

REGION 3—FINGER LAKES

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The start of the winter season was unseasonably cold in Region 3. In Ithaca, respective average temperatures for December and January were 3.7° and 3.4° F below historical norms. Frequent moderate snowfall in January yielded a total of 24.6", 37% above the historical average. February brought yet more snow, a total of nearly 28" inches in Ithaca or nearly twice the historical mean for the month.

A male **King Eider**, first found in late November at Myers Park in Lansing, lingered until 29 December at the south end of Cayuga Lake, mostly at Stewart Park. As usual, Cayuga Lake also hosted large wintering flocks of Redheads, with an impressive maximum count of approximately 18,000 birds on 20 February. Smaller in magnitude but perhaps even more notable for disproportion was Doug Daniels's count of 875 Common Mergansers on Seneca Lake in mid-January, which is eBird's all-time high tally for this species in the Region. Snow Geese remained in unusual numbers at least into early January; Christmas Bird Counts in both Elmira and Schuyler County recorded all-time high counts of this species. For at least the twelfth consecutive winter, an Eared Grebe joined a small flock of Horned Grebes on Aurora Bay.

Despite the deep snow cover, vultures lingered throughout December and January in the Ithaca area. On 23 January, Susan Danskin observed a **Black Vulture** with a flock of Turkey Vultures in Lansing. A few days later, Bob McGuire refound the Black Vulture with the other vultures. These birds flew to a day roost, where many observers eventually saw them. The maximum tally of Turkey Vultures in this flock was 15.

Winter raptor observations were largely unsurprising. There were scattered reports of Merlins throughout the Region plus Peregrine Falcons in urban lakeside areas of both Geneva and Ithaca. No Gyrfalcons were reported during the season. Brad Carlson and Doug Daniels noted the season's only Golden Eagle above Aurora Bay on 30 January.

The most notable shorebird of the season was a Wilson's Snipe, which spent several days in January in a small patch of mud by a drainage pipe by Stewart Park. Early Killdeer were found in at least two locations in February.

On 11 December, Tim Lenz, Hope Batcheller, and Andy Johnson found a Little Gull on Cayuga Lake from Lower Lake Road. White-winged gulls and Lesser Black-backed Gulls were observed throughout the season in various locations.

Birders reported scattered "half-hardies" such as Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Winter Wren, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and Hermit Thrush throughout the period. Marty Schlabach found the season's only Gray Catbird on the Ithaca CBC. American Pipits made rare winter appearances at several locations along the shore of Cayuga Lake in January. Expected field birds were tallied in impressive numbers this winter, including more than 1000 Snow Buntings counted by Gary Kohlenberg atop Mount Pleasant and 18 Lapland Longspurs found in a roadside flock in Yates County by Bob Guthrie.

On 4 December, Dave Czaplak found and closely observed a late Yellow Warbler at Seneca Lake State Park. A Pine Warbler frequented Claire Damaske's feeder near Seneca Falls for over a week in late February.

The other major rarity of the winter was a **Harris's Sparrow**, which rode out essentially the entire reporting period by a feeding station along Dryden Lake. Out-of-season Eastern Towhees, Field Sparrows, and White-crowned Sparrows were found at various locations. Participants on the Elmira CBC found 75 Rusty Blackbirds, eight Common Grackles, and a Brown-headed Cowbird in a single mixed flock.

Winter finches irrupted into the Region on an apparently moderate scale. Common Redpolls were numerous and rather readily found throughout the Region, but not in record-breaking numbers. Matt Young, Kevin McGowan, and Steve Fast separately found single Hoary Redpolls in Common Redpoll flocks. Pine Siskin reports were sparse. White-winged Crossbills were evidently completely absent, but Bob McGuire turned up single Red Crossbills in Summer Hill State Forest in December and February. The Summerhill area also proved a fairly reliable spot for Evening Grosbeaks, with a high count of 20 at the home known as the Hovel at the intersection of Fillmore and Salt Roads.

Members of the Eaton Birding Society mourn the loss of one of its most active and treasured members, Bob Guthrie, who died early this year in his sleep at home in Keuka Park. He was an excellent field naturalist with knowledge of plants, mammals, insects, and birds which he shared with passion and enthusiasm on almost all the Eaton Bird Club trips. He moved back to Keuka Park from New Jersey in 1988 and in the years since then he was an active birder as he had been in NJ. He was recognized by NYSOA for covering 30 blocks for the Breeding Bird Atlas of NYS. He participated in Audubon Christmas Bird Counts for Geneva and Montezuma, yearly NYSDEC Winter Waterfowl Counts for Keuka Lake, and Montezuma Muckraces. He volunteered for many local organizations including Cummings Nature Center, Ontario

Pathways, Canandaigua Botanical Society, and the Finger Lakes Land Trust, to name a few.

His skills at observation were exceptional. He had the sharpest eyes and an extraordinary ear for bird calls, combined with a wealth of knowledge gathered over his 77 years. He had a fun side too and often came up with jokes, limericks, unique observations, and especially puns, which were either hilarious or ghastly depending on your point of view.

People who ran into Bob in the field usually left with a smile. Friends and those who birded with him often felt privileged to have known him. He will be remembered and missed for the joy he expressed sharing the beauty and wonder of the natural world with others.—Leona Lauster

CONTRIBUTORS

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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; MCBC – Montezuma Christmas Bird Count on 18 Dec; 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 SLSP 8 Jan (MM).

Snow Goose: max 20000 Geneva late Dec (FB); 285 ECBC 1 Jan new high for count; 250 SchCBC 2 Jan new high for count.

Brant: 1 MNWR 4 Jan (DT, KF).

Canada x Snow Goose hybrid: 1 Sheldrake (SENE) 9 Jan (BMcG, DN, *et al.*).

Cackling Goose: 1 StP 2 Jan AM.

Mute Swan: 2 Myers 14 Feb (DN); 2 StP 17 Feb (TL, JGe).

Tundra Swan: max 2000 Mud Lock (CAYU) 18 Feb (M&JT).

Trumpeter Swan: max 9 Harris Park (CAYU) 20 Feb (TL).

Wood Duck: 1 Corning CBC 28 Dec second ever on count.

Gadwall: max 28 SchCBC 2 Jan new high for count.

N. Shoveler: 1 MNWR 19 Dec (JM, MM, TL, SB); 1 Branchport (YATE) 3 Jan (BG); 1 Keuka Lake 17 Jan (LD, AD, LL).

Canvasback: max 1590 SP 18 Feb (JM).

Redhead: max 18000 Cayuga Lake 20 Feb (TL).

KING EIDER: 1 Myers 2-4 Dec (DN, MW, LG, mob); 1 StP and ATSM 5-29 Dec (TL, DN, mob!).

Surf Scoter: 1 Sheldrake (CAYU) 6-7 Feb (BMcG, AM, KA); 1 ESP 16 Feb (JGK).

Long-tailed Duck: max 12 Aurora Bay 21 Dec (JM, PM).

Com. Merganser: max 875 SLSP 19 Jan (DD), very high.

Red-breasted Merganser: max 39 Sheldrake (CAYU) 13 Feb (NSe).

Red-throated Loon: 1 ESP and StP 30 Dec (BE, JM).

Pied-billed Grebe: 1 StP 4 Jan (MP); 2 SchCBC 2 Jan.

Red-necked Grebe: 2 Aurora Bay 21 Feb (SF); 1 Myers 27 Feb (BM, DF).

EARED GREBE: 1 Aurora Bay 19 Dec thru (JM, MM, TL, SB, mob), at least 12th consec. winter.

BLACK VULTURE: 1 Lansing 23 Jan, 28-29 Jan (SD, DN, mob).

Turkey Vulture: max 15 Lansing 31 Jan (DN, BMcG, AM), high.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Red-shouldered Hawk: 1 SW 8 Dec thru (JG, SK, mob); 1 Monkey Run South (TOMP) 8 Jan (CLW).

Golden Eagle: 1 Aurora 30 Jan (DD, BC), only report.

Merlin: 1 ICBC 1 Jan (DN, SO); 1 GCBC 2 Jan; 1 Ithaca 9 Jan (BMcG, DN, *et al.*); 1 King Ferry (CAYU) 30 Jan (JM, TL, NS, SH); 1 StvR 15 Feb (Amy).

Peregrine Falcon: 1 dtlth 11 Dec (BB, DN); 1 GCBC 2 Jan; 1 StP 27 Jan and 24 Feb (PA, DN); 1 CU 9 Feb (RC); 1 Geneva 13 Feb (FB).

Killdeer: 1 Bonnie Banks Rd (SENE) 5 Feb (TL); 1 Brooktondale 18 Feb (SF).

Wilson's Snipe: 1 StP 17-22 Jan StP (DL, SY, mob).

Little Gull: 1 Lower Lake Road (SENE) 11 Dec (HB, AJ, TL).

Iceland Gull: max 4 Geneva 18 Dec (CR, LR, BG); 1 StP 19 Dec (KR); 1 Chemung River 15 Jan (BO); 1 StvR 22 Jan (KM).

Lesser Black-backed Gull: max 3 ESP 26 Feb (JM); 1 StP 11 Dec (HB, AJ, TL); 1 Geneva 11 Dec (CR); 1 StP 19 Dec (KR); 1 Lakefront Park (SENE) 24 Dec (GC); 1 Chemung River 15 Jan (BO); 1 StvR 24 Feb (JM).

Glaucous Gull: 1 StP 11 Dec (TL); 1 StP 19 Dec (KR); 1 SLSP 24 Dec (GC); 1 StP 26 Dec (DN); 1 StvR 26 Jan (JM); 2 StP 6 Feb (DN).

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: 1 Penn Yan 10 Dec (BG); 1 Quick Cemetery (TOMP) 11 Jan (JGe); 1 Groton 29-30 Jan (MCo); scattered other reports.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

Fish Crow: 1 MCBC 18 Dec, 1st for count.

Marsh Wren: 2 MNWR 19 Dec (JM, MM, TL, SB).

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: max 4 LPSP 21 Dec (JM, PM).

Hermit Thrush: 1 Monkey Run South (TOMP) 8 Jan (CLW).

Gray Catbird: 1 Ithaca 1-2 Jan (MS), only report.

Am. Pipit: 1 Cayuga Lake (TOMP) 13 Jan (EM, DN); 1 Aurora 22-30 Jan (DN, SF, DD, BC); rare mid-winter records.

LONGSPURS - WARBLERS

Lapland Longspur: max 18 Leach Road (YATE) 14 Dec (BG), high.

Snow Bunting: max 1020 Dryden 8 Jan (JGK).

Yellow Warbler: 1 SLSP 4 Dec (DCz!), very late.

Pine Warbler: 1 Gravel Road (SENE) 19-25 Feb (CD), only report.

TANAGERS - WEAVERS

E. Towhee: 1 StP 3 Dec (TL); 1 Ithaca 24 Dec (RG).

Field Sparrow: max 4 Cascadilla Creek (TOMP) 1 Jan (JF); 1 SW throughout late December and early January.

HARRIS'S SPARROW: 1 Dryden Lake 6 Dec - 20 Feb (NI, mob!).

White-crowned Sparrow: 1 Mecklenburg 20 Dec - 15 Jan (ND); 1 GCBC 2 Jan; 2 Canoga 9 Jan (BMcG, DN, *et al.*); max 3 King Ferry 16 Jan (KR, TS, MB).

Rusty Blackbird: max 75 ECBC 1 Jan, high count CBC; 2 SW 10 Dec (LAvL); 1 SW 26 Jan (JM, FD).

Com. Grackle: max 30 MCBC 18 Dec; 9 ECBC 1 Jan; 1 Mecklenburg 20 Dec (ND).

Brown-headed Cowbird: 1 Union Springs 11 Dec (FB); 1 ECBC 1 Jan.

Red Crossbill: 1 SHSF 9 Dec and 17 Feb (BMcG).

Com. Redpoll: max 280 Lake Como Road (CAYU) 12 Feb (JM).

Hoary Redpoll: 1 Lake Como Road (CAYU) 30 Jan (MY); 1 Dryden 20 Feb (KM); 1 Brooktondale 22 Feb (SF).

Pine Siskin: 3 Brooktondale 12 Dec (SP); 3 Danby 25 Dec (AH).

Evening Grosbeak: max 20 Fillmore Road (CAYU) 7 Jan (MY).