

## REGION 5—ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

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The season was very warm, with just two days when the low in Syracuse went below 0° F and only 11 days when the high failed to reach 32° F. There was a scant 43" of snow for the season, and often little or no snow on the ground at lower elevations. Oneida Lake didn't freeze until 15 January, and the eastern half was opening up by 28 February. Onondaga Lake was frozen for about ten days. In the Adirondacks, Big Moose and Fourth Lakes froze on 29 December. In December the average temperature at the Syracuse Airport was 35.9°, 6.5° above normal, with 2.48" of precipitation, 0.74" below normal. The average

temperature for January was 31.1°, 7.5° above normal, with 3.88" of precipitation, 1.38" above normal. In February the temperature averaged 32.3°, 6.4° above normal, and there was 1.41" of precipitation, 0.66" below normal.

The mild winter greatly affected bird distribution over the season. Less common winter waterfowl lingered into and through the winter, while some expected waterfowl were reported in much smaller numbers since the weather did not concentrate them in smaller, open areas. Half-hardy species were seen in very good numbers, but Horned Larks, Lapland Longspurs, and Snow Buntings had the run of snowless fields and were not concentrated at manure spreads. The major "fall" goose migration occurred on 17 December after a cold front. It was well reported as it coincided with the first Saturday of the Christmas Bird Count season. Snow Geese barely left the area for the winter. Large numbers of Tundra Swans also remained on Oneida Lake until the mid January freeze-up, with about 60 Tundra Swans wintering on the open water at Brewerton. Greater White-fronted Goose and Brant lingered into December, and several Cackling Geese were reported.

Northern Shoveler stayed into December, and a few Northern Pintail and American Wigeon likely wintered. Numbers of Greater Scaup, White-winged Scoters, and Long-tailed Ducks were low, likely because the lack of ice on Lake Ontario allowed waterfowl to spread over the lake or even remain farther north. After a year's absence, Lesser Scaup again staged in large numbers at the eastern end of Oneida Lake. Grebe and loon numbers were low. Great Blue Herons were scarce, again quite possibly spread about on the edges of all of the open water this year. A **Great Cormorant** was seen passing Derby Hill after a December cold front. Wild Turkeys were able to feed in the woods instead of coming to manure spreads in open fields.

Overall, there was a good variety of raptors this season. Turkey Vulture reports were from expected areas, one late Osprey passed by in December, and two Red-shouldered Hawks were reported. There were no Rough-legged Hawk concentrations this season. We had four Golden Eagles reported away from Derby Hill, and Dave Wheeler reported a gray **Gyr Falcon** flying by Oswego Harbor and harassing geese and gulls. Spring Red-tailed Hawk migration was underway by 21 February.

American Coot wintered in larger than normal numbers at Skaneateles Lake, Onondaga Lake, and Oswego Harbor. Twenty Sandhill Cranes flew southwest past Derby Hill; this was the second consecutive year that a large number have been seen in December coming from somewhere to our north. Purple Sandpiper was the only shorebird reported until Killdeer and American Woodcock arrived at the end of February.

Single **Black-legged Kittiwakes** were observed at Derby Hill in December and January. Bonaparte's Gulls remained on Oneida Lake into January. With no ice shelves forming above dams on the Seneca and Oswego Rivers, gulls had no roost spots, so the Madison County landfill was the best spot for gulls even after Oneida Lake froze in January. As many as eight Iceland Gulls and three Lesser Black-backed Gulls were found there, while Glaucous Gull was scarcer with

only singles seen at any location. A mid-December **Pomarine Jaeger** was later than most years but always a candidate following a December cold front.

It was a good Snowy Owl year nationwide, but there were not many in our area except for the three Snowy Owls at the Syracuse Airport. A **Barn Owl** was heard calling on one occasion but was not heard again despite repeated checking. Beaver Lake Nature Center hosted a one-day Long-eared Owl and Northern Saw-whet Owl that was seen through most of the season. Two Short-eared Owls at Derby Hill were the only ones reported. N. Flickers and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers wintered in higher than usual numbers, and a Red-headed Woodpecker at a feeder in Old Forge was far from normal wintering areas.

Half-hardy species were numerous this year, with multiple sightings of Winter Wren, Gray Catbird, White-crowned Sparrow, Eastern Towhee, and Rusty Blackbird plus Hermit Thrush, Field Sparrow, and Fox Sparrows. An injured Chipping Sparrow seemed to be the only species forced to remain in the area. American Pipit was an early arrival at Derby Hill, while Horned Lark and Snow Buntings were scarce as mentioned above.

Bohemian Waxwings put in a brief appearance over a few days in January. Paul Richardson found a **Yellow-throated Warbler** under the railroad bridge where Onondaga Creek flows into Onondaga Lake; the bird remained for several days. Subsequent observers also found a Yellow-rumped Warbler and a **Yellow Warbler**, a species even more unusual than the Yellow-throated Warbler in December.

Red-winged Blackbirds may not have left the area, but they and Common Grackles were moving in by 24 February. There were lots of Purple Finches this winter, while Pine Siskins briefly mobbed feeders in December then dropped to small numbers found in most areas with hemlocks through the season. Common Redpolls numbers were expected to be low this winter, and there was only one large flock plus a few birds at feeders. Crossbills were disappointing in a year with a good cone crop. They presumably found good cone crops elsewhere and did not have to travel this far. No Pine Grosbeaks or Evening Grosbeaks were reported.

For the season a total of 140 species was seen, about 14 more than the recent 10-year average. Highlights included Greater White-fronted Goose, Cackling Goose, Great Cormorant, Osprey, Golden Eagle, **Gyr Falcon**, Sandhill Crane, Purple Sandpiper, **Black-legged Kittiwake**, **Pomarine Jaeger**, **Barn Owl**, Bohemian Waxwing, **Yellow Warbler**, **Yellow-throated Warbler**, Fox Sparrow and White-crowned Sparrow.

## CONTRIBUTORS

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## ABBREVIATIONS

Adks – Adirondacks; BLNC – Beaver Lake Nature Center, T. Lysander; DH – Derby Hill; FH – Fair Haven; Little Sodus Bay and vicinity; GLSP – Green Lakes SP; HI – Howland Island WMA; MCL – Madison County landfill, T. Lincoln; OneiL – Oneida L; OnonL – Onondaga L; SFNS – Spring Farm Nature Sanctuary, Kirkland; Skan – Skaneateles; SPD – Sandy Pond; SSSP – Selkirk Shores SP; SVB – Sylvan and Verona Beach; Syr – Syracuse; TR – Three Rivers WMA; WM – West Monroe; Wpd – Woodman Pd, Hamilton.

### WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

**Greater White-fronted Goose:** SVB 26 Dec (DW).  
**Snow Goose:** max 7000 DH 11 Dec; 2338 Syr 17 Dec; 5000 Mexico 2 Feb.  
**Brant:** 2 SVB 5 Dec (BB).  
**Cackling Goose:** DH 16 Dec; Syr 17 Dec; HI 6 Jan.  
**Canada Goose:** max 60,900 Syr 17 Dec, huge migration.  
**Mute Swan:** max 42 FH 15 Feb.  
**Tundra Swan:** max 372 Constantia 1 Jan; 60 Brewerton thru after freeze.  
**Wood Duck:** SPD 15 Dec; Pulaski 30 Jan.  
**Gadwall:** max 13 OnonL 18 Feb.  
**Am. Wigeon:** max 15 Wpd 7 Dec; 4 other reports to 5 OnonL 27 Feb.  
**Am. Black Duck:** max 116 Constantia 14 Jan.  
**N. Shoveler:** max 5 FH 13 Dec; last 4 FH 26 Dec.  
**N. Pintail:** winter max 15 DH 16 Dec; spring 56 Skan 29 Feb.  
**Green-winged Teal:** 3 FH 13 Dec; OnonL 31 Jan.  
**Canvasback:** max 37 OnonL 18 Feb.  
**Redhead:** max 315 OnonL 18 Feb.  
**Ring-necked Duck:** max 173 Tully 10 Dec; 60 OnonL 27 Feb.  
**Greater Scaup:** max 121 Skan 14 Dec.  
**Lesser Scaup:** max 5000 OneiL 5 Dec.  
**King Eider:** DH to 16 Dec.  
**Surf Scoter:** max 4 SVB 5 Dec.  
**White-winged Scoter:** max 53 DH 8 Dec.  
**Black Scoter:** max 5 SVB 26 Dec.  
**Long-tailed Duck:** max 337 DH 16 Dec.  
**Bufflehead:** max 65 Mexico Pt 8 Feb.  
**Com. Goldeneye:** max 278 South Bay OneiL 1 Jan.  
**Hooded Merganser:** max 160 Otisco L 12 Dec; 52 Old Forge 17 Dec, late for Adks.  
**Com. Merganser:** max 1370 OnonL 18 Feb.

**Red-breasted Merganser:** max 4200 FH 10 Dec.  
**Ruddy Duck:** max 36 Otisco L 31 Dec.  
**Wild Turkey:** low numbers in open winter  
**Red-throated Loon:** 5 Dec reports; max 3 Oswego 7 Jan.  
**Com. Loon:** max 15 North Bay 5 Dec.  
**Pied-billed Grebe:** max 4 OnonL 31 Jan.  
**Horned Grebe:** max 17 Wpd 7 Dec; 11 Oswego 7 Jan.  
**Red-necked Grebe:** 3 reports, last Oswego 18 Jan.  
**Double-crested Cormorant:** max 25 Syr 10 Dec.  
**Great Cormorant:** DH 8 Dec (DW).  
**Great Blue Heron:** max 3 HI 6 Jan.

### HAWKS - ALCIDS

**Turkey Vulture:** max 6 Fayetteville 5 Dec; singles thru.  
**Osprey:** DH 3 Dec (BP), late.  
**Bald Eagle:** to 18/day Redfield Jan-Feb; 12 SPD Jan; 9 Forestport 27 Feb.  
**N. Harrier:** 9 Jan singles; arr 2 DH 21 Feb.  
**N. Goshawk:** 2 Jan & 2 Feb reports.  
**Red-shouldered Hawk:** 2 winter reports; arr DH 25 Feb.  
**Red-tailed Hawk:** max 38 DH 22 Feb.  
**Rough-legged Hawk:** 6 Dec reports; singles most areas in Jan, Feb.  
**Golden Eagle:** WM 18 Dec; Camden 18 Dec; Erieville 17 Feb; Pompey 18 Feb; DH 27 Feb.  
**Am. Kestrel:** max 5 Mexico thru.  
**Merlin:** 6 reports.  
**GYRFALCON:** Oswego 18 Jan (DW, NYSARC).  
**Peregrine Falcon:** reports from 5 sites.  
**Am. Coot:** max 105 Skan 1 Jan.  
**Sandhill Crane:** 20 DH 12 Dec (BP); 2 Williamstown 29 Feb (PC).  
**Killdeer:** arr Fabius & Tully 27 Feb.

**Purple Sandpiper:** max 3 FH thru 10 Dec; last 2 FH 20 Dec.

**Am. Woodcock:** arr Mexico 23 Feb (WF).

**Black-legged Kittiwake:** DH 16 Dec, 8 Jan.

**Bonaparte's Gull:** max 70 OneiL 10 Dec; last 4 OneiL 11 Jan.

**Iceland Gull:** to 8 per day MCL Jan-Feb.

**Lesser Black-backed Gull:** max 4 OnonL 11 Feb.

**Glaucous Gull:** max 2-3 per day MCL after 24 Jan.

**POMARINE JAEGER:** DH 16 Dec (BP, KB).

### PIGEONS - WOODPECKERS

**BARN OWL:** Williamstown 8 Dec, calling at night (FB).

**Snowy Owl:** 4 Dec sites; max 3 Syr Airport Jan-Feb.

**Long-eared Owl:** BLNC 21 Jan.

**Short-eared Owl:** 2 DH to last 4 Jan.

**N. Saw-whet Owl:** BLNC thru; 2 calling Waterville 29 Feb.

**Red-headed Woodpecker:** Old Forge 27 Feb (CB, ph), surprising location.

**Red-bellied Woodpecker:** Old Forge 26 Jan thru.

**Yellow-bellied Sapsucker:** 5 reports.

**Black-backed Woodpecker:** 4 sites Old Forge area.

**N. Flicker:** max 11 WM 31 Dec.

### FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

**N. Shrike:** about 10 reports per month.

**Fish Crow:** max 10 OnonL 31 Jan.

**Com. Raven:** Solvay 2 Jan; expected in rural areas.

**Horned Lark:** max 60 DH 21 Feb.

**Winter Wren:** Big Moose 24 Dec; HI 6 Jan; Dewitt 17 Feb.

**Hermit Thrush:** last Oswego 7 Jan.

**Am. Robin:** max 230 Skan 14 Jan.

**Gray Catbird:** max 3 Dewitt 13 Dec; Constantia 1 Jan; Dewitt 25 Jan; Elbridge 14 Feb.

**Am. Pipit:** arr DH 20 Feb.

**Bohemian Waxwing:** 2 TR 26 Jan; max 25 SSSP 29 Jan.

**Cedar Waxwing:** max 75 TR 26 Jan.

### LONGSPURS - WARBLERS

**Lapland Longspur:** Pulaski 15 Jan; GLSP 16 Jan.

**Snow Bunting:** max 250 Pulaski 29 Jan.

**YELLOW WARBLER:** Syr 3-5 Dec (DW, mob).

**Yellow-rumped Warbler:** max 13 Rice Creek 18 Dec; 8 sites Jan.

**YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER:** Syr 1-5 Dec (PR, mob).

### TOWHEES - WEAVERS

**E. Towhee:** DH 17 Dec (WF); SFNS 25-28 Jan (MP).

**Am. Tree Sparrow:** max 50/day SFNS in Feb.

**Chipping Sparrow:** Fulton 18 Dec (BP), injured wing.

**Field Sparrow:** SFNS 15 Dec (MP).

**Fox Sparrow:** GLSP to 16 Jan.

**Song Sparrow:** max 5 Clay 17 Dec.

**Swamp Sparrow:** last HI 6 Jan.

**White-throated Sparrow:** max 16 Dewitt 31 Dec.

**White-crowned Sparrow:** 2 Westmoreland 17 Dec; DH 22 Dec & Sterling 28 Jan; 2 DH after 2 Feb.

**Dark-eyed Junco:** max 72 North Bay 14 Jan.

**Red-winged Blackbird:** 68 Skan 1 Dec, widespread; 16 Syr 28 Dec; 110 DH 11 Jan; returning birds 25 Feb.

**Rusty Blackbird:** 2 SVB 1 Jan; Van Buren 14 Feb.

**Com. Grackle:** 18 Skan 1 Dec; 70 Skan 25 Feb.

**Brown-headed Cowbird:** max 40 Oneida 1 Jan.

**Purple Finch:** max 16 Forestport 11 Dec.

**Red Crossbill:** 2 Big Moose 15 Feb.

**White-winged Crossbill:** max 12 SFNS 9 Dec; 3 Georgetown 7 Jan; Old Forge 15 Feb.

**Com. Redpoll:** max 40 SSSP after 5 Feb.

**Pine Siskin:** max 90 Williamstown 30 Dec; widespread in small numbers at hemlocks.

**Am. Goldfinch:** max 150 Williamstown 25 Feb.

### CORRIGENDA 61(3)

**E. Kingbird:** arr is 26 Apr, not 26 May.

**Prairie Warbler:** delete "1 Apr; max 7 per day LOL."

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