

REGION 5—ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

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The season was warm overall; there were only two days in Syracuse when the temperature fell below zero degrees Fahrenheit. In December the average temperature was 27.9° F, 0.7° below normal, with 5.04" of precipitation, 1.92" above normal, and 49.8" of snow. The January average temperature was 29.5°, which was 6.8° above normal. Precipitation for the month was 1.36", 1.24" below normal, with only 10.1" of snow. In February the average temperature was 25.7° F, 1.2° above normal, with 4.72" of precipitation, 2.6" above normal, and 30.5" of snow.

In Old Forge the temperature varied from 48° F. to -22° F, and 22 days had a sub-zero low, but there was rarely two feet of snow on the ground until the end of the season. Oneida Lake froze over on 1 January, reopened on 10 January, and froze for the duration on 19 January. A mild period in the middle of January left lots of open water to be covered on the NYS Waterfowl Census and altered

distribution of the waterfowl.

Many Snow Geese and Tundra Swans lingered into January and the latter species again wintered at Brewerton. The Region has been fortunate to have had few breeding Mute Swans, but the winter population is slowly increasing. American Wigeon, Northern Shoveler, and Northern Pintail were the less common dabblers reported this winter, and it's not clear why a large flock of Pintail was seen along Lake Ontario in February—either birds moving south or birds moving north on the strong south winds of the day. Some Green-winged Teal usually stay until freeze-up, but only a single bird was reported.

Canvasback, Redhead, and Lesser Scaup were seen in better than average numbers for recent winters. White-winged Scoters, presumably eating zebra mussels, could be found along much of the Lake Ontario shore, while Black and Surf scoter, King Eider, and Ruddy Duck were the uncommon divers for the season. Most grebes left early although a few Pied-billed Grebes wintered. A low number of Common Loons stayed into January, and few Red-throated Loons were seen.

Turkey Vultures are now expected in the eastern Syracuse suburbs through the season. The wintering numbers of Bald Eagle are increasing. We received many reports of Sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks, most often around populated areas where feeders might be encountered. Northern Harrier and Rough-legged Hawk numbers were low, as most N. Harriers were pushed out by the December snow and Rough-legged Hawks probably found low concentrations of mice and voles. No shorebirds were reported despite relatively mild weather. Snowy Owl, Long-eared Owl, and Short-eared Owl were scarce.

Gulls started building on the Oswego River on 21 December, with many Herring Gulls and four Iceland Gulls appearing as control gates at the dams were opened due to melting of the heavy December snow. The strong flow washed many fish over the dams resulting in a feast for the gulls. Observers remarked that gulls were having such an easy time finding food that they weren't harassing one another for a meal. Numbers peaked in January, with record counts of Iceland and Lesser Black-backed gulls. It was obvious that many gulls were on the move throughout the period; the peak count of 30 Iceland Gulls on 26 January included no adults, while there were at least five adults at Phoenix on 6 January. Two different Thayer's Gulls, one with a missing primary, were showing the generally accepted field marks of first-cycle birds. Little Gull and Black-legged Kittiwake were seen at Derby Hill following the passage of a strong low-pressure system. A Forster's Tern was totally unexpected at the end of December. The Little Gull and Forster's Tern sightings were regional firsts for December.

More Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were reported than usual, although there were no February reports. Northern Flicker numbers were somewhat low. There were many Northern Shrikes in the Region, some of them quite persistent. Common wintering species such as Blue Jay, Black-capped Chickadee, nuthatches, and Golden-crowned Kinglet were scarce in most forests. A Tufted

Titmouse at a Thendara feeder was north of its usual range, while Hermit Thrush, Winter Wren, Gray Catbird, American Pipit, and Yellow-rumped Warbler were among the half hardies spotted.

Ravens in Camillus, Dewitt, and Three Rivers WMA were on the fringes of suburbia; it will be interesting to see if they will continue to expand into human habitation. Even without a substantial wild food crop some large flocks of Cedar Waxwings were seen, but observers found few Bohemian Waxwings in a year when many were in the far northern part of the state. Eastern Towhee, Fox Sparrow, Swamp Sparrow, and White-crowned Sparrow were half-hardy sparrows typically expected in winter. Most would be fortunate to survive through February hereabouts. Blackbird numbers were on the low side, with few Red-winged Blackbirds and Common Grackles, a single Rusty Blackbird, and only a few flocks of Brown-headed Cowbirds.

Pine Grosbeaks and redpolls were the finch stars this season. It was the first good Pine Grosbeak invasion since the winter of 2001-02, and they could be found in many areas with crabapples and other ornamental fruit trees. In northern Herkimer County flocks of Pine Grosbeaks were found at bird feeders as well as in the forest. Common Redpolls were generally encountered, although the influx was more or less average, certainly not as big as some years. Some Hoary Redpolls were found in redpoll flocks when there was an opportunity for careful scrutiny. With the lack of cones, only a few Pine Siskins remained in the area and both crossbills were very scarce. Purple Finch was scattered in low numbers. Evening Grosbeaks were at some feeders in early December throughout the Region and afterwards were common only at traditional higher elevation sites with a few nomads elsewhere. Still, it was the best year in some time for winter finches.

A total of 126 species plus two hybrid gulls were seen over the winter, average for the last ten years. Highlights for the season included King Eider, Harlequin Duck, Ruddy Duck, Little Gull, Thayer's Gull, Iceland Gull, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Glaucous Gull, Black-legged Kittiwake, Forster's Tern, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Pine Grosbeak, and Hoary Redpoll.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

Bvllle – Baldwinsville; CM – Clay Marsh; DH – Derby Hill; FH – Fair Haven, Little Sodus Bay, and vicinity; Geo – Georgetown; GSC – Great Swamp Conservancy, n. MADI; HI – Howland Island WMA; LOL – Lake Ontario Littoral; OneiL – Oneida Lake; OnonL – Onondaga Lake; Skan – Skaneateles; SPd – Sandy Pond; SVB – Sylvan and Verona Beach; Syr – Syracuse; VB – Van Buren.

WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

Snow Goose: max 1300 Skan L 13 Jan.
Cackling Goose: Sherrill 1 Jan (CS, BB).
Mute Swan: max 10 FH 9 Feb; 4 Canastota 3 Jan.
Tundra Swan: max 88 OnonL 14 Jan; 60 Oneil 13 Jan; 24 Brewerton 28 Feb, wintered.
Wood Duck: max 4 W Winfield 8 Jan; last Manlius 24 Jan.
Gadwall: max 15 OnonL 4 Dec.
Am. Wigeon: max 6 Skan L 24 Feb; 2 SPd 13 Jan; 2 OnonL 31 Jan.
Am. Black Duck: max 84 OnonL 31 Jan.
N. Shoveler: 2 GSC 1 Dec; OnonL 29 Jan (JT).
N. Pintail: 11 Fulton 13 Jan; 33 LOL 17 Feb.
Green-winged Teal: Camillus 16 Jan, only report.
Canvasback: max 4 OnonL 10 Feb; total 19 for season.
Redhead: max 700 OnonL 23 Feb.
Ring-necked Duck: max 130 Otisco L 14 Dec; 14 OnonL 31 Jan.
Greater Scaup: max 497 Skan L 13 Jan.
Lesser Scaup: max 112 LOL 13 Jan.
King Eider: DH 1 Dec; 3 SPd 13 Jan.
Harlequin Duck: Oswego 24-29 Dec (BP).
Surf Scoter: max 7 SPd 10 Dec; Oswego after 9 Feb.
White-winged Scoter: max 698 LOL 13 Jan.
Black Scoter: max 42 SPd 10 Dec; 2 Oswego 26 Feb.
Long-tailed Duck: max 658 LOL 13 Jan.
Bufflehead: max 38 Oswego 22 Dec.
Com. Goldeneye: max 1000 OnonL 23 Feb.
Hooded Merganser: max 245 Otisco L 14 Dec; 30 Fulton 13 Jan.

Com. Merganser: max 4700 OnonL 10 Feb.
Red-breasted Merganser: max 323 LOL 13 Jan.
Ruddy Duck: 2 Syr 1 Dec; Bvllle 15 Feb (JB).
Red-throated Loon: 2 FH 7 Dec; Oswego 22 Dec; Oswego 9 Feb.
Com. Loon: max 5 OnonL 15 Dec; FH 13 Jan.
Pied-billed Grebe: 4 OnonL 15 Dec; about 6 wintered along Oswego R.
Horned Grebe: max 10-LOL 5 Jan; OnonL 15 Feb.
Red-necked Grebe: 2 OnonL 15 Dec; OnonL 14 Jan.
Double-crested Cormorant: max 18 Oswego R 15 Jan.
Great Blue Heron: max 3 Fulton thru Jan.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Turkey Vulture: max 9 Fayetteville 31 Jan.
Bald Eagle: max 11 Redfield 11 Jan; 10 OnonL 30 Jan; 7 Cross L 24 Feb; up to 6 wintered Big Moose.
N. Harrier: Richland 12 Jan; Weedsport 13 Jan, only Jan-Feb reports.
N. Goshawk: reports from CM, Constantia, DH, Geo, Rome, Richland, and W Winfield.
Red-tailed Hawk: 8 DH 24 Feb, early migrants.
Rough-legged Hawk: max 3 SVB 1 Jan & 3 s. MADI 16 Jan.
Merlin: reports from at least 12 sites.
Peregrine Falcon: SPd 13 Jan, local pairs Syr & Utica thru.
Am. Coot: max 8 OnonL 31 Jan; lesser numbers Oswego & FH.
LITTLE GULL: DH 12 Dec, first winter record.

Bonaparte's Gull: max 8 SVB 7 Dec, none after Dec.

Herring Gull: 10,000+ Oswego River in Jan.

Herring Gull X Glaucous Gull (Nelson's Gull): Phoenix 7-24 Jan.

Herring Gull X Lesser Black-backed Gull: Phoenix & Bvle 24-31 Jan.

Thayer's Gull: 2 Oswego R 29 Dec to 12 Jan (MY, KMGa, BC, BP).

Iceland Gull: 9 Phoenix 22 Dec; max 30 Bvle to Oswego 26 Jan, record count (AVN, JM, KMGa); 18 Oswego R 13 Feb.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: Phoenix 22 Dec; max 5 Oswego R 29 Dec to 12 Jan.

Glaucous Gull: Phoenix 8 Dec; max 8 Oswego R 29 Dec; Phoenix 13 Feb.

Black-legged Kittiwake: 3 DH 12 Dec.

Forster's Tern: Oswego 30 Dec, first winter record (KMGa).

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

Snowy Owl: Weedsport 5 Feb; N Syr 23 Feb; none at traditional sites.

Barred Owl: numerous reports of birds hunting by day.

Long-eared Owl: Pompey 6 Dec; FH 20 Dec.

Short-eared Owl: SVB 9 Dec.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: max 5 Clinton CBC 15 Dec; 7 others to last T Onondaga 25 Jan.

N. Flicker: max 19 Syr 15 Dec.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: a big year with reports from 30+ locations.

Blue Jay: few in woods, low numbers at feeders.

Am. Crow: 3578 Syr 2 Feb

Fish Crow: max 4 OnonL 14 Jan.

Com. Raven: max 22 Old Forge 20 Dec; 2 Dewitt 8 Dec; Camillus 5 Jan; 2 Green Lakes SP 3 Feb, on suburban fringes.

Horned Lark: max 95 Skan 5 Jan.

Tufted Titmouse: Thendara 13 Feb, unusual Adks.

Brown Creeper: max 3 HI 19 Jan.

Winter Wren: CM 10 Dec; Camillus 5 Jan; Dewitt 26 Jan; CM 25 Feb.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 6 VB 21 Dec; 3 Pratt's Falls 6 Jan.

E. Bluebird: max 22 CM 15 Dec.

Hermit Thrush: Syr 15 Dec; CM 28 Dec.

Am. Robin: max 300 Spafford 25 Jan; also 187 Skan 5 Jan & 137 HI 8 Jan, large flocks in sw. part of Region.

Gray Catbird: Clinton & CM 15 Dec; FH 2 Feb (KMGa).

N. Mockingbird: New London 1 Jan, unusual there.

Am. Pipit: Oswego 9 Dec (GD).

Bohemian Waxwing: 4 Pompey 22 Dec; 2 Clay 19 Dec; Three Rivers WMA 17 Jan.

Cedar Waxwing: max 200 Pompey 26 Dec; also 170 Rome 30 Dec & 123 Oswego 4 Jan.

WARBLERS

Yellow-rumped Warbler: Oswego 29 Dec; 2 HI 8 Jan.

TANAGERS - WEAVERS

E. Towhee: CM 7 Jan (DN).

Am. Tree Sparrow: max 60 SVB 1 Jan.

Fox Sparrow: Geo 23 Dec, only report.

Song Sparrow: max 6 Rome 30 Dec.

Swamp Sparrow: 2 HI 8 Jan.

White-throated Sparrow: max 24 CM 15 Dec; also 24 Elbridge 17 Feb, a good late season count.

White-crowned Sparrow: Scriba 29 Dec (BB, JT).

Dark-eyed Junco: max 47 Elbridge 7 Dec.

Lapland Longspur: max 10 Split Rock 26 Dec; 2 VB 8 Dec; 4 Cato 19-24 Jan; Marshall 24 Feb.

Snow Bunting: max 1000 VB 5 Feb; several flocks of 200+ every month.

Red-winged Blackbird: 7 reports to last 2 CM 28 Jan.

Rusty Blackbird: Syr 15 Dec (JR), only report.

Com. Grackle: 3 reports, last 23 Dec.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 42 Rome 30 Dec; 14 Colosse 29 Jan, high for snowbelt.

Pine Grosbeak: flocks of 20-35 common and widespread thru; at feeders in Adks, crabapples elsewhere.

Purple Finch: max 9 Clinton CBC 15 Dec; 3 Rome 30 Dec; Oneida 1 Jan; 4 Beaver L after 11 Jan; 2 Elbridge 17 Feb.

Red Crossbill: Forestport 27 Jan.

White-winged Crossbill: Beaver Lake 2-5 Jan.

Com. Redpoll: max 230 Scriba 29 Dec; widespread, typical irruption year.

Hoary Redpoll: Geo 22 Dec; Sauquoit 26 Dec; Pulaski 4 Jan, 2 Feb; DeRuyter after 16 Jan.

Pine Siskin: max 30 Hastings 4 Dec;
scattered low numbers, few persist.

Evening Grosbeak: flocks to 40-60
persistent Adks, Tug Hill, & Southern
Highlands.

EXOTICS: Mandarin Duck: m New
Hartford pond 4 Jan, joined by second m 9
Jan.

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