Brown-headed Cowbird:** max 300 Lewis Pt 7 Dec; 156 N Syr 27 Jan, good midwinter count.

**Pine Grosbeak:** max 5 Boylston 8 Jan, only report.

**Purple Finch:** max 9 Utica CBC 18 Dec; 3 other singles reported.

**House Finch:** 1237 on 5 CBC's; few reported otherwise.

**White-winged Crossbill:** 1 Boylston 17 Jan, only report.

**Com. Redpoll:** widespread, flocks of 50-100 common and some 200+; max 400 Canastota 27 Feb.

**HOARY REDPOLL:** (all NYSARC) 1 Parish 8 Dec (MSc); 1-2 Otisco Dec to mid Jan (MY, DS, GP); 1 Paris 2-25 Jan; another Paris 30 Jan - 15 Feb (MP); 1 Pompey 6 Feb (Paul Radway, DWC); 1 Cato 23 Jan (GP).

**Pine Siskin:** 23 on 4 CBC's; only 4 other reports of 9 birds.

**Am. Goldfinch:** max 40 Beaver L 16 Jan.

**Evening Grosbeak:** up to 200 Boylston Jan-Feb; small numbers ONEI-MADI, stayed at higher elevations for most part.

**Corrigenda:** Vol. 49, no. 4: 356; **Hooded Merganser:** LJ is L Julia. **Killdeer:** NMP is Nine Mile Point to include Lake Road and Noyes Sanctuary. Pg 352; **Orchard Oriole:** fledged y Van Buren, not Lysander (same error Vol. 48, no. 4: 341).

wpurcell@dreamscape.com  
315-668-2871