

REGION 1 – NIAGARA FRONTIER

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December was moderate, with an average temperature of 33.2° F, 3.4° above normal. Monthly precipitation at Buffalo-Niagara International Airport was 3.64", 0.16" less than usual, and snowfall 21.6", 3.9" less than usual. Most of the snow fell over three days, 14, 17 and 25 December. January was persistently cold and had frequent lake effect snow. The average temperature was 17.4°, 7.1° below normal, making this the coldest January since 1994. The month's precipitation was 2.95", 0.21" below normal, with 45.2" of snow, 19.1" more than normal. Lake Erie began to ice over at mid-month and was mostly covered by the last week. February was typical at an average temperature of 25.5°, 0.4° below normal. However, the month was unusually dry, with total precipitation 1.15", 1.27" below normal, and only 5.9" of snowfall, 11.9" below normal.

To the delight of the birders, and probably birds too, the weather was especially good during the CBC season. There was more open water on inland ponds than usual and waterfowl lingered. I had the good fortune of finding an adult **Ross's Goose** at Iroquois NWR during the Oak Orchard CBC on 27 December. Many birders searched for the rare goose in subsequent days and came up with some more interesting finds, including **Greater White-fronted Goose** and **Common Yellowthroat**. There were more reports of lingering Northern Shovelers than usual, likely attributed to the open water.

The weather quickly deteriorated after early January, and birder activity decreased. Red-necked Grebes turned up in Dunkirk Harbor and along the Niagara River in late January and early February but in much smaller numbers than last winter's invasion. Their appearance likely coincided with the freezing of Lake Erie. One bird was recovered from the parking lot at Ralph Wilson Stadium in Orchard Park, rehabilitated, and released a few days later.

Wintering raptor highlights were similar to last year. A **Golden Eagle** was once again observed in Allegany State Park. Bald Eagles were widespread and well reported throughout the season. The maximum count was 11 at Allegheny Reservoir. Up to seven Merlins wintered at the SUNY Buffalo campus and several other birds were seen in the Region. This species was formerly very rare in winter. Five winter Red-shouldered Hawk reports were a high number.

Unprecedented in winter was a **Willet** that remained at the Bird Island Pier along the Niagara River into early January. It may have been the same bird observed at this location in September, however, it did not appear to be injured. While observing this bird on 3 January, two local birders were interrogated at gunpoint by the Buffalo Police and subsequently questioned by the Border Patrol, other federal agencies and local TV crews, who suspected they were terrorists. It's no coincidence that few birders ventured to this area after this incident of overreaction and harsh treatment.

An adult **Mew Gull** was the highlight for the Niagara River this winter. Only the fourth report for the Region, it was found on the Canadian side at Niagara Falls on 6 December. Willie D'Anna refound the bird on 13 December on the American side at the Niagara Power Project. Consistent with recent winters, **Black-headed Gull** and **California Gull** were observed on multiple occasions. Gordon Bellerby commented that the large number of Bonaparte's Gulls arrived on the Niagara two weeks late and spent less time in the Region than usual. His high count for Bonaparte's was 12,100 on 7 December. A rare Laughing Gull was observed in a mall parking lot in January, possibly the same bird that was seen along the Niagara in December.

Snowy Owls were reported from only two locations and Long-eared Owls from only one. There were a few more reports of Short-eared Owls and Northern Saw-whet Owls than usual, the latter because birders seem to be making more effort to find them.

In mid-February, Dave Tetlow noticed that there were good numbers of Northern Shrikes along the Lake Ontario plain and he suspected they were staging prior to migration. On 17 February, he performed a methodical, all-day search through three towns and counted **22 Northern Shrikes**, a new state daily maximum.

Common Redpolls were widely reported and in good numbers and a **Hoary Redpoll** was documented in Youngstown. Pine Siskins were reported in low numbers and there were single reports of both crossbill species and Pine Grosbeaks, plus a handful of Evening Grosbeak reports.

Susan O'Donnell found the Region's second Townsend's Solitaire on 6 December along the West River Parkway in Grand Island. The bird was refound the next day but not again. Other rarities not previously mentioned included Northern Gannet and Bohemian Waxwing.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

AISP – Allegany SP CATT; BeSP – Beaver I SP ERIE; BuSP – Buckhorn I SP ERIE; BWWTP – Batavia Wastewater Treatment Plant GENE; DH – Dunkirk Harbor CHAU; FMCSP – Four Mile Creek SP NIAG; FNSP – Fort Niagara SP NIAG; GHSP – Golden Hill SP NIAG; INWR – Iroquois NWR GENE/ORLE; JDSP – Joseph Davis SP NIAG; L Erie SP – L Erie SP CHAU; NF – Niagara Falls

NIAG; NPP – Niagara Power Project on NR, Lewiston NIAG; NR – Niagara R; RTPI – Roger Tory Peterson Institute, Jamestown CHAU; SPNS – Sinking Ponds Nature Sanctuary, E Aurora ERIE; Tift NP – Tift Nature Preserve, Buffalo ERIE; TWMA – Tonawanda WMA GENE/NIAG; WhSP – Whirlpool SP NIAG; WTSP – Wilson-Tuscarora SP NIAG.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES GREATER WHITE-FRONTED

GOOSE: 3 Cheektowaga ERIE 1 Dec, continued from fall season (MM!, WW!); INWR 1, 2 Jan (BBR).

Snow Goose: 2 Cassadaga L CHAU 3 Dec; 7 Beaver Meadow CBC 20 Dec; INWR 1 Jan; 2 BeSP 13-14 Feb (JL); only reports.

ROSS'S GOOSE: INWR 27 Dec-2 Jan (MM! NYSARC), 1st winter record.

Mute Swan: WTSP 13 Dec; max 5 Porter NIAG 28 Dec; DH 17 Jan-8 Feb; 2 Newfane NIAG 22 Feb; 2 Pt Breeze ORLE 22 Feb.

Tundra Swan: 28 Bear L CHAU 20 Dec; 11-14 INWR 23 Dec-2 Jan; max 294 NR 10-18 Jan; 6 DH 17 Jan; 30 BuSP 15 Feb; 135 BeSP 27 Feb.

Wood Duck: NF 5 Dec; max 5 Amherst ERIE 11 Jan; only reports.

Am. Black Duck: 36 Oakfield GENE 23 Dec; max 127 BWWT 1 Jan, good count for date.

N. Shoveler: SPNS 1-25 Dec & 8 Jan (LH); 57 BWWT 7 Dec; 1 BWWT 23 Dec; Wilson NIAG 27 Dec; 2 INWR 30 Dec (BK!); LaSalle P Buffalo 1 Jan; more reports than usual after mid-Dec.

N. Pintail: reported from 8 locations; more than usual for winter.

Green-winged Teal: NF 6 Dec; 7 BWWT 7 Dec; INWR 3 Jan (S&TO); Amherst ERIE 15 Jan (JP); only reports.

Canvasback: 2 BWWT 1 Jan; max 4090 NR 10-18 Jan, lower max than usual; 25 DH 31 Jan; 3000 Grand I NR 3 Feb (JL).

Ring-necked Duck: 5 INWR 3 Jan; max 7 Strawberry I NR 5 Feb.

Greater Scaup: max 8066 NR 10-18 Jan.

Lesser Scaup: max 5 Buffalo NR 19 Jan.

Surf Scoter: 3 Wilson NIAG 27 Dec; 3 FMCSP 28 Dec; Sheridan CHAU 1 Jan; FNSP 18 Jan; only reports.

Black Scoter: FNSP 11 Jan (S&TO), only report.

Hooded Merganser: max 35 N Tonawanda NIAG 22 Dec; 11 DH 25 Jan.

Red-breasted Merganser: max 7000 Somerset NIAG 6 Feb (DT), flying east on L Ontario during 10 minute period.

Ruddy Duck: 3 BWWT 7 Dec; 1 BWWT 1 Jan; 1-2 DH 17 Jan-8 Feb; N Tonawanda NIAG 7 Feb (JP); rare in Feb.

Red-throated Loon: max 15 FMCSP 28 Dec; DH 1 Feb (FR); FNSP 15 Feb (PY).

Com. Loon: DH 1 Jan; last BuSP 4 Jan.

Pied-billed Grebe: max 4 DH 1 Jan; N Tonawanda NIAG 5 Jan.

Horned Grebe: 1-2 DH 1 Jan-8 Feb; max 16 Shadigee ORLE.

Red-necked Grebe: 2 FMCSP 28 Dec; Wilson NIAG 1 Jan; recovered in Wilson Stadium parking lot Orchard Park ERIE late Jan (GC); max 11 Buffalo NR 5 Feb (PY); max 11 DH 8 Feb (WW).

N. GANNET: imm NF 6-16 Dec (WD!, WW!, GB, NYSARC); imm WhSP NR 6 Dec, different individual than one at NF observed on same day; very rare on NR.

Double-crested Cormorant: max 70 DH 1 Jan.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: DH 17 Jan (FR), only report.

Turkey Vulture: Lancaster ERIE 30 Jan (MM!), rare in mid-winter; Buffalo ERIE 8 Feb (WD!); arr Hamburg ERIE 28 Feb.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: Alexander GENE 19 Dec; 3 INWR 27 Dec; Porter NIAG 28 Dec; max 11 Allegheny Res CATT 1 Jan (MD, TL); Ripley CHAU 25 Jan; DH 25 Jan; Westfield CHAU 2 Feb; 8 Strawberry I NR Feb; 4 Grand I ERIE 18 Feb; 2 Lewiston NIAG 22 Feb; increasingly common.

N. Harrier: max 23 Porter NIAG 28 Dec (MM), together in one field at dawn.

N. Goshawk: Beaver Meadow CBC 20 Dec; St Bonaventure CBC 21 Dec; only reports.

Red-shouldered Hawk: Gerry CHAU 4 Dec; Westfield CHAU 9 Dec; Ellicott CHAU 9, 17 Dec & 25 Jan (LD); Beaver Meadow CBC 20 Dec; 2 Jamestown CHAU 31 Jan (JB); unusual in winter.

Rough-legged Hawk: max 6 Ellington CHAU 15 Feb (LD); well reported thru.

GOLDEN EAGLE: AISP 8 Feb (TB), wintered this location in recent years.

Merlin: max 7 SUNY Buffalo campus ERIE thru season (PY!), traditional winter roost; Somerset NIAG 16 Dec, 1 Feb (BE, WD!); Alabama GENE 1 Jan, 28 Feb (DS! JL!); Alexander GENE 18 Jan (KF).

Peregrine Falcon: BuSP 10 Dec (WW!); Porter NIAG 13 Dec (WD!); 1-2 Buffalo ERIE thru (BBu! RA!), near nesting area.

Am. Coot: 10 BuSP 10 Dec; INWR 27 Dec; 7 Buffalo Harbor 1 Jan; max 49 DH 28 Jan.

Killdeer: last Beaver Meadow CBC 20 Dec; arr Hamburg ERIE, Belmont ALLE 29 Feb.

WILLET: Bird I Pier NR 9 Dec-3 Jan (PY! WD!); first winter record.

Purple Sandpiper: 3 Bird I Pier NR 15 Dec; 3 NF 26 Dec (WD); only reports.

LAUGHING GULL: N Tonawanda NIAG 21 Dec (NS!); in a mall parking lot Amherst ERIE 11 Jan (DS!); possibly same bird; unusual in any season.

Little Gull: max 3 NR Dec; fewer reports than usual.

BLACK-HEADED GULL: Lewiston NR

13 Dec, 8 Jan (WD! GB!); annual in recent winters.

Bonaparte's Gull: max 12,100 NR 7 Dec (GB); Bellerby commented that the large number of gulls arrived on NR about two weeks late and spent less time in Reg than usual.

MEW GULL: NPP 13, 16 Dec (WD! MH, NYSARC), first found at NF Ontario on 6 Dec; 4th Reg record; very rare.

CALIFORNIA GULL: 1-2 ad NPP 6 Dec-12 Jan (WD! GB, NYSARC), continued from fall.

Thayer's Gull: several undocumented reports along NR as usual.

Iceland Gull: typical number of reports along NR thru; Porter NIAG 28 Dec; FNSP 17 Jan; LBSP 22 Feb.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Grand I NR 6 Dec; BeSP 22 Feb; only reports away from NF and NPP.

Glaucous Gull: DH 17-25 Jan; Porter NIAG 17 Jan; FNSP 15 Feb; only reports away from NF and NPP.

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Snowy Owl: Buffalo Harbor 14 Dec (CR); NF Airport NIAG 3, 17 Jan, 1 Feb (WD, PY, S&TO); only reports.

Long-eared Owl: 5 INWR 28 Dec, 2 INWR 11 Jan (CR); only reports.

Short-eared Owl: 3 Carlton ORLE 2, 16 Dec; 8 Shelby ORLE 12, 27 Dec; 2 Clarence ERIE 18 Dec; 3 Beaver Meadow CBC 20 Dec; max 15 Porter NIAG 28 Dec (AG), up to 9 routinely observed this location thru; NF Airport NIAG 17 Jan; 2 Somerset NIAG 12 Feb.

N. Saw-whet Owl: Grand I ERIE 21 Dec; 2 Oak Orchard CBC 27 Dec; WTSP 27 Dec (CR); max 3 INWR 18 Feb (CR); Cambria NIAG 23 Feb; Lewiston NIAG 23 Feb; Porter NIAG 29 Feb; Bennington WYOM 29 Feb (KF).

Red-headed Woodpecker: Hamburg CBC 4 Jan, only report.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: Bennington WYOM 4 Jan (GS), unusual in winter.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: well reported thru; max 22 Carlton ORLE to Somerset NIAG 17 Feb all day methodical search of roads in 3 towns on L Ontario Plain (DT!); state maximum count.

Com. Raven: Sardinia ERIE 26 Feb (JL!); only report outside of CATT or ALLE.

Horned Lark: max 175 Yates ORLE 19 Jan.

Carolina Wren: moderate number of reports.

Winter Wren: Tift NP 9 Dec, only report.

E. Bluebird: typical number of reports.

TOWNSEND'S SOLITAIRE: Grand I ERIE 6-7 Dec (S&TO!); 2nd Reg report.

Hermit Thrush: 7 Porter NIAG 28 Dec, good count.

Gray Catbird: 2 Tift NP 10 Dec; 1 Tift NP 2 Jan (RA, WW); unusual in winter.

BOHEMIAN WAXWING: 2 GHSP 10-11 Jan (WD!, WW!); max 11 Somerset NIAG 17 Feb (DT), latest winter report ever.

WARBLERS

Yellow-rumped Warbler: 2 Porter NIAG 28 Dec; 3 Lewiston NIAG 29 Feb; only reports.

Com. Yellowthroat: INWR 30 Dec (BK!); very rare in winter.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

E. Towhee: Dunkirk CHAU 1 Feb (FR); Somerset NIAG 18 Feb; unusual in winter.

Chipping Sparrow: Pomfret CHAU 2 Dec (TM); Alexander GENE 19 Dec (KF); Scio CBC 20 Dec; unusual in winter.

Field Sparrow: 2 Scio CBC 20 Dec; 2 Oak Orchard CBC 27 Dec; unusual in winter.

Savannah Sparrow: Carlton ORLE 4 Dec (DT); rare in winter.

Swamp Sparrow: 2 Tift NP 9 Dec; Beaver Meadow CBC 20 Dec; 22 Oak

Orchard CBC 27 Dec.

White-crowned Sparrow: max 23 Porter NIAG 28 Dec (WD); 2 Dunkirk CBC 1 Jan; JDSP 18 Jan.

Lapland Longspur: 2, 10 Porter NIAG 28 Dec, 18 Jan; 16 Yates ORLE 17 Jan; max 25 Yates ORLE 1 Feb (WD); 2 Newstead ERIE 9 Feb; 8 Shelby ORLE 9 Feb.

Snow Bunting: 37 Times Beach NP 14 Dec; 288 Porter NIAG 28 Dec (MM); 17 Farmersville CATT 18 Jan; 65 Yates ORLE 19 Jan; 250 Pomfret CHAU 8 Feb; max 700 Somerset NIAG 12 Feb (DT); 40 Lyndon CATT 15 Feb.

Red-winged Blackbird: 40 Porter NIAG 28 Dec (MM); 122 Hamburg CBC 4 Jan, good winter count; Bethany GENE 26 Jan; arr Clarence ERIE 16 Feb.

Com. Grackle: 18 Scio CBC 20 Dec; Dunkirk CBC 1 Jan; SPNS 4 Jan; arr Somerset NIAG 23 Feb.

Brown-headed Cowbird: 20 Tonawanda ERIE 22 Dec; arr Clarence ERIE 16 Feb.

Pine Grosbeak: 5 Colden ERIE 4 Jan (MB), only report.

Purple Finch: low numbers on CBCs and elsewhere.

Red Crossbill: Porter NIAG 28 Dec (KF), only report.

White-winged Crossbill: FMCSP 13 Dec (S&TO), only report.

Com. Redpoll: max 115 Porter NIAG 28 Dec; 30 Bennington WYOM 1-29 Feb; widely reported.

HOARY REDPOLL: Youngstown NIAG 31 Jan (LL!), very rare.

Pine Siskin: 2 AISP 11 Jan; max 10 Colden ERIE 22 Feb; 4 Bennington WYOM 22-24 Feb; Conewango CATT 23 Feb; Orchard Park ERIE 28 Feb; 2 Napoli CATT 29 Feb.

Evening Grosbeak: 5 Scio CBC 20 Dec; Hamburg CBC 4 Jan; 5-7 Alma ALLE 1 Jan -29 Feb; Angelica ALLE 30-31 Jan; only reports.