

REGION 1—NIAGARA FRONTIER

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December 2009 was typical in terms of temperature and snowfall, but a little wetter than usual. The average temperature was 28.6° F, 1.2° below normal. Monthly precipitation at Buffalo-Niagara International Airport was 5.13", 1.33" more than usual, with 25.1" of snow, 0.4" less than usual. Much of the snow was during three lake effect events. January averaged out to a nearly typical month but was mild for a long stretch. The average temperature was 23.2° F, 1.3° below normal. The monthly precipitation was 3.19", 0.03" above normal, with 35.6" of snow, 9.5" more than normal. Most of the snow fell during lake effect events between the 2nd and 5th and 27th-28th. February saw nearly consistent weather, with little range in temperatures and light snow on most days. The Region missed the major snowstorms that formed along the Atlantic coast. The average temperature was 24.6°F, 1.3° below normal. The monthly precipitation was 1.60", 0.82" below normal, with 13.4" of snowfall, 4.4" below normal. The eastern basin of Lake Erie was mostly ice-covered by early February.

As usual, the Niagara River held large numbers of wintering waterfowl especially from inside the ice boom on Lake Erie to around Grand Island. High counts of 10,000+ were received for Greater Scaup, Canvasback, and Common Merganser from this area. However, totals are better reflected in the New York State winter waterfowl count data. Tundra Swans congregate in winter around Grand Island and near Strawberry Island; 317 in this area on 23 December was an impressive total. Rarer waterfowl species included the nearly annual King Eider and Barrow's Goldeneye. **King Eiders** were found by Jim Pawlicki at Sturgeon Point in early December, and then two individuals in Buffalo Harbor that were sighted several times between late January and late February. The adult male **Barrow's Goldeneye** that has been a regular at Point Breeze for the past few winters was present throughout the winter. This is the same individual as reported in the Region 2 report from the same site.

A remarkable 76 **Red-throated Loons** were counted by Willie D'Anna on Lake Ontario from Fort Niagara S.P. on 15 February. Formerly very rare beyond the first week of January, sightings and totals continue to increase on Lake Ontario in mid-winter. There were only a few Red-necked Grebe sightings this winter, all from Lake Ontario. An **Eared Grebe** at Dunkirk Harbor was present 18-28 January and well observed after its initial discovery by David Neveu.

Counts of Ruffed Grouse are rarely made, so it was encouraging to get a seemingly very high count of 13 from Jeff Reed at the Wolf Run section of Allegany S.P. on 5 February. As seen from recent breeding bird atlas data, Ruffed Grouse is not as common in Region 1 as most other parts of the State. They are much more common in the southern tier counties. There were several reports of 50+ Wild Turkeys this winter; they seem to be continuing to thrive.

There were many Bald Eagle and Merlin reports again this winter; both clearly on the rise. The maximum count of Bald Eagles was 19 at Dunkirk Harbor in mid February. There were two **Northern Goshawks** documented, an adult spying David Junkin's feeders in Wethersfield in December and an immature at Wilson-Tuscarora S.P. in January. There were very few Rough-legged Hawks reported this winter.

For the second consecutive winter, an **American Avocet** delighted many birders with an extended appearance from 12 December to 2 January. The avocet was found on the west side of Dunkirk Harbor, where it waded and swam near shore. This was only the second winter record for the Region.

The New Year started in an exciting way, with two Mew Gulls found on the Niagara River near the Niagara Power Project in the first week of January. An adult **Mew Gull** of the North American form (*L. c. brachyrhynchus*) was found on 1 January by Betsy Potter and quickly identified by Jean Iron and Willie D'Anna. There were several unverified reports of it in the next week. Even more exciting was the subsequent find of Mew Gull of the European form (*L. c. canus*), also known as "**Common Gull**," in the same location on 6 January by Dean DiTommaso, Jean Iron, and Kevin McLaughlin and by several observers on the following day. Good photographs of both gulls were obtained. These sightings represent the 9th and 10th Regional records following three sightings in winter 2008-2009.

Other notable gulls on the Niagara River included a **California Gull** that continued from the fall season, a **Black-legged Kittiwake**, and two reports of **Black-headed Gull**. Several birders checked out Cuba Lake in Allegany County in early December, as many large gulls come in to roost there. These expeditions resulted in finding Glaucous Gull, Iceland Gull, and Lesser Black-backed Gulls, which are all rare occurrences for so far inland from the Great Lakes and Niagara River. A maximum of 1,875 Herring Gulls was also a high inland count. Great Black-backed Gulls were abundant at Dunkirk Harbor this winter, with a maximum of 1,345 exceeding counts from recent winters.

The winter's only **Snowy Owl** was found by Chris Wood in Somerset and remained throughout the period. A maximum of nine **Short-eared Owls** was found in Hartland, the greatest concentration at several sites tracked by Chuck Rosenberg as part of a NYSDEC study. There were a few reports each of Long-eared Owl and Northern Saw-whet Owl, mostly from CBCs.

While counting crows at the Ralph Wilson Stadium parking lots for the Hamburg-East Aurora CBC, Jim Pawlicki and Kyle Horton came across a smaller crow that was suggestive of Fish Crow structurally; however, despite several photographs, a definitive identification could not be made. Fish Crow has yet to be documented in Region 1.

Two pairs of **Bohemian Waxwings** were picked out among Cedar Waxwings along the Lake Ontario Plain representing the only sightings for this fall and winter. Joe Mitchell found and photographed a **Vesper Sparrow** in South Dayton on 27 December, one of very few winter records for the Region, especially in recent times. Several reports of hundreds of Red-winged Blackbirds in Niagara County in late December, January, and early February

were most unusual for the season. Kurt Fox also found many unseasonal blackbirds in late December on the Oak Orchard CBC, including a rare **Brewer's Blackbird**. Similar to last winter, very few waterfowl or blackbirds arrived in February this year.

Similar to the fall season, finches were nearly absent this winter. There were very few Purple Finches present, a scattering of Pine Siskin reports, and only one report of Common Redpolls. It would be too much to complain about this scarcity after the tremendous number of finches present last winter.

CONTRIBUTORS

Tim Baird, Doug Beattie, Ann Beebe, Jim Berry, Brad Carlson, Greg Coniglio, Willie D'Anna, Michael DeSha, Kurt Fox, Mike Galas, Ron Hacker, Carol Hardenburg, Paul Hess, Linda Holmes, Kyle Horton, Alec Humann, Jean Iron, David Junkin, Bernie Kester, Mark Kurtis, Jim & Karen Landau (J&KL), Greg Lawrence (GLa), Jerry Lazarczyk (JeL), Tom LeBlanc, Garner Light (GLi), Jay McGowan, Joe Mitchell, Mike Morgante, Celeste Morien, Terry Mosher, Dave Neveu, Chris Newton, Jeff Norton, Susan & Tom O'Donnell, Jim Pawlicki, Jeff Reed, Gerry Rising, Richard Rosche, Chuck Rosenburg, Debbie Sharon (DSH), Jeanne Skelly, David Suggs (DSu), Bob Sundell, Dave Tetlow (DTe), John Thill, Don Tiede (DTi), William Watson, David Wheeler, Chris Wood, Peter Yoerg.

ABBREVIATIONS

AlSP – Allegany SP, CATT; BeSP – Beaver I SP, ERIE; BuSP – Buckhorn I SP, ERIE; BWWT – Batavia Wastewater Treatment Plant, GENE; ChauL – Chautauqua L, CHAU; DH – Dunkirk Harbor, CHAU; FMCSP – Four Mile Creek SP, NIAG; FNSP – Fort Niagara SP, NIAG; GHSP – Golden Hill SP, NIAG; INWR – Iroquois NWR, GENE/ORLE; LBSP – Lakeside Beach SP, ORLE; MI – Motor I NR, ERIE; NF – Niagara Falls, NIAG; NFSP – Niagara Falls SP, NIAG; NPP – Niagara Power Project on NR, Lewiston, NIAG; NR – Niagara R; OOWMA – Oak Orchard WMA; GENE/ORLE; PB – Point Breeze, ORLE; SPNS – Sinking Ponds NS; ERIE; WTSP – Wilson-Tuscarora SP, NIAG.

WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

Snow Goose: last Oakfield GENE, OOWMA 5 Dec; arr 30 Great Valley CATT 25 Feb (MK); only reports.

Snow x Ross's Goose: N. Harmony CHAU 5 Dec (JB), same bird as documented on ChauL 28 Nov.

Cackling Goose: 5 Oakfield GENE 5 Dec; Porter NIAG 27 Dec; OOWMA 27 Dec; only reports.

Mute Swan: 2 BeSP 18 Dec; max 12, 8 Lewiston NR 7 Jan, 15 Feb; 2 PB 13 Jan; 5 Wilson NIAG 17 Jan; 2 Celeron ChauL 31 Jan.

Trumpeter Swan: Waterport ORLE 17 Dec (WW!, JeL!), only report.

Tundra Swan: 14 SPNS 6 Dec; 14 Colden ERIE 11 Dec; Sheridan CHAU 12 Dec; max

317 BeSP 23 Dec (DSH); 2 Celeron ChauL 31 Jan.

Wood Duck: 1-2, 2 Amherst ERIE 2-12 Jan, 2 Feb (JP); Olean CATT 17 Jan (TB, MD, TL); only reports.

Gadwall: max 30 NFSP 2 Feb.

Am. Wigeon: max 30 NF 6 Jan.

Am. Black Duck: 26 BWWT 5 Dec; max 35 Strawberry I NR 12 Dec; max 35 Olean CATT 17 Jan.

N. Shoveler: 7 BWWT 5 Dec; 2 OOWMA 5 Dec; Wilson NIAG 6 Dec; DH 12 Dec; 2 Celeron ChauL 31 Jan (JP, DW); only reports.

N. Pintail: max 14 BWWT 5 Dec; SPNS 6 Dec; Jamestown CBC 20 Dec; OOWMA 27 Dec; Lewiston NR 30 Dec; Amherst ERIE 2, 3 Jan; Wilson NIAG 21 Jan; 2 DH 31 Jan.

Green-winged Teal: 2 Cuba L ALLE 2 Dec; 4 DH 14 Dec; 2 Jamestown CBC 20 Dec; Lackawanna ERIE 1 Jan; only reports.

Canvasback: max 10,000 NF 9 Jan (GLa); 7,245 Grand I NR 16 Jan; 7,000 MI 20 Feb.

Redhead: 161 Buffalo CBC 20 Dec; max 270 NF CBC 27 Dec; 45, 48 DH 11 Jan, 21 Feb.

Ring-necked Duck: 3 DH 6 Jan; 2 Grand I NR 16 Jan; 2 Celeron ChauL 31 Jan; max 12 Strawberry I NR 21 Feb.

Gr. Scaup: max 10,000, 13,000 Buffalo NR 23 Jan, 13 Feb (JP, DW, WW).

Lesser Scaup: 6 DH 10 Jan; 5 BuSP 16 Jan; Olean CATT 17 Jan; max 23, 24 Tonawanda NR 6, 17 Feb.

KING EIDER: Sturgeon Pt ERIE 5 Dec (JP, DW), few reports away from NR and L Ontario; 2, 1 Buffalo Harbor ERIE 23 Jan, 13-21 Feb (JP, DW).

Surf Scoter: BWWT 5 Dec; Wilson NIAG 6 Dec; FNSP 24 Jan; only reports.

White-winged Scoter: 3 DH 20 Dec; 6 Buffalo ERIE 12 Feb; max 250 FNSP 20 Feb.

Black Scoter: 5 Wilson NIAG 6 Dec; 3 Dunkirk CBC 19 Dec; Wilson CBC 19 Dec; NF 6 Jan; 1, 2 PB 2, 15 Feb; Buffalo ERIE 28 Feb; only reports.

Bufflehead: max 1,200 Buffalo & NR 13 Feb.

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE: m PB 16 Dec thru (JP, mob), likely same individual as last few winters at this location (Regions 1 and 2).

Hooded Merganser: max 125, 100 Cuba L ALLE 5, 9 Dec; 72 INWR 5 Dec; 86 DH 14 Dec.

Com. Merganser: max 10,000 NR 6 Feb (DSu).

Ruddy Duck: max 242 BWWT 5 Dec; 2, 2 DH 14 Dec, 6 Jan; 2 BeSP 20, 22 Dec; 3 Jamestown CBC 20 Dec; BuSP 16 Jan; Buffalo NR 24 Jan; only reports.

Ruffed Grouse: 13 AISP 5 Feb (JR), encouraging high count in Wolf Run area.

Wild Turkey: several reports of groups of 50+.

Red-throated Loon: Silver Creek CHAU 5 Dec; max 40, 167 Wilson NIAG 6, 19 Dec (WD); 5 GHSP 23 Jan; Yates ORLE 23 Jan; 8 Wilson NIAG, 3 FMCSP 24 Jan; 2 PB 2 Feb; 76 FNSP 15 Feb (WD), remarkable count for Feb; winter records on L Ontario continue to incr.

Com. Loon: last FNSP 31 Dec.

Pied-billed Grebe: max 11 DH 21 Feb.

Horned Grebe: max 100 Derby ERIE to Barcelona CHAU 5 Dec; 51 Somerses NIAG & Yates ORLE 23 Jan; 3 DH 24 Feb.

Red-necked Grebe: 1, 2 Wilson NIAG 6, 19 Dec; 3 GHSP 23 Jan; 2 Wilson NIAG 24 Jan; only reports.

EARED GREBE: DH 18-28 Feb (DN, mob), increased sightings in recent winters.

Double-crested Cormorant: max 215, 146 DH 14 Dec, 21 Feb; Lewiston NR 4, 10 Jan; 2 Tonawanda NR 18 Jan; 5 Buffalo Harbor ERIE 23 Jan.

Great Blue Heron: 19 DH 9 Jan; 53 MI 16 Jan; max 87 MI and Strawberry I NR 24 Jan.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: 14 Buffalo ERIE 7 Jan (JT); imm DH 16 Jan (CH), only report.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: max 19 DH 18 Feb (DN); well reported from other traditional wintering and breeding areas.

N. Goshawk: ad Wethersfield WYOM 28 Dec (DJ!, photo); imm WTSP 20 Jan (BC, JS); only reports.

Red-shouldered Hawk: Orchard Park ERIE 3-6 Dec; Jamestown CBC 20 Dec; Hamburg-E Aurora CBC 26 Dec; Shelby ORLE 27 Dec; Pomfret CHAU 23 Jan; 2 Darien GENE 4, 23 Feb; Bennington WYOM 8 Feb; only reports.

Rough-legged Hawk: only 7 on 3 CBCs; only six other reports; unusually few.

Merlin: Elma ERIE 2 Dec; Buffalo ERIE 11 Dec, 20 Jan; Buffalo CBC 20 Dec; Hamburg-E Aurora CBC 26 Dec; NF 23 Dec; FNSP 31 Dec; S Buffalo ERIE 1-31 Jan; E Aurora ERIE 16 Jan; Clarence Center ERIE 10 Feb; BeSP 20 Feb; Carlton ORLE 28 Feb; incr in winter.

Peregrine Falcon: 2 Newstead ERIE 1 Dec (GC, GLi); DH 14 Dec; 2 Grand I ERIE 30 Dec; 2 Buffalo ERIE 1 Jan; Dunkirk CHAU 14 Jan; NFSP 30 Jan; well reported near nesting areas and elsewhere.

Am. Coot: max 78 INWR 5 Dec; 68, 75 DH 14 Dec, 5 Feb; NFSP 9 Jan; 7 BuSP 10 Jan; PB 12, 16 Jan; 6 Celeron ChauL 31 Jan.

Killdeer: 2 Jamestown CBC 20 Dec; Pomfret CHAU 9 Jan (TM); 2 Clymer CHAU 21 Feb (JP, WW); only reports.

AM. AVOCET: DH 12 Dec – 2 Jan (DN, mob), 2nd winter report, 2nd consecutive winter.

Wilson's Snipe: Jamestown CBC 20 Dec; 4 Clymer CHAU 19 Feb (AB, BS), only reports.

Black-legged Kittiwake: NF 5 Dec (WD), only report.

Bonaparte's Gull: 8,000 Buffalo NR 11 Dec; leucistic Whirlpool NR 17 Dec, 14 Jan; 9,942 FNSP 31 Dec; max 10,000 Buffalo NR 9 Jan.

BLACK-HEADED GULL: Whirlpool NR 5 Dec (JM); Lewiston NR 9, 10 Jan (GLa, WD), only reports.

Little Gull: max 9 Buffalo NR 11 Dec (JP); 8 NPP 23 Dec; 2 FNSP 28 Dec; 2, 2 Lewiston NR 24 Jan, 21 Feb; DH 31 Jan.

MEW GULL: NPP 1 Jan (WD! JI! NYSARC), North American form (*L. c. brachyrhynchus*); NPP 6, 7 Jan (JI!, JP!, WW, NYSARC), European form (*L. c. canus*); 9th and 10th regional records of “Mew Gull”.

CALIFORNIA GULL: 3rd-cycle NPP 5, 23, 30 Dec, 2 Jan (WD!), WW, JP, NYSARC), continued from fall.

Herring Gull: 1,875 Cuba L ALLE 2 Dec (JP, WW), good count for inland location.

Herring x Glaucous Gull: NPP 1 Jan (WD); Lewiston NR 12 Feb (WD); several sightings of “Nelson’s Gull” on NR are regular each winter.

Thayer’s Gull: a few reports NPP, NF; all sightings considered “probable” due to identification difficulties.

Iceland Gull: Cuba L ALLE 2, 5 Dec (JP, WW, RR, JeL); max 15, 19 NPP 5 Dec, 7 Jan (WD, BC); DH 11 Jan; PB 24 Jan; Buffalo NR 30 Jan; 6 Lewiston NR 7 Feb; 4 Olcott NIAG 26 Feb.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: 3 ad Cuba L ALLE 2 Dec (WW, JP), rare inland; max 14 NF 5 Dec (WD); 6 NPP 4, 7 Jan; 6 NFSP 9 Jan.

Glaucous Gull: Cuba L ALLE 2 Dec (JP, WW), rare inland; Orchard Park ERIE 26 Dec (JP, KH); 3 DH Jan; PB 24 Jan, 24 Feb.

G. Black-backed Gull: max 1,345 DH 5 Jan.

Tern species: Grand I NR 13 Dec (BK), probable Common.

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Snowy Owl: Somerset NIAG 27 Dec – 15 Feb (CW, mob); only report.

Long-eared Owl: 8 Porter NIAG 27 Dec (WD); OOWMA 27 Dec (KF); only reports.

Short-eared Owl: NF Air Station NIAG 17 Dec; 2 Shelby ORLE 27 Dec; 5 Cambria NIAG 30 Dec; max 9, 6 Hartland NIAG 17, 19-29 Jan (CR); only reports.

N. Saw-whet Owl: 3 Wilson CBC 19 Dec; OOWMA 27 Dec (KF); Bethany GENE 15, 19 Jan (DB); only reports.

Red-headed Woodpecker: LBSP 18 Jan, 15 Feb (GLa); only report.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: Silver Creek CHAU 11 Dec; Bethany GENE 12 Dec; 5 on 4 CBCs; only reports.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: seemed to be an average season; reported throughout Reg.

possible FISH CROW: Orchard Park ERIE 26 Dec (JP, KH), smallish bird showing some characteristics of Fish Crow but not conclusive; still no confirmed reports in Reg.

Com. Raven: 14 AISP 27 Dec (TB), one group; Colden ERIE 31 Dec; 2 Arkwright CHAU 7

Feb; 2 Middlebury WYOM 16 Feb; only reports outside of CATT or ALLE.

Horned Lark: max 95 Bethany GENE 13 Jan.

Carolina Wren: fewer reports than usual.

Winter Wren: Dunkirk Airport CHAU 14 Dec; 3 Wilson CBC 19 Dec; 2 Buffalo CBC 20 Dec; 7 NF CBC 27 Dec; only reports.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: 6 Jamestown CBC 20 Dec, only reports.

E. Bluebird: max 12 Sheridan CHAU 14 Jan (DN).

Hermit Thrush: Buffalo ERIE 25 Dec (AH); NF CBC 27 Dec; only reports.

Am. Robin: max 60 Westfield CHAU 21 Feb.

Gray Catbird: SPNS 6 Dec (LH); Buffalo ERIE 3 Jan (PY); INWR 25 Jan (PH); OOWMA 15 Feb (S&TO); only reports.

N. Mockingbird: Lackawanna ERIE 1 Jan; Arcade WYOM 9 Jan; Grand I ERIE 14 Jan; only reports away from NIAG.

Am. Pipit: last 3 Jamestown CBC 20 Dec, only report.

Bohemian Waxwing: arr 2 Carlton ORLE 16 Dec (JP); 2 Somerset NIAG 20 Jan (BC, JS).

Cedar Waxwing: max 150 Somerset NIAG 20 Jan.

WARBLERS

Yellow-rumped Warbler: 7 Wilson CBC 19 Dec; 2 Jamestown CBC 20 Dec; 3 Porter NIAG 27 Dec (WD); 1, 2 Bethany GENE 29 Jan, 27 Feb (DB, DTi); only reports.

TOWHEES – WEAVERS

Chipping Sparrow: 2 Dunkirk CBC 19 Dec; Medina ORLE 28 Dec – 29 Jan (CM); 2 Beaver Meadow CBC 2 Jan; only reports.

Field Sparrow: Scio CBC 19 Dec; Jamestown CBC 20 Dec; 8 Beaver Meadow CBC 2 Jan; Tiftt NP 6, 13 Feb (CN); only reports.

VESPER SPARROW: S Dayton CATT 27 Dec (JM!), very rare in winter.

Fox Sparrow: Colden ERIE 11 Dec (J&KL); Tonawanda ERIE 20 Dec (GR); only reports.

Swamp Sparrow: 20 on 6 CBCs; no reports beyond Dec.

White-crowned Sparrow: max 14 Scio CBC 19 Dec; Porter NIAG 9 Jan; 12 Bethany GENE 13 Jan (DB); 8 Carlton ORLE 31 Jan.

Lapland Longspur: max 17 Somerset NIAG 9 Jan; 6 Newfane, Porter, Yates NIAG 10 Jan; 4 Bethany GENE 13 Jan; Alexander GENE 8 Feb; 3 Carlton ORLE 28 Feb.

Snow Bunting: 392 Sheldon WYOM 24 Dec (DJ); 350 Porter NIAG 27 Dec; 220 Bethany GENE 13 Jan; 450 Wilson NIAG 13 Feb (WD); max 1650 Carlton ORLE 15 Feb (DTe).

Red-winged Blackbird: 235 Ransomville NIAG 27 Dec (MM); 147 OOWMA 27 Dec (KF); max 320, 450 Lewiston NIAG 15 Jan, 3 Feb (WD); unusually high counts for winter; arr Portland CHAU 25 Feb.

Rusty Blackbird: 2 OOWMA 27 Dec; 3 Jamestown CHAU 1-31 Jan (JN); only reports.

BREWER'S BLACKBIRD: Shelby ORLE 27 Dec (KF!), rare.

Com. Grackle: 6 Wilson CBC 19 Dec; Buffalo CBC 20 Dec; Ransomville NIAG 27 Dec;

OOWMA 27 Dec; Salamanca CATT 28 Dec; Alden ERIE 19 Jan; only reports.

Brown-headed Cowbird: 120 Ransomville NIAG 27 Dec; 75 Alden ERIE 19 Jan; max 350, 200 Clarence ERIE 19, 22 Jan (KF); 150 Lancaster ERIE 19 Jan.

Purple Finch: few reports; low numbers on CBCs; max 8 Dunkirk CBC 19 Dec.

Com. Redpoll: 2 Java WYOM 2 Jan (MG, RH), only report.

Pine Siskin: 10 on 5 CBCs, only reports.

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