

REGION 5—ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

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The average temperature in December was 29.2°F degrees, 0.6° degrees above normal, with 3.8 inches of precipitation, 0.68 inches above normal and 19 inches of snow. In January the average temperature of 21.0° degrees was 1.7° degrees below normal, and there were 2.96 inches of precipitation, 0.36 inches above normal. For the month there were 44.5 inches of snow. The first half of January was characterized by warmer than average temperatures, with a maximum of 64 degrees at the Syracuse Airport on both the 13th and 14th. Much of the snow that had fallen prior to 15 January had melted. This, which, along with above average rainfall, contributed to high water in the Oswego River. Oneida Lake was mostly frozen early in the month but had large areas of open water by the 15th, and even some smaller lakes and ponds started to thaw. The first of several arctic air masses moved through on the 15th, and temperatures plummeted. Open water quickly refroze, pack ice formed along the shore of Lake Ontario, and open water below dams on the Oswego River was at a minimum although the river continued to run high. Old Forge recorded six low temperatures ranging from -24 to -30 degrees during the last half of January. In February the average temperature was 25.7° degrees, 1.2° degrees warmer than normal, but the last 11 days of the month were colder than average, with at least a foot of snow on the ground in most places. There were 2.96 inches of precipitation for February, 0.36 inches more than normal, and virtually all of it fell as 44.5 inches of snow. The first trickle of migrants began to show up on 15 February, but after the turn in the weather migration ceased.

Fall migration lasted into December, with the last wave of Snow Geese and Canada Geese moving on the 12th. Trumpeter Swans again spent time at Fair Haven where they stayed until the mid-January freeze-up, and Tundra Swans also lingered as long as possible. Most waterfowl were scarce through the first half of the season, but when inshore areas of Lake Ontario began freezing in January, many Greater Scaup, White-winged Scoters, and Long-tailed Ducks, moved into Oswego Harbor as it opened to some degree. In February, they were joined by a King Eider, a species not so frequently seen as in the 1970s and 1980s. Ten Northern Pintails in January was the highest count for that month in 38 years. There were few reports of Gadwall, Wood Duck, Canvasback, and Redhead.

An American Kestrel in Boylston and a Turkey Vulture in West Monroe in early January were signs of the mild winter and lack of snow cover to that point. Even before the snow got deep there were few Northern Harriers, and as winter wore on the small Rough-legged Hawk concentrations dispersed. Northern Goshawk numbers were good, and Bald Eagle continues to increase. The last reports of Short-eared Owls were in early January. There was one Long-eared Owl. The two Snowy Owls that were reported were very elusive.

Iceland and Glaucous Gulls were consistently found along the Oswego River, although numbers were low. Two Iceland Gulls were seen at the Madison

County Landfill, a site that may deserve more attention. No Lesser Black-backed Gulls were reported this season. Even with a lot of open water during the first half of the season, Belted Kingfisher reports were few.

It was a good year for Northern Shrike, which was reported by many observers and at many locations. Fish Crow continues to maintain its foothold in the Region. American Crow winter roosts reached their peak in Utica and Syracuse in the winter of 2001-2 and, after steep declines the past two years, seem to be rebounding somewhat. American Robins wintered in large numbers, indicating that food was plentiful, so it's surprising that few Eastern Bluebirds and only low numbers of Cedar Waxwings were found. There was one sighting of two Bohemian Waxwings.

Eastern Towhee, Field Sparrow, and Rusty Blackbird all managed to survive the season at feeders. Other half-hardy reports included Red-headed Woodpecker, Pine Warbler, Fox Sparrow, and White-crowned Sparrow. It was a poor winter for American Tree Sparrow, Song Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, and Dark-eyed Junco with generally low counts. Snow Buntings were still moving through on 12 December 12 and large flocks were encountered through the period. Lapland Longspurs could be found in some of those flocks, more than we usually see in a winter. A few Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Grackles moved into the Region in mid-February, but that first hint of migration ended with the return of harsh weather on 18 February.

Purple Finch staged an irruption into our area, chiefly in the southern highlands, where Matt Young had increasing numbers through the season. The species was feeding on ash samaras and was found region-wide, although usually much less persistent at lower elevations. Common Redpolls came south in small flocks this season and were seen mostly at feeders. Pine Siskin numbers were low, there were no Pine Grosbeaks or White-winged Crossbills, only one Red Crossbill, and only a few Evening Grosbeaks for the season.

Observers reported 122 species for the winter. Highlights included King Eider, Purple Sandpiper, Bohemian Waxwing, Pine Warbler, Eastern Towhee, Field Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, and Lapland Longspur.

Contributors

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Abbreviations

Bvllle — Baldwinsville, CM - Clay Marsh, DeR - DeRuyter, DH - Derby Hill, FH - Fair Haven, Little Sodus Bay and vicinity, Geo - Georgetown, HIWMA — Howland Island WMA, LOL - Lake Ontario Littoral, NYSWC — New York State Waterfowl Count, OneiL - Oneida Lake, OnonL - Onondaga Lake, SFNS - Spring Farm Nature Sanctuary, Kirkland, Syr - Syracuse, TRWMA - Three Rivers WMA.

WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

Snow Goose: max 730 Pulaski 12 Dec; 100 SFNS 4 Dec; 175 W Winfield to 15 Dec; 1 Sherrill 16 Jan, injured.
Canada Goose: max 10,000 Delta L area 8 Dec; 3440 Pulaski 12 Dec, just arriving.
Cackling Goose: 1 Camillus 4 Dec (MV ph).
Brant: singles Oswego 7 Dec; & Syr 18 Dec.
Mute Swan: max 4 FH to 16 Jan; 2 FH thru; 2 Syr 24 Dec.
Tundra Swan: 30 OneiL 16 Jan; & 9 Otisco L 14 Jan, high for mid Jan.
TRUMPETER SWAN: 4 FH 3-16 Jan.
Wood Duck: 2 Geo 3 Dec; 2 CM 18 Dec.
Gadwall: max 17 Syr CBC 18 Dec; 1 NYSWC 16 Jan, very low; 3 OnonL 31 Jan.
Am. Wigeon: 3 Mexico Pt 17 Dec; 2 Oswego 20 Feb.
Am. Black Duck: max 75 OnonL 31 Jan; 15 Marcellus 4 Feb.
N. Pintail: 10 Seneca R 16 Jan, most Jan since 1967 (JB).
Green-winged Teal: max 4 FH 8 Dec; 2 Syr 16 Jan.
Canvasback: 1 FH 8 Dec, only report.
Redhead: max 5 LOL 4 Jan; & max 5 Oswego 13 Feb.
Ring-necked Duck: max 1150 Eaton Res; andmax 175 Hatch L 2 Dec; Dec; 5 FH 16 Jan; 2 Bvllle 2 Feb.
Greater Scaup: max 1740 LOL Oswego-Scriba 27 Feb; 197 NYSWC 16 Jan, low.
Lesser Scaup: max 360 North Bay OneiL 11 Dec; to 2/day LOL after Jan 1; and none NYSWC 16 Jan, last missed 1968.

King Eider: 1 female Oswego after 20 Feb; (BP); 1 imm male Scriba 24 Feb (KM).
Surf Scoter: 1 North Bay OneiL 11 Dec; 1 grounded Minoa 20 Jan, released OnonL; 2 Oswego 20 Feb.
White-winged Scoter: max 180 LOL 16 Jan; 1 quarry pond Minoa 7 Jan; 40-60 Oswego after 12 Feb thru.
Black Scoter: 1 North Bay OneiL 11 Dec; 1 per day LOL to 16 Jan.
Long-tailed Duck: max 1875 LOL 16 Jan, mostly Mexico Bay; 400-500 per day Oswego after 20 Feb thru.
Bufflehead: max 110 Scriba 27 Feb.
Com. Goldeneye: max 1000 FH 22 Dec; 600 North Bay OneiL 11 Dec.
Hooded Merganser: max 30 Nelson 2 Dec; & 29 Mexico Pt 17 Dec; 6 Bvllle 29 Jan.
Com. Merganser: max 2130 Bridgeport OneiL 5 Jan.
Red-breasted Merganser: max 272 LOL 16 Jan.
Ruddy Duck: singles Beaver L 4 Dec.; Fulton 17 Dec; & Syr CBC 18 Dec.
Ruffed Grouse: max 5 New Woodstock CBC 19 Dec; 1 per day otherwise.
Wild Turkey: max 153 T Madison 25 Feb; 60-80 per day T Western thru.
Red-throated Loon: max 7 LOL 7 Dec; last Oswego 3 Jan.
Com. Loon: max 5 Oswego 16 Jan; 1 Fourth L 15 Dec, iced in and taken by Bald Eagle.
Pied-billed Grebe: 1 Bvllle 31 Jan to-22 Feb.
Horned Grebe: max 15 LOL 16 Jan.
Red-necked Grebe: singles Oswego 22 Dec; & LOL 1 Jan.

Double-crested Cormorant: 18 Oswego 3 Jan; 7 Oswego 29 Jan, zero 15 Feb.
Great Blue Heron: 2 Geo 3 Dec; max 3 Syr 18 Dec; few reports.
Turkey Vulture: 1 Fayetteville 9 Jan; 1 WM 13 Jan; 1 Dewitt 13 Feb.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: max 10 T Western 22-23 Fed, on a deer carcass; 2-4 Big Moose thru season; 4-6/day LOL & open rivers; 2 TRWMA 22 Feb, at nest site.
N. Harrier: 6 Dec reports, 3 in Jan, and 1 in Feb.
N. Goshawk: reports from 8 locations.
Red-tailed Hawk: max 11 CM 2 Dec.
Rough-legged Hawk: 3-5 per day Mexico-Richland & southern highlands to mid Jan.
Am. Kestrel: about 12 total, with 4-5 persisting thru season.
Merlin: singles Hamilton 12 Dec; & Fabius 9 Jan.
Peregrine Falcon: 1 Utica 18 Dec; pair Syr thru.
Am. Coot: max 2 FH 4 Jan; singles Bvll, FH, Fulton & Oswego at various times.
Killdeer: max 2 Cicero 2 Dec; last Cicero 28 Dec.
Purple Sandpiper: 1 FH 4-11 Dec.
Bonaparte's Gull: max 38 DH 1 Dec; last 3 FH 8 Dec.
Ring-billed Gull: max 2856 Oswego 9 Dec.
Herring Gull: max 1150 Bvll & Oswego 21 Jan.
Iceland Gull: 1-2 Oswego R after 16 Dec; max 3 Oswego 20 Feb; 2 Lincoln 15 Jan, at landfill.
Glaucous Gull: arr 1 DH 1 Dec; 1-2 per day Oswego R & Harbor, Seneca R & OnonL Jan-Feb.
Great Black-backed Gull: max 185 Bvll & Oswego 21 Jan.

DOVES - WOODPECKERS

Mourning Dove: max 51 CM 18 Dec.

Snowy Owl: 1 Oswego 6-17 Dec; 1 Fenner 9 Jan.
Long-eared Owl: 1 Beaver L to 15 Dec.
Short-eared Owl: last 2 Verona & 6 Danube 1 Jan.
Belted Kingfisher: 6 reports, only one after 15 Jan.
Red-headed Woodpecker: 1 DeR thru 19 Dec (LC).
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: 1 Syr CBC 18 Dec; 1 Camillus 2 Jan.
Black-backed Woodpecker: 1 Old Forge 28 Feb.
N. Flicker: max 12 Syr CBC 18 Dec; 6 reports Jan-Feb.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: numerous reports, approx. 23 individuals.
Am. Crow: max 4023 Clinton CBC 18 Dec; and max 6481 Syr CBC 18 Dec, slight increase.
Fish Crow: max 2 Syr thru.
Com. Raven: 1-2 Oswego thru season; 5 Hastings 20 Jan.
Horned Lark: max 282 s. ONEI 25 Feb; to 50 per day at manure spreads thru season.
Red-breasted Nuthatch: common Adks; 2-3 per day elsewhere and absent many locations.
Brown Creeper: max 10 HIWMA 2 Jan.
Carolina Wren: numbers steady despite slightly severe winter; 3 sites s. OSWE, slight expansion.
Winter Wren: 1 HIWMA 2 Jan, only report.
Golden-crowned Kinglet: common Adks; 2 per day elsewhere.
E. Bluebird: max 4 Lysander 2 Jan; only 9 reports.
Am. Robin: max 300 New Hartford 21 Jan; flocks of 50-100 common at lower elevations.
N. Mockingbird: max 14 Syr CBC 18 Dec.
Bohemian Waxwing: 2 Fabius 22 Jan (BC).

Cedar Waxwing: max 60 Tioghnioaga
WMA 3 Dec & Sterling 4 Dec; mostly
<20 per day where found.

WARBLERS

Pine Warbler: 1 DeR 19 Dec (MY).

TANAGERS - WEAVERS

E. Towhee: 1 Van Buren feeder after 20
Jan thru.

Am. Tree Sparrow: max 85 SFNS after
20 Feb thru.

Field Sparrow: 1 Kirkville after 16 Jan
thru (JC).

Fox Sparrow: 1 DeR 19 Dec (LC).

Song Sparrow: max 3 Van Buren
9 Jan.

Swamp Sparrow: singles Clinton CBC
18 Dec; HIWMA to 13 Jan; &
Van Buren 9 Jan.

White-throated Sparrow: max 23
Liverpool 18 Dec.

White-crowned Sparrow: 1 Liverpool
18 Dec (BC).

Dark-eyed Junco: max 12 Pompey 5
Dec & 12 T Onondaga 4 Feb.

Lapland Longspur: max 7 Pompey
30 Jan; also reports from 7 other sites,
a good season.

Snow Bunting: max 2500 Stockbridge 29

Jan; 1330 Pulaski 12 Dec, migrants in
12 flocks.

Red-winged Blackbird: max 25 Oneida
1 Jan; arrfirst arrivals 17 Feb; 1 wintered
Big Moose.

E. Meadowlark: 1 Sauquoit 18 Dec.

Rusty Blackbird: max 2 Bville 15 Dec &
2 Geo after 8 Feb thru; 2 other singles.

Com. Grackle: 1 Geo 3 Jan; first
migrants to 4 per site 15-17 Feb, with last
of mild weather.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 128 New
Woodstock CBC 19 Dec.

Purple Finch: max 70 Geo-DeR 23 Jan;
8-15 many locations, persistent at higher
elevations.

House Finch: CBC numbers indicate
continued decline.

Red Crossbill: 1 Geo 3 Dec, only report.

Com. Redpoll: arr Pompey 15 Dec;
max 60 Pompey 23 Feb; small numbers
at many feeders, not persistent.

Pine Siskin: max 7 Geo-DeR 12 Dec;
1-4/day elsewhere, usually on
the move.

Am. Goldfinch: to 60 per day some
feeders for short periods.

Evening Grosbeak: max 12 Fabius
9 Jan; 3 Rome CBC 19 Dec; small
numbers Old Forge.