

REGION 2 – GENESEE

Kevin C. Griffith

61 Grandview Lane, Rochester NY 14612

ckgrif@localnet.com

It could definitely be classified as winter this year. After a couple of mild winters, we were hit with a good one. It really started in November, but December was also cold and snowy. Temperatures were a full degree below normal at 28.4°F. The 41.1" of snow was nearly double the norm. Precipitation was 3.85", which was 1.12" above normal. Conditions were not particularly good for the three area CBCs. January saw a continuation of the trend: temperatures averaged only 18.2°, 5.7° below normal, and there was 43.4" of snowfall from a precipitation total of 2.05". This precipitation total was 0.29" below normal, and the snowfall to precipitation ratio amazing. February's average temperature was 4.4° below normal at 20.9°. Precipitation was a mere 0.08" below normal, with a total of 1.96". The 21.9" of snow was just about normal.

The winter conditions didn't make winter birding any easier. There were long stretches when the temperature didn't top the freezing mark. February saw a span of 15 days, the 4th through the 18th, when the temperatures didn't reach freezing. January turned out to be the sixth snowiest in history. Open water was nearly nonexistent after mid-January. Only patches existed near the Lake Ontario shore. Russell Station turned out to be particularly good. The stream at the Caledonia State Fish hatchery remained open and was a bird magnet.

The overall bird picture was still okay. The ice conditions seriously hampered the Hamlin Lakewatch, and, after early January, lake watching anyplace. Conditions often limited the actual birding time and opportunity. There were the usual loon reports from early January, but numbers were lower than usual. The only real grebe highlights were the arrival of Red-necked Grebes in late February and the continued Eared Grebe sightings. The usual few Double-crested Cormorants wintered at the bubblers at a marina on Irondequoit Bay. With conditions the way they were, the number of Great Blue Herons was interesting. There were days when more than 20 were found at Caledonia Fish Hatchery and other days when more than 10 could be seen standing on the ice of Long Pond, with a surprising total of 31 reported around the ponds along the lakeshore in late January. Twenty-one Turkey Vultures in Wheatland in January was a good winter total, especially with this year's conditions. Waterfowl lowlights included the record **266 Mute Swans** on the Rochester CBC. This comment also fits Canada

Goose, with the 4148 reported on the Little Lakes CBC a new record. Puddle ducks were about normal. A group of six Northern Shovelers at a bubbler on Irondequoit Bay in January was high and a count of 18 Green-winged Teal on the lake in early February was unprecedented. The diving ducks were typical in species reported. There were some good counts for Greater Scaup, Bufflehead and Common Goldeneye. Barrow's Goldeneye at Conesus Lake and Sodus Bay and a January female King Eider at Russell Station were highlights.

The raptor situation was rather lackluster. Merlin and Peregrine reports were surprisingly good and a few Rough-legged hawks were reported, but accipiters were down and American Kestrels seemed quite scarce. A Red-shouldered Hawk in Parma in January was unusual. Four Virginia Rails at Mendon Ponds was an exceptional total for the winter. The Common Moorhen on the Rochester CBC was calling from the marshes of Buck Pond. It was truly a unique winter for shorebirds: the lone Killdeer, Sanderling, Purple Sandpiper and Dunlin that congregated on a few feet of gravel bar where Slater Creek empties into Lake Ontario at Russell Station in January was a "once in a lifetime" event. After spotting that group, Dave Tetlow made it a five-shorebird day by adding Wilson's Snipe at the fish hatchery. The Sanderling and Dunlin were seen off and on most of the season. Many times the Sanderling could be found walking in the snow along the edges of the parking lot or even in the parking lot itself. A **jaeger** reported from Irondequoit Bay outlet was a good find. The bird of the season was undoubtedly the **Ross's Gull** found by Bob Spahn on Irondequoit Bay in January. The bird was quite cooperative and many birders, both local and out of town, were treated to views. Gulls in general were okay, with the usual reports of Thayer's, Lesser Black-backed, Iceland and Glaucous in low numbers. Bonaparte's Gulls were only concentrated briefly in early January and then were nearly nonexistent. Little Gull reports were few.

Owl reports were about usual, with the typicals found on the CBCs. Long-eared and Northern Saw-whet have become standard on the Little Lakes CBC. There were some good concentrations of Short-eared Owls in the usual locales. A single Snowy Owl report was "it" for the season.

There were scattered reports of Northern Shrike, but no predictable locations. Common Raven reports from the southwestern portion of the Region have become expected. The passerine picture in general harbored no major surprises. On the plus side were Horned Lark, Carolina Wren, American Robin, Northern Mockingbird, Yellow-rumped Warbler and White-crowned Sparrow. On the down side were Common Yellowthroat, Song, Swamp and White-throated sparrows, blackbirds and winter finches. Reported half-hardies included Winter Wren, Marsh Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, Gray Catbird and Rose-breasted Grosbeak. A single Bohemian Waxwing was a highlight on the Little Lakes CBC. Lapland Longspurs were reported throughout, but didn't reach decent numbers until February when open ground patches appeared.

The passerine highlight of the season was undoubtedly a Northern Waterthrush discovered by Dave Tetlow at the Caledonia Fish Hatchery in

January. It was only the second January record for the Region. It was seen in the same area as good numbers of Yellow-rumped Warblers wintering there.

The December species total of 111 was well below the ten-year average of 122.8. The year ended with a total of 299 species. January started things off with a total of 125 species, which is right about at the ten-year average. February added only three species, bringing the 2003 total to 128.

CONTRIBUTORS

Jessie Barry, Jim Barry, Douglas Bassett, John Boettcher, Tim Bush, Bernie Carr, Carolyn Cass, Diane & Roger Cass, Jim Cavagnaro, Belma Cerosaletti, Gary Chapin, Jerry Czech, Kathleen Dalton, Doug Daniels, Mike Davids, Jon & Sandy Dombrowski, Colleen Dox-Griffith, Brett Ewald, Jeannine & Kurt Fox, Christine Fredercle, Jack Graham, Kevin Griffith, Lucretia Grosshans, Georgia & Ralph Guenther, Judy Gurly, Bob & Trish Haggett, Bill Hallahan, James Hallahan, Chris & Helen Haller, Greg Hartenstein, Diane Henderson, Barbara Herrgesell, Anne Hudson, Bernie Kester, David King, Pat Kocinski, Gerry Leubner, Robert & Sandy Mauceli, Chita & Robert McKinney, Frank Mitchell, Barb & Erwin Molyneaux, Richard O'Hara, John Olson, Norma Platt, Betty & Bill Powell, Diane & Mike SanFilippo, Ed Scheidlower, Dominic Sherony, Jeanne Skelly, Doug Smith, Tom Smith, Robert & Susan Spahn, Cathy Spahn, Paul Spindler, Jeff Spindler, Allan & David & Grace Strong, William Symonds, David Tetlow (DT), Joann & Mike Tetlow, Bill Thompson, Don & Donna Traver, Ellen Wagner, Joe Wing, Bruce Zollner.

ABBREVIATIONS

A – T Avon LIVI; B – T Brighton MONR; BP – Buck Pd, T Greece MONR; CFH – Caledonia Fish Hatchery LIVI; CH – Ontario Beach, Charlotte MONR; CL – Conesus L LIVI; G – T Greece MONR; H – T Hamlin MONR; HB – Hamlin Beach SP MONR; IB – Irondequoit Bay MONR; LLCBC – Little Lakes CBC; R – Retsoff LIVI; RCBC – Rochester CBC; RS – Russell Station MONR; MP – Mendon Ponds P MONR; P – T Perinton MONR; S – T Sodus WAYN; W – T Webster MONR.

LOONS – DUCKS

Red-throated Loon: H 1 Jan; IB 1 Jan; max 5 HB 5 Jan.
Pied-billed Grebe: CL 1 Jan.
Red-necked Grebe: CH 1-20 Jan.
Eared Grebe: CL 1 Jan (R&SS, mob); RS 12 Jan.
Double-crested Cormorant: 1-5 IB 1-19 Jan; RS 12, 18 Jan; 1-2 IB 1-28

Feb.

Great Blue Heron: max 31 G 26 Jan.
Turkey Vulture: max 21 Wheatland MONR 17 Jan (DT).
Snow "Blue" Goose: S 20 Jan, only report.
Canada Goose: 4148 LLCBC 21 Dec, record high for CBC.

Mute Swan: 266 RCBC 15 Dec, record high.

Trumpeter Swan: 2 IB 1-14 Jan, yellow tags #459, #460, same as last winter.

Tundra Swan: 2 IB 1 Jan, only report.

Gadwall: max 42 IB 14 Jan.

N. Shoveler: max 6 IB 12 Jan.

Green-winged Teal: max 18 G9 Feb, unprecedented winter high.

Redhead: max 4000 CL 1 Jan (DT), in flight.

King Eider: 2 f HB 24 Dec (WS); f RS 10 Feb (KG).

Bufflehead: max 450 RS 16 Feb, high total.

Com. Goldeneye: max 1500 S 15 Dec.

Barrow's Goldeneye: m CL 21 Dec (JB, JS); f S 5 Jan (DT, MD).

Ruddy Duck: max 9 CL 1 Jan.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Red-shouldered Hawk: Parma 26 Jan (DT, MD), unusual in winter.

Merlin: CH 6 Jan; CH 22 Feb; G 23 Feb; B 28 Feb.

Peregrine Falcon: CH 1 Jan; IB 11 Jan; IB 13 Jan; S 19 Jan; CH 22 Feb; W 5-6 Feb.

Virginia Rail: BP 15 Dec; 4 MP 1-4 Jan.

Com. Moorhen: BP 15 Dec (KG).

Killdeer: RS 10-20 Jan.

Sanderling: CH, RS 12-31 Jan, 1-28 Feb (DT, MD, mob).

Purple Sandpiper: RS 17-31 Jan (DT, MD); RS 3 Feb (LG).

Dunlin: Ch, RS 12-31 Jan, 1-19 Feb (DT, MD, mob).

Wilson's Snipe: CFH 15-18 Jan (DT). jaeger species: IB 18 Jan (GC).

Thayer's Gull: 1st yr P 9-10 Dec (DS); P 20 Dec (C&RM, RO); 1st yr IB 11 Jan (RS, KG); 1st yr BP 3 Feb (JB).

Iceland Gull: max 4 P 12 Dec, 2 ad, 2 1st yr.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: ad BP 9

Feb (KG).

ROSS'S GULL: 1st winter IB 9-13 Jan (RS, mob, NYSARC).

DOVES – WOODPECKERS

Snowy Owl: Henrietta MONR 20 Jan (AH).

Short-eared Owl: max 16 Lima 10 Dec.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: S 1 Jan; R 5 Jan; S 11 Jan; Webster 10-20 Jan.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

Com. Raven: 2 Rattlesnake Hill WMA LIVI 25 Jan (KG, CD-G); 2 T Dalton LIVI 1 Feb (KG, CD).

Winter Wren: Penfield 7 Jan.

Marsh Wren: 2 Northrup Creek G 15 Dec; CFH 18 Jan.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: 3 RCBC 15 Dec; Port Bay WAYN 5 Jan.

Hermit Thrush: MP 30 Jan.

Gray Catbird: H 7 Dec.

Bohemian Waxwing: Taylor Marsh, Richmond 21 Dec (DB), only report.

WARBLERS

Yellow-rumped Warbler: 6 Honeoye L 21 Dec; max 60+ CFH 18 Jan (DT, MD).

NORTHERN WATERTHRUSH: CFH 15, 18 Jan (DT, MD).

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

Chipping Sparrow: Pittsford 1-31 Jan (JC, EW).

Field Sparrow: P 12-31 Jan (MT); max 23 A 20 Feb (DD).

Fox Sparrow: G 15-16 Feb (TB).

White-crowned Sparrow: max 60+ R 18 Jan.

Lapland Longspur: 20 A 3 Feb (LG, DH).

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: W 1-14 Dec (B&EM).

Pine Siskin: 3 Victor 21-22 Feb (RH), only report.