

REGION 5—ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

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The season was drier and colder than normal with near record amounts of snow. In December the average temperature was 25.5° F, 3.1° below normal, with 2.42" of precipitation, 0.70" below normal. There were 72.8" of snow for the month. January had an average temperature of 21.0°, 1.7° below normal, with 1.43" of precipitation, 1.17" below normal, and 43.4" of snow. The February averages were 23.8°, 0.8° below normal, 2.65" of precipitation, 0.53" above normal, and 43.3" of snow.

Fourth Lake froze on 8 December, Oneida Lake was mostly frozen by 23 December, Onondaga Lake by 11 January, and the shallow north end of Skaneateles Lake on 22 January. There was not much of a winter thaw, a few days around the first of the year and then little relief until 17 February. With that mid-February warm-up some waterfowl moved in and a few half-hardies were noted, likely wintering birds found by observers encouraged to get out by the milder weather.

A cold front on 8 December brought the largest Snow Goose and Canada Goose migration of the fall. This late migration is now the norm. Flocks of Tundra Swans at two sites on 23 February may have wintered in the area but possibly came in with the warm weather a few days earlier. Blue-winged Teal was an early arrival at Fair Haven and had probably wintered somewhere close

by. Green-winged Teal were gone by early December. Two Harlequin Ducks were on Onondaga Lake in December just before hunting season opened and later a single one was found at the lake's outlet, remaining until the outlet froze a week later. Loons and grebes were infrequently reported and in low numbers only.

Reports of Turkey Vultures in southwestern Onondaga County may be an expansion of their local winter range, while Red-tailed Hawk and American Kestrel wintered in expected numbers. Northern Harrier was pushed out by the December snowfall, and Rough-legged Hawk was present in fairly low numbers with the exception of one area. Onondaga Lake again hosted a large number of Bald Eagles in mid-winter. Two Golden Eagles were reported, Merlins were widespread, and Peregrine Falcons were found around the three largest cities in the Region. The spring hawk migration began on 17 February with a Northern Goshawk and several Red-tailed Hawks.

A record flock of **48 Sandhill Cranes** were calling as they flew over Jamesville in December. Two Purple Sandpipers at Fair Haven were later than most years, and a Purple Sandpiper on Onondaga Lake was the first recorded sighting in Onondaga County. Killdeer had arrived by the end of the period, and a Wilson's Snipe spent much of the winter in an open drainage ditch.

For the second year in a row, gulls were scarce, with low numbers of Herring Gulls on the Oswego River system and sightings of Glaucous, Iceland, and Lesser Black-backed infrequent. Bonaparte's Gull does not winter in the Region, but December counts are typically higher than they were this year. A Black-legged Kittiwake passed Derby Hill on an early season cold front.

Few migrant owls were reported. A Snowy Owl was in Oswego for a short time, and one was at a shopping center at the end of the season. One Short-eared Owl was found on 1 January, a bit of a surprise given the amount of snow that had fallen in December. No Long-eared Owls were noted and there was only one Northern Saw-whet Owl report. An adult Red-headed Woodpecker spent the winter along Lake Ontario, and Yellow-bellied Sapsucker was reported in higher numbers than most years. One Black-backed Woodpecker was seen in the Old Forge area.

An Eastern Phoebe was seen along a sheltered, fast-flowing creek that remained open. The 17 February date would indicate a survivor, not a new migrant. It was an off year for Northern Shrike, with few persistent birds. Fish Crow and Common Raven are doing well, and the latter species is increasing on the margins of the Syracuse suburbs. Red-breasted Nuthatches had moved out of breeding areas in large numbers, so eight in the conifer plantations along two miles of road in the Tug Hill were not expected.

At least five Winter Wrens were seen after mid-December, many small flocks of Eastern Bluebirds were wintering, and American Robins were conspicuous even with the deep snow. The only Hermit Thrush reported was of one eating berries at Okara Lakes during the Old Forge CBC. A mid-January Gray Catbird seemed to be going strong in a wet area, although it still had a long winter to survive. Yellow-rumped Warblers spent the winter in Liverpool and

Van Buren, and several were seen on Howland Island which seems to host them most winters of late.

Deep snow in many areas apparently limited the numbers of American Tree and White-throated Sparrows. Swamp Sparrow didn't linger after December, and even Dark-eyed Junco numbers were low overall. The ten Rusty Blackbirds photographed at a feeder in January were one-day wonders, while two singles seen in late February were birds that had probably wintered nearby. Reports of other blackbirds were consistent with past years, with numbers dwindling rapidly by late December and the first hardy migrants appearing in late February.

Purple Finch was fairly scarce; a few birds here and there but otherwise generally not noted. We received only single reports of both Red and White-winged Crossbills, likely birds roaming about trying to find food and having very little success hereabouts. The Common Redpoll irruption was moderate this year, and with little natural food, redpolls were dependent on feeders. Hoary Redpoll reports were higher than most years and photos confirmed the identification of many of them. Evening Grosbeaks were found near feeders in forested upland areas and were quite scarce elsewhere.

For the season a total of 128 species were seen, about one more than the recent 10 year average. Highlights included Blue-winged Teal, Harlequin Duck, Sandhill Crane, Purple Sandpiper, Wilson's Snipe, Black-legged Kittiwake, Red-headed Woodpecker, Eastern Phoebe, Hermit Thrush, Gray Catbird, Bohemian Waxwing, Rusty Blackbird, and Hoary Redpoll.

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ABBREVIATIONS

BRH – Bishop Road Hawk Watch, T Richland; Bvle – Baldwinsville; CM – Clay Marsh; DH – Derby Hill; FH – Fair Haven, Little Sodus Bay and vicinity; LOL – Lake Ontario Littoral; MCL – Madison County landfill, T Lincoln; MR – T's Mexico & Richland grasslands; OneiL – Oneida Lake; OnonL – Onondaga Lake; Skan – Skaneateles; Syr – Syracuse; WPD – Woodman Pond, Hamilton.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Snow Goose: large, Region-wide migration 8 Dec; 3 Sherrill 10 Feb.

Cackling Goose: Otisco L 11 Dec; Utica 17 Dec.

Mute Swan: max 6 OnonL 16 Jan.

The Kingbird 2011 June; 61 (2)

Trumpeter Swan: 2 OnonL 19 Jan; 2 FH 14 Jan.

Tundra Swan: max 214 OneiL 2 Dec; 31 Brewerton 23 Feb; 19 OnonL 23 Feb.

Wood Duck: CM 25 Jan & 5 Feb; arr 2 DH 18 Feb.

Gadwall: 3 DH 6 Dec; max 11 Brewerton 23 Feb.
Am. Wigeon: max 10 WPd 4 Dec; arr OnonL 23 Feb.
Am. Black Duck: max 82 DH 6 Dec.
Blue-winged Teal: arr FH 27 Feb (DW), record early.
N. Pintail: max 32 DH 6 Dec; last Mexico 16 Jan; arr Oswego 12 Feb.
Green-winged Teal: last DH 7 Dec.
Canvasback: max 5 Oswego 17 Feb.
Redhead: max 246 OnonL 18 Dec.
Ring-necked Duck: max 171 Hatch L 13 Dec.
Greater Scaup: max 454 Oswego 4 Feb.
Lesser Scaup: max 342 OnonL 19 Dec.
Harlequin Duck: 2 OnonL 23-24 Dec (MS, mob); OnonL 16-23 Jan.
Surf Scoter: max 3 LOL 11 Dec; last LOL 11 Jan.
White-winged Scoter: max 384 DH 6 Dec.
Black Scoter: max 15 DH 6 Dec; 3 singles Jan-Feb.
Long-tailed Duck: max 215 DH 11 Dec.
Bufflehead: max 59 Skan L 12 Dec.
Com. Goldeneye: max 180 OnonL 6 Jan.
Hooded Merganser: max 145 Otisco L 12 Dec; 47 Bvll 13 Feb, good winter count.
Com. Merganser: max 2000 Cross L 10 Dec; 1400 OnonL 18 Dec.
Red-breasted Merganser: max 1200 FH 11 Dec.
Ruddy Duck: max 94 Skan L 12 Dec; 25 Skan L 16 Jan, late.
Red-throated Loon: DH 6 Dec; Oswego 17 Feb.
Com. Loon: 2 Jan & 2 Feb reports.
Pied-billed Grebe: max 2 Oswego R 16 Jan.
Horned Grebe: max 5 OnonL 16 Dec; last DH 7 Jan.
Red-necked Grebe: max & last 3 OnonL 18 Dec.
Double-crested Cormorant: max 15 OnonL 11 Jan.
Great Blue Heron: max 14 OnonL 18 Dec.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Turkey Vulture: max 5 Dewitt 26 Dec; Marcellus and Skan after 7 Feb; arr DH 18 Feb.
Bald Eagle: max 24 OnonL 22 Jan.
N. Harrier: Fairfield 5 Dec, only winter report; arr DH 17 Feb.
N. Goshawk: 5 Dec reports; max 3 T Lincoln 9 Jan; arr DH 18 Feb.
Red-shouldered Hawk: last Dewitt 18 Dec; arr Cicero 27 Feb.
Red-tailed Hawk: max 8 DH 18 Feb.
Rough-legged Hawk: to 9 per day Mexico after 4 Jan, only concentration.

Golden Eagle: Whitesboro 11 Dec; Sullivan 16 Jan (BB, MV).
Merlin: 6 sites Jan; pair Oakwood Cem Syr 20 Feb.
Peregrine Falcon: OnonL 6 Jan; Syr 30 Jan; pair Oswego 27 Feb.
Am. Coot: max 50 WPd 9 Dec; 23 Skan 16 Jan.
SANDHILL CRANE: 48 Pompey 4 Dec (KC!), record number.
Killdeer: arr 2 Brewerton 21 Feb.
Purple Sandpiper: 2 FH 11 Dec (GD); OnonL 18 Dec (BP, BC), 1st ONON record.
Wilson's Snipe: Brewerton after Jan thru (CL).
Black-legged Kittiwake: last DH 7 Dec.
Bonaparte's Gull: max 14 DH 6 Dec.
Herring Gull: max 1430 MCL 2 Dec.
Iceland Gull: max 2 per day LOL, MCL & OnonL.
Lesser Black-backed Gull: singles at 4 sites to 14 Jan.
Glaucous Gull: max 4 Oswego 5 Feb; singles otherwise.
"Nelson's" Gull (Herring Gull x Glaucous Gull): Phoenix 8 Jan.
Great Black-backed Gull: max 220 MCL 8 Jan.

PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

Snowy Owl: Oswego 19 Dec to 2 Jan; Fulton 27 Feb.
Barred Owl: 3 Richland 16 Feb, hunting in afternoon.
Short-eared Owl: Verona 1 Jan, only report.
N. Saw-whet Owl: Beaver L 16 Dec.
Belted Kingfisher: max 3 OnonL 18 Dec.
Red-headed Woodpecker: Scriba 1 Jan thru (JB, mob).
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: 7 sites in Jan & 4 sites Feb, more than usual.
Black-backed Woodpecker: Old Forge 18 Dec.
N. Flicker: max 5 GLSP 21 Dec; 11 sites in Jan & 5 in Feb.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

E. Phoebe: Skan 17 Feb (DiW).
N. Shrike: 10 sites Jan & 7 sites Feb, hard to find.
Blue Jay: max 30 Williamstown 14 Dec; low numbers outside Tug Hill & Adks.
Fish Crow: reports from Onondaga Lake and Syr University area.
Com. Raven: widespread, increasing near populated areas.
Horned Lark: max 200 Cazenovia 13 Feb.
Red-breasted Nuthatch: max 8 Boylston 25 Jan.
Winter Wren: 2 Syr CBC 18 Dec; Nelson 29 Dec; Oneida 1 Jan; 2 CM 7 Feb.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 7 Camden 24 Dec.

E. Bluebird: max 24 Mexico 4 Dec; many small flocks now winter here.

Hermit Thrush: Rondaxe L 18 Dec (Culleen Doolittle fide GL).

Am. Robin: 234 Oneida CBC, record high; widespread Onondaga County and LOL despite snow.

Gray Catbird: Utica 18 Dec; Elbridge 19-20 Jan (KB).

Am. Pipit: last Pulaski 4 Dec.

Bohemian Waxwing: max 280 Pulaski 4 Jan; 65 Rainbow Shores 7 Jan; to 10 per day otherwise.

Cedar Waxwing: 144 Oneida CBC, count record high; max 150 New Hartford 28 Feb.

LONGSPURS - WARBLERS

Lapland Longspur: max 4 Deruyter 13 Feb.

Snow Bunting: max 500 Stockbridge 27 Dec; individuals at feeders in Feb.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: max 3 Oswego 19 Dec; 3 Howland Island 28 Jan; 3 other singles.

SPARROWS - WEAVERS

Am. Tree Sparrow: 36 Skan 29 Dec; max 64 Skan 9 Jan.

Song Sparrow: max 6 Verona 1 Jan; 4 Tully 23 Feb, possible migrants.

Swamp Sparrow: last 2 Syr CBC 18 Dec.

White-throated Sparrow: max 17 CM 18 Dec.

White-crowned Sparrow: Nelson 4, 21 Dec (BW); Syr 26-27 Dec (AW).

Dark-eyed Junco: max 34 Sandy Creek 4 Dec.

N. Cardinal: Thendara thru 15 Feb, unusual Adks.

Red-winged Blackbird: max 7 Fayetteville 7 Dec; arr Verona 27 Feb.

Rusty Blackbird: max 10 McConnellsville 19 Jan; Tully 16 Feb, likely wintered.

Com. Grackle: singles after 2 Dec; arr 2 N Syr 28 Feb.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 17 Hannibal 19 Dec.

Purple Finch: 5 per day Dec; max 7 Pulaski 4 Jan.

Red Crossbill: Boylston 17 Jan, only report.

White-winged Crossbill: 5 Camden 19 Dec, only report.

Com. Redpoll: to 100 per day Jan-Feb, widespread.

Hoary Redpoll: arr Hastings 4 Jan; max 5 Beaver L 8 Feb (JM ph, AVN).

Pine Siskin: max 24 Liverpool 18 Dec; 3 singles Jan.

Am. Goldfinch: max 81 Salisbury 2 Jan.

Evening Grosbeak: max 75 Okara L after 1 Jan; 70 DeRuyter 8 Jan; 67 T Ohio 28 Fe