

REGION 2 – GENESEE

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This winter will be long remembered for its warmth and freedom from dealing with snow. All three months averaged $> 5^{\circ}$ F above normal, though no record highs were logged. The three months were the fifth warmest recorded for the period at 32.4° but were still 2° less than the warmest in 1931-32. Precipitation was near normal in December and February and 0.9" above in January, but snowfall was way below normal: December recorded only 4.9", 16.9" below normal and sixth lowest on record; January saw 19.9", 8.3" below average; and

The Kingbird 2012 June; 62 (2)

150

February more than doubled those two, with 27.3", 5.8" above normal. The average snow depth for the season was only 1", and often there was extensive green grass and bare ground. Temperature data were: December - 32.5°, 5.2° above normal; January - averaged 30.2°, 5.5° above average; and February - 31.8°, 5.4° above normal. Precipitation ran: December - 2.48", 0.15" below normal; January - 3.32", 0.90" above average; and February - 3.13", 0.18" above normal.

With a winter like this, clearly one would expect to see effects in the birders' reports. Generally, waterfowl numbers for many species were high on the CBCs, and later numbers increased quickly and early toward season's end. Half-hardy passerines wintered in good numbers and were still found—with effort—through February. Examples are included in the species lists below, with numbers of reports and individuals approximate due to multiple reports of the same birds in eBird and to the possibility of a lingering bird being sighted many times. An effort was made to remove duplication from the totals. Substantially through the efforts of Dave Tetlow searching diligently, the species total for the Region for February eclipsed the previous high.

Back to a look in more detail starting with the waterfowl, we find an interesting and varying picture. Through most of the Christmas Bird Count season, most of the bodies of water in the Region were ice free. We had high to even record high counts of several waterfowl species on the three local CBCs, e.g., for Snow Goose, Canada Goose, Cackling Goose, Wood Duck, Gadwall, Lesser Scaup, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, and Hooded Merganser. Then in the waning days of December we had a cold snap with some snow and nearly all of the bays and ponds and the Finger Lakes iced over nearly completely. These reopened in a few days, but then it was warm enough that duck hunters and fishermen were everywhere and waterfowl remained scarce in most places. By the mid-January NYS Waterfowl Count, some waterfowl were returning and the overall count ended up very good. Early February found many species still present in small numbers, which increased as migrants arrived in the latter half of the month. It will be a difficult task to assign spring arrival dates for many waterbird species this year. Looking carefully at eBird data may be the best approach.

In addition to this general picture, there were some special observations around continuing trends and waterbird rarities. There was only one report of two Greater White-fronted Geese from the west edge of the Region, more to the west in Region 1. In December, Snow Geese were nearby in numbers, but few in the Region. In January and February there were several reports numbering in the thousands both in the Northern Montezuma Wetland Complex (NMWC) and from the Lake Ontario Plain west of Rochester. Cackling Goose continued through the winter, with over twenty different reports (eliminating shared list duplications) of about 45 individuals. All three swan species were reported through the season. Puddle duck variety was good each month, with some numbers very high for winter. Among the divers, numbers on Lake Ontario for all but Long-tailed Duck and Red-breasted Merganser were modest to low most of the season. Long-tailed Duck rafts are now found at many sites along the

south shore of Lake Ontario, replacing the scaup and Redhead flocks that used to winter there. But some very high numbers of Redhead were reported all season from Conesus Lake along with occasional good numbers of scaup. Also decent numbers of scaup and White-winged Scoter were noted at Point Breeze and Sodus Point at times. King Eider was found through the season at several sites, and Barrow's Goldeneye was reported at the usual Point Breeze and Sodus Point sites. Both regular loons were scarce in mid winter. A **Pacific Loon** in February was a rare find. Among the grebes, we again had the phenomena of a high number of Horned Grebes along a very local stretch of the Lake Ontario shore in Wayne County on the Waterfowl Count and again high numbers of Red-necked Grebe in early December, a trend of only the past few years. A new species for December locally was an **American White Pelican** found and photographed near Fairport on 3 December. It was likely a bird reported in several places to our west in Canada through November.

Among the raptors and allies, the ongoing trends stand out. Black Vulture continues to increase its presence in the Region, with reports of at least one individual in the Towns of Riga and Leroy through the season. In that same area Dave Tetlow also tallied a record high winter count of 81 Turkey Vultures. A **Golden Eagle** on 11 December was a rare winter record. Reports of both Northern Goshawk and Red-shouldered Hawk remained very few, while Merlin and Peregrine Falcon numbers were above old norms for the season. On 15 December, Dave Mathiason and Dave Genesky road trapped a banded Red-tailed Hawk near Avon which was found to have been originally banded in the same vicinity by the late Bob McKinney on 3 March 2000.

In spite of the warm, open winter, shorebird reports were few, but quality beat quantity in late December, with counts of up to 10 Killdeer at Maxwell Creek in Wayne County and a Regional record high **nine** Purple Sandpipers, along with a Sanderling and a Dunlin, at Sodus point just a few miles east, all in the period 9-13 December. Killdeer was also reported in January and February and a Purple Sandpiper showed up at the mouth of the Genesee River from 20-22 February. Another rarity for the season was a **King Rail** from the NMWC in early December.

The local gull picture remains likely "permanently" modified by the continued hazing of gulls away from the High Acres Landfill in the Town of Perinton. This has greatly reduced winter records of rarer gulls from near there on Lake Edwards and from Irondequoit Bay. Recent efforts by Dave Tetlow and a few others to search near the Riga Landfill west of Rochester have produced good finds there. White-winged gulls were reported in small numbers through the season, highlights being the first record for Iceland Gull and the third record for Glaucous Gull for Livingston County found by Kurt Fox on Conesus Lake on 24 December. There were at least 24 reports for Lesser Black-backed Gull for the season. Rare reports included Black-legged Kittiwake of 11 December and 5 January and **Parasitic Jaeger** on the Rochester CBC on 18 December and on 2 January.

Eurasian Collared-Dove continued at the usual area in the Town of Hamlin through the season, with sporadic reports of up to five birds present.

Probably the wildest report of the season was of a record late **Yellow-billed Cuckoo** flying in front of Steve Taylor then stopping in a hedge row in the Town of Brighton on 19 December. This followed other very late reports for the species in western New York this fall.

It was a good winter for Snowy Owl. At least six individuals were banded in the Region by Tom McDonald this season, with at least 22 total reported during the season. It has always been hard to determine exact counts aside from the banded birds.

Red-headed Woodpecker has become more difficult to find locally during the winter, but one was present in the Town of Byron for much of the season, plus another was observed once in Hamlin Beach SP.

Among the passerines, a winter like this would be expected to produce a multitude of records and this season did not disappoint. Nearly all of the half-hardy species were found and many persisted or were found late in the season. The relatively regular species NOT found are the easiest to cover: Eastern Phoebe, Ruby-crowned Kinglet, and Eastern Meadowlark. Among those reported, it is only possible to detail the most interesting or exceptional here and to urge the reader to study the records in the species section. Good numbers of Northern Shrike were reported each month. American Crow again set a new record high count at the Rochester roost on the 18 December CBC. Later a flap arose over the numbers and their impact on the neighborhood, and the USDA Wildlife Services Division was engaged to disperse the birds. The results are somewhat clouded by the fact that in most recent winters they have left the main site following the New Year's Eve fireworks display nearby, and the dispersal work did not begin this year until after that time. There was also the protest encampment under their main roost which had already decreased the numbers a bit. Again this winter, Fish Crows visited feeders in the Charlotte area, with a maximum of 16 reported. Surprisingly, Winter Wren and Hermit Thrush were not particularly widely reported, but Dave Tetlow turned up four and three Winter Wrens on 28 February in Rochester parks on opposite sides of the Genesee River. Through December, late Gray Catbirds were all over the place, with an incredible **eight** in one small area in Hamlin Beach SP on 14 December; then no more reports after December. The lone Brown Thrasher was found in late January. American Pipit is relatively rare in winter, but Dave Tetlow found and video taped a flock of at least 23 birds in the Town of West Sparta, Livingston County 21 January. Back there with Kurt Fox, they also located 26 American Pipits and 18 Savannah Sparrows in that same area on 22 January. Among the warblers, the usual species were present: Common Yellowthroat in four locations; Pine Warbler in Webster and Hamlin Beach SP, but present all winter in the latter location with up to five individuals reported; and Yellow-rumped Warbler, with a maximum of 23 on 23 December at the Caledonia Fish Hatchery, a known wintering site. Icing on the cake was a record late **Wilson's Warbler** found by Gary Chapin on the Rochester CBC in Durand-Eastman Park on 18 December. It was seen by several others that day and through 22 December. Late half-hardy sparrows included multiple Eastern Towhees, Chipping sparrow, Field Sparrow, many Savannah Sparrows, Fox Sparrow, and

White-crowned Sparrows. Another bonus bird was the Region's fifth **Lark Sparrow** found by Dave Tetlow at a feeder in the Town of Kendall, Orleans County on 29 January. It was later enjoyed by many and stayed past season's end. An odd-looking junco coming to the feeders of Wade and Melissa Rowley in North Wolcott, Wayne County, made the online ID discussion sites. It was in the **Dark-eyed ("Oregon/Pink-sided") Junco** complex with a leaning toward "Oregon". It was interesting to follow the discussion both from the standpoint of learning of the difficulties in identification within some groups of species and subspecies and to see the varied approaches of participants to such discussions. The blackbird family was most notable for a lack of interesting winter records and only limited numbers returning by season's end.

The winter finch picture was pretty much hit and miss this winter. There were no substantial numbers other than several reports of hundreds of Common Redpolls in late January and early February, but all the winter finch species were at least reported. Evening Grosbeak was the least substantiated, with the only reports being a few Project Feederwatch birds with no way to follow up.

Species totals for all three months were above the 10-year averages: December - 135 (125.5), January - 131 (130.2), and February - 127 (108.4). The species total for the season was 153.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

BB – Braddock Bay, T Greece, MONR; CFH – Caledonia Fish Hatchery, LIVI; CHCBC – Conesus-Hemlock CBC; CL – Conesus Lake, LIVI; G – T Greece, MONR; H – T Hamlin, MONR; HB – Hamlin Beach SP, MONR; IB – Irondequoit Bay, MONR; K – T Kendall, ORLE; LSLCBC – Letchworth-Silver Lake CBC on 17 Dec; NMWC – Northern Montezuma Wetlands Complex, T Savannah, WAYN; PB – Point Breeze, T Carlton, ORLE; RCBC – Rochester Christmas Bird Count; S – T Savannah, WAYN; SB – Sodus Bay, WAYN; SP – Sodus Pt, WAYN; TPP – Turning Point Park, Rochester, MONR; TWS – Groveland Flats, T West Sparta LIVI; WP – Webster Park, MONR.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Greater White-fronted Goose: 2 Elba 21 Jan (KF).
Snow Goose: Dec max 240 T Leicester LIVI 26 Dec; max 5,000 S 9 Jan (W&MR); 4700 T Carlton 28 Feb (DT).
Cackling Goose: 22 rep of approx 45 individuals, some duplication possible.
Canada Goose: max 10,000 Twin Cedars Environmental Area 4 Dec (MW).
Mute Swan: max 169 RCBC 18 Dec.
Trumpeter Swan: max 21 S 11 Dec (SBi,JMc,NS,BraW).
Tundra Swan: max 305 CL 24 Dec (KF); 250 S Dec (SBi,JMc,NS,BraW).
Wood Duck: 3 CHCBC 26 Dec, count record high; 1 CFH 3 Jan (DT); 1 Penfield 5 Feb (KH); few wintering.
Gadwall: max 114 RCBC 18 Dec; 12 LSLCBC 17 Dec, count record high; arr 2 G 15 Feb (GL).
Am. Wigeon: 1 CL 15 Jan (DT, KF); 74 NMWC 10 Feb (IBA Monitoring); max 78 NMWC 29 Feb (DT)), many for the date.
Am. Black Duck: max 385 S 3 Feb (DT).
Mallard: max 2800 S 3 Feb (DT).
N. Shoveler: max 19 G 3, 18 Dec (DT, R&SSp,CSp); arr 2 S 29 Feb.
N. Pintail: max 1421 NMWC 28 Feb (IBA Monitoring).
Green-winged Teal: Dec max 68 S 5 Dec; 1-2 sev thru 8 Feb; arr 14 NMWC 28 Feb.
Canvasback: max 67 BB 20 Feb, low.
Redhead: 4000 CL 24 Dec (KF); max est 12,000 CL 27 Jan (MW), included 1 leucistic ind.; 5700 CL 16 Feb (MW); very high counts.
Ring-necked Duck: max 600+ Hemlock L 1 Jan (R&SSp,CSp).
Greater Scaup: 1500 SP 10 Jan (MT); max 2300 SP 10 Feb (DT); numbers generally low again this winter.
Lesser Scaup: 75 CHCBC 17 Dec, count record high; max 500 CL 24 Dec, low max.
King Eider: 3 f HB 1Dec (DS, RSp); 1-3 off Irondequoit 18-26 Dec (mob); 2 f PB ORLE 27

DEC (CW); 1 f PB 22 Jan thru (mob); 1 f mouth of Genesee River 14 Feb thru (GL, mob).
Harlequin Duck: 1 f IB 18-22 Dec (GC, mob); 2 imm m WP 18-20 Dec (AGu, mob); 1 imm m G 27 Feb (DT).
Long-tailed Duck: max 2600 off E Manitou Rd Greece 2 Jan (DT).
Bufflehead: max 497 CHCBC 26 Dec, count record high.
Com. Goldeneye: 100 LSLCBC 17 Dec, count record high.
Barrow's Goldeneye: 1 m PB 25 Dec-6 Feb (A&RGU, mob); 1 m SP 17-31 Jan (DW, JTa, mob)
Barrow's x Com. Goldeneye: 1 m PB 17 Jan (DW,JTa).
Hooded Merganser: max 464 RCBC 18 Dec, count record high; 343 CHCBC 26 Dec, high.
Ruddy Duck: max 42 Silver Lake 17 Dec (KF), high for winter; arr 1 BB 17 Feb (KG).
Red-throated Loon: max 96 HB 1 Dec, low max; 12 HB 9 Feb, low winter max.
PACIFIC LOON: 1 HB 9 February (DT), rare in Reg especially in winter.
Pied-billed Grebe: 2 Chimney Bluffs 10 Jan (DD); CL 15 Jan (KF); IB 21 Feb (RSp).
Horned Grebe: max 139 off County Line-Bear Creek WAYN 16 Jan (RSp, JBoe, TSm).
Red-necked Grebe: max 349 West Lakeshore 3 Dec (AB, RSp), good late fall count.
Double-crested Cormorant: max 21 IB 22 Dec, good winter count.
AM. WHITE PELICAN: 1 Fairport MONR 3 Dec (BY, ph), likely bird moving east from Canada over previous month.
Great Blue Heron: max 46 RCBC 18 Dec.
BLACK VULTURE: T Parma 10 Dec (DT); T Leroy GENE 2 Jan (DT); T Riga MONR 30 Dec, 3 Jan, 2-11 Feb (DT, BCar), 4th & 5th winter records, assuming the Riga and Leroy records are the same bird.
Turkey Vulture: max 74-81 T Riga MONR (DT), record high Reg winter count.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

N. Goshawk: Penfield MONR 8 Jan (RB,SW); TPP Rochester 20 Jan (DT); Webster 21 Jan (FM); 1ad WP 22 Jan (R&SSp); only winter reports.

Red-shouldered Hawk: G 11 Dec (CW); Penfield 24 Dec (CR); Springwater LIVI 8 Jan (DT,KF); T Rose WAYN 6 Feb (DT,GL).

Red-tailed Hawk: 1 retrapped near Avon 11 Dec (DM,DG), originally banded near same place 3 Mar 2000, *intro*.

Golden Eagle: Hamlin & Greece 11 Dec (DT, JeB), rare in winter.

Merlin: total 5 all Dec; total 5 all Jan; total 16 all Feb.

Peregrine Falcon: total 2 all Dec; total 0 all Jan; total 6 all Feb.

KING RAIL: S 5 Dec (DT).

Virginia Rail: none.

Am. Coot: 275 LSLCBC 17 Dec, count record high; max 515 CL 24 Dec.

Killdeer: max 10 Maxwell Creek WAYN 9 Dec (DT), very high winter count; arr 1 H 27 Feb.

Sanderling: 1 SP 11, 13 Dec

(SBI,JMc,NS,BraW,mob), rare in Reg in winter.

Purple Sandpiper: IB Outlet 2-4 Dec; 2 SP 10 Dec; 7 SP 11 Dec (SBI,JMc,NS,BraW,mob), Reg record high at the time; 9 SP 12-13 Dec (DT,DSh,MT), Reg record high count; 2 BB-ES 14 Dec; 1 Genesee River Mouth piers 20-22 Feb (GL, mob), Reg record late. **Dunlin:** 1 SP 11-13 Dec (SBI,JMc,NS,BraW,mob), rare in Reg in winter.

Wilson's Snipe: 4, 5 Maxwell Creek WAYN 5, 9 Dec (DT); Nations Rd LIVI 12 Jan (DD); scarce in winter.

BLACK-LEGGED KITTIAWAKE: HBSP 11 Dec (CW); HB 5 Jan (DT), late.

Herring Gull: max 2700 Riga Landfill 2 Feb (DT), high count.

Iceland Gull: CL 24 Dec (KF), 1st LIVI record, continued to CHCBC 26 Dec; 14 other rep.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: 21 rep for season; max 4 T Leroy GENE 2 Jan (DT).

Glaucous Gull: CL 24 Dec (KF), 3rd LIVI record.

Parasitic Jaeger: off Irondequoit 18 Dec (MT, JC); off Greece 2 Jan (DT,G); rare in winter.

PIGEONS – WOODPECKERS

Rock Pigeon: max 572 TWS 22 Jan (DT), high for a single location count.

Eurasian Collared-Dove: 8 rep of 2-5 H 15-28 Jan, 4, 13 Feb (sev), sightings more sporadic this winter.

YELLOW-BILLED CUCKOO: Brighton 19 Dec (ST), Reg record late.

E. Screech-Owl: max 73 RCBC 18 Dec, good count.

Snowy Owl: at least 22 scattered about the Reg thru; 6 banded in Region thru (TM).

Barred Owl: approx 10 rep of 17 birds sev sites thru, good numbers; 12 at 6 sites LIVI & ONTA 8 Jan (KF, DT), show numbers possible if observers work at finding owls.

Long-eared Owl: 2-3 Bergen Swamp 1 Jan (DT, GL, JPo), usual location for starting year list, only rep.

Short-eared Owl: 4-7 Church Rd T Hamlin 15 Jan thru (mob).

N. Saw-whet Owl: 1-2 Bergen Swamp 1 Jan (DT, GL, JPo), usual location for starting year list, only rep.

Red-headed Woodpecker: T Byron GENE 18 Jan, 2 Feb; HB 31 Jan, few winter rep.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: total 8 rep of 10 birds for season, excellent winter total.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

E. Phoebe: none.

N. Shrike: total about 54 for season, excellent total.

Am. Crow: max 33,449 RCBC 18 Dec, new record high; subsequently steps were taken to haze birds away from the downtown Rochester roost, *intro*.

FISH CROW: birds were back in the Charlotte of Rochester area for this winter; max 16 Rochester (Charlotte) 4 Jan, 7 Feb (DT). **Com.**

Raven: max 6 Nunda LIVI 5 Feb (DT).

Brown Creeper: approx 27 rep of 54 ind, good total for winter.

Winter Wren: 4 Seneca P & 3 TPP 28 Feb (DT), parks across the Genesee River from one another; approx 25 other rep of 17 individuals.

Marsh Wren: 4 S 5 Dec (DT), high for winter; 1 T Richmond ONTA 26 Dec (D&DT); 2 Seneca Park 28 Feb (DT), survivors.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: none.

Hermit Thrush: approx 13 rep of 21 birds, good count though seemed scarce.

Am Robin: max 3200 K 10 Feb (DT), good count for winter.

Gray Catbird: 6 Dec rep, max 8 HB 14 Dec (DT), many for so late, but none after Dec.

Brown Thrasher: TPP 20 Jan (DT).

Am. Pipit: 23 TWS 21 Jan (DT), some video taped; 26 TWS 22 Jan (DT, KF), Reg record high winter count; 7 continuing to 5 Feb.

LONGSPURS – WARBLERS

Snow Bunting: max 175 K 29 Jan (BCar), low max indicative of open winter.

Com. Yellowthroat: S 18 Dec; Hemlock Lake 18 Dec; TPP 31 Dec-1 Jan; Mendon Ponds P 26-27 Feb.

Pine Warbler: 1-5 HB campground area 3-31 Dec, 1-11 Jan, 1-4 Feb (DT, *et al*); TPP 1 Jan (GL); Webster 10 Dec (JBoe,NP).

Yellow-rumped Warbler: max 23 CFH 23 Dec (DT), 3-11 still present 3-16 Jan (DT); Oatka Creek P 28 Feb (JAd).

Wilson's Warbler: Durand-Eastman P 18-22 Dec (GC, MT, DT, JC), ties State record late.

TOWHEES – WEAVERS

E. Towhee: 5 rep sev loc 1 Dec-1 Jan.

Am. Tree Sparrow: 110 Clarendon 18 Jan; max 231 RCBC, low this winter.

Chipping Sparrow: H 3 Dec (KG); LSLCBC 17 Dec; Beatty Pt Greece 18 Dec (GL)

Field Sparrow: 8rep sev loc thru 2 Feb.

LARK SPARROW: 1 K 29 Jan thru (DT, mob), 5th Reg record, at feeders.

Savannah Sparrow: 11 TWS 21 Jan (DT), some video taped; max 18 TWS 22 Jan (DT, KF), ; 7 K & T Carlton ORLE 21 Jan (AG); 4 other rep 1-5 sev loc 15 Jan – 2 Feb (DT, sev).

FOX SPARROW: 2 WP 13 Dec (BCar), only report.

White-crowned Sparrow: max 13 Cuylerville LIVI 3 Jan.

Dark-eyed (likely Oregon) Junco: 1 N Wolcott 13 Jan (W&MR, ph), topic of ID discussion groups, *intro*.

E. Meadowlark: none.

Rusty Blackbird: max 26 T Perry WYOM 26 Dec (DT).

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 1000 Nations Rd, Avon 2 Dec (MW); 183 Honeoye Falls 14 Jan (BCar).

Purple Finch: max 23 Rattlesnake Hill WMA LIVI 8 Jan.

Pine Grosbeak: 1 Hogan Pt, Greece 19 Dec (DT), only rep.

Red Crossbill: Durand-Eastman P 12 Dec; HB 31 Dec; HB 2 Feb.

White-winged Crossbill: 9 rep of 1-15 ind sev loc 3 Dec – 10 Feb; max 43 HB 3 Dec (DT).

Com. Redpoll: 1-2 HB & Maxwell Creek 12-31 Dec; 150 HB 31 Jan (KH); 250-380 HB 1-10 Feb (DT, *et al*).

Hoary Redpoll: 2 HB 1 Jan (DT).

Pine Siskin: max 16 MP 25 Jan, low.

Evening Grosbeak: Project Feederwatch tallied 3 in Dec & 8 in Jan, *intro*.