

REGION 5 – ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

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The December average temperature was 30.0°F, 1.4° above normal, with 3.01" of precipitation, 0.1" below normal. There was 48.5" of snow, with a maximum depth of 19" on the ground, possibly enough to drive out half-hardies, although milder weather at the end of the month left little snow on the ground. Many area lakes and ponds were frozen by 15 December and Oneida Lake was mostly frozen by 23 December except the area near Bridgeport, which didn't freeze until 8 January. The average temperature for January was 14.7°, 8.0° below average, which made it the second coldest January on record. There was 1.86" of precipitation, 0.74" below normal, and it all fell as snow, which totaled 78.1", the most ever for the month. Oswego County received 115-160" of snow for the month, with four feet from 29-31 January over most of the county and a maximum of seven feet in some areas. In February the snow let up with 19.4" and the temperature averaged 23.5°, 1.0° below normal, with 1.12" of precipitation, 1.0" below normal.

Waterfowl numbers were generally low for the season as the rapid freeze-up forced many birds to leave. Moderating conditions toward the end of February opened Little Sodus Bay slightly and some early migrants appeared there. An immature male Tufted Duck with some traces of gray on the flanks and a tuft that extended about halfway down the nape was found in Oswego Harbor in December. What was thought to be the same duck, in bright adult plumage but with a similar length tuft, was seen at Fair Haven when Little Sodus Bay began to open up in late February. [RREd.: Region 2 birders thought the Fairhaven bird was likely an adult male seen at Sodus Point from 11 January to 17 February.] Possibly spurred by a mild spell, Snow Geese were seen flying north to Lake Ontario in early January just before the harsh weather set in. A family of Trumpeter Swans were at Fair Haven in December, and what may be our first wing-tagged Trumpeter was at Baldwinsville. Green-winged Teal, Common Loon and Horned Grebe numbers quickly declined after 1 January.

Turkey Vulture numbers seemed to increase in eastern Onondaga County despite the hard winter, and one over Stillwater Reservoir in January was a surprise. Early in the season the low numbers of species such as Northern Harrier, Rough-legged Hawk and Short-eared Owl were probably due to a crash in rodent population, while later the raptors most affected by the deep snow were Red-tailed Hawk and American Kestrel. The deep snow may have been responsible for Long-eared Owls seen in daylight in February as they looked for prey. Northern Goshawk and Red-shouldered Hawk reports were up. There was a single Golden Eagle. Merlins at several sites suggested increased wintering, although the Syracuse birds seem to have changed their roost site away from Onondaga Park. Several Peregrine Falcons seen in urban areas may be birds prospecting for new nesting sites. No Snowy or Short-eared owls were reported this season.

Early December is usually the end of shorebird season in this part of the state, so this was the first time that Purple Sandpiper, Dunlin and Red Phalarope were reported in the same winter season. Gull numbers were very low in January, usually a good month for them along the Oswego River, but they returned to more normal levels in February. Bonaparte's Gull was an exception, with a record winter count on 7 January as Great Lakes lingerers moved south with the onset of harsh weather. Iceland and Glaucous gull numbers were very low this year. A gull with gray in the wing tips but otherwise suggesting a first winter Glaucous may have been the result of a first generation "Nelson's" (Herring x Glaucous hybrid) mating with a Glaucous.

Gene Huggins did point counts of American Crows flying to roost at several locations in Syracuse and the numbers were down from the previous year as was the Syracuse CBC total. Half-hardies such as Winter Wren, Hermit Thrush, Gray Catbird, Rusty Blackbird, Red-winged Blackbird and Common Grackle were reported through December and the first few days of January. Red-breasted Nuthatch was seen at many feeders away from breeding areas, but at the same time they were also easy enough to find at higher elevation breeding sites. There were only scattered sightings of Bohemian Waxwing for most of the season; it wasn't until mid-February that large numbers were found in southern Madison and Oneida counties. The sparrow variety was good, with most of the typical half-hardy species represented, but only one Swamp Sparrow was reported later than 17 January. There were good numbers of Common Redpolls, but not as large as most big invasion years, and there were several well-described Hoary Redpolls. American Goldfinches wintered in large numbers in many areas, while Pine Siskin was seen in small numbers and Purple Finch was very scattered. No Pine Grosbeaks and neither crossbill species were found this year.

For the season, a total of 125 species was reported, very good for a severe winter. Highlights included Tufted Duck, Golden Eagle, Purple Sandpiper, Red Phalarope, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Bohemian Waxwing, Field Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow and Hoary Redpoll.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

Bvlle – Baldwinsville; CM – Clay Marsh; DeR – DeRuyter; DH – Derby Hill; FH – Fair Haven, Little Sodus Bay and vicinity; Geo – Georgetown; OnonL – Onondaga L.; SFNS – Spring Farm Nature Sanctuary, Kirkland; SSSP – Selkirk Shores SP; Syr – Syracuse; TRWMA – Three Rivers WMA.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Snow Goose: max 700 Sterling 4 Jan, flying north.

Canada Goose: max 5000 FH 10 Jan.

Brant: FH 25 Dec (GD), only report.

Mute Swan: 2 FH to mid Jan freeze-up; Bvllle thru; 2 SVB 27 Dec.

Trumpeter Swan: max 7 FH 7 Dec; Bvllle after 1 Feb, wingtagged.

Tundra Swan: max 41 Bridgeport 3 Jan; last 12 Oswego 9 Jan.

Wood Duck: last 2 Manlius 14 Jan.

Gadwall: max 3 FH 11 Jan; few reports.

Am. Wigeon: last FH 4 Jan.

Am. Black Duck: max 118 Sherrill 10 Jan.

N. Shoveler: 3 FH 4 Dec, only report

N. Pintail: max 3 Oneida L 7 Dec; arr 2 Seneca R 21 Feb.

Green-winged Teal: last 3 Meadowbrook Syr 3 Jan.

Canvasback: 4 singles thru; max 33 FH 29 Feb.

Redhead: max 82 FH 16 Feb.

Ring-necked Duck: max 15 Hatch L 5 Dec.

TUFTED DUCK: imm m Oswego 14-29 Dec (GP, mob); m FH after 22 Feb (KM, mob), thought by some to be the same bird. [Thought by Reg 2 birders to be an ad m at Sodus Pt 11 Jan -17 Feb}, *intro*.

Greater Scaup: max 463 SSSP 10 Dec.

Lesser Scaup: max 8 Oswego 8 Feb.

King Eider: 3 DH 1 Dec, on cold front.

White-winged Scoter: max 20 DH 1 Dec; 17 Oswego 16 Feb, fewest wintering since 2000.

Black Scoter: max 5 DH 1 Dec; none Jan-Feb.

Long-tailed Duck: max 335 DH 1 Dec; 80-100 Oswego thru.

Bufflehead: max 64 Oswego 16 Feb.

Com. Goldeneye: max 1350 FH 29 Feb.

Hooded Merganser: max 15 Delta L 4 Dec.

Com. Merganser: max 1452 OnonL 8 Jan.

Red-breasted Merganser: max 75 DH 1 Dec.

Ruddy Duck: last FH 8 Dec.

Red-throated Loon: singles Oswego & FH 4 Dec, only reports.

Com. Loon: max 11 DH 1 Dec; 1-2 Oswego to 5 Jan; only 2 reports of singles after that.

Pied-billed Grebe: max 2 Bvllle & 2 Fulton 11 Jan.

Horned Grebe: Cazenovia L 5 Dec; max 3 OnonL 20 Dec; last L Ontario 1 Jan, early departure.

Red-necked Grebe: FH 4 Dec; Seneca R 29 Feb.

Double-crested Cormorant: 5 Oswego 11 Jan, low mid winter max.

Great Blue Heron: 2 Bvllle late Feb, survived hard winter; 3 other singles after early Jan.

Turkey Vulture: max 9 Fayetteville 13 Dec, where some wintered; Stillwater Res 17 Jan (TS!), not expected Adks.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: 11 NYS Waterfowl Count 10-11 Jan, new high; max one site 5 SVB 27 Dec, with 1-4 per day large lakes and rivers thru; singles Western 5 Feb & Poland 11 Feb, on deer carcasses.

N. Harrier: last Richland 4 Jan.

N. Goshawk: 6-7 singles, with 1 Geo persistent thru Jan.

Red-shouldered Hawk: Clinton 1 Dec; New Hartford 20 Dec; Durhamville 20 Feb thru; not found most winters.

Red-tailed Hawk: 92 Clinton CBC 20 Dec, new high for count; 9 Sangerfield 27 Dec, reduced to zero 24 Jan.

Rough-legged Hawk: scattered in open areas of southern highlands; not persistent elsewhere, presumed lack of prey and deep snow.

Golden Eagle: Geo 14 Dec (MY).

Am. Kestrel: most departed by mid Jan.

Merlin: Utica 20 Dec; Syr 20 Dec; Cicero 6 Jan; Durhamville 25 Jan-7 Feb; Clinton

22 Feb; continues increase in winter.

Peregrine Falcon: DH 1 Dec; Oswego 4 Dec & 1 Jan; Utica 20 Dec; 2 Syr after 20 Dec; Phoenix 7 Jan.

Am. Coot: max 2 per day Bvllle and Syr; 4 other singles thru.

Killdeer: last 2 Cicero 4 Dec; arr Constantia 18 Feb (BMc), very early for severe winter; next 1 Camillus 29 Feb.

Purple Sandpiper: 1-2 FH 5-7 Dec.

Dunlin: FH 4-5 Dec.

Red Phalarope: FH 4 Dec.

Bonaparte's Gull: max 210 FH (KM); 18 Phoenix 7 Jan (BC); winter record as birds moved on a cold front.

Ring-billed Gull: max 4000 Oswego 28 Feb.

Herring Gull: 285 Oswego R Jan, very low; more normal Feb with 600+ per day Oswego Harbor.

Iceland Gull: max 2 Bvllle 16 Feb; few Jan reports.

Glaucous Gull: max 1 per day, hard to find.

"Nelson's" Gull (Herring x Glaucous): DH 1 Dec, thought to be a result of Glaucous and first generation "Nelson's" mating.

Great Black-backed Gull: 47 Oswego R & Bvllle 18 Jan, very low.

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Long-eared Owl: Feb daytime reports Holland Patent, Bvllle & Camillus, possibly stressed by deep snow.

N. Saw-whet Owl: Oneida CBC 27 Dec (BB).

Belted Kingfisher: max 2 Carpenter's Brook 3 Jan; 1 report after 11 Jan.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: 31 Clinton CBC 20 Dec, very high as range expansion continues eastward.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: Pompey feeder Jan-Feb; W Winfield 27 Feb.

Black-backed Woodpecker: Stillwater Res 17 Jan (TS).

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: 9 Dec reports 10 Jan reports; 3

Feb reports; forced out by snow?

Am. Crow: Huggins noted 20% decline of birds flying to roost in Syr.

Fish Crow: 2-4 Syr & 2 Liverpool thru, usual locations.

Com. Raven: 1-2 per day southern highlands; 2 southbound over SSSP 4 Jan; 1 Verona Beach 8 Feb; 2 calling Scriba 29 Feb.

Horned Lark: max 100 Tully 25 Jan.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: thru in breeding areas.

Carolina Wren: reported throughout usual sites Syr, Utica areas, 2 Fulton; possibly building some winter hardiness?

Winter Wren: SFNS & Dewitt 20 Dec.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 6 Bvllle 29 Dec; 4 Nine Mile Creek 3 Jan; only 2 reports after 3 Jan.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: Fulton 2 Jan (AVN).

E. Bluebird: generally scarce, 2-3 per day but 8 Durhamville & 12 Tully wintered at feeders on fruit and suet.

Hermit Thrush: last SSSP 10 Dec (DN).

Am. Robin: max 200 New Hartford 5 Feb.

Gray Catbird: last Syr 20 Dec.

Bohemian Waxwing: Bvllle 5 Dec; Hastings 1 Feb; 2 New Hartford 5 Feb; 1-2 TRWMA 6 Feb thru; max 70 Tioughnioga WMA 14 Feb (MY) in the crabapple "orchard"; 40 SFNS 27 Feb (MP).

Cedar Waxwing: max 200 New Hartford 5 Feb.

WARBLERS

None.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

E. Towhee: singles Clinton CBC & Syr CBC 20 Dec.

Am. Tree Sparrow: to 80 per day SFNS thru.

Chipping Sparrow: SFNS 2 Dec; 2 Oneida CBC 27 Dec.

Field Sparrow: Kirkville 17-18 Jan (JC).

Savannah Sparrow: Kirkville 17-18 Jan (JC).

Swamp Sparrow: SFNS thru; 2

Skaneateles 3 Jan.

White-throated Sparrow: max 11

Camillus 3 Jan.

White-crowned Sparrow: Pompey 29

Dec-7 Jan.

Lapland Longspur: Oswego 7 Dec; 2
Stockbridge 25 Jan; Fabius 26 Jan; DeR
27 Feb.

Snow Bunting: max 800 Stockbridge 25
Jan.

Red-winged Blackbird: max 8 Solvay 20
Dec; singles SFNS 5 Jan & 6 Feb.

Rusty Blackbird: last Durhamville 1 Dec
(BB).

Com. Grackle: Williamstown thru; max 4
Fayetteville 8 Feb.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 25 Delphi
Falls 8 Jan; 4 Norway 14 Feb, unusual; 20
Fayetteville 22 Feb, possible early arr.

Purple Finch: 2 DeR 15 Dec; 26 Clinton

CBC 20 Dec; 3 Bville 8 Jan; mostly
scattered 1-2 per day.

Com. Redpoll: 50-100 many feeders Jan
& Feb.

Hoary Redpoll: 3 Clinton CBC 20 Dec;
1-2 Geo, DeR in Jan (MY!); Sauquoit 7
Jan (JH, ph); 2 SFNS 23 Jan to 25 Feb
(MP).

Pine Siskin: 3-6 Geo thru; 15 DeR 14
Dec; 6 Western 24 Dec; max 25 Camillus
3 Jan; small numbers higher elevations.

Am. Goldfinch: large numbers, 80+ at
feeders not uncommon.

Evening Grosbeak: 14 Geo 2 Dec; 20+
Old Forge early Dec; 26 Geo 1 Jan; 5-10
per day southern highlands Jan & Feb.

ADDENDUM

Vol.54, No. 1, p. 74 add **Red Knot:** 3 SPd
8 Sep (DW), only report.