

REGION 4 – SUSQUEHANNA

No report received.

REGION 5 – ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

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The average temperature for December was 21.7°F, 6.6° below normal. There were 2.36" of precipitation for the month, which was 0.84" below normal, but it fell in the form of a record **70.3" of snow**. Oneida Lake iced over initially on 7 December and froze for the winter on the 20th. Delta Lake was frozen by mid month. The season warmed up after December; the average temperature in January was 31.5°, 3.2° above normal, and February's average was 27.7°, 3.7° above normal. The snowfall for the two months was 56.1" but there were only 3.29" of water in that snow, which was 1.2" below normal. A brief warm spell during 15-17 December reduced snow cover in some of the southern areas but most of the Region had at least 1-3' of snow on the ground after early December.

Common Loon reports were few and there was only one Red-throated Loon for the season. The Oswego Harbor Great Cormorant departed in early January and Double-crested Cormorant numbers dwindled quickly, with none remaining through the season. Turkey Vulture, a species presumably affected by snow and cold, was sighted on several occasions east of Syracuse in the area where it has wintered in the recent past. Few Snow Geese lingered into December, in contrast with the past few years. Canvasbacks were quite scarce. The second recorded Tufted Duck showed up in early February and stayed through the month in Oswego Harbor where it was readily found by anyone who cared to look. A Harlequin Duck put in a brief appearance and two Barrow's Goldeneyes were seen as well. Kevin McGann found two King Eiders along the east shore of Lake Ontario in January, and in February he found a remarkable **15** about 10 miles away along the south shore. There were high numbers of Redheads and Hooded Mergansers during the season, while all three scoter species spent the winter in the Nine Mile Point area. By the end of the season there was little evidence that spring waterfowl migration was underway.

An immature dark Gyrfalcon was found on frozen Little Sodus Bay by Mary Alice Koeneké in early February and seen by many the same day. By the end of the month it was being seen on a regular basis by birders who were willing to spend some time waiting for it to feed on various carcasses on the ice. Northern Harrier, Rough-legged Hawk, American Kestrel and Short-eared Owl, raptors affected by snow depths, were all reported in very low numbers. Snowy Owl did not persist in

Oswego Harbor and there were only two verified birds elsewhere. While not reported in the species account below, the three resident owls, Eastern Screech-Owl, Great Horned and Barred, were all reported in good numbers by observers who looked for them. As is usually the case, an irruption of northern owls ended just to the north of our Region.

Gulls peaked on the Oswego River in early January, began declining by the end of the month and dropped considerably in numbers as the river opened up in February. Kevin McGann had our bird of the season, an immature Ivory Gull on 29 December on Lake Ontario, seen from the Energy Information Center in Scriba. The bird was seen as it flew into a gull roost on the ice but within minutes a Bald Eagle flying along the shore put all the birds up and the Ivory Gull was not seen again. Iceland and Glaucous gulls were consistently found, but in low numbers, while Lesser Black-backed Gull was missed.

An Eastern Phoebe flycatching along Oriskany Creek on the Clinton CBC was only our third winter record. Winter Wren reports were more than usual, while numbers of Northern Shrikes, Golden-crowned Kinglets and Red-breasted Nuthatches all seemed to be above average. Abundant fruit and seed crops supported flocks of American Robins and Cedar Waxwings. In a non-invasion year, only one Bohemian Waxwing was reported. Yellow-rumped Warblers feeding on poison ivy berries at Howland Island were still present in late February. The sparrow variety was very good for winter, although numbers of the regular species, such as American Tree, Song, White-Throated and Dark-eyed Junco were no better than most years.

White-winged Crossbills were on territory throughout northern Herkimer County and in pockets of suitable habitat in the southwestern Tug Hill. Pine Siskins were also paired up in the Adirondacks and by February some had been noted at the higher elevations of southern Onondaga and Madison counties. There were only a few reports of Common Redpolls this winter, mostly in and around the Adirondacks, and the only Evening Grosbeaks were coming to feeders in Old Forge and Big Moose. American Goldfinches were quite scarce at feeders but Matt Perry reported that they were feeding on Hop Hornbeam and Yellow Birch fruit and the latter tree seemed to be what large flocks of Purple Finches were feeding on in Herkimer County. No Pine Grosbeaks or Red Crossbills were reported.

By the end of February only small groups of Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Grackles had appeared and a few hawks had begun to move past Derby Hill. The season's total of 129 species was the same as 1998 and might well be a Regional best. Highlights were Great Cormorant, **Tufted Duck**, King Eider, Harlequin Duck, Barrow's Goldeneye, **Gyr Falcon**, **Ivory Gull**, **Eastern Phoebe**, Bohemian Waxwing, White-winged Crossbill and all the "half-hardies."

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

Adks – Adirondacks; Bvllc – Baldwinsville; CM – Clay Marsh; FH – Fair Haven, Little Sodus Bay and vicinity; HIWMA – Howland Island WMA; LOL – Lake Ontario Littoral; OnonL – Onondaga Lake; SFWS – Spring Farm Wildlife Sanctuary, Paris; Skan – Skaneateles; StMC – Saint Mary's Cemetery, Dewitt; Syr – Syracuse.

LOONS – DUCKS

Red-throated Loon: FH 3 Dec, only report.
Com. Loon: Fourth L 9 Dec, caught in ice; max 3 LOL 14 Jan; last Oswego 3 Feb.
Pied-billed Grebe: max 4 Seneca R 14 Jan; max 4 Oswego R 28 Jan.
Horned Grebe: max 20 LOL 14 Jan.
Red-necked Grebe: LOL 7 Jan; Oswego 24 Feb.
Double-crested Cormorant: 6 LOL 7 Jan; last Oswego 7 Feb.
GREAT CORMORANT: Oswego thru early Jan.
Great Blue Heron: max 12 OnonL 25 Feb.
Turkey Vulture: 2 Pompey 9 Feb; 3 Dewitt 24 Feb, thought to be wintering.
Snow Goose: only a small number lingered into Dec; arr 1 blue morph FH 24 Feb.
Canada Goose: max 4200 FH 11 Feb.
Mute Swan: max 4 FH 28 Feb; 2 Oswego 11 Feb; singles Bvllc, OnonL, Syr in Jan.
Tundra Swan: max 6 FH 3 Dec; 4 Oneida L 16 Dec; none after Dec.
Trumpeter Swan: 4 ad 2 y FH 3 Dec (BP, NYSARC), 2 remained FH into Feb.
Wood Duck: Bvllc 6 Jan; OnonL 13 Jan; Phoenix 14 Jan; 3 Manlius 14 Jan.
Gadwall: max 24 FH 3 Dec.
Am. Wigeon: max 65 FH 3 Dec; Skan L 14 Jan; 2 FH 4 Feb.

Am. Black Duck: max 115 FH 3 Dec; 71 OnonL 13 Jan.
Mallard: max 600 Oswego R 10 Jan.
N. Shoveler: max 4 FH 3 Dec; last 16 Dec.
N. Pintail: 2 Fulton 25 Jan.
Green-winged Teal: 2 Oswego 3 Dec; 2 Syr 16 Dec, only reports.
Canvasback: max 6 FH 4 Feb; missed on Jan NYS Waterfowl Census for only 4th time since 1955.
Redhead: max 1400 FH 4 Feb; 666 Skan L 14 Jan.
Ring-necked Duck: max 6 Bvllc 7 Jan.
TUFTED DUCK: male Oswego after 4 Feb (BP, GP, KM, mob, NYSARC), 2nd Regional record.
Greater Scaup: max 498 Skan L 14 Jan.
Lesser Scaup: max 140 FH 3 Dec.
KING EIDER: 2 LOL 7-8 Jan; 15 LOL T New Haven 24 Feb (KM, BP), 2nd highest one day count.
HARLEQUIN DUCK: female Oswego 4 Jan (GP).
Surf Scoter: 2 LOL after 15 Jan.
White-winged Scoter: up to 24 LOL Oswego to New Haven thru.
Black Scoter: 3 LOL 7 thru.
Long-tailed Duck: max 515 LOL 14 Jan.
Bufflehead: max 80 LOL 7 Jan and FH 4 Feb.
Com. Goldeneye: max 2503 LOL 14 Jan.
BARROW'S GOLDENEYE: male moving between Brewerton and Phoenix

after 14 Jan (John Rogers, mob); male FH after 1 Feb (MAK, BP, MSc).

Hooded Merganser: max 20 Oswego R 14 Jan.

Com. Merganser: max 4200 OnonL 16 Dec.

Red-breasted Merganser: max 40 Oswego 14 Jan.

Ruddy Duck: max 6 Cazenovia L 4 Dec; last FH 24 Dec.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: 3 ad and 2 imm Big Moose in Dec; 2 ad and 2 imm along Oswego R to OnonL thru; 2 Verona 23 Dec; Durhamville 24 Dec; W Canada Creek 7 Jan; T Florence 31 Jan; Oneida 24 Feb.

N. Harrier: 2 Syr CBC and 1 Clinton CBC 16 Dec, last reports.

N. Goshawk: Big Moose 16 Dec; Selkirk Shores SP 7 Jan.

Red-tailed Hawk: Old Forge in Feb, unusual.

Rough-legged Hawk: max 5 Clinton CBC 16 Dec; mostly 1 a day Jan & Feb.

Am. Kestrel: only 7 reports, very scarce.

Merlin: 2 wintered Onondaga P Syr; also reported from University and downtown Syr; Oneida 9 Feb.

Peregrine Falcon: 1-2 downtown Syr thru.

Ring-necked Pheasant: max 5 Clinton CBC 16 Dec.

Ruffed Grouse: max 5 Verona 23 Dec; many seen eating tree buds.

Wild Turkey: max 131 Verona 23 Dec; 50-100 per day T Western thru.

Am. Coot: max 5 Oswego R 28 Jan; fewer wintering than in recent years.

Killdeer: N Syr 16 Dec (JB).

Com. Snipe: Syr 16 Dec.

Bonaparte's Gull: max 10 OnonL 16 Dec; none lingered to Jan.

Ring-billed Gull: max 2400 Oswego 14 Jan.

Herring Gull: max 800 Phoenix 7 Jan.

Iceland Gull: 1-3 per day Oswego R after 17 Dec.

Glaucous Gull: max 2 Bvle 7 Jan; mostly 1 per day Oswego R Jan & Feb.

Great Black-backed Gull: mid winter max of 350, which seems low.

IVORY GULL: imm L Ontario off Scriba nuclear plants 29 Dec (KM, NYSARC), first regional report.

DOVES – WOODPECKERS

Snowy Owl: 2 Oswego 3 Dec; Fairfield 24 Dec, periodic thru Jan; Fenner 14 Jan, reported into Feb.

Long-eared Owl: 2 Pompey 15 Feb thru; Otisco 16 Feb.

Short-eared Owl: Clinton 16 Dec; last Verona 23 Dec.

N. Saw-whet Owl: 2 calling Pompey after 13 Feb.

Belted Kingfisher: reports from 5 locations.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: StMC thru 3 Feb (GH).

Black-backed Woodpecker: Moss L 20 Jan; Windfall Pd 21 Jan; Third L Creek 21 Jan.

N. Flicker: max 3 per day to mid Jan in usual areas, southern ONON and LOL.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

EASTERN PHOEBE: Oriskany Creek Clinton 16 Dec (Ernest Williams, fide MP); 3rd winter record.

N. Shrike: reports of at least 26 individuals, few were persistent.

Am. Crow: max 2242 Syr 16 Dec, roost may have shifted to new location.

Fish Crow: 2 Liverpool, 3 Shop City Syr and occasional University area Syr thru.

Com. Raven: all reports from Adks and Tug Hill.

Horned Lark: max 93 Skan 30 Dec.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: max 15 Boylston 20 Jan; many wintered in breeding areas.

Carolina Wren: singles Syr 16 Dec and Marcellus 30 Dec.

Winter Wren: Syr 16 Dec; 2 CM 16 Dec; CM 21 Jan; Dewitt 24 Jan;

Deansboro 20 Feb; most since 1974.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 15
Fulton 17 Dec.

E. Bluebird: max 13 T Onondaga
(Pleasant Valley) 30 Dec; T Western 26
Dec, only snowbelt report.

Hermit Thrush: singles SFWS 12 Dec
and Camillus 30 Dec.

Am. Robin: max 173 Green Lakes SP 1
Feb; good numbers ONON despite deep
snow; straggler T Webb 16 Dec.

Gray Catbird: Syr 16 Dec.

Bohemian Waxwing: Oswego 7 Jan
(KM, BP, BB, MAK).

Cedar Waxwing: max 200 SFWS
16 Feb; large flocks found thru.

WARBLERS

Yellow-rumped Warbler: Bvile 3 Dec;
Syr 16 Dec; HIWMA 1 Jan; 3 HIWMA
19 Feb, surviving on poison ivy berries.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

Am. Tree Sparrow: 20-40 per party on
CBCs; generally 10-15 per day
otherwise.

Chipping Sparrow: Rome to 13 Jan.

Savannah Sparrow: Verona 21 Dec.

Fox Sparrow: Bvile 2 Dec (JB).

Song Sparrow: max 5 Pumpkin Hollow
30; 1-2 per day until mid Jan, then very
scarce.

Swamp Sparrow: Clinton CBC 16 Dec.

White-throated Sparrow: max 23 CM
16 Dec; to 6 per day southern areas thru.

White-crowned Sparrow: Pumpkin
Hollow 30 Dec (GH).

Dark-eyed Junco: max 37 Camillus 30
Dec.

Dark-eyed "Oregon" Junco: Parish thru
(MSc, NYSARC)

Lapland Longspur: Sangerfield 29 Dec;
Oswego 7 Jan; 2 Navarino 6 Jan; 2 T
Onondaga 13 Jan; Nine Mile Pt 13 Jan;
Van Buren 31 Jan.

Snow Bunting: max 550 Fenner 29 Jan;
200 per day there thru Feb.

Red-winged Blackbird: only 5 at 4 sites
until end of Feb; max 27 Dewitt 25 Feb.

Rusty Blackbird: 9 Pulaski 3 Dec, only
report.

Com. Grackle: max 4 N Syr 21 Dec; 3
Pompey thru; arr SFWS 22 Feb.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 170 Tully
16 Feb; many wintered southern areas.

Purple Finch: flocks of 25-40 common
in Adks; 2-4 per day at feeders outside
Adks late Feb.

House Finch: max 104 Verona 23 Dec;
53 StMC 8 Dec, feeding on Hop
Hornbeam fruit; leucistic male at SFWS
4th consecutive winter.

White-winged Crossbill: pairs on
territory everywhere T Webb and T Ohio
HERK thru, some y noted.

Com. Redpoll: max 15 Big Moose 16
Dec; only a few reports.

Pine Siskin: widespread Adks where
they appeared to be in pairs; also small
numbers at other higher elevations.

Am. Goldfinch: max 32 CM 16 Dec;
mostly feeding in deciduous trees.

Evening Grosbeak: only a few at feeders
Big Moose and Old Forge.

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