

REGION 3—FINGER LAKES

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The winter season in Region 3 began rather typically, with December temperatures and snow levels each just slightly below average in Ithaca. Ithaca temperatures were a frigid 6.5 ° F below normal for 1-13 January, with at least half an inch of snowfall on 10 of these 13 days. Then the weather turned, with unseasonably high temperatures and only one day with greater than half-inch snowfall for the rest of the month. The temperature for the entire month of January 2010 ended up exactly equal to the historical average, but with only a trace of snow cover by 1 February. Weather throughout most of February was unremarkable, with temperatures and snowfall right at historical norms, but on 26-27 February a storm dropped nearly two feet of snow on the Region.

Geese on and around both Seneca and Cayuga Lakes highlighted the season's waterfowl reports. Both lakes had Brant lingering into December, as well as multiple reports of Greater White-fronted Goose, Ross's Goose, and Cackling Goose in January and February. The most unusual duck was notable as much for its mystery as for its probable rarity. On 30 January, Tom Johnson found and photographed an unusual female goldeneye in a flock of Common Goldeneye south of Long Point State Park. This bird showed characteristics consistent with Barrow's Goldeneye, including an apparently short, shallow, mostly pale orange bill, steep forehead, and rounded "mane." At certain angles, however, the head shape did not seem to match completely with pure Barrow's. In the end, it proved impossible to pinpoint the bird's identity. The expected variety of common wintering waterfowl was present in the Region but not reported in unusual numbers. Remarkably, for the eleventh consecutive year, an Eared Grebe wintered on Aurora Bay.

As in past years, raptors around Ithaca appeared rather reliably at accessible locations, to the pleasure of many birders. Among these birds were: an adult Red-shouldered Hawk at Sapsucker Woods, a Peregrine Falcon on the cliff-like faces of Bradfield Hall on the Cornell University campus, and two adult Bald Eagles around Stewart Park. Merlins made scattered appearances at multiple locations.

A late Killdeer was at Dean's Cove State Marine Park on Cayuga Lake on 12 December. Shorebirds were otherwise absent.

Chris Wood found an adult Thayer's Gull on Myers Point on 22 December. Despite the difficulty of distinguishing this taxon from "Kumlien's" Iceland Gull, Chris's fine photographs clinch this bird's identity, clearly showing wing tips that are white from below but largely charcoal-gray above, especially on the outer webs of the primaries. Actual Iceland Gulls, as well as Glaucous Gulls, were encountered sporadically throughout the winter around Ithaca. For the first winter season in three years, Slaty-backed Gull went unreported.

Sue March saw the only Snowy Owl of the season as she drove on the NYS Thruway just east of Montezuma NWR on 28 February. Several observers found Northern Saw-whet Owls and Short-eared Owls at various locations, but no one reported any rare owl species or unusual numbers.

As expected, a few half-hardy species such as Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, and Rusty Blackbird turned up here and there throughout the Region. Four American Pipits were tallied on the Elmira Christmas Bird Count on 2 January, a new high and third record for this count. An American Pipit appeared at Myers Park in Lansing on 18 January and again two weeks later. Two unexpected mimids lingered into the winter. Lisa Gillis found a Brown Thrasher in Corning in early January. In December and again in February, Chris Wood, Jessie Barry, and others saw a Gray Catbird at a Cornell Plantations preserve along Monkey Run South in Varna. It seems probable that these catbird records represent a single individual staying all winter. Observer effort at the site was minimal or absent in January.

By far the biggest songbird surprise of the season was an **Ovenbird** observed by ornithologist Stefan Hames on the Ithaca CBC in the suburban village of Cayuga Heights. This bird was evidently present for about a week around 1 January at a feeder. A Field Sparrow found by Ryan Douglas in Lansing in February was the season's least expected sparrow. Also notable was the widespread and prolonged occurrence of Swamp Sparrows throughout the winter, including a record high count of 21 on Ithaca's CBC on 1 January.

The Ithaca CBC also turned up an immature **Rose-breasted Grosbeak**, which Bob McGuire found on Neimi Road. After the huge irruption of 2008-09, this season's winter finch turnout was, perhaps predictably, very sparse. A female Evening Grosbeak appeared regularly throughout almost all of February at Bill Baker's feeders in Caroline. Two days after that bird was last sighted at Bill's place, Steve Fast observed a female Evening Grosbeak at his feeders a few miles away. Annette Finney found the season's only Common Redpoll on the Ithaca CBC, also in Caroline. Twice in February, Ryan Douglas reported a single Pine Siskin in south Lansing. Near the end of the month, Anne Marie Johnson saw a Pine Siskin at her feeders in Caroline. No one submitted observations of crossbills or Pine Grosbeaks.

CONTRIBUTORS

Bill Baker, Jessie Barry, Mark Chao, Susan Danskin, Lynn Donaldson, Ryan Douglas, Steve Fast, Annette Finney, Jeff Gerbracht, Chuck Gibson, Lisa Gillis, Jane Graves, Stephanie Greenwood, Bob Guthrie, R. Stefan Hames, Wesley Hochachka, Anne Marie Johnson, Thomas B. Johnson, J. Gary Kohlenberg, Stuart Krasnoff, Leona Lauster, Greg Lawrence, Tim Lenz, Michele Mannella, Sue March, Dave McCartt, Jay McGowan, Kevin McGowan, Perri McGowan, Bob McGuire, Ann Mitchell, Tom Nix, Dave Nutter, Mike Powers, Ken Rosenberg, Marty Schlabach, Tom Schulenberg, Mike Tetlow, Carolyn van Leer, Harriet Wagner, Phil and Mary Jean Welser, Chris Wiley, Christopher L. Wood, Ray Zimmerman.

ABBREVIATIONS

ATSMP – Allan Treman State Marine Park, Ithaca; CU – Cornell University; dtIth – downtown Ithaca; EBSCBC – Eaton Birding Society Christmas Bird Count; ECBC – Elmira Christmas Bird Count; ESP – East Shore Park, Ithaca; GCBC – Geneva Christmas Bird Count; HHSF – Hammond Hill State Forest; ICBC – Ithaca Christmas Bird Count; LptSP – Long Point State Park; MNWR – Montezuma NWR; Myers – Myers Park, Lansing; SchCBC – Schuyler County CBC; SLSP – Seneca Lake State Park; StvR – Stevenson Road, Dryden; SW – Sapsucker Woods; StP – Stewart Park, Ithaca.

WHISTLING-DUCKS - VULTURES

Greater White-fronted Goose: 1 Union Springs (CAYU) 11 Jan (DN); 1 StP 20 Jan (JM), 24 Jan (DN, SK); 1 SLSP 20 Feb (GC); 1 Myers 20-21 Feb (SD, TBJ, JGK, mob!).
Ross's Goose: 1 Cayuga Lake (SENE) 12 Dec (TBJ); 1 Lake Road, Ledyard (CAYU) 21 Dec (CLW, JB).
Brant: 1 StP 7 Dec (JM) and 13 Dec (DN). 1 Seneca Harbor Park (SENE) 13 Dec (MP).
Canada x Snow Goose hybrid: 1 Cayuga Lake (SENE) 12 Dec (TBJ, TL, CWi).
Cackling Goose: 4 Cayuga Lake (SENE) 12 Dec (TBJ, TL, CWi).
Mute Swan: 7 Harris Park (CAYU) 27 Jan (JM, TBJ).
Tundra Swan: max 1000 Mud Lock (CAYU) 6 Feb (MT).
Trumpeter Swan: max 8 Mud Lock (CAYU) 31 Jan (TL).
Gadwall: max 13 StP 12 Dec (JM, TL, CWi, TBJ).
N. Shoveler: 5 ATSMP 12 Dec (KR); 1 SW 1 Jan (TS).
Wood Duck: 2 ECBC 2 Jan, 8th count record.
Redhead: max 8200 ESP 21 Feb (CLW).
Surf Scoter: 1 StP 13 Jan (BM).
Long-tailed Duck: max 4 StP 7 Jan (CLW).
EARED GREBE: 1 Aurora Bay 11 Jan (DN) until 17 Feb (GL).
Double-crested Cormorant: 5 SchCBC 24 Dec, new count high.
Turkey Vulture: max 3 Guyanoga Valley (YATE) 11 Jan (LD, BG).

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Red-shouldered Hawk: 1 SW thru.
Bald Eagle: 2 StP 25 Jan (MC).
Merlin: 1 SchCBC 24 Dec; 1 StP 18 Jan (DN); 1 Brooktondale (TOMP) 24 Jan (AF); 1 SW 25 Jan (KM).
Peregrine Falcon: 1 CU 3 Jan - 28 Jan (MM, RZ, mob).
Sandhill Crane: 35 Armitage Road (SENE) 8 Dec (CG, JGr).

Killdeer: 1 Dean's Cove State Marine Park (SENE) 12 Dec (LD, TBJ, TL, CWi, BG, LL).

THAYER'S GULL: 1 Myers 22 Dec (CLW, mob!).

Iceland Gull: arr 1 StvR 27 Jan (KM); max 2 StvR 29 Jan (TBJ).

Lesser Black-backed Gull: 1 StP 1 Jan (KR); 1 ECBC 2 Jan, 3rd count record; 1 StP and StvR 29 Jan (TBJ, DN).

Glaucous Gull: 1 StP 5 Jan (DN); 1 StP and StvR thru 12 Feb (DN, TBJ).

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

Snowy Owl: 1 just east of MNWR (SENE) 28 Feb (SM).

N. Saw-whet Owl: 1 Neimi Road, Dryden 22 Jan (RD); 1 HHSF 4 Feb (SF); 1 Rte. 89 (TOMP) 8 Feb (MS).

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: 1 Lodi thru (HW); 1 Quick Cemetery (TOMP) 11 Jan (JGe).

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: 1 ECBC 2 Jan, 5th count record and first in 24 years; 1 HHSF 1 Jan (SF); 1 Lake Road, Aurora 14 Jan (JM, PM).

Am. Robin: 3000 Ledyard (CAYU) 5 Jan (SF) +.

Hermit Thrush: 1 SW 7 Jan (WH), 15 Jan (TS), 31 Jan (AM, DN); 1 EcoVillage Ithaca 8 Feb (SG).

Gray Catbird: 1 Monkey Run South, Dryden 13 Dec & 20 Feb thru (CLW); unus in winter.

Brown Thrasher: 1 Murphy Road, Corning 3 Jan (LG).

Am. Pipit: 4 ECBC 2 Jan, high, 3rd count record; 1 Myers 18 Jan (MC) and 31 Jan (TL, JM).

WARBLERS

Yellow-rumped Warbler: 1 SW 27 Jan (JM); 1 east of Ithaca 3 Feb (TN); 1 SW 17 Feb (GL).

OVENBIRD: 1 Cayuga Heights (TOMP) 1 Jan (RSH), very rare in winter.

TOWHEES - WEAVERS

Field Sparrow: 1 Bomax Drive, Lansing, 31 Jan (RD), only report.

Swamp Sparrow: 21 ICBC 1 Jan, new count high.

White-crowned Sparrow: max 4 EBSCBC 3 Jan; 1 Covert (SENE) 17 Jan (P&MAW; MS).

ROSE-BREASTED GROSBEAK: 1 imm Neimi Road, Dryden 1 Jan (BM).

Brown-headed Cowbird: 1 Caroline (TOMP) 21 Feb (BB).

Red-winged Blackbird: 7 ECBC 2 Jan, first on count in 8 years.

Rusty Blackbird: 1 SW 22 Dec (DM); 1 EBSCBC; 1 SW 4 Feb (CLW).

Com. Grackle: 1 Dryden 2 Jan (CvL); 1 SchCBC 24 Dec.

Evening Grosbeak: 1 Caroline (TOMP) 29 Jan - 26 Feb (BB, mob), 1 Caroline (TOMP) 28 Feb (SF).

Com. Redpoll: 1 Caroline (TOMP) 1 Jan (AF), only report.

Pine Siskin: 1 Lansing 7 Feb and 13 Feb (RD); 1 Brooktondale (TOMP) 27 Feb (AMJ).