

REGION 2—GENESEE

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This was a season of active and variable weather throughout. Overall we ended a bit above normal for average temperature, 3" above normal precipitation, and just above average for snowfall. Month by month the averages are as follows: December – temperature: 29.3°F, 0.1° below normal; precipitation: 4.18", 1.55" above normal; and snowfall: 41.8", 19.9" above normal; January - temperature: 30.4°F, 6.5° above normal; precipitation: 1.60", 0.74" below normal; and snowfall: 15.2", 10.6" below normal; and February - temperature: 26.4°F, 1.1° above normal; precipitation: 4.27", 2.23" above normal; and snowfall: 23.7", 1.5" above normal.

However, the effects on birding are in the details. December was cold and snowy in the first half, including both the Rochester and the Letchworth-Silver Lake CBCs, then warmer and less snowy. The cold froze most of the ponds, lakes, and bays before the early CBCs, but some water opened back up for the later ones. Conditions were windier than desirable for all three local CBCs, but overall the weather was terrible for the Rochester count (though actually better than forecast), and this led to the lowest count in 52 years. A large number of count-week species brought the total to a near average for recent years and showed that birds were still around and just could not be located on the almost unbirdable count day. January ran cold for a few days, then warm for two weeks, with highs in the 60s on the 7th-9th and two of these record highs for the dates. There was open water in most parts of the Region for the Waterfowl Count, but the combination of the early December freeze which had dispersed many of the birds, especially the puddle ducks, and a waterfowl hunting season open to the day of the start of the Waterfowl Count period, led to tallies which were generally average to below for most species. The rest of the month was cold. There was nuisance snow on most days, but nothing seriously heavy. Damaging windstorms hit on the 9th and 30th, with peak winds to 75 and 70 mph, respectively, causing much damage and many power outages in the Region. Dave Tetlow and Kurt Fox jump-started the year list by going for over 100 species in the first two days—and made **106**. After that the push was much less than in many recent years and the poor weather dampened the enthusiasm of most. A highly changeable February brought several bouts of sleet and freezing rain between snowfalls, so that by late in the month walking in the woods was tough. Clearly the weather took its toll over time and there were many comments on half hardies being scarce by late January.

As noted in the weather effects, waterfowl numbers were generally poor. A high count of 20,000 Snow Geese early in January was simply an accident of the Main Pool in Montezuma being open for a bit and the Snow Geese staging there,

then going north to feed in corn fields just into Wayne County on a day a party of Region 2 birders happened to drive past at the right time. Shortly afterward the pool froze and the birds moved south onto Cayuga Lake and dispersed into fields south in Region 3 for the rest of the season. A **Ross's Goose** found near Pt. Breeze by Dave Tetlow and Kurt Fox established the Region's fourth winter record. Continuing the trend since its split as a species, Cackling Goose was reported in small numbers each month of the season. Large numbers of Canada Goose wintered, though numbers on the day of the Waterfowl Count were off 20% from the 10-year average. Mute Swan continues out of control, though numbers on counts were a bit lower this year due to dispersal caused by the bays freezing and to hunting activity; more were seen scattered about out on Lake Ontario than typical. Trumpeter Swans were noted, but no neck-banded birds were reported this winter and most of the birds in Wayne County were either pushed south out of the Region or to open water inaccessible to birders.

Puddle duck numbers were poor throughout the season. They were virtually missing on both the CBCs, and on the Waterfowl Count, other than Am. Black Duck and Mallard, each tallied at less than half the 10-year average. The diving duck picture was more mixed. Canvasback was low, but Redhead good for the Conesus-Hemlock CBC, then dropping way off. Results were similar, but more expected, for Ring-necked Duck. There were no large scaup rafts in the Region all season. Only a lone female King Eider was spotted in a raft of White-winged Scoters on the Waterfowl Count. The bright spots in this dismal picture were above average tallies for White-winged Scoter, Long-tailed Duck, and Red-breasted Merganser and near average for both Bufflehead and Common Goldeneye. Common Merganser was low on the Rochester CBC and the Waterfowl Count, but there were counts of 2000+ several times during the season from Irondequoit Bay, so numbers depended on the ice, hunting and fishing activity on the bay, and timing of birders visiting. Of special note were a male Barrow's Goldeneye returning to winter at Pt. Breeze for the fourth season, another male Barrow's Goldeneye off Chimney Bluff east of Sodus Bay, and a **Bufflehead x Common Goldeneye hybrid** also in the latter location.

As usual, loons wintered on Lake Ontario. Numbers for both species were more than three times the 10-year average for the Waterfowl Count, with Red-throated Loons far more common than Common, a pattern seen in just the past few years. Horned and Red-necked grebes were also present in above average numbers, though for the latter the number is still small. A **Western Grebe** found off Greece by Greg Lawrence was the 11th record for the Region. Many who got the message and drove right out had great looks, but it was unfortunately a one-day wonder. Typical of recent winters, a few Double-crested Cormorants stayed through, most as a small group at a marina on the west side of Irondequoit Bay. A surprise was a Black-crowned Night-Heron at a marina on the Genesee River not far from Lake Ontario.

In recent years, roosts of Turkey Vultures have been located in a place or two in the Region each winter. As usual, there was the flock on the walls of the

Genesee River Gorge in Letchworth State Park. Another flock roosted in a new location in a wooded area in the Town of Rush, first noted by Martha Zettel, who lives nearby.

There was little of special note among the wintering raptors. The number of reports of Northern Goshawk was up a bit relative to the recent past, a Red-shouldered Hawk showed up in Greece in January for an unusual location, Rough-legged Hawk numbers were low, and American Kestrels were very scarce. However, numbers of reports were back up for both Merlin and Peregrine Falcon, after a dip last winter. There were about 22 Merlin reports for the winter, a huge contrast to the rarity of the species anywhere away from the coast in winter only 15 years ago.

There were no rails reported this winter, a combination of decreased serious searching and a recent degradation of the habitat at the Mendon Ponds site where birders could find Virginia Rail, and sometimes Sora, with relative ease for most of the past 30 winters. **Seven Sandhill Cranes** over Hogan Point in winter was termed a “wonderful sight.” It would be unprecedented except for the nine birds in Savannah in December last year and just outside our Region in the mucklands of the Northern Montezuma Wetlands Complex into early January. This winter, there were no shorebird reports other than a few single Killdeer into January and four noted as spring arrivals in late February.

Gull numbers also were generally below average this winter. An exception was 20,000+ larger (Herring Gull +) gulls on the ice edges of Irondequoit Bay as it froze in mid-December. Many of these birds would be there in the early mornings and late afternoons, but would spend much of the day at High Acres Landfill and the nearby Lake Edwards (formerly referred to as Detection Systems Pond) in the Town of Perinton about 10 miles to the SE. Gull reports from either or both of those locations included many Iceland, Lesser Black-backed, and Glaucous; a few Thayer’s; and the Region’s second **Slaty-backed Gull**, a 3rd cycle bird—photographed, but seen by two only one afternoon—on Irondequoit Bay. This year, Bonaparte’s Gulls never gathered in big numbers in the Region and disappeared by late January—a return to an historical pattern? Unsurprisingly, there was only a single Little Gull report from a day with a small flock of Bonaparte’s Gulls off Durand-Eastman Park.

After very few reports of Snowy Owl in the late fall, there was only a single report of a bird, at Pt. Breeze briefly, for this season. Even Short-eared Owls were present in lower numbers than usual at traditional sites near Lima and Genesee plus a few other scattered locations. The usual species of owls were turned up in Bergen Swamp for the big start-the-year list, but the next report was of a possible “first-spring-movement” of N. Saw-whet Owl from the usual roost area on the west side of Manitou Beach Road.

The Region’s first **Rufous Hummingbird**, an adult male present in West Walworth from 10 October, lingered just into the season on 1 December before disappearing.

Among the woodpeckers, all of the regular species were reported in typical numbers, including a few Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, but Red-headed Woodpecker proved very hard to find. The known breeding pairs and their young departed early, probably largely due to a nearly bust acorn crop. A surprise then was an individual turned up by an RBA field trip in an old traditional site at Nations and Roots Tavern roads near Geneseo, where the species had been absent for a couple of years.

Among the passerines, there were reports of many of the usual lingering half-hardy species, but numbers were down from the past few years. There were no Eastern Phoebes on the CBCs; only a single swallow not identified to species; a few Winter Wrens and no Marsh Wren; no Ruby-crowned Kinglet; Hermit Thrushes scattered about in small numbers; a lone Gray Catbird in a swale in Hamlin Beach SP; a lone Brown Thrasher found in Webster Park in February; an American Pipit in Elba where often found by Big January birders; a few Yellow-rumped Warblers and a February Common Yellowthroat for the only warblers; three Chipping Sparrows and a Savannah Sparrow in December in the Town of Hamlin, with one Chipping lingering into January there and another in Irondequoit; and small numbers of the expected holdover blackbirds, though with Rusty Blackbird only to late December. In this context, a surprise was a female **Indigo Bunting** coming to the Lawrence's feeder in Greece from 21 January through the season and beyond.

Other interesting passerines included: good numbers of Northern Shrike through December, but dropping off rapidly after that; an excellent count of 20,000 American Crows in the downtown Rochester winter crow roost for the Rochester CBC; typical Common Raven reports all from the hills to the south; Red-breasted Nuthatch numbers way down after the pretty good burst passing this fall; Cedar Waxwings hit and miss, but many reports of Bohemian Waxwing in the first half of the season, including a Regional record high **105** seen by Dave Tetlow in Hamlin Beach SP on 8 January; the usual wintering Am. Tree, Song, Swamp, White-throated, and White-crowned sparrows; lots of Dark-eyed Juncos; and the usual Lapland Longspurs and Snow Buntings, though with numbers reported held down by the many periods with little snow cover.

A major positive for the season was the reporting of all of the winter finches during at least some part of the season. Pine Grosbeaks were scattered in small flocks off and on all season, Purple Finch were scarce, both crossbills were reported only as isolated flyovers, Common Redpoll was found through the season in varying flock sizes, about 10 reasonably convincing **Hoary Redpolls** were recorded, and a few Evening Grosbeaks visited briefly.

Species tallies by month were about average. Highlights included: **Ross's Goose**, Barrow's Goldeneye, the **hybrid Buffle head x Common Goldeneye**, **Western Grebe**, Sandhill Crane, **Slaty-backed Gull**, **Rufous Hummingbird**, **Indigo Bunting**, and the winter finches.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

DEP – Durand-Eastman Park, MONR; G – Greece, MONR; GE – Geneseo, LIVI; H – T of Hamlin, MONR; HB – Hamlin Beach SP, MONR; HP – Hogan Point, T of Greece, MONR; I – Irondequoit, MONR; IB – Irondequoit Bay, MONR; LLCBC – Conesus-Hemlock or Little Lakes CBC; LSLCBC – Letchworth-Silver Lake CBC; PB – Point Breeze, ORLE; PE – Perinton, MONR; S – T of Savannah, WAYN; SB – Sodus Bay, WAYN; WL – West Lakeshore, MONR & ORLE.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Snow Goose: max 20,000 Clyde 14 Jan (R&SS), flock from Main Pool Montezuma feeding in fields along Rt. 89; 12 G 8 Jan, many for the location and date.

ROSS'S GOOSE: PB 1 Jan (KF,DT), 4th Reg winter record.

Cackling Goose: 5 rep of 1-3 sev loc thru.

Canada Goose: max 25,000 S 29 Jan (BD, BG), high for winter,

Mute Swan: max 277 Waterfowl Count 12-13 Jan.

N. Shoveler: 8 SB 21 Feb (DD), only report.

Redhead: max 5352 LLCBC 29 Dec, high count, 5000 still present 5 Jan.

Ring-necked Duck: max 313 LLCBC 29 Dec.

Greater Scaup: max 1200 G 14 Feb, low max.

King Eider: 1 f Forest Lawn, Webster 13 Jan (JB,NP,RS), only report.

Bufflehead: max 317 LLCBC 29 Dec, record high for CBC.

BUFFLEHEAD x COMMON

GOLDENEYE: 1 m Chimney Bluff 13 Jan (DS, MT).

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE: 1 m PB 5 Dec thru (KF,DT,mob), returned for 4th year in general area; 1 m Chimney Bluff 13 Jan (DS, MT).

Com. Goldeneye: max 1321 SB to Fairhaven 13 Jan (DS, MT), good count.

Hooded Merganser: max 301 LLCBC 29 Dec, good count.

Com. Merganser: max 3500 IB 19 Dec (RS), high count; 1726 IB 12 Feb, good count.

Red-throated Loon: max 32 HB 12 Jan (WS), good count for Jan.

WESTERN GREBE: off G 23 Jan (GL,mob), 11th Reg record, sev ph.

Double-crested Cormorant: 6-8 IB thru.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: Gibb's Marina Genesee River, Rochester 28 Dec-31 Jan (JS, mob).

Turkey Vulture: max 31 Rush 25 Dec thru (MZ, mob); 20 Letchworth SP 15 Dec (LSLCBC).

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: 8 total sev loc Jan, good mid-winter total for Reg.

N. Goshawk: 1 G 21 Dec (BD); 1 G 28 Dec (MD, DT); 4 total WL 3-15 Jan (DT); 1 ad Lyons 26 Jan (AT).

Red-shouldered Hawk: 1 ad G 12 Jan (DT), unusual location for date I recent years.

Merlin: 17 total WL 1-31 Dec (DT); 5 total sev loc 1-31 Jan.

Peregrine Falcon: 5 total sev loc 2-28 Dec.

Virginia Rail: no reports.

Am. Coot: max 230 SB 6 Dec (DT), low max.

SANDHILL CRANE: 7 HP 5 Dec (GVN), rare, high count for winter.

Killdeer: 1 G 8 Jan; 1 HP 9 Jan; arr 4 sev loc 24 Feb (DT).

Little Gull: 1 ad off DEP 21 Dec (RS, CS), only report.

Thayer's Gull: 1 1st win IB 15 Dec (RS); 1 1st win IB 18 Dec (RMCK) 1 1st win PE 19 Dec (DS); 1 imm IB 1 Jan (RS).

Iceland Gull: max 10 PE 1-31 Dec (DS, MT).

Lesser Black-backed Gull: 5 total sev loc Feb; others at IB & PE off and on Dec a & Jan.

SLATY-BACKED GULL: 1 3rd cycle IB 17 Dec (RS-photos,DT), 2nd Reg record.

Glaucous Gull: max 3 PE 5 Dec (DS,MT).

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Snowy Owl: 1 PB 13 Jan (KF,TL), only report.

Barred Owl: 1 Highland Park, Rochester 25-27 Feb (GP, sev), unusual location.

N. Saw-whet Owl: arr 1 M 17-29 Feb (MF).

RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD: 1 ad m West Walworth thru 1 Dec (B&LG), continued from fall.

Red-headed Woodpecker: 1 Nations Road, GE 3 Feb (RBA), only report, traditional site where missing past couple of years.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: 26 total Dec, several locations.

Am. Crow: max 20,000 Rochester (DB, *et al*), count of downtown roost.

Com. Raven: 4 LLCBC 29 Dec; 5 Rattlesnake Hill WMA (KF, DT).

Gray Catbird: 1 HB thru, only report.

Brown Thrasher: 1 Webster Park 8 Feb, only report.

Am. Pipit: 1 Elba (KF, DT).

Bohemian Waxwing: 3 Manitou 10 Dec; 3 HP 13 Dec; 3 HP 19 Dec; max 105 HB 8 Jan(DT), Reg. record high; 38 total WL 1-15 Jan (DT,KF,RS).

WARBLERS

Yellow-rumped Warbler: only a few singles at sev loc.

Com. Yellowthroat: 1 DEP 2 Feb (RS), only report.

TANAGERS – WEAVERS

E. Towhee: 3 reports Dec, sev loc.

Chipping Sparrow: 1-3 H 19-31 Dec, 1 continuing to 16 Jan; 1 I 18 Dec (B&BP); only reports.

Savannah Sparrow: 2 H 21Dec (RS,CS); 1 WL 21 Dec (DT).

Fox Sparrow: 1 H 21 Dec (DT).

Snow Bunting: max 1220 Byron 19-20 Dec (WS); 600 Kendall 16 Feb.

INDIGO BUNTING: 1 fem G 21 Jan thru (FL, GL), 2nd Reg winter record.

Com. Grackle: max 20-22 Pittsford 30 Dec, 9 Jan (PO), only sizable flock this winter.

Pine Grosbeak: 5-7 Webster Arboretum 1-29 Feb (GP, et al).

Red Crossbill: 9 Rattlesnake Hill WMA 2 Jan (KF,DT); 1 HP 8 Jan (DT).

White-winged Crossbill: 1 HP 19 Dec (DT); 1 Rattlesnake Hill WMA 2 Jan (KF,DT); 1 Webster Park 4 Jan (R&SS).

Com. Redpoll: max 200 S 16 Feb (TL,TJ,MH).

Hoary Redpoll: 3 total sev 20-29 Dec (RS,JS,DT); 7 total sev 1-19 Jan (sev), good number of reports this winter.