

REGION 2 – GENESEE

Kevin C. Griffith

61 Grandview Lane, Rochester NY 14612

ckgrif@frontiernet.net

It was a winter of contrasts. Early December brought a hint of winter with cold temperatures and snow. Unfortunately, the heaviest snowfall occurred on the 14th, the day of the Silver Lake CBC. Deep snow cover persisted through the Rochester CBC the next weekend, followed by warming temperatures and the disappearance of the bulk of the snow. The average temperature for the month was 2.9° above normal at 32.3°F. Precipitation was slightly below normal, - 0.31", at a total of 2.42". Snowfall totaled 27.2", which was 5.3" above normal. January was a monster. After a warm start, with a record 61° on the 3rd, things changed drastically. The temperature didn't top the freezing mark until the end of the month. The average was 17.2°, for the coldest in 10 years and the ninth coldest in the last 100 years. A record 61.3" of snow fell, with some lake areas recording over 80" due to persistent lake effect. Precipitation totaled 2.81", only 0.47" above normal, but the snowfall was 35.5" above normal. February was best described as tranquil and brought a bit of respite to the harsh winter. The average temperature was 0.3° below normal at 33.5°, but it was very dry with 0.72" of precipitation. That was 1.32" below normal. Snowfall was less than half the norm at 10.3".

The varied conditions often dictated the where and how to bird for local birders. The Christmas Bird Counts certainly were impacted by the changing weather. The Silver Lake and Rochester counts were hampered by deep snows, even when it wasn't snowing. The Little Lakes Count, on the other hand, experienced pleasant conditions. Open water was relatively scarce away from the lakeshore. Lakeshore birding was often hampered by the persistent lake effect snow. February brought considerably better conditions and renewed birding opportunities. Regardless of the total impact, it was still a season with interesting and exciting reports. The lack of a Big January effort, the closing of part of the Hamlin Beach State Park roadway and, of course, the inclement weather were all factors that contributed to low numbers of reports. Yet diligent birding by some produced some excellent results.

Canada Geese remained rather common as did, unfortunately, Mute Swans. Trumpeter Swans were once again reported, with two wing-tagged birds that were spotted the last two years again frequenting the south end of Irondequoit Bay. On the low side were Green-winged Teal, Canvasback and scaup. Common Goldeneye and Red-breasted Merganser were about average. Some observers also commented on the abundance of White-winged Scoters; pockets could be located frequently along the shore of Lake Ontario with totals higher than usual. When the ice pack piled against the shoreline, they were found in any open water along the shore. Immature male King Eiders were reported at the mouth of the Genesee in January and February for a seasonal highlight. It certainly seems like Tufted Duck is being more consistently reported in the state, and the same holds true for

Region 2. A very cooperative male was discovered by Mike Tetlow at Sodus Bay on 11 January and was observed through the middle of February at that location. A very healthy total of 107 Wild Turkeys was reported from the Town of Huron in January. Red-throated Loon and Red-necked Grebe numbers were a bit above average while Horned Grebe reports were near average. The usual couple of late Double-crested Cormorants disappeared quickly in January. Great Blue Herons were limited to a few individuals. An adult Black-crowned Night-Heron was discovered in January at Powder Mill Park. Typical winter records here are of adults. Turkey Vultures were reported from the usual Letchworth State Park location, with scattered reports of singles elsewhere around the Region.

The usual Bald Eagle sightings were reported as the wintering numbers continue to be steady. Eight Northern Harriers in the Nations Road area in January was a good count. It was a banner winter for Cooper's Hawk, with 42 sightings in January alone by David Tetlow. Northern Goshawks were reported from three separate locations in January. Of special interest were the two Red-shouldered Hawks seen in Rattlesnake Hill WMA in January. This is a species seldom reported in winter. Rough-legged Hawks were good early but dropped off during January. Merlins continued the recent trend of winter sightings. A most interesting find was the adult female **GYRFALCON** discovered at Sodus Bay in February by Mike Tetlow. Research into its origin, determined by a USFWS band on its leg, indicated that it was a recovered and released bird. Many observers managed to enjoy its presence in that area to the end of the season. At least one of the Rochester Peregrine Falcons was observed from time to time throughout the season. Two observers had the fortunate experience of seeing American Kestrel, Merlin and Peregrine Falcon all in the same day, an unusual winter occurrence here. Virginia Rail was reported from the traditional Mendon Ponds location, but Sora went unreported this winter. This season's shorebird total was zero, a far cry from last winter's five species in one day. Gulls for the most part were very good, with Thayer's Gull a highlight. Herring Gull numbers were good and Lesser Black-backed Gull continued the trend of multiple sightings. Iceland and Glaucous gulls were reported regularly, but were not entirely predictable as to location. Little Gulls were unreported and Bonaparte's Gulls left the area quite early. A Black-legged Kittiwake found by Bill Symonds in January was an unexpected surprise.

A **Barn Owl** in the Livonia area was a very good find. Snowy Owls were found in a few locations, but moved out rather quickly. An immature bird seen in the Braddock Bay area for six consecutive days was the only "long-term" sighting. Long-eared and Northern Saw-whet owls were both reported. The Short-eared Owl maximum was a respectable 17 birds in the Nations Road area on 18 January. A single individual represented Yellow-bellied Sapsucker this winter.

Jim Kimball saw the ***Tyrannus flycatcher hybrid*** that was first discovered in Livingston County in November on 2 December for the last sighting of this most interesting bird. Northern Shrike numbers fluctuated throughout the season, but Dave Tetlow counted an unprecedented 22 individuals along the West Lakeshore in Region 2 on 26 February, matching the total he had turned up a few days prior

in Region 1 just to the west. Common Raven was reported from the hilly southern portion of Livingston County in February. This area continues to produce consistent sightings. Carolina and Winter wren numbers were good. Both species were very consistent in suitable habitat. Hermit Thrush was found in four locations. Gray Catbird was found in all three months of the season. There was one Brown Thrasher report in January and one in February. The only American Pipit report came from the Town of Leicester in early December. It was a very poor winter for Cedar Waxwings, yet there was a single **Bohemian Waxwing** found with Cedars in Durand Eastman Park on 8 February. This single report was surprising, based on the reports of an influx in the Northeast. Yellow-rumped Warblers were found in lower numbers than recent peak counts in the Caledonia area. There were two Common Yellowthroat reports.

A female Eastern Towhee lingered in Durand Eastman Park into January. American Tree Sparrow numbers were good. A lone Savannah Sparrow report continued the trend of recent winters. A "Slate-colored" Fox Sparrow was carefully studied by Bob and Sue Spahn in Hamlin Beach State Park. White-throated Sparrow numbers were generally low. White-crowned Sparrow started the season in very high numbers but dropped off as the season progressed. The male Indigo Bunting found near Leicester in November continued visiting a feeder for three days into December. Up to seven Rusty Blackbirds were seen in the Town of Leicester for most of January. The only Common Grackle report was of a single bird in Greece on 15 January.

The winter finches were sparse for the most part. December saw a Pine Grosbeak report, four separate **Hoary Redpoll** sightings and three Evening Grosbeaks. Common Redpoll numbers fluctuated, with decent counts earlier in the season and a drop in numbers as the season progressed. The Hoary Redpolls reported in December were found with flocks of Commons.

December's total of 117 species was higher than last year but below the ten-year average. The year 2003 ended with a species total of 279, which was again below the ten-year average. January's total was just slightly below the ten-year average at 119 species. February's 101 species, with five new for the year, brought the 2004 total to 124 species.

CONTRIBUTORS

Jack & Joan Barlett, Jessie Barry, Jim Barry, Douglass Bassett, John Boettcher, Brad Carlson, Carolyn Cass, Jerry Czech, Steve Daniel, Doug Daniels, Mike Davids, Brett Ewald, Jon & Sandy Dombrowski, Colleen Dox-Griffith, Lucretia Grosshans, John Foster, Jeannine & Kurt Fox, Kevin Griffith, Georgia & Ralph Guenther, Carmin Gumina, Helen Haller, Greg Hartenstein, Diane Henderson, Jim Kimball, Pat Kocinski, John Lehr, Gerry Leubner, Cindy Marino, Robert & Sandy Maucelli, Chita & Robert McKinney, Frank Mitchell, Richard O'Hara, John Olsen, Peter Olsen, Phil Opdycke, Tom Painting, Marie Pellet, Norma Platt, Betty & Bill Powell, Ed Scheidlower, Dominic Sherony, David Smith, Doug

Smith, Tom Smith, Cathy Spahn, Robert & Susan Spahn, Jeff Spindler, Paul Spindler, Diana Stout, David, Grace & Allan Strong, William Symonds, Joyce Testa, David Tetlow, Kathy Tetlow, Michael Tetlow, Bill Thompson, Don & Donna Traver, Bruce Zollner.

ABBREVIATIONS

B – T Brighton MONR; BB – Braddock Bay MONR; CH – Charlotte MONR; DE – Durand-Eastman P MONR; G – T Greece MONR; HB – Hamlin Beach SP MONR; HO – Honeoye L area LIVI; HP- Hogan Pt, T Greece MONR; IB – Irondequoit Bay MONR; L – T Leicester LIVI; LLCBC – Little Lakes CBC; NR – Nations Rd, Avon LIVI; P – T Perinton MONR; PI – T Pittsford MONR; RCBC – Rochester CBC; RH – Rattlesnake Hill WMA LIVI; SA – T Savannah WAYN; SB – Sodus Bay WAYN; W – Webster MONR; WL – West Lakeshore MONR/ORLE.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Snow Goose: max 2300 SA 3 Jan.

Canada Goose: max 30,000 SA Jan.

Canada x Greater White-fronted Goose: 1 SA 3 Jan (DT, MD).

Mute Swan: 266 RCBC 21 Dec, record high for count.

Tundra Swan: max 300 SA 3 Jan.

Trumpeter Swan: 2 IB 10-11 Jan, wing tags 459 & 460 back for 3rd year.

Wood Duck: Bear Creek WAYN 11-31 Jan; Caledonia 17 Jan.

Gadwall: max 72 IB 9 Dec.

Am. Wigeon: max 30 Ellison P North MONR, 21 Dec.

N. Shoveler: arr 1 G 28 Feb.

N. Pintail: max 30 Conesus L LIVI 27 Dec.

Ring-necked Duck: 72 LLCBC 27 Dec.

TUFTED DUCK: m SB 11-31 Jan (MT, mob); 4th Reg record.

King Eider: f G 21 Dec (WS); imm m HB 31 Dec (WS); 2 imm m CH 25 Jan (BE); imm m CH 26 Jan-16 Feb (mob), one of the 31 Dec birds.

Black Scoter: max 4 SB 1 Jan.

Com. Goldeneye: max 100 SB 18 Jan.

Wild Turkey: max 107 T Huron WAYN 11 Jan.

Red-throated Loon: max 21 G (RCBC)

21 Dec, record high for count.

Red-necked Grebe: max 17 HB 9 Dec.

Double-crested Cormorant: G 1-2 Jan; IB 11 Jan.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: ad Powder Mill P MONR 1-29 Feb (mob).

Turkey Vulture: NR 1 Jan; max 17 Letchworth SP 25 Jan.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

N. Harrier: max 8 NR 4 Jan.

Cooper's Hawk: 42 total many locations Jan (DT); big total for a single observer for a month, reflecting high numbers present.

N. Goshawk: imm m W 10 Dec (JC); RCBC 21 Dec; Manitou MONR 13 Jan; imm f HP 16 Jan; Avon 21 Jan.

Red-shouldered Hawk: 2 RH 21 Jan (DT).

Merlin: G 21 Dec; Seneca P Rochester 21 Dec; IB 26 Dec; Bergen GENE 18 Jan.

GYRFALCON: ad f SB 20-29 Feb (MT, mob); captive that was previously retrieved, checked out, banded and released.

Peregrine Falcon: RCBC 21 Dec; ad f B 18 Jan; downtown Rochester all Jan.

Virginia Rail: Mendon Ponds P 1-31 Jan.

Killdeer: arr Hamlin 29 Feb.

THAYER'S GULL: P 9 Jan (MT); 1st winter IB 30 Jan (RS); 1st winter P 10 Feb (RS).

Herring Gull: max 11,000 P 29 Dec, 8 Jan (MT).

Iceland Gull: max 6 P 8 & 26 Jan (MT).

Lesser Black-backed Gull: 2nd yr P sev Jan (MT); ad P sev Jan (MT); ad G 11 Jan (KG); ad SB 18 Jan (R&SS).

Glaucous Gull: max 3 P 26 Jan.

Black-legged Kittiwake: imm HB 4 Jan (WS, RS, DT).

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Barn Owl: Livonia LIVI 27-31 Dec (J&PD, PK).

Snowy Owl: BB 17-22 Dec; CH 21-22 Dec (LG, JO); B 30 Jan (BC).

Long-eared Owl: NR 7 Dec (C&RMc), only report.

Short-eared Owl: max 17 NR 18 Jan.

N. Saw-whet Owl: WAYN 7 Dec (DD); HO 27 Dec (RS).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: RH 21 Jan, only report.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

Tyrannus flycatcher hybrid: L thru 2 Dec (JK).

N. Shrike: 22 WL 26 Feb (DT).

Com. Raven: 2 Dalton LIVI 21 Feb (KG, CD-G), only report.

Horned Lark: max 900 Byron GENE; good total.

Carolina Wren: max 3 Pittsford all Jan (R&SM).

Brown Thrasher: HB 1 Dec.

Gray Catbird: Penfield 9 Dec; Caledonia 17 Jan; 1 dead W 18 Jan; Manitou 29 Jan; Hamlin 2 Feb.

Am. Pipit: last L 2 Dec.

Bohemian Waxwing: DE 8 Feb (RS).

WARBLERS

Com. Yellowthroat: Conesus L 1 Jan; 1 DE 1-2 Jan.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

E. Towhee: f DE 1 Dec-2 Jan.

Savannah Sparrow: Groveland 1 Jan (DT, JeB).

“SLATE-COLORED” FOX SPARROW: HB 7-8 (R&SS, NYSARC); 2nd state report for this form.

Song Sparrow: max 25 Hilton 21 Dec.

White-throated Sparrow: max 50 P 12-31 Jan.

White-crowned Sparrow: max 100+ Avon area LIVI 12 & 21 Jan.

Indigo Bunting: m L 1-3 Dec, very late.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 71 P 29 Dec.

Hoary Redpoll: DE 13 Dec (R&SS, NYSARC); HB 17 Dec (RS, NYSARC); Manitou MONR 27 Dec (RO); HO 27 Dec (RS, NYSARC).

Evening Grosbeak: 3 Canadice LIVI 27 Dec, only report.

