

REGION 3—FINGER LAKES

Mark Chao

124 Simsbury Drive, Ithaca, NY 14850
markchao@imt.org

December temperatures in Region 3 were right at their annual averages, but snowfall levels were nearly twice as high as usual at 27.5" in Ithaca compared with 14" on average. Snow cover remained throughout the Region for all of January, as that month was extremely cold, with an average temperature 15.2° F in Ithaca, 7.4° below the historical norm. February was slightly warmer than usual, with only about one-third of the usual levels of precipitation and snowfall, resulting in very little snow cover.

Expansive open water on the Region's larger lakes hosted high numbers of common waterfowl, as noted on various organized counts in January. Several rarer species were noted, including a Barrow's Goldeneye found by David Wheeler on Canandaigua Lake and, for the tenth winter in a row, an Eared Grebe on Cayuga Lake by Aurora. The most notable phenomenon among wading birds was the presence of two Black-crowned Night-Herons near downtown Ithaca in mid-December, with another sighting of this species in Sapsucker Woods a few weeks later.

An adult Golden Eagle was photographed several times at a deer carcass in Avoca, Steuben County, in late December and early January. A party of four Ithaca birders found the only Gyrfalcon of the season, a gray morph, crossing Cayuga Lake near Aurora on 10 January.

For the second winter in a row, a Slaty-backed Gull was observed and documented by many at Cornell University's compost facility on Stevenson Road in Dryden and at Stewart Park. Paul Hurtado found one first-cycle Thayer's Gull in Seneca Falls on 17 January. Tom Johnson and Shawn

Billerman found another at Stevenson Road on 17 February. Both Thayer's Gulls were well documented with multiple photos showing various distinguishing marks, putting even this difficult identification beyond any doubt.

It was a good winter for owl-watching, especially between Seneca and Cayuga Lakes, where at least fourteen Short-eared Owls were observed on one field trip and at least three Snowy Owls were present for most of the season.

A few unexpected passerines appeared during the season, most notably a Rose-breasted Grosbeak found by Leona Lauster in Yates County in early February. Other notable songbirds in the Region included Gray Catbird, Field Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, Eastern Meadowlark, and Common Grackle.

Longtime observers seemed unanimous in their sense that this winter's influx of White-winged Crossbills and Pine Siskins was the greatest in two decades. Christmas Bird Counts in Elmira/Corning and Ithaca both recorded all-time high counts of these species. Throughout the season and over the whole Region, both species were easy to find, with Pine Siskins especially numerous around feeders, and White-winged Crossbills observed feeding primarily on the cones of various native and ornamental spruces plus hemlock, larch, pine, and fir cones and some deciduous tree buds. Several observers reported the rare green morph of Pine Siskin. Common Redpolls were widely present in January and February, but not in especially high numbers. Mickey Scilingo made the only detailed report of Hoary Redpoll, from Mecklenburg on 9 February.

CONTRIBUTORS

Janet Akin, Paul Anderson, Bill Baker, Jessie Barry, Fred & Julie Bertram, Shawn Billerman, Gladys Birdsall, Fritzie & John Blizzard, Rose Broome, Mike Burger, Brad Carlson, Mark Chao, Kathleen Clements, Susan Danskin, George Dillmann, Lynn Donaldson, Ryan Douglas, Jody Enck, Bill Evans, Steve Fast, Annette Finney, John Fitzpatrick, Jeff Gerbracht, Jon Glase, Jane Graves, John & Sue Gregoire, Andy Guthrie, Scott Haber, Jim and Judy Haviland, Stephen Hill, Paul Hurtado, Sara Jane Hymes, Tom Johnson, Marsha & Fred Kardon, Geo Kloppel, Gary Kohlenberg, Stuart Krasnoff, William Kuk, Tim Lenz, Bill & Shirley McAneny, Elaina McCartney, David McCart, Jay McGowan, Kevin McGowan, Bob McGuire, Matthew Medler, Ann Mitchell, David Nicosia, Dave Nutter, Stefhani Ohlström, Linda Orkin, Bill Ostrander, Mike Powers, Marie Read, Cameron Rognan, Ken Rosenberg, Lisa Rouse, Sean Scanlon, Mickey Scilingo, Marty Schlabach, Ellen Sears, Nate Senner, Dominic Sherony, Nick Sly, Robert Spahn, Chris Tessaglia-Hymes, Carolyn van Leer, Lee Ann van Leer, John van Niel, David Werier, David Wheeler, Chris Wiley, Mary Winston, Mark Witmer, Christopher L. Wood, Matt Young

ABBREVIATIONS

ATSMP – Allan Treman State Marine Park, Ithaca; CU – Cornell University; dtItH – downtown Ithaca; ECCBC – Elmira/Corning Christmas Bird Count; ESP – East Shore Park, Ithaca; GCBC – Geneva Christmas Bird Count; ICBC – Ithaca Christmas Bird Count; LPTSP – Long Point State Park; MNWR – Montezuma NWR; Myers – Myers Park, Lansing; SchCBC – Schuyler County CBC; StvR – Stevenson Road, Dryden; SW – Sapsucker Woods; StP – Stewart Park, Ithaca.

WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE: 1 Aurora Bay 6 Dec (TL, MM, PH); 1 Sheldrake 26 Jan - 5 Feb (DN, BM, SD, AM, BC).

Snow Goose: max 45000 Union Springs 27 Feb (JesB, CLW).

Cackling Goose: max 2 MNWR 6 Dec (PH, TL); 1 MNWR 17 Jan (CR); 1 Aurora Bay 18 Jan (KR, SS, MB); 1 Myers 1 Feb (RD).

Mute Swan: max 10 Farley's Point (CAYU) 7 Feb (TL, AM).

Tundra Swan: 1500 MNWR 30 Dec (RS).

Trumpeter Swan: 26 Cayuga Lake (village of Cayuga) 16 Jan (DS, AG, ph!), ++.

Gadwall: max 52 Union Springs 18 Jan (KR, SS, MB).

Am. Black Duck: max 226 Farley's Point (CAYU) 18 Jan (KR, SS, MB).

N. Shoveler: max 2 ATSMP 28 Feb (WK); 1 ATSMP 4 Jan (EM); 1 Sheldrake 22-26 Jan (DN, *et al.*)

Green-winged Teal: 1 dtlth 2 Jan thru (DN, *et al.*).

Canvasback: max 818 LPtSP 18 Jan (KR, SS, MB).

Redhead: max 10000 LPtSP 10 Jan (MB).

Surf Scoter: 2 ESP 23 Jan (JaGr).

White-winged Scoter: max 18 Aurora 7 Feb (JesB, CLW).

Black Scoter: 1 StP 1-3 Dec (SK, DN, *et al.*); 1 StP 14 Feb (TJ).

Long-tailed Duck: 14 ICBC 1 Jan, +.

Com. Goldeneye: max 1500 Myers 7 Feb (RD), +.

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE: 1 Canandaigua Lake 14-22 Feb (DWh, GK, *et al.*).

Com. Merganser: max 750 Canoga, SENE 10 Jan (TL, MM, SB), +.

Ruddy Duck: max 9 ICBC 1 Jan, +.

EARED GREBE: 1 Aurora 10 Jan (SB, TL, MM, CWi).

Red-necked Grebe: max 10 Aurora 7 Feb (SF).

Double-crested Cormorant: 1 StP 11 Dec (DN); 1 SchCBC 27 Dec.

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT-HERON: 1 ad dtlth 3 Dec (DN); 1 imm dtlth 6 Dec (SK); 1 imm SW 21 Dec (CLW).

Turkey Vulture: multiple scattered reports thru.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Red-shouldered Hawk: 1 SW 23 Dec thru.

GOLDEN EAGLE: 1 Avoca, STEU 28 Dec, 5 Jan, 9 Jan (JH ph!).

Bald Eagle: max 12 Union Springs 10 Jan (TL, MM, SB).

Merlin: multiple scattered reports thru.

The Kingbird 2009 June; 59 (2)

Peregrine Falcon: 1 dtlth 15 Jan thru (DN *et al.*); 1 CU 16 Jan thru (MWit, RD, *et al.*).

Reports from two locations possibly represent one bird.

GYRFALCON: 1 LPtSP 10 Jan (SB, TL, MM, CWi).

Killdeer: 1 StP 2 Jan (PH) only report.

Am. Woodcock: 1 Ithaca 9 Jan (NaS), only report.

Bonaparte's Gull: max 2 StP 7 Dec (KR).

Herring Gull: 1200 StP 1 Jan (KR, Ithaca CBC).

THAYER'S GULL: 1 Seneca Falls 17 Jan (PH, ph!); 1 StvR and StP 17-19 Feb (TJ, SB, *et al.*, ph!).

Iceland Gull: 10 Seneca Falls 17 Jan (PH); 6 StP 1 Jan (KR, PH, Ithaca CBC).

Lesser Black-backed Gull: max 5 ESP 14 Feb (TJ), +.

Glaucous Gull: 2 StP 15 Jan (PH).

SLATY-BACKED GULL: 1 StvR and StP 21-23 Dec (TL, KM, *et al.*, ph!).

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

Snowy Owl: max 2 Seneca Falls 17 Jan (TJ, *et al.*).

Long-eared Owl: 1 Seneca Falls 14 Feb (JvN).

Short-eared Owl: max 14 Ovid 13 Dec (AM, *et al.*)

N. Saw-whet Owl: max 2 Prospect Hill (CHEM) 10 Dec (MP).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: 1 Preemption Road (ONT) 7 Dec (FB); 1 SW 3 Jan (MWin), 1 Covert thru (J&JH, DN).

Hairy Woodpecker: 147 ICBC 1 Jan, +.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

Am. Crow: max 9278 GCBC 14 Dec, +.

Horned Lark: max 525 GCBC 14 Dec.

E. Bluebird: max 141 ICBC 1 Jan.

Hermit Thrush: 1 Ithaca 2, 4 Jan (SO, DN, *et al.*), likely same bird, only reports.

Gray Catbird: 1 CU 20 Jan thru (RD); 1 dtlth 31 Jan (DN).

WARBLERS

Yellow-rumped Warbler: 2 dtlth 31 Jan (DN); 2+ Severne Road (YATE) 2 Feb (LL).

TANAGERS - WEAVERS

E. Towhee: 1 Trumansburg 11-18, 26 Dec (B&SMcA).

FIELD SPARROW: 1 Ithaca 15 Jan (SO, DN); 1 Lansing 18, 21 Jan (RD).

SAVANNAH SPARROW: 1 Lansing 1-2 Jan (RB).

Fox Sparrow: 1 Dryden 1-2 Dec (JF), only report.

White-crowned Sparrow: 3 Preemption Road, ONTA 25 Jan (LL), +.

Snow Bunting: max 1694 GCBC 14 Dec, +.

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK: 1 Severne Road, YATE 2 Feb (LL), only report.

E. Meadowlark: 2 Scofield Rd (TOMP) 4 Jan (PA, ES, *et al.*); 1 Skyline Dr, YATE 6 Jan (LD).

Com. Grackle: 1 Dryden thru (CvL, LaVL).

RED CROSSBILL: 1 Dryden 8 Feb (MS), only report.

WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL: 156 ICBC 1 Jan, +; widely reported thru.

Com. Redpoll: max 80 Mecklenburg 9 Feb (MiS).

HOARY REDPOLL: 1 Mecklenburg 9 Feb (MiS), only report.

Pine Siskin: max 472 ECCBC 14 Dec, ++; widely reported thru.