

REGION 2 – GENESEE

David W. Tetlow

79 Hogan Point Rd., Hilton, NY 14468

dktetlow@rochester.rr.com

The winter season was split almost exactly down the middle weather-wise; the first half very mild, the second half absolutely brutal at times. This was definitely reflected in the reports of half-hardy species. December was the warmest on record, with an average of 39.0°F, 9.6° above normal. Precipitation of 3.03" was 0.30" less than normal which was hardly significant. But what was significant was the snowfall total of 4.3", 25.8" below normal. This was

undoubtedly helpful to land birds but made it almost impossible to find any concentrations. January averaged 30.0°F, 6° above normal. The first two weeks of the month actually averaged 16° above normal. Unfortunately the first two weeks also were more often than not cloudy and rainy and therefore not very birdable. Precipitation was 4.25", 1.91" above normal. Snowfall was 30.2", 4.4" above normal. Almost all of this fell in the second half of the month, again making for not very birdable conditions. February was the coldest in 14 years and the snowiest in 47. Temperatures averaged 20.3°F, 5° below normal. Precipitation was 2.09", 0.05" above normal. Snowfall was 46.5", 24.3" above average. Wind usually is not discussed in these pages, but February was incredibly windy. It seemed that every day had winds in the 15-25 M.P.H. or higher range. February was truly brutal and made for some of the toughest birding this area has probably ever seen.

The three area Christmas Bird Counts were about average. Letchworth-Silver Lake had 84 species, the Little Lakes 86, and Rochester 102 species, with 1, 4, and 9 of these, respectively found only during the count week. The Rochester total is the second highest ever for the count. This total was aided greatly by several rarities that had been found prior to count day. Both the Rochester and Little Lakes counts were hurt by rather dreary weather, but the Letchworth count was aided by fair weather. There were a few record high counts set, but only a few of these were really unexpected given recent trends and the warm fall and early winter. The NYS Waterfowl Count produced nothing of note, and the numbers were relatively low owing to the open conditions and poor weather.

Waterfowl numbers were generally good. The ever increasing Cackling Goose was well reported. The total of 31 noted for the season was made with an attempt to eliminate any duplication in reports. Mute Swan numbers continue to be out of control. Trumpeter Swan may not be very far behind, with a count of 56 made by the Spahns in one area in the Wayne County part of the Northern Montezuma Wetlands Complex. Puddle ducks lingered in good numbers through mid-winter, obviously aided by the open conditions. Diving ducks are what really made headlines. A **Tufted x Ring-necked Duck** hybrid at Sodus Bay found by Dave Tetlow and Mike Davids was a rarely reported combination for North America. **Barrow's Goldeneye** reports were too numerous to list individually. A whopping total of at least six different birds were reported, certainly a record for Region 2. This didn't even include a returning **Barrow's x Common Goldeneye** hybrid from Sodus Bay. Is this a population spike or just an anomaly? Only time will tell. Red-throated Loon and Red-necked Grebe numbers were excellent for winter. Red-throated Loons will clearly linger during milder winters, but what of Red-necked Grebes? They obviously winter in large numbers on Lake Ontario every year, but in some years are more easily observed. Why this is remains to be determined. Double-crested Cormorants were also in well above average numbers for much the same reason. A good

Great Blue Heron count was made at the Caledonia Fish Hatchery, but elsewhere they were oddly somewhat hard to find.

Raptors were highlighted by the usual suspects. A count of 42 Turkey Vultures was reported from Bergen by Steve Maley. Vultures were reported from all corners of the Region. Two each of Northern Goshawk and Red-shouldered Hawk were reported, which basically is average for the winter. Ten Merlin reports were lower than recent winters but still were well above historical numbers.

Three Virginia Rails were located near the spring-fed areas of Mendon Ponds Park. Hearing them call in mid-winter is always a treat. A flock of 780 American Coot at Irondequoit Bay must have been a pretty sight. Large flocks used to occur at Sodus Bay as well but have not been had there in many years. **Sandhill Cranes** have become almost expected in winter in recent years, but nine in Savannah in December was incredible. It will be interesting to see if this trend continues with their population increasing in the east and moderate winters becoming more common. Shorebirds should have been more abundant in the early winter but were surprisingly few and far between. Purple Sandpipers seem to be becoming more common in December than in November, an odd trend. Up to three were reported from Irondequoit Bay in December. American Woodcock was again found in Bergen Swamp. They undoubtedly winter in there every year. They are an abundant breeder in the swamp, and there are extensive spring-fed areas through-out. **Pomarine Jaeger** may very well be another regular winter resident in the Region. One was seen at Hamlin Beach in January for the second year in a row. Increased observer effort appears to be the key to seeing this species. Of course, this is typically the key to seeing any less common species. Gulls produced a few reports of note. A maximum of ten Iceland Gulls in Perinton was a good count, as was a record count of six Lesser Black-backed Gulls at the same location. **Black-legged Kittiwake** was again seen at Hamlin Beach in January. They seem to hang in there as long as it is relatively mild.

Only one Snowy Owl for the season was a disappointment, but at least it was a long-staying, cooperative bird. Short-eared Owls were found at multiple locations throughout the Region. Northern Saw-whet Owls were found at several unusual locations, possibly staying further north than usual due to the mild weather. Bill Symonds found as many as seven Red-headed Woodpeckers at Hamlin Beach SP in February. This is certainly good news, as they appear to have been extirpated from much of the Nations Road area. Northern Shrikes were reported in good numbers through about mid-winter but were scarce thereafter. A high count of 15 Common Ravens was tallied in Livingston County. This species is becoming downright common in this area, the question is why?

Half-hardy species made news in two ways. In one respect, the level of quality was high and the variety excellent. On the other hand, the more regular half-hardies were hard to find and in poor numbers. First winter records were

had for the following three species: **Blue-headed Vireo** found by Brad Carlson at Hamlin Beach, **Black-throated Blue Warbler** found by Mike Davids and Dave Tetlow at Hamlin Beach, and **Clay-colored Sparrow** found by Bob Spahn in Parma. Add to these a Pine Warbler, an **Ovenbird**, and three Common Yellowthroats in one location and you have an impressive winter list. Sparrows in general were well represented. There were numerous Eastern Towhees, Field Sparrows, and Savannah Sparrows reported. Am. Tree Sparrow was everywhere with flocks of a hundred or more regular. But of course, the other star sparrow of the season was a long-staying **Harris's Sparrow** at Gerry Leubner's backyard feeding station. This was the second Harris's Sparrow for his yard, the other being 35 years ago. Thanks to the Leubners' hospitality, approximately 100 people got to enjoy this bird. One other half-hardy was a **Baltimore Oriole** visiting a suet feeder in Spencerport that undoubtedly perished when the weather turned in mid-January. Hermit Thrush, Gray Catbird, and Winter Wren were dirt common last year, but extremely hard to find this year. This is hard to explain when one looks at the quantity and quality listed above. What exactly causes these swings in numbers and quality from year to year is not always as easy to figure out as one might think. There is more intense winter birding coverage now than ever before, so hopefully some answers will be forthcoming in the near future. In the last but not least category of quality goes a male **Brewer's Blackbird** found by Mike Davids and Dave Tetlow in Geneseo for a fourth winter record.

Newsflash: The impending winter finch invasion is a bust. Despite a good cone crop locally, reports were few and far between. Unfortunately the birds appeared to have stayed north due to the cone crop there being even better. Maybe next time will be our turn.

CONTRIBUTORS

Richard Ashworth, Matt Bango, Jessie Barry, Jim Barry , Douglas Bassett, Sharon & Doug Beattie, John Boettcher, George Briggs, Joe Brin, Diane Brown-Steiner, Brad Carlson, Gary Chapin, Christmas Bird Count Teams, Lewis Crowell, Willie D'Anna & Betsy Potter, Kathleen Dalton, Steve Daniel, Doug Daniels, Mike Davids, Peter Debes, Robert Doehler, Rick Flood, Kurt & Jeannine Fox, Mike Frail, Kenny Frisch, Andy Garland, Bill Gillette, GOS/RBA Field Trips, Jay Greenberg, Kevin Griffith and Colleen Dox-Griffith, Bob Groling, Lucretia Grosshans, Ralph & Georgia Guenther, Tim Guenther, Judy Gurley, Andy Guthrie, Bob Guthrie, Helen Haller, Tom Hampson, David & Vanna Harding, Greg Hartenstein, Kim Hartquist, Diane Henderson, Carolyn Jacobs, J. and J. Kaufman, Jim Kimball, Patti Kocinski, Dennis Kuba, Tom Lathrop, Leona Lauster, Fred Lawrence, Greg Lawrence, Jerry Lazarczyk, Gerry Leubner, David & Jane Levy, Jeff and Joni Libutti, Bill Maier, Steve Maley, Bob Marcotte, Pat Martin, Robert & Sandy Mauceli, Robert & Chita McKinney, Ferne Merrill, Meg Merritt, Susie Nettleton, Richard O'Hara, Phil Opdycke,

Tom Painting, Jim Pawlicki, Mike Peter, Jim Pisello, Norma Platt, Bill & Betty Powell, Gail Price, David Prill, Carolyn Ragan, William Ruscher, Shirley Shaw, Andrew Schecter, Dominic Sherony, Chuck Schleigh, Judy Slein, John Slowick, Tom & Pat Smith, Robert & Susan Spahn, Cathy Spahn, David & Grace Strong, Al & Di Stout, Kimberly Sucy, William Symonds, Steve Taylor, Joyce Testa, David Tetlow, Michael & Joann Tetlow, Don & Donna Traver, William Watson, David Wheeler, Martha Zettel.

ABBREVIATIONS

BB - Braddock Bay, MONR; C - Caledonia Fish Hatchery, LIVI; DEP - Durand-Eastman Park, MONR; G - Greece, MONR; GE - Geneseo, LIVI; H - T of Hamlin, MONR; HB - Hamlin Beach SP, MONR; HE -T Henrietta, MONR; HP - Hogan Point, MONR; HL - Honeoye Lake, ONTA; I - Irondequoit, MONR; IB - Irondequoit Bay, MONR; K - T. Kendall, ORLE; LLCBC - Conesus-Hemlock or Little Lakes CBC; LSLCBC - Letchworth-Silver lake CBC; M - Manitou, MONR; P - T of Parma, MONR; PB - Point Breeze, ORLE; PE - Perinton, MONR; R - City of Rochester, MONR; S - T of Savannah, WAYN; SB - Sodus Bay, WAYN.

WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

Snow Goose: max 26,500 S 31 Dec (BG, RS).

Cackling Goose: 31 reports for season, several locations.

Mute Swan: max 351 Rochester CBC 17 Dec.

Tundra Swan: max 250 S 22 Dec.

Trumpeter Swan: 16 SB 22 Dec; 34 S 31 Dec.; max 56 S 3 Jan (R, S, & CS).

Gadwall: max 93 IB 20 Dec (R & CS).

N. Shoveler: max 9 G 1-19 Dec (DT); 5 reports for Jan, several locations.

N. Pintail: max 16 HB 20-28 Dec (WS).

Green-winged Teal: 4 reports for Jan, several locations.

Redhead: max 4000 off I 11-17 Jan (RS).

TUFTED DUCK x RING-NECKED

DUCK: 1 SB 2 Feb (DT, MD), rare hybrid for N.A.

Ring-necked Duck: max 125 BB 11-13 Jan (KG, MD).

BARROW'S x COMMON

GOLDENEYE: 1 m SB 23 Jan.-28 Feb (DT, MD).

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE: 1 m PB 9 Dec-28 Feb (K & JF, mob); 1 m HB 2 Dec (WS, MD, KG); 1 f HB 28-30 Dec (WS, DS); 1 m, 1 f SB 23-31 Jan (DT,MD); 2 f

SB 2 Feb (DT, MD); unprecedented number of reports.

Hooded Merganser: max 223 Conesus Lake LIVI 30 Dec (LLCBC).

Ruddy Duck: max 79 Silver Lake, WYOM 16 Dec (LSLCBC).

Red-throated Loon: max 861 HB 6 Dec (WS, RS); 40 HB 7 Jan (WS), good count for Jan.

Red-necked Grebe: max 173 HB 23 Dec (WS, MD); 17 HB 21 Feb (WS), good count for Feb.

Double-crested Cormorant: max 40 BB-SB 1-31 Jan (DT, MD).

Great Blue Heron: 43 C 7 Jan (DT, MD).

Turkey Vulture: max 42 Bergen GENE 30 Dec (SM).

HAWKS - ALCIDS

N. Goshawk: 1 ad G 12 Jan (KG); 1 ad Nunda LIVI 21 Jan (DT, MD, KF).

Red-shouldered Hawk: 1 imm Rattlesnake Hill LIVI 21 Jan (DT, MD, KF); 1 ad Avon 28 Jan (DT, MD).

Merlin: 10 reports for season, several locations.

Virginia Rail: 3 Mendon Ponds Park MONR 22 Jan (DT, MD).

Am. Coot: max 780 IB 13 Jan (JB, RS).

SANDHILL CRANE: 9 S 3 Dec (TL); 1 S 31 Dec (RS); 1 S 3 Jan (DT); rare winter reports.

Killdeer: 1 HE 1 Jan (KG).

Purple Sandpiper: 1-3 IB 1-17 Dec.

Wilson's Snipe: 1 C 17 Jan (DT, MD).

Am. Woodcock: 1 Bergen Swamp GENE 12 Jan (DT, MD).

Pomarine Jaeger: 1HB 7 Jan (DT).

Thayer's Gull: 1 imm PB 2 Jan (MD, DT).

Iceland Gull: max 10 PE 11 Dec (MT).

Lesser Black-backed Gull: 6 PE 22 Jan (DT, MD).

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE: 1 HB 14 Jan (DT), rare winter report.

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Snowy Owl: 1 SB all season (RS, *et al*).

Short-eared Owl: 1-15 Lima LIVI 1-31 Dec.

N. Saw-whet Owl: 1 M 4 Dec (MF); 3 HL 30 Dec (LLCBC); 1 S 31 Dec (RS, BG); 1 R 5 Jan. (TH).

Red-headed Woodpecker: max 7 HB 1 Feb (WS), increasingly rare.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

E. Phoebe: 1 G 17 Dec (PM); 2 HL 30 Dec (RS); 1 C 29 Jan. (KG).

N. Shrike: 25 reports total Jan, several locations.

BLUE-HEADED VIREO: 1 HB 3-4 Dec (BC, GC, DS, *et al*), 1st regional winter record.

Com. Raven: max 15 LIVI 21 Jan (DT, MD, KF).

Carolina Wren: max 14 Rochester CBC 17 Dec; max 27 LLCBC 30 Dec; high counts.

Marsh Wren: 1 Turning Point Park MONR 1-11 Jan (RS, *et al*), only report.

VARIED THRUSH: 1 Penfield MONR 18 Dec thru (RF, mob).

Gray Catbird: 1 G 27 Feb, only report.

Bohemian Waxwing: 1 Webster Park MONR 27 Dec, only report.

WARBLERS

Black-throated Blue Warbler: 1 HB 1-2 Dec (DT, MD), 1st regional winter record.

Pine Warbler: 1 HB 30 Dec. – 16 Jan (mob), rare winter record.

OVENBIRD: 1 I 19 Dec. – 25 Jan. (JK *et al*), very rare winter record.

Com. Yellowthroat: 3 DEP 8 Dec (DT, MD), high count.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

E. Towhee: 3 reports for season, several locations.

Am. Tree Sparrow: max 600+ Nunda 21 Jan (DT, MD, KF), best of many good counts.

Chipping Sparrow: 1 P 24 Dec – 3 Feb, only reports.

CLAY COLORED SPARROW: 1 first winter P 17 Dec – 2 Jan (RS, mob), first regional winter record.

Field Sparrow: 9 rep 16-31 Dec; 1 Webster MONR 1 Jan; 1 P 3 Feb.; very good total.

Savannah Sparrow: max 5 LIVI 20-29 Jan (DT, MD, JK); 2 LIVI 1, 19 Feb; good total.

HARRIS'S SPARROW: 1 imm I 1 Dec thru (GL, mob).

Lapland Longspur: max 120 H 14 Jan; max 120 K 17 Jan.

Snow Bunting: max 1200 Pavilion WYOM 1 Feb.

E. Meadowlark: 4 A 25-31 Jan (DT, *et al*).

BREWER'S BLACKBIRD: 1 m Geneseo LIVI 17 Jan (DT, MD), 4th regional winter record.

Com. Grackle: max 34 Honeoye Falls MONR 11 Feb, good pre-migration total.

BALTIMORE ORIOLE: 1 f Spencerport MONR 9 Dec – 14 Jan (KF *et al*), very rare winter record.

Pine Grosbeak: 1 HP 18 Dec, only report.

White-winged Crossbill: 3 DEP 6 Jan, only report.

Com. Redpoll: 3 G 20 Jan, only report.

Pine Siskin: 3 HB 13 Jan, only report.

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