

REGION 3 - FINGER LAKES

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Winter effectively came and went in the month of December. At Ithaca, temperatures averaged 3.2°F colder than normal in December. January and February, however, were unusually mild, with positive departures from the norm of 9.3° and 4.2°, respectively. Nevertheless, it was cool enough to keep snow on the ground for much of the period. Snow was on the ground every day in December except the first day. Snow depth peaked December 16 with a 10-inch accumulation. January had 11 days with snow cover and February had thirteen days. Total precipitation was a little below normal for the season.

The particularly mild January may have induced geese to move into the Region early, with numbers beginning to build in late January and large numbers already achieved by 2 February. With the Snow Geese and Canada Geese came Greater White-fronted Geese, single Ross's Goose, and Cackling Geese. A Wood Duck lingering at the ponds in Union Springs; a Eurasian Wigeon, also at Union Springs; a Surf Scoter on Cayuga Lake at Taughannock Falls State Park; and a Barrow's Goldeneye on Keuka Lake at Branchport were waterfowl highlights. Observers in the Cayuga Lake Basin also noted a number of hybrids. Especially interesting was a Greater White-fronted X Snow Goose hybrid. Both American Wigeon and Canvasback numbers were up for the second consecutive year.

The bird of the season, for the Region, was a juvenile Pacific Loon on Cayuga Lake, first reported by Anne Marie and Tim Johnson 28 January. It stayed in the vicinity of Sheldrake and Kidders in the Town of Ovid through the end of the period. It was observed by many birders in February, but also frustrated many by remaining out of view of accessible sites and by diving so frequently as to make locating it difficult. A Red-throated Loon spent several days on Beebe Lake at Cornell University. A second Red-throated Loon appeared there briefly, and by the end of that day the first also departed. An Eared Grebe wintered for the ninth consecutive year in Aurora Bay.

The forty Great Blue Herons found on the Montezuma Christmas Bird Count was the highest count in the Region in the last eight years. A Black-crowned Night-Heron, reported at Taughannock Falls State Park in mid-December, was an exceptionally at an late date for this species. Turkey Vultures were reported from various places throughout the Region and throughout the winter.

A Gyrfalcon was in the Savannah Mucklands in late January to early February at the same time that Snow Goose numbers were building. A study of the correlation between Gyrfalcon occurrences and large concentrations of Snow Geese might prove interesting. Rough-legged Hawks were down in numbers, but the change did not achieve statistical significance.

Single Killdeer were noted on both the Corning and Elmira CBCs. The usual awinter gull species were present, including Lesser Black-backed, Iceland, and Glaucous gulls.

Only two Snowy Owls were reported. One was in Hopewell, Ontario County. The other was in the Savannah Mucklands on New Year's Day. Observers found small numbers of Short-eared Owls in scattered locations around the Region. A Red-headed Woodpecker was seen in mid-January and again in early February, but few seekers were able to find this elusive individual.

Both feeder watchers and field observers noticed that Blue Jays were present in very high numbers. This was confirmed by historically high counts on the Region's Christmas Bird Counts. Many passerines took advantage of the mild winter weather to linger. Those reported included Eastern Phoebe; Winter Wren; Ruby-crowned Kinglet; Hermit Thrush; Gray Catbird; American Pipit; Eastern Towhee; Field, Fox, and White-crowned sparrows; and four species of icterids. The presence of both goose and icterid species throughout the winter made it impossible to pinpoint the arrival of the spring migrants of those species. Bill Evans reported that a Common Yellowthroat was dwelling for a time inside the Home Depot building in Ithaca.

Snow Buntings and Lapland Longspurs were fairly observable in the Region, even though Snow Bunting numbers were down. A good variety of winter finches made appearances in small numbers. Evening Grosbeaks were present in larger numbers and more locations than in most recent years.

The following data include "+" and "-" notations indicating population increases or decreases of observed bird populations in the Region between winter 2005-06 and winter 2004-2005. Unless otherwise noted, the cited comparisons showed statistically significant changes ($X^2 > 3.84$; $P = 0.05$). 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

AuB - Aurora Bay CAYU, CayL - Cayuga L, CU - Cornell University, GCBC - Geneva CBC, ICBC - Ithaca CBC, LCMF - Lettie Cook Memorial Forest CAYU, LPSP - Long Pt SP, MCBC - Montezuma CBC, MNWR - Montezuma NWR, MWC - Montezuma Wetlands Complex, SaMu - Savannah Mucklands SENE, StP - Stewart P TOMP, USPd - Union Springs Ponds CAYU.

WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

Greater White-fronted Goose: SaMu 22 Jan (TL); max 4 SaMu 3 Feb (GC), high; CayL 26 Feb (BoMc).

Greater White-fronted X Snow Goose: CayL 11 Feb (JaGr, JK, SR).

Snow Goose: max 60000 SaMu 5 Feb (SRBA), high.

ROSS'S GOOSE: MCBC 30 Dec (FMWC); SaMu 4 Feb (fide KM); SaMu 5 Feb (SRBA).

CAACKLING GOOSE: CayL 8 Dec (BoMc, DN); max 4 SaMu 4 Feb (fide KM), high; 2 Geneva 19 Feb (eB).

Trumpeter Swan: max 5 MWC 22 Jan (BGU, Lyn Jacobs), high.

WOOD DUCK: USPd 5 Jan.

Gadwall: max 168 MNWR 5 Feb (MiH, TL), high.

EURASIAN WIGEON: USPd 12 Feb (SD!); USPd 19 Feb (MAN, MiH, TL,

KR, GS); CayL 26 Feb (BoMc, DR, ph).

Am. Wigeon: max 72 CayL Basin 20 Feb (AsH, AMit), high, +.

Am. Black Duck: max 235 Farley's Pt CAYU 11 Feb, low, -.

Am. Black Duck X Mallard: Cass P 17 Dec (PHU).

Gadwall X Mallard: MNWR 5 Feb (MiH, TL).

Mallard X N. Shoveler: CayL 21 Feb (PHU, ph).

N. Shoveler: Union Springs 19 Feb.

N. Pintail: max 6 SaMu 22 Jan, -.

Green-winged Teal: max 3 AuB 5 Dec.

Canvasback: max 2800 Farley's Pt CAYU 11 Feb, +.

Redhead: max 5000 CayL WMA 28 Jan, -.

Ring-necked Duck: max 200 T Ovid P, -.

Greater Scaup: max 1000 SaMu 30 Jan (BoMc), high, +.

Lesser Scaup: max 1000 SaMu 30 Jan (BoMc), high.

SURF SCOTER: Taughannock Falls SP 30 Jan (BoMc), only report.

White-winged Scoter: Skaneateles L 5 Dec (MY); LPSP 8 Dec (BoMc, DN); AuB 27 Dec (JM), -.

Long-tailed Duck: CayL 13 Feb.

Com. Goldeneye: max 390 CayL 2 Jan, -.

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE: max 2 Branchport 21 Jan (eB), only report.

Ring-necked Pheasant: max 14 GCBC 1 Jan (EBS), high.

RED-THROATED LOON: CU 1 Dec (JE, DL); last & max 2 CU 5 Dec (DR), late.

PACIFIC LOON: CayL 28 Jan thru (AM&TJ!), thru (mob, ph).

Red-necked Grebe: max 2 Clute Memorial P SCHU 18 Dec.

EARED GREBE: AuB 8 Dec (BoMc, DN) - 20 Feb (AsH, AMit).

Double-crested Cormorant: max 2 Portland Pt TOMP 12 Feb.

Great Blue Heron: max 40 MCBC 31 Dec (FMWC), high.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON: Taughannock Falls SP 15 Dec (SFi); GCBC 2 Jan (EBS).

Turkey Vulture: max 9 Route 13, Cayuga Heights 22 Feb (JM), high, +.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: max 5 MNWR 5 Feb.

N. Harrier: max 5 MCBC 31 Dec.

Cooper's Hawk: max 17 ICBC 1 Jan (CaBC), high.

Red-shouldered Hawk: Sapsucker Woods TOMP 4 Dec.

Red-tailed Hawk: max 172 ICBC 1 Jan (CaBC), high.

Peregrine Falcon: StP 20 Jan.

GYRFALCON: SaMu 21 Jan (SRBA); SaMu 4 Feb (BP)

Am. Coot: max 360 Portland Pt TOMP 2 Feb, -.

KILLDEER: Corning CBC 17 Dec; Elmira CBC 2 Jan.

Glaucous Gull X Herring Gull: StP 18 Dec (MAn, TL, ph).

Herring Gull: max 520 Watkins Glen CBC 31 Dec, -.

Iceland Gull: max 2 ICBC 1 Jan, -.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: max 2 ICBC 1 Jan, -.

Glaucous Gull: East Shore Sailing Club TOMP 11 Feb.

Great Black-backed Gull: max 88 GCBC 2 Jan, -.

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

SNOWY OWL: SaMu 1 Jan.

Barred Owl: max 4 ICBC 1 Jan (CaBC), high.

Long-eared Owl: Dryden 8 Dec.

Short-eared Owl: max 6 CayL Basin 19 Feb, -.

N. Saw-whet Owl: max 4 Hammond Hill State Forest TOMP 13 Feb (eB), high.

RED-HEADED WOODPECKER: Aurora 13 Jan.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: max 186 ICBC 1 Jan (CaBC), high.

Downy Woodpecker: max 550 ICBC 1 Jan (CaBC), high.

Hairy Woodpecker: max 141 ICBC 1 Jan (CaBC), high.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

E. PHOEBE: CU 4 Dec (eB; MCBC 31 Dec (FMWC).

Blue Jay: max 1366 ICBC 1 Jan (CaBC), high, +.

Fish Crow: max 15 StP 28 Jan.

Com. Raven: max 19 ICBC 1 Jan.

Black-capped Chickadee: max 3946 ICBC 1 Jan (CaBC), high.

Tufted Titmouse: max 442 ICBC 1 Jan (CaBC), high.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: max 106 ICBC 1 Jan (CaBC), high.

White-breasted Nuthatch: max 544 ICBC 1 Jan (CaBC), high.

Brown Creeper: max 38 ICBC 1 Jan (CaBC), high.

Winter Wren: max 4 MCBC 31 Dec (FMWC), high.

RUBY-CROWNED KINGLET: LCMF 29 Dec (St&SuF); LCMF 2 Jan (BoMc, DN); LCMF 28 Jan (eB).

E. Bluebird: max 96 ICBC 1 Jan.

HERMIT THRUSH: Lansing 10 Dec (TL); ICBC 1 Jan (CaBC); South Hill TOMP 28 Jan (DN).

Am. Robin: max 211 GCBC 2 Jan, -.

GRAY CATBIRD: max 1 MCBC 31 Dec (FMWC); Gorham 27 Feb (Julie Horton).

AM. PIPIT: StP 7 Dec (TL); Myers Pt 22 Jan (AMit); AuB 12 Feb (BCa, MY).

BOHEMIAN WAXWING: LPSP 4 Feb (BoMc); LPSP 6 Feb (JM), -.

Cedar Waxwing: max 1500 CU 23 Feb (JM), high.

WARBLERS

COM. YELLOWTHROAT: Ithaca Home Depot 24 Dec (BEv), only report.

TANAGERS - WEAVERS

E. TOWHEE: Cayuga Heights 17 Dec.

FIELD SPARROW: max 2 ICBC 1 Jan (CaBC), only report.

FOX SPARROW: last Enfield 19 Dec (BBa), late.

Song Sparrow: max 114 ICBC 1 Jan (CaBC), high.

White-crowned Sparrow: Jerusalem 23 Dec.

Lapland Longspur: max 3 Genoa 8 Jan.

Snow Bunting: max 410 GCBC 2 Jan, -.

N. Cardinal: max 607 ICBC 1 Jan (CaBC), high.

Red-winged Blackbird: max 87 MCBC 31 Dec, -.

E. MEADOWLARK: Northeast Ithaca 22 Dec (JM), late.

Rusty Blackbird: max 2 Ellis Hollow TOMP 17 Feb.

Com. Grackle: max 32 Ithaca 17 Dec.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 120 Dryden 3 Jan, +.

Purple Finch: max 8 Corning 8 Jan, -.

Red Crossbill: max 2 Caroline 30 Jan (eB), only report.

White-winged Crossbill: max 3 Bear Swamp State Forest CAYU 10 Dec (JSi, MY); Caroline 18 Dec (KAC!).

Com. Redpoll: max 8 Corning 8 Jan, -.

Pine Siskin: max 15 Dryden 18 Feb.

Am. Goldfinch: max 838 ICBC 1 Jan (CaBC), high.

Evening Grosbeak: max 67 Summerhill 21 Dec, +.