

REGION 3 – FINGER LAKES REGION

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Overall, the winter was colder and snowier than normal. December was 1.8°F warmer than normal, but January was 6.8° colder and February was 2° colder than normal. December, with 28.3" of snowfall in Ithaca, was twice as snowy as normal. January snowfall was 4.6" more than normal. February had 3.8" less snowfall than normal. Snow covered the ground on all but 14 days.

The season featured several rarities and lingering migrants. Rare for the season waterfowl were Ross's Goose, Brant and Barrow's Goldeneye, all in the Cayuga Lake Basin. Several species showed significant changes in numbers since the previous winter, but only Common Goldeneye and Common Merganser increased for the second consecutive year.

Other rare waterbirds included **Pacific Loon**, Eared Grebe and Northern Gannet. Pete Hosner provided good details of the one good look that the Pacific Loon afforded before it quickly moved to the center of Cayuga Lake. His poor digiscoped photograph was perhaps not conclusive, but was not at all inconsistent with the identification. The Eared Grebe returned once again to the waters of Cayuga Lake's Aurora Bay, where it remained through the end of the season. Tim Lenz was the only one fortunate enough to see the Northern Gannet pass by Stewart Park in Ithaca in early December.

A Peregrine Falcon roosting at Cornell University through the winter was the biggest raptor news. Large numbers of Red-tailed Hawks again gathered at the Ithaca Game Farm; one photograph showed the amazing phenomenon of 20 sitting together on the same fence. Regionwide, the numbers of both Red-tailed and Rough-legged hawks were up from last year.

There was nothing particularly remarkable among this winter's gull species. The presence of four Glaucous Gulls in Geneva, however, was the most at a single site in at least ten years. The only shorebird this winter season was a migrating Killdeer that would have missed this report if this were not a leap year.

In spite of West Nile Virus, American Crow and Common Raven numbers were both up this year. Blue Jay numbers, which tend to vary a great deal from winter to winter anyway, were down. Among the small woodland birds, only Black-capped Chickadee increased. This was the second consecutive increase for the species' winter numbers.

Dave, Matt and Mark Russell had a great father-sons day helping with the Watkins Glen Christmas Bird Count. They found a Bald Eagle, two Marsh Wrens, a Gray Catbird and a Brown Thrasher, even though they had a late start. They had had to return to Horseheads to get Mark's forgotten coat. On return to Horseheads for the coat, they discovered and photographed a Peregrine Falcon.

Just single Bohemian Waxwings, one in December and one in February, were reported. Cedar Waxwing numbers were down for the second straight year. A **Yellow-throated Warbler** seemed very out of place sitting in a Cliff Swallow's

old nest near the top of one of the tallest buildings in downtown Elmira in early December.

The Dickcissel that appeared at a home in Enfield in mid-November lingered there until 7 December. Eastern Towhees appeared in the neighboring towns of Ulysses, Tompkins County, and Covert, Seneca County. As one might guess, considering the persistent snow cover, it was a good winter for finding Snow Buntings. Their numbers were up for the second consecutive year.

Steve Kelling found the only Pine Grosbeak of the season, and Evening Grosbeaks appeared at a few feeders in the Region. Redpolls were the big news, however. Good-sized flocks of Common Redpolls appeared at many feeders in the counties bordering the Finger Lakes, though they were scarce in the Southern Tier counties. Feeder watchers recorded Hoary Redpolls at a remarkable seven locations. For the second consecutive winter, American Goldfinch numbers were up.

Overall, 96 species showed no significant change since the previous winter. Twenty-three species increased significantly. Eighteen species declined significantly.

The following species listing includes comparisons of observed bird populations in the Region between winter 2002-03 and winter 2003-04. A "+" at the end of the species account indicates an increase; a "-" indicates a decrease. Accounts with neither symbol indicate that the species did not demonstrate a significant change in reported numbers. 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 that appeared in the December 1999 issue of *The Kingbird*.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

AurB – Aurora Bay CAYU; CLB – Cayuga L Basin; ECBC – Elmira CBC; GCBC – Geneva CBC; GCC – Geneva Chamber of Commerce; ICBC – Ithaca CBC; KeuL – Keuka L; MCBC – Montezuma CBC; MyPt – Myers Pt TOMP; StP – Stewart P TOMP; WCBC – Watkins Glen CBC.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Snow Goose: Ithaca 6 Dec; max 6000 Montezuma NWR 3 Jan (J&K&PMc), high; 2 Genoa 28 Feb, +.
ROSS'S GOOSE: AurB 14 Dec (J&KMc).
Canada Goose: 37,093 MCBC 1 Jan, +.
BRANT: last 2 StP 2 Dec (GK).
Tundra Swan: 15 StP 2 Dec; 724 MCBC 1 Jan; MyPt 18 Feb, +.
Trumpeter Swan: MyPt 11 Jan-15 Feb; max 3 Mill Pd CAYU 26 Jan.
Am. Black Duck: max 1045 CLB 17 Jan, -.
Mallard: max 2343 CLB 17 Jan, -.
Canvasback: max 800 AurB 8 Feb, -.
Redhead: max 19,000 AurB 8 Feb (MDr, PHo, TL, MiS), high, -.
Ring-necked Duck: max 205 KeuL 17 Jan (EBS), high, +.
Lesser Scaup: max 351 CLB 17 Jan (CaBC), high, +.
Black Scoter: KeuL 17 Jan; Sampson SP 15 Feb.

Surf Scoter: GCC 7 Feb (GC), only report.

White-winged Scoter: AurB 19 Dec; max 6 Sampson SP 15 Feb, -.

Long-tailed Duck: max 11 Lodi Pt Marine SP 15 Feb.

Com. Goldeneye: max 969 CLB 17 Jan, +.

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE: MyPt 25 Jan thru (MDe); max 2 Taughannock Falls SP 28 Jan (JA).

Com. Merganser: max 255 CLB 17 Jan, +.

Ruddy Duck: max 5 Hog Hole TOMP 8 Dec; Canandaigua City Pier ONTA 30 Dec.

Wild Turkey: 126 ICBC 1 Jan, -.

Red-throated Loon: MyPt 8-22 Feb.

PACIFIC LOON: MyPt 8 Feb (MDr, PHo, ph!, AMJ, TL, MiS).

Red-necked Grebe: KeuL 17 Jan; max 22 Seneca L 13 Feb; 4 Long Pt SP 28 Feb.

EARED GREBE: AurB 1 Jan thru (BTr!).

N. GANNET: StP 4 Dec (TL!).
Turkey Vulture: max 4 Varna 21 Feb, +.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: max 9 MCBC 1 Jan.
Sharp-shinned Hawk: max 4 ICBC 1 Jan, low.
Red-tailed Hawk: max 172 ICBC 1 Jan (CaBC), high, +.
Rough-legged Hawk: max 17 ECBC 1 Jan, +.
Am. Kestrel: max 8 WCBC 27 Dec.
Merlin: max 2 ECBC 1 Jan (CVAS), high.
Peregrine Falcon: Cornell U thru; MyPt 21 Feb.
Am. Coot: max 398 CLB 17 Jan.
Killdeer: arr & max Dryden 29 Feb (COC, SH), only report.
Bonaparte's Gull: StP 5 Jan (JE), only report, -.
Ring-billed Gull: max 2591 GCBC 1 Jan, +.
Herring Gull: max 717 MCBC 1 Jan, -.
Iceland Gull: max 6 GCC 12 Feb.
Lesser Black-backed Gull: max 3 T Seneca 28 Dec.
Glaucous Gull: max 4 GCC 7 Feb (GC), high.
Great Black-backed Gull: max 220 Seneca L SP 24 Jan, -.

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Mourning Dove: max 343 WCBC 27 Dec, low, -.
Snowy Owl: Phelps 27 Dec (B&DP!), only report.
Barred Owl: max 2 ICBC 1 Jan (CaBC), only report.
Short-eared Owl: max 3 Milo 23 Feb, low.
N. Saw-whet Owl: Danby 1 Dec-12 Jan.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: max 2 ICBC 1 Jan.
Blue Jay: max 350 ICBC 1 Jan, -.
Am. Crow: max 30,000 Auburn 10 Jan, +.

Fish Crow: max 13 Riverfront P CHEM 20 Jan (BO), high.

Com. Raven: max 39 ECBC 1 Jan (CVAS), high, +.

Horned Lark: max 600 Genoa 15 Dec (TL, MM), high.

Black-capped Chickadee: max 2350 ICBC 1 Jan, +.

Tufted Titmouse: max 241 ICBC 1 Jan.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: max 71 ICBC 1 Jan, +.

Winter Wren: Sapsucker Woods TOMP 31 Dec (KR); max 2 ICBC 1 Jan.

MARSH WREN: max 2 WCBC 27 Dec (SCBC).

Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 66 ICBC 1 Jan.

E. Bluebird: max 37 ICBC 1 Jan, -.

Hermit Thrush: Sapsucker Woods TOMP 14 Jan-19 Feb.

Am. Robin: max 177 MCBC 1 Jan, -.

GRAY CATBIRD: Corning CBC 20 Dec; WCBC 27 Dec.

BROWN THRASHER: WCBC 27 Dec.

European Starling: max 4507 GCBC 1 Jan, -.

Am. Pipit: MyPt 28 Feb (eB); arr & max 9 Dryden 29 Feb (MAn, COC, BW).

BOHEMIAN WAXWING: SSF 20 Dec (KR, JW); Lansing 22 Feb (MH).

Cedar Waxwing: max 354 ICBC 1 Jan, -.

WARBLERS

Yellow-rumped Warbler: max 2 AurB N Bluffs 18 Jan.

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER: Riverfront P CHEM 3-6 Dec (BO, MPo, ph).

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

E. TOWHEE: Ulysses 13 Dec (BTh); Covert 26 Feb (BMcA).

Am. Tree Sparrow: max 453 ICBC 1 Jan, -.

CHIPPING SPARROW: ICBC 1 Jan (CaBC); Ithaca 31 Jan (ML).

Field Sparrow: ECBC 1 Jan, only report.

White-crowned Sparrow: 2 Romulus 7-21 Jan; max 7 GCBC 1 Jan, +.

Lapland Longspur: max 4 Ovid 12 Jan.

Snow Bunting: max 700 Ledyard 21 Dec, +.

N. Cardinal: max 293 ICBC 1 Jan, -.

DICKCISSEL: Enfield 3-7 Dec (CM, LW).

Red-winged Blackbird: max 25 Ithaca Game Farm TOMP 29 Feb.

Rusty Blackbird: max 2 Clock property 11 Jan; Fast property 11 Feb.

Com. Grackle: Mill Pd CAYU 31 Dec (J&KMc), only report.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 2000 Hector 5 Dec (EG), high, +.

PINE GROSBEAK: Caroline 1 Feb (SK, ph).

House Finch: max 252 ICBC 1 Jan, low.

Red Crossbill: Summerhill 20 Dec (fide MY), only report.

White-winged Crossbill: SSF 1 Jan; max 3 Dryden 15 Jan.

Com. Redpoll: max 103 ICBC 1 Jan, +.

HOARY REDPOLL: Caroline 14 Dec (AM&TJ, ph!); Dryden 21 Feb (NM).

Pine Siskin: max 20 Summerhill 9 Dec, +.

Am. Goldfinch: max 547 ICBC 1 Jan, +.

Evening Grosbeak: 13 Caroline 2 Dec; max 62 Summerhill 6 Jan; 2 SSF 28 Feb, +.

House Sparrow: max 691 ICBC 1 Jan, +.