

REGION 3 – FINGER LAKES

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A colder than normal December, with temperatures averaging 6°F below normal, led to early freezing of bodies of water throughout the Region. January and February were 2.9° and 4.0° warmer than normal respectively, but night time lows stayed slightly above freezing only three times all winter in Ithaca and only twice in Elmira. Consequently, there was little appreciable thawing. Although precipitation in Ithaca was well below normal all three months, the cold temperatures helped to maintain a snow cover there on all but eight days. Elmira had even less precipitation and much of what fell there was in the form of rain, so there were few days with snow cover, at least at lower elevations.

The following account includes comparisons of observed bird populations in the Region between Winter 2000-2001 and Winter 1999-2000, with occasional reference to a species' status in the previous two winters. Unless otherwise noted, the cited comparisons showed statistically significant changes ($\chi^2 > 3.84$; $P = 0.05$). A discussion of my methodology and its limitations can be found in the Region 3 report in the December 1999 issue of *The Kingbird* (Vol. 49, No. 4, pp. 335-6).

The numbers of many aquatic species reported by observers in the Region changed significantly from those reported the previous winter. Great Blue Heron, Tundra Swan, Green-winged Teal, Mallard, Lesser Scaup and Ruddy Duck were all reported in lower numbers. All but the Lesser Scaup are dependent upon shallow waters, which were largely frozen throughout the season. Nevertheless, some dabbling species showed increases. Canada Goose, American Black Duck and Gadwall increased for the second consecutive year. American Wigeons were also seen in greater numbers this winter. Some observers reported on the habit of the wigeons accompanying diving species, especially American Coots, and stealing their food when they surfaced from their dives. Perhaps the parallel increase in American Coot helps to explain why more wigeons were able to spend the winter in the Region. Among the divers, Common Merganser and Canvasback increased, the latter fivefold. Greater Scaup and Common Goldeneye increased for the second consecutive year. Redhead and Ring-necked Duck were the only species, aquatic or otherwise, to increase for the third consecutive year.

Several interesting water birds showed up during the season. An Eared Grebe again appeared in Aurora Bay at the center of the east side of Cayuga Lake, although it spent some time at the Ithaca Yacht Club near the southwest corner of the lake. A group of birders from Ithaca discovered a Greater White-fronted Goose at Myers Point on 24 February, and another group found probably the same bird feeding in a field in the Town of Lansing the following day. Martin Jorgenson saw a Brant at Treman Marina State Park on the late date of 19 December. The Blue-winged Teal found on the Ithaca CBC on New Year's Day was an unusually late record. Probably the same female Northern Shoveler that was discovered in

Horseheads last winter returned there to be counted on the Elmira CBC. Bob Fogg found a Eurasian Wigeon near the northwest corner of Cayuga Lake in early December. Individual male Barrow's Goldeneyes again appeared off Seneca Lake State Park at Geneva and near the ice edge at the north end of Cayuga Lake.

The only raptor to change significantly was Rough-legged Hawk, which increased by 64%. Wild Turkey was the only gallinaceous species to increase. Supported by good mast crops and little snow cover in the Southern Tier, populations may be expected to increase in the approaching breeding season. Two January sightings of Red-shouldered Hawk in Sapsucker Woods indicate that one may have stayed in that vicinity for the winter, as one probably did the previous winter. Fred Bertram found a Peregrine Falcon in the Town of Ledyard on 24 December. Nicolas Barbarin and Bob Fogg found another on New Year's Day on the ice on Cayuga Lake near Union Springs. Probably the same bird was reported twice more on 16 and 20 January. Ben Fambrough and Meena Haribal reported an immature Gyrfalcon from West Cory Road in the Town of Venice. Though many people subsequently visited the site, they were unable to find the bird. Nevertheless, they were usually rewarded with flocks of field birds and other open-country raptors.

Among gulls, only Ring-billed Gull showed an increase. Reports of Herring and Great Black-backed gulls were down in numbers. Sam and Steve Kelling found the gull of the season, a Laughing Gull at Stewart Park, 17 December. Stewart Park also produced the latest records of Bonaparte's Gulls, with the last reported by Bill Evans on Christmas Day.

Rock and Mourning doves were both reported in lower numbers. No owl species showed significant changes from last year. Multiple Snowy Owls at the Savannah Mucklands and on the ice at the north end of Cayuga Lake raised optimism for a Regionwide invasion of this species, but none appeared elsewhere.

Downy Woodpecker was the only woodpecker species to change. It increased for the second consecutive year. No reports of Red-headed Woodpecker came in during the season, but after the season ended Mike Demunn's report came to light. He observed one at Lodi Point along Seneca Lake through the entire winter.

Winter field birds were numerous. Horned Larks and Snow Buntings were both reported in higher numbers. Lapland Longspurs were present also, but in lower numbers than last year. While other corvids showed no significant changes, Blue Jays increased for the second consecutive year, doubling last year's numbers. Perhaps the availability of acorns for storage in the fall allowed more to stay in the Region this winter.

Among the southern species whose ranges have expanded into the Region over the past century, Tufted Titmouse and Northern Cardinal were the only ones to change. Both of them increased.

Species which lingered in the Region in higher numbers included Eastern Bluebird, Song and White-throated sparrows. These were the second consecutive increases for all three. Lingering species that decreased included White-crowned Sparrow and icterids Red-winged Blackbird, Rusty Blackbird, Brown-headed

Cowbird and Common Grackle. Spring migrants of these icterid species arrived in February, but in very small numbers. Individuals of many other species lingered in the Region. Most unusual were the Gray Catbird and two Rose-breasted Grosbeaks on the Geneva CBC.

Dark-eyed Juncos were up from last year. Winter finches were, of course, down from last year. However, Purple Finches were up in spite of a dismal crop of White Ash seeds, and American Goldfinches were up for the second consecutive year. Many people mentioned not having goldfinches at their feeders, however. On two occasions I observed flocks of goldfinches feeding on Black Birch catkins, which seemed abundant this winter.

European Starling increased and House Sparrow increased for the second consecutive year. House Finches, which were actually up last winter in spite of conjunctivitis, were down this winter. In summary, of the 138 species reported during the season in the Region, 89 showed no significant change in numbers reported, 20 decreased and 29 increased. Many that increased this winter, increased last winter also. None of the species that decreased this winter showed decreases last winter.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AurB – Aurora Bay; CayL – Cayuga Lake; CCBC – Corning CBC 16 Dec; CLB – Cayuga Lake Basin; CLSP – Cayuga Lake SP; ECBC – Elmira CBC 1 Jan; GCBC – Geneva CBC 17 Dec; ICBC – Ithaca CBC 1 Jan; IYC – Ithaca Yacht Club; KeuL – Keuka Lake; KH – Kestrel Haven Avian Migration Observatory; MCBC – Montezuma CBC 1 Jan; SaW – Sapsucker Woods TOMP; SavM – Savannah Mucklands SENE; SML – Seneca Meadows Landfill SENE; StP – Stewart Park TOMP; SuFS – Summerhill State Forest; WCBC – Watkins Glen CBC 30 Dec.

LOONS – DUCKS

RED-THROATED LOON: 2 Canoga Marsh 17 Dec (MH), only report.

Com. Loon: max 4 KeuL 9 Dec; 2 Taughannock Falls SP 2 Dec.

Pied-billed Grebe: max 9 KeuL 9 Dec; 7 IYC 31 Jan.

Horned Grebe: max 12 AurB 15 Feb.

Red-necked Grebe: WCBC; ICBC; IYC 17 Jan; CayL 3 Feb.

EARED GREBE: AurB 9-16 Dec, 27 Jan-24 Feb (mob); IYC 6-18 Jan (mob).

Double-crested Cormorant: CayL 8 Dec; last WCBC.

Great Blue Heron: max 8 MCBC; 6 ICBC.

Turkey Vulture: arr Lansing 2 Feb, early; max 2 Ithaca 13 Feb.

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED

GOOSE: arr Myers Pt 24 Feb (JGe, StK, J&KMc); Lansing 25 Feb (RB, BFa, MMe, MW).

Snow Goose: last & max 932 SavM 17 Dec; arr 12 Genoa 23 Feb.

BRANT: Treman Marina SP 19 Dec (MJ), only report.

Mute Swan: max 9 CLB 23 Jan.

Tundra Swan: max 500+ CLSP 2 Dec;

33 Cornell U 28 Dec.

Wood Duck: max 3 WCBC; Chemung Valley 13 Jan.

Gadwall: max 82 CLB 23 Jan (CaBC), high; 10 Seneca L SP 31 Jan.

EURASIAN WIGEON: CayL 6-7 Dec (BFo).

Am. Wigeon: max 50 CayL 9 Dec (StK, J&KMc, KR), high; 41 CLSP 2 Dec.

Am. Black Duck: max 4000 Ulysses 19 Feb (BiMc), high; 1466 CLB 23 Jan.

BLUE-WINGED TEAL: CLSP 5 Dec; ICBC.

N. SHOVELER: ECBC (DRu).

N. Pintail: max 30 Wyers Pt SENE 10 Feb; 11 CLB 23 Jan.

Green-winged Teal: max 7 Union Springs Mill Pd 27 Jan; 2 ECBC; WCBC.

Canvasback: max 8004 ICBC, high; 2000 Union Springs Marina 23 Feb.

Redhead: max 13,412 ICBC, high; 7329 CLB 23 Jan.

Ring-necked Duck: max 133 KeuL 9 Dec (EBS, J&NL), high; 42 CLB 23 Jan.

Greater Scaup: max 200 CayL 9 Dec; 110 GCBC.

Lesser Scaup: max 75 ICBC; 63 CLSP 2

Dec.

White-winged Scoter: Wyers Pt SENE
21 Jan (BFa, MMe), only report.

Long-tailed Duck: max 3 ICBC; 2 AurB
1 Jan.

Bufflehead: max 97 CLB 23 Jan; 37
GCBC.

Com. Goldeneye: max 1359 CLB 23
Jan; 324 Seneca L 14 Jan.

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE: Seneca L
SP 9 Dec-31 Jan (mob); CayL 12 Jan-4
Feb (mob).

Hooded Merganser: max 50 CayL
WMA 5 Dec; 20 KeuL 9 Dec.

Com. Merganser: max 670 CLB 23 Jan;
56 Chemung River 17 Jan.

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER:
max 30 CayL 10 Feb (CWi).

RUDDY DUCK: max 2 ICBC; CayL 7
Jan (GBi, AM).

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: max 2 Red Jacket Yacht
Club SENE 8 Jan; 2 MCBC.

N. Harrier: max "several" CLB 9 Dec; 3
GCBC.

Sharp-shinned Hawk: max 7 ICBC, tied
seven-year high; 5 WCBC.

Cooper's Hawk: max 10 ICBC, tied
seven-year high; 6 ECBC.

N. Goshawk: KH 29 Dec-25 Feb; SuSF
29 Dec; Romulus 16 Feb.

RED-SHOULDERED HAWK: SaW 6
Jan (MH); SaW 23 Jan (WH, KMc, KR);
only reports.

Rough-legged Hawk: max 27 WCBC;
15 ECBC.

Merlin: 11 reports scattered thru Reg.

PEREGRINE FALCON: Ledyard 24
Dec (FB); CayL 1-16 Jan (NB, BFo).

GYRFALCON: Venice 28 Jan (BFa
MH!).

Wild Turkey: max 108 ECBC; 65
WCBC.

Am. Coot: max 580 ICBC; 314 WCBC.

Killdeer: CayL 2 Dec; MCBC; Union
Springs Marina 13 Jan; arr KH 11 Feb.

LAUGHING GULL: StP 17 Dec

(Sa&StK!).

BONAPARTE'S GULL: last & max 7
StP 25 Dec (BE), high; 4 StP 18 Dec
(GK); CLSP 5 Dec (CoBC).

Ring-billed Gull: max 1870 GCBC
(EBS), high; 1603 MCBC.

Herring Gull: max 296 MCBC, low;
188 WCBC.

Iceland Gull: arr Van Cleef L 5&9 Dec;
max 2 SML 20&27 Jan; CayL 13&21
Jan, 24 Feb.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: max 3 SML
9 Dec; 2 Seneca Falls 2 Dec; 2 CayL 2
Dec.

Glaucous Gull: arr SML 29 Dec; CayL
8-13 Jan, 24 Feb.

Glaucous Gull X Herring Gull hybrid:
SML 9 Dec (StK, J&KMc, KR).

Great Black-backed Gull: max 45
GCBC; 42 ICBC.

DOVES – WOODPECKERS

Rock Dove: max 1029 WCBC; 933
ICBC.

Mourning Dove: max 551 ECBC; 386
ICBC.

Snowy Owl: max 2 CayL 9 Dec-29 Jan
(BFo, MW), high; 2 SavM 2-10 Dec; last
CayL 3 Feb.

Barred Owl: Southport 13 Dec-7 Feb;
ICBC 1 Jan; SavM 12 Jan; SuSF 5 Feb;
only reports.

Short-eared Owl: max 6 Montezuma
Wetlands Complex 2 Dec; 3 Ledyard 13
Jan.

N. Saw-whet Owl: max 2 W Danby 30
Jan; 2 Elmira 4 Feb.

Belted Kingfisher: max 8 ICBC, high; 3
MCBC.

RED-HEADED WOODPECKER:
Lodi Pt thru (MD).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: max 5 ICBC,
high; WCBC; ECBC.

Downy Woodpecker: max 260 ICBC;
65 WCBC.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: max 2 MCBC; 2 ICBC; 2

Dryden 6 Jan.

Blue Jay: max 750 ICBC, high; 227 CCBC.

Fish Crow: max 4 ECBC; 2 Treman Marina SP 10 Dec.

Com. Raven: max 12 CCBC, high; 11 ECBC.

Horned Lark: max 600 Fayette 27 Jan (JB, CoBC, JW, MW), high; 250 KH 18 Jan.

Tufted Titmouse: max 201 ICBC; 74 ECBC.

Carolina Wren: max 15 ICBC; 9 ECBC.

WINTER WREN: ECBC; ICBC; WCBC; Esty Glen 4-6 Feb (CSe).

Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 85 ICBC, high; 33 CCBC.

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET: Long Pt SP 9 Dec (StK, J&KMc, KR), only report.

E. Bluebird: max 150 Dix 23 Dec; 63 ICBC.

HERMIT THRUSH: ICBC, only report.

Am. Robin: max 1066 MCBC, high; 161 ICBC.

GRAY CATBIRD: GCBC (EBS), only report.

European Starling: max 8103 ICBC; 4708 MCBC.

WARBLERS

Yellow-rumped Warbler: max 9 Long Pt SP 8 Jan; 2 MCBC.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

E. TOWHEE: max 2 Enfield 8 Feb thru (fide SJH); 2 ECBC; other reports of singles.

Am. Tree Sparrow: max 690 ICBC, high; 251 WCBC.

FIELD SPARROW: 2 ICBC, only report.

SAVANNAH SPARROW: Dix 23 Dec (BO), only report.

Song Sparrow: max 53 ICBC; 17

MCBC.

Swamp Sparrow: max 6 ICBC; GCBC; Summerhill 29 Dec; only reports.

White-throated Sparrow: max 132 ICBC; 42 WCBC.

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW: max 3 Romulus 17-25 Jan (MJT); Etna 18 Feb (SyA); Covert thru.

Dark-eyed Junco: max 709 ICBC; 357 CCBC.

Lapland Longspur: max 8 Dryden 6 Jan (J&K&PMc), high; 6 GCBC.

Snow Bunting: max 1000 Venice 4 Feb; 650 Fayette 27 Jan.

N. Cardinal: max 367 ICBC; 138 MCBC.

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK: 2 GCBC 16-17 Dec (A&DCo).

Red-winged Blackbird: max 47 Horseheads 24 Feb; 40 Lansing 29 Jan; arr KH 16 Feb.

E. Meadowlark: 2 ECBC (MBo, GW), only report.

Rusty Blackbird: SaW 6 Dec (BR), only report.

Com. Grackle: max 14 ICBC, low; MCBC.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 74 WCBC; 47 Dryden 16 Jan.

Purple Finch: max 36 ICBC; 23 TOMP 15 Jan.

House Finch: max 456 ICBC; 191 ECBC.

Red Crossbill: 2 SuSF 11 Jan (BFo), only report.

Com. Redpoll: arr 20 KH 9 Dec; max 38 ICBC.

Pine Siskin: max 14 SuSF 20 Feb; 3 Orange 16 Feb.

Am. Goldfinch: max 373 ICBC; 177 MCBC.

House Sparrow: max 1134 ICBC; 280 GCBC.

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