

REGION 5 - ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

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The first half of the season was warmer than normal and temperatures were high enough to allow many wetlands to remain open. The second half of the season was colder than usual with a lot more snow than even this snow-hardened area expects. Area ponds froze in early December but reopened in several days with a warm trend that lasted until the middle of January. Oneida Lake did not freeze until 20 January. Even in northern Herkimer County lakes iced over and opened several times before finally freezing on 11 January, and snow didn't accumulate until 20 January.

The December average temperature was 37.4°F, 8.8° above normal, with 3.76" of precipitation, 0.64" above normal. In January the temperature averaged 27.2°, 4.5° above normal, with 4.2" of precipitation, 1.6" above normal. In February the average temperature was 18.5°, 6.0° below normal, with 2.49" of precipitation, 0.37" above normal. Snowfall at the Syracuse airport for February was 59.5" but snowfall north of there was in the 100-150" range.

There were several reports of Trumpeter Swans with wing tags across the Region. Tundra Swans remained on Oneida Lake for the January waterfowl census and some of them wintered at the west end of the lake after freeze-up, while others moved to open water on Onondaga Lake and the Seneca River. Through mid-January large numbers of waterfowl could be found at sites normally frozen in January, especially Sandy Pond and Oneida Lake, but also in small wetlands. Scoters and a King Eider could be found along the eastern shore of Lake Ontario as the shore line remained ice-free into February.

There were not as many Great Blue Herons and N. Harriers as might be expected in a winter that was relatively snow and ice free into late January. Bald Eagle was also difficult to find until freeze-up, when they became more common along open waterways. Tom Salo organized a raptor count in the southeastern Herkimer County towns of Stark and Warren, the site of a proposed wind power project, and found two regional winter rarities, Golden Eagle and Red-shouldered Hawk. Concentrations of Rough-legged Hawk did not develop until late January.

Shorebirds are uncommon here in the winter season, but this year Dunlin, Purple Sandpiper, and Am. Woodcock were all reported. The woodcock were

found in a wet area in late February and may have overwintered, as that month's weather had been not been favorable for migration. Early December cold fronts brought Pomarine Jaeger, Little Gull, and Black-legged Kittiwake to Derby Hill, but overall gull numbers were low through the season on the Oswego River. The Madison County landfill was the best place to find Iceland Gull until Oneida Lake froze and the gulls no longer had a short commute to open water.

All seven regular species of owls were seen over the season, although there was only one report each of Long-Eared and N. Saw-whet, and Short-eared was reported from only a single location. It was not a big invasion year for Snowy Owl.

In many winters our northern forests are very quiet, as common residents such as Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, both nuthatches, Brown Creeper, and Golden-crowned Kinglet leave in large numbers. That was not the case this year, as good food sources allowed many birds to remain this year. Horned Larks and Snow Buntings were elusive until the cold weather and snow in late January.

Half-hardies included Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Winter Wren, Hermit Thrush, Yellow-rumped Warbler, E. Towhee, and Chipping Sparrow. Gray Catbird was a mildly surprising miss for a winter with a mild beginning. Sparrow numbers were not especially high for an open winter, especially Song and White-throated. Several Fox and White-crowned sparrows along with Swamp Sparrows in Oswego County were all slightly north of their regular winter ranges.

Finches were mixed this season; most species were affected in some way by the abundant cone crop and other food sources. The cone crop probably had little effect on Evening Grosbeaks as they continue to decline. Pine Grosbeaks and Common Redpolls were able to stay to our north and were not reported. There were large flocks of Purple Finches in the Adirondacks, but they were scarce elsewhere. Red Crossbill was common in much of northern Herkimer County and also present in the highest elevations of southern Madison County. White-winged Crossbill and Pine Siskin were seen in much lower numbers and seemed to be restricted to the Adirondacks.

For the season, 127 species plus the introduced Trumpeter Swan were reported. That's just about average for what was initially a mild winter. Highlights included N. Shoveler, King Eider, Red-shouldered Hawk, Golden Eagle, Purple Sandpiper, Dunlin, Am. Woodcock, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Chipping Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, and Red Crossbill. Red-necked Grebe was about the only "expected" species not found. Other half-hardies such as Killdeer, Wilson's Snipe, and E. Meadowlark were missed.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

Bvllle – Baldwinsville; CM - Clay Marsh; DH - Derby Hill; FH - Fair Haven, Little Sodus Bay and vicinity; Geo – Georgetown; HIWMA – Howland Island WMA; LOL - Lake Ontario Littoral; MCL – Madison County landfill, T Lenox; OneiL - Oneida Lake; OnonL - Onondaga Lake; SCH – T Schroepfel; SFNS - Spring Farm Nature Sanctuary, Kirkland; SPd – Sandy Pond; SVB – Sylvan and Verona Beach; Syr – Syracuse.

WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

Snow Goose: max 5000 Clinton 7 Jan; widespread flocks to 50/day into Jan; Green Lakes SP 4 Feb, wintering.

Brant: last 9 Dewitt 16 Dec.

Mute Swan: max 13 FH 21 Jan.

Trumpeter Swan: 9 Syr CBC 16 Dec, (KM, BP); 8 Barneveld 1 Jan (CS); SCH 23 Feb, all wing-tagged.

Tundra Swan: max 121 OneiL 14 Jan; 20 Brewerton after 19 Jan; Feb reports OnonL & Bvllle.

Wood Duck: max 2 Syr 16 Dec; Green Lakes 20 Jan; last FH 23 Jan.

Gadwall: max 4 FH 28 Jan.

Am. Wigeon: max 4 DH 2 Dec; arr Phoenix 22 Feb.

Am. Black Duck: max 43 Marcellus 30 Dec.

N. Shoveler: 1 Utica Marsh 16 Dec (JK).

N. Pintail: max 3 Beaver L 31 Dec; totals 7 in Dec & 4 in Jan.

Green-winged Teal: max 9 Syr 16 Dec; last 4 Syr 20 Jan.

Canvasback: 4 SPd 7 Jan; max 18 OneiL 13 Jan.

Redhead: max 85 Bvllle 10 Feb.

Ring-necked Duck: max 16 OnonL 27 Jan.

Greater Scaup: max 791 OneiL Jan.

Lesser Scaup: max 1810 SPd 13 Jan.

King Eider: DH 4 Dec; e. shore LOL 5-13 Jan.

Surf Scoter: 2 e. shore LOL 6-13 Jan.

White-winged Scoter: max 118 DH 2 Jan.

Black Scoter: max 18 DH 2 Dec; 5 e. shore LOL 5 Jan.

Long-tailed Duck: max 2225 DH 2 Dec, mostly southbound; 1791 LOL 13 Jan.

Bufflehead: max 62 FH 19 Dec.

Com. Goldeneye: 913 OneiL 13 Jan; max 934 LOL 14 Jan.

Hooded Merganser: max 53 Otisco L 20 Dec.

Com. Merganser: max 599 OneiL 13 Jan.

Red-breasted Merganser: max 240 LOL 14 Jan.

Ruddy Duck: max 19 Beaver L 31 Dec; last OnonL 27 Jan.

Red-throated Loon: last SPd 7 Jan.

Com. Loon: max 11 OneiL 13 Jan.

Pied-billed Grebe: max 3 OnonL 9 Dec; 2 per day Oswego R thru.

Horned Grebe: max 21 LOL 7 Jan.

Double-crested Cormorant: max 30 Oswego R 14 Jan.

Great Blue Heron: max 8 Syr CBC 16 Dec; few Jan-Feb.

Turkey Vulture: max 12 Dewitt 19 Dec; Oswego 29 Dec; MCL 17 Feb.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: max 7 Oswego R 28 Jan.

N. Harrier: max 4 SVB 1 Jan; 2 other Jan reports & 1 in Feb.

N. Goshawk: Nelson Swamp 10 Dec; Marcy 16 Dec; W Winfield 20 Dec; Skan CBC 30 Dec.

Red-shouldered Hawk: SFNS 20 Dec; Warren 7 Jan.
Rough-legged Hawk: max 8 SCH 19 Feb; 4 SVB 25 Feb; 3 Fabius 11 Feb.
Golden Eagle: imm Stark 7 Jan (fide TS).
Am. Kestrel: 1-2 per day, low numbers for open winter.
Merlin: reports from 4 sites.
Peregrine Falcon: pair courting Syr 24 Feb; single Utica thru.
Am. Coot: max 3 OnonL & 3 Bvll 20 Feb.
Purple Sandpiper: max 4 DH 2 Dec; last Oswego 10 Dec.
Dunlin: SPd 7 Jan, record late.
Am. Woodcock: 2 Elbridge 25 Feb, wintered?
Pomarine Jaeger: 2 DH 2 Dec.
Little Gull: DH 4 Dec.
Bonaparte's Gull: max 40 DH 2 Dec; 11 SPd 7 Jan; 6 Oneil 13 Jan.
Iceland Gull: max 5 MCL 15 Jan; to 3/day Oswego R after 1 Jan.
Lesser Black-backed Gull: MCL 16 Jan (KM).
Glaucous Gull: max 2 Oswego R in Feb; MCL 16 Jan.
Black-legged Kittiwake: max 7 DH 2 Dec; DH 4 Dec.

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

Snowy Owl: Syr airport 16 Dec; Solvay 29 Dec; FH 1 Jan; Stark 7 Jan.
Long-eared Owl: Liverpool 28 Feb, only report.
Short-eared Owl: SVB to 12 Jan.
N. Saw-whet Owl: W Winfield 6 Dec, only report.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: Clinton 22 Jan; Manlius 8 Feb.
N. Flicker: max 9 HIWMA 31 Dec.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: about 10-12 individuals for season.
Blue Jay: *intro*.
Am. Crow: max 6397 Syr 16 Dec.
Fish Crow: max 12 Liverpool 11 Dec, doing well.
Com. Raven: max 20 Geo 24 Feb.
Horned Lark: max 80 Cato 28 Jan.
Black-capped Chickadee: *intro*.
Boreal Chickadee: 2 Old Forge 3 Jan (JB, KM).
Red-breasted Nuthatch: *intro*.
White-breasted Nuthatch: *intro*.

Brown Creeper: *intro*.
Carolina Wren: max 4 Syr 16 Dec.
Winter Wren: 2 Syr 16 Dec; max 3 CM 1 Jan; last Fayetteville 2 Feb.
Golden-crowned Kinglet: *intro*.
E. Bluebird: max 13 Fulton 17 Dec.
Hermit Thrush: Syr 16 Dec; Rome 16 Dec.
Am. Robin: max 170 T Onondaga 4 Jan.
Cedar Waxwing: max 140 Bvll 28 Jan.

WARBLERS

Yellow-rumped Warbler: FH 23 Jan (KM).

TANAGER - WEAVER

E. Towhee: SFNS after 18 Jan (MP).
Am. Tree Sparrow: below average on CBC's.
Chipping Sparrow: Constantia 8 Dec (DB).
Fox Sparrow: Dewitt 2 Dec; Pompey 1 Feb.
Song Sparrow: 4 SVB 1 Jan, barely reported after that.
Swamp Sparrow: 2 Syr 16 Dec; 2 Fulton to 7 Jan.
White-throated Sparrow: 5-8 per day to late Jan.
White-crowned Sparrow: Fulton 17 Dec; 2 Port Byron 4 Feb.
Lapland Longspur: Smithville 25 Jan; Stockbridge 26 Jan.
Snow Bunting: max 300 Stockbridge 26 Jan; all counts of 50+ came after 20 Jan.
Red-winged Blackbird: max 18 Syr CBC 16 Dec; singles thru.
Rusty Blackbird: 2 CM 29 Jan; 2 Lysander 1-19 Feb.
Com. Grackle: max 10 Elbridge 8 Jan; singles to late Jan.
Brown-headed Cowbird: max 300 VB 24 Dec; 12 SFNS 26 Feb, possible early migrants.
Purple Finch: widespread Adks, to 50 per day; 7 Pulaski 4 Feb thru, the max elsewhere.
Red Crossbill: widespread Adks; max 68 North L Road 25 Feb; 30 Geo 12 Jan.
White-winged Crossbill: 3 North L 25 Feb; 5 N Wilmurt 28 Feb.
Pine Siskin: 9 Forestport 24 Feb; 4 North L 25 Feb.
Am. Goldfinch: max 46 Erieville 12 Feb.
Evening Grosbeak: 2 Rome 16 Dec; 25 Lenox 11 Jan; uncommon Adks.