

REGION 2 - GENESEE

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The winter of 2012-13 was much closer to normal after the extremes of last year. Still, temperatures averaged more than 5° F above normal for both December and January this winter, and only February was back to near normal. Snowfall was near normal for December, far below for January, then above for February for a total only 10% below average. But for December and January much of the time the ground was bare and the average snow depth for all three months was only two inches and the maxima 9-11 inches. The only two notable synoptic snow events were the day after Christmas (8.5") and on 8 February

(10"). Lake Ontario remained open all winter, with only enough shore ice to provide some erosion protection. Summary details from the National Weather Service follow. December: temperature average 36.2°, 6.2° above normal, precipitation 3.57", 0.94" above normal, and snowfall 22.6", 0.80" above normal; January: temperature average 30.1°, 54° above normal, precipitation 1.47", 0.94" below normal, and snowfall 11.7", 16.5" below normal; and February: temperature average 26.8°, 0.4° above normal, precipitation 2.86", 0.91" above normal, and snowfall 28.8", 7.3" above normal.

Generally, species diversity was very close to the 10-year averages for each month, with December a bit above. In spite of the early warmth, half-hardy lingering birds seemed harder to find than in many years. Total species on all three local Christmas Bird Counts ran high average to a record high for the Letchworth-Silver Lake CBC. These were helped by the open water, count dates between the waterfowl seasons, and the incursion of winter finches. More than half the record high counts were among the waterbirds. Interestingly, many of the high counts were from the Finger Lakes, even for species which have historically wintered in bigger numbers on Lake Ontario. There seemed to be less emphasis on 'Big January' searches this year, yet with the warmth and lack of snow cover, diversity to start the year was right on average. There was no substantial early spring push of migrants through season's end.

Delving into the season's picture in more detail, we can start with waterfowl. Most expected species, even the less regular, were at least present in all three months, with only a few puddle ducks dropping out in February. Only the two eiders and Harlequin Duck were missed. Brant and Blue-winged Teal made it into early December. Snow Goose, Canada Goose, and Cackling Goose each set record highs on at least one CBC. By the January Waterfowl Count, numbers were down for most species. Greater White-fronted Goose, Ross's Goose, and Barrow's Goldeneye were reported as rarities, with a Common x Barrow's Goldeneye tossed in at Sodus Point. All three swans wintered. Among the puddle ducks, small numbers of individuals popped up here and there through the winter, with Wood Duck not reported after December and N. Shoveler and Green-winged Teal missed in February. Among the divers, continuing trends were low numbers of Canvasback, but increasing numbers of Ring-necked Duck, Redhead, and scaup gathered on the Finger Lakes instead of Lake Ontario. On Lake Ontario, scoter numbers were relatively low, Long-tailed Duck locations were shifted a bit, and Bufflehead and Common Merganser counts were low. Red-breasted Merganser numbers continue to rise, and record highs were noted for Ruddy Duck on two CBCs. Wintering loons and grebes were back to more typical lower numbers, though Horned Grebe was again locally numerous off parts of Wayne County. A highlight was the finding of a rare **Western Grebe** in January. Most Double-crested Cormorant reports were of young birds wintering on Irondequoit Bay.

There was a sizeable Turkey Vulture roost in the Town of Lima, with one Black Vulture reported there in mid December but none later in the season.

There were very few raptor reports of great interest. A record late Osprey was well described from the Conesus-Hemlock CBC, the Sharp-shinned/Coopers hawk ratio was a typical 1:2, only three N. Goshawks were reported, and Rough-legged Hawk numbers were low. The falcons now appear taxonomically after woodpeckers but seem to fit here, so American Kestrels were scarce and Merlin and Peregrine Falcon numbers typical of recent winters. Sandhill Crane was recorded for the first time on the Conesus-Hemlock CBC, though the birds were reported in the area sporadically since August and they were found nearby in January in 2011. Two Virginia Rails were found on the Rochester CBC, but none was reported all winter from the usual Mendon Pond Park sites.

Late shorebirds included Killdeer on two CBCs and reports in December and January; White-rumped Sandpiper to a record late date of 8 December; Dunlin on the Rochester CBC on 16 December; a Purple Sandpiper at Sodus Point on 26 January; and Wilson's Snipe on 3 January. Bonaparte's Gull made a first appearance on the Letchworth-Silver Lake CBC but then vanished by historically typical mid January, not to reappear until March. There was a Thayer's Gull report from the Riga landfill area, and typical numbers of Iceland, Lesser Black-backed, and Glaucous Gulls scattered about through the season. A first Iceland Gull for Wyoming County and a new bird for the Letchworth-Silver Lake CBC was recorded by Kurt Fox and Dave Tetlow on 15 December on Silver Lake. Great Black-backed Gull numbers seemed low until numbers on the edge of the breaking ice on Irondequoit Bay jumped up in late February. Both Herring x Glaucous and Herring x Great Black-backed gulls were reported.

Eurasian Collared-Dove was reported through December and early January at the usual Hamlin (Church Road) location but not after that. For the less regularly reported owls, Long-eared Owl was found in Penfield and Lima, as well as at the usual Bergen Swamp location for that species, and N. Saw-whet Owl was checked by a group on 1 January. Short-eared Owls were reported as expected through the season. Snowy Owl went unreported this winter. We had no verified Red-headed Woodpecker reports for the season, but a few Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers through late January and record high Red-bellied Woodpecker counts on two CBCs were noted. The Monk Parakeets on West Ridge Road were reported into early January but then not again until after season's end. Late information told of their being in the vicinity since May 2012, and there was no substantiation of rumors of a local pet shop origin; origin is still unknown. Finally, Northern Shrike was well reported, with 20, 14, and 13 apparently different birds by month—good but not really big numbers.

The next couple of groupings capture most of the half hardies and several irruptive species. American Crow numbers tallied at the Rochester roost during the CBC were down a bit from last year, and after that there were efforts to drive the birds out of that area. Fish Crow was reported all season from the Charlotte area of Rochester and nearby Greece, where they have been found the past two winters. However, the local feeding site for crows seemed not to be active this winter and peak numbers were way down. Black-capped Chickadee numbers

were good, but many of the other winter-woods species were relatively low. Red-breasted Nuthatch had staged an early fall irruption, but, while there were many reports through this season, there were only five counts in double digits aside from CBC totals. Winter Wren and Hermit Thrush were reported through the season in small numbers at typical sites. American Pipit was reported in December and January. Bohemian Waxwing was only found in December, and even Cedar Waxwing numbers dropped off quickly. Lapland Longspur and Snow Bunting were reported all season but with few big counts. Warbler reports were few this winter, but included Common Yellowthroat in Greece, Yellow-rumped Warbler in all three months, and two Pine Warblers in February.

Among the sparrows, only American Tree Sparrow and Dark-eyed Junco wintered in sizable numbers. There were reports of small numbers of the usual Song, White-throated, and White-crowned Sparrows. Then we had scattered reports of the less regular Eastern Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, Field Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, and Savannah Sparrow, and finally a “Gambel’s” White-crowned Sparrow in Honeoye falls and at least two photographed Dark-eyed “Oregon” Juncos. Swamp Sparrow numbers were very low. Northern Cardinal set a new record high on the Conesus-Hemlock CBC, and a Dickcissel was found by Dave Tetlow in Parma 19-21 December.

A Yellow-headed Blackbird, this time an adult male, again joined the horde (maximum 550) of Brown-headed Cowbirds and other species at Brad Carlson’s feeders in Honeoye Falls from 28 December to 7 January, with likely the same bird nearby in Rush on 1 February. An Eastern Meadowlark was found on the Conesus-Hemlock CBC, and a male Baltimore Oriole was photographed at a feeder on 23 December.

The major winter finch irruption was one of the big stories of this winter across the continent. It started here in earnest by late October. However by this season, while all species were reported, numbers for most had dropped dramatically. Pine Grosbeaks were reported all season, but the only reliable site was Webster Park, and they were reported from only three other locations. There were three reports of 1-6 Red Crossbills in December and only a lone report of two in February. White-winged Crossbill was reported all season, but were much scarcer after December and down to one report in February. Redpoll numbers held up through the season, with good counts of Common Redpoll and several reports of Hoary Redpoll among them each month. Pine Siskin was surprisingly scarce, and only a lone Evening Grosbeak was reported on the Letchworth-Silver Lake CBC in December.

About 24,579 eBird records were received for the Region for the season. There was a large jump in reports and reporters in February with eBird taking on the reports from the Great Backyard Bird Count. This produced a jump in reports but also added issues in report screening with the new skill mix and new reporters. As usual, it remains to users to try to extract numbers of different records and counts of individuals from the simple sum of records received—a not an insignificant task.

Species totals for all three months were near or above the 10-year averages: December – 136 (126.8), January – 129 (128.8), and February – 112 (110.7).

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ABBREVIATIONS

BB – Braddock Bay, T Greece, MONR; 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; LSLCBC – Letchworth-Silver Lake CBC on 17 Dec; NMWMAC – Northern Montezuma WMA, T Savannah, WAYN; PB – Point Breeze, T Carlton, ORLE; RCBC – Rochester CBC; SB – Sodus Bay, WAYN; SP – Sodus Pt, WAYN; TCEA – Twin Cedars Environmental Area at Avon DEC offices; WP – Webster Park, MONR.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Greater White-fronted Goose: 1 CL 22 Jan (DD, DM).

Snow Goose: 50 RCBC 16 Dec, count record high; max 610 Newark 19 Dec; 500 NMWMA 12 Jan; arr 200 Mendon 25 Feb; 600 WAYN 26 Feb.

Ross's Goose: 3 TCEA 12 Dec (BMo, MW).

Brant: last 1 TCEA 10-12 Dec.

Cackling Goose: approx 49 ind many loc Dec; max 19 HB 8 Dec (DT); 10 TCEA 10-12 Dec (MW); 1 CL 1 Jan; 1 BB 16 Feb; 2 CL 18 Feb.

Canada Goose: 12,000 Lake LaGrange WYOM 9 Dec (KF); max 14,000 TCEA 17 Dec (MW); record highs also on LSL CBC and RCBC of 19,469 and 16, 448.

Mute Swan: 233 RCBC 16 Dec; 242 Waterfowl Count 19-27 Jan.

Trumpeter Swan: max 20 NMWMA (Railroad Rd) 16 Feb (LL).

Tundra Swan: max 200 NMWMA (N Rt 31) 13 Jan (W&MR).

Wood Duck: last 2 RCBC 16 Dec.

Gadwall: max 60 C-HCBC 28 Dec, count record high.

Am. Wigeon: 19 CHCBC 28 Dec, count record high; 1-5 sev loc Jan; arr 7 BB 25 Feb.

Am. Black Duck: max 143 22 Jan (DD, DM).

Mallard: max 3648 CL 22 Jan (DD, DM).

Blue-winged Teal: last 1 NW Quad Treatment Plant, Parma 9 Dec (DT).

N. Shoveler: max 8 SB 20 Dec.

N. Pintail: 12 RCBC 16 Dec, count record high; arr 5 BB 25 Feb.

Canvasback: max 19 BB 16 Feb, low, other months lower.

Redhead: max 7083 Waterfowl Count 22 Jan (DD, DM), all on Conesus, Hemlock, and Honeoye lakes – 6810 on just Conesus Lake, high count.

Ring-necked Duck: max 1734 Lake LaGrange WYOM 15 Dec (KF); 1905 LSLCBC 15 Dec & 1025 CHCBC 28 Dec, count record highs; down to 17 CL 19 Feb, months high.

Greater Scaup: 800 SB 19 Dec, low.

Lesser Scaup: 300 CL 2 Jan, low max

White-winged Scoter: max 500 SB 22 Feb (JTa, DWh); good counts near Pt, Breeze overlap Region 1 & 2 boundary.

Long-tailed Duck: max 2043 RCBC 16 Dec; 1650 SP 21 Jan (GL).

Bufflehead: max 216 CHCBC 28 Dec; otherwise low.

Com. Goldeneye: max 727 CHCBC 28 Dec, count record high.

Barrow's Goldeneye: 1 m PB 18 Dec-Jan (CCa, mob).

Barrow's x Com. Goldeneye: 1 m SP 26 Jan – x Feb (TL, JMcG, AVN, mob), ph, good description of ID issues posted on geneseebirds 11 Feb by CW.

Hooded Merganser: max 357 CHCBC 28 Dec; high numbers on each CBC.

Com. Merganser: max 900 IB-N 16 Feb.

Red-breasted Merganser: 2013 RCBC 16 Dec, count record high; max 4857 Waterfowl Count 19-27 Jan.

Ruddy Duck: 166 LSLCBC 15 Dec & 112 CHCBC, count record highs.

Red-throated Loon: max 96 HB 1 Dec, low max; 12 HB 9 Feb, low winter max.

Pied-billed Grebe: max 17 CL Inlet 2 Jan (MW).

Horned Grebe: max 86 Waterfowl Count 19-27 Jan, all but 1 off WAYN.

Red-necked Grebe: max 810 HB 2 Dec (AG), very high fall count; 18 eBird rep Feb, but all of 1 ind at IB-N.

WESTERN GREBE: 1 off Irondequoit Bay Outlet 19 Jan (RS, JBo, JeB, CW, ph), approx 13th Reg record.

Double-crested Cormorant: max 25 IB 1 Dec (KH), present in decreasing numbers thru.

Great Blue Heron: max 32 RCBC 16 Dec.

BLACK VULTURE: 1 Lima LIVI 15-17 Dec (BCL, MW), only report.

TURKEY VULTURE: MAX 45-46 LIMA LIVI 15, 17 DEC, ROOST ACTIVE THRU.

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Osprey: 1 CL 28 Dec (AC), found on CHCBC, Reg record late.

N. Goshawk: 1 Honeoye Falls 1-2 Jan, 9 Feb (BCL, mob; 1 Kendall 21 Jan (DT).

Red-shouldered Hawk: 2 Rattlesnake Hill WMA 5 Dec (MW), only report.

Virginia Rail: 2 RCBC 16 DEC; none at usual Mendon Ponds sites.

Am. Coot: max 900 CL 2 Jan (MW).

Sandhill Crane: 3 T Richmond ONTA 3 Dec, 30 Jan (KK); 3 T Bloomfield ONTA 6 Dec (AH); 2 T Richmond ONTA 28 Dec (LB), first CHCBC record; all likely same 3 ind present since Aug in area.

Killdeer: near Cuylerville LIVI 15 Dec; Greece 16 Dec; Ontario Beach ROCH 31 Dec; Greece 8 Jan (BBI).

White-rumped Sandpiper: 1 BB-ES 8 Dec (GL, JoB), Reg record late.

Purple Sandpiper: 1 SP 26 Jan (TL, JMcG, AVN), only report. **Dunlin:** 1 BB-ES 8, 16 Dec (GL, JoB, mob), rare in Reg in winter.

Wilson's Snipe: T Ogden 3 Jan (DT), scarce in winter.

Bonaparte's Gull: max 230 RCBC 16 Dec, low; last 5 off Durand-Eastman Park 15 Jan, historically typical.

Herring x Glaucous Gull: NMWMA (N of Rt 31) 14 Jan (DWe).

Herring x Great Black-backed Gull: SP 26 Jan (TL, JMcG, AVN).

THAYER'S GULL: 1 Riga Landfill 1 Jan (KF, GL, DT).

Iceland Gull: 1 Silver Lake WYOM 15 Dec (KF, DT), 1st WYOM record; approx 26 other reports thru.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: 27 ind for season; max 6 T Bergen 24 Dec (AG).

Glaucous Gull: approx 19 ind for season.

Great Black-backed Gull: max 74 IB-N 25 Feb, late increase, low most of season.

PIGEONS – PARROTS

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE: 1-4 H Dec-5 Jan, none later.

E. Screech-Owl: max 47 RCBC 16 Dec, good count.

Long-eared Owl: 2 Bergen Swamp 1 Jan (DT, KF, GL), usual loc for year list start; Penfield 16 Feb & Lima 26 Feb, interesting locations.

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

N. Saw-whet Owl: 1 Bergen Swamp 1 Jan (DT, KF, GL), usual loc for year list start.

Short-eared Owl: max 10-11 NMWMA (Morgan Rd) WAYN 16-23 Feb.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: 57 LSLCBC 15 Dec & 93 CHCBC 28 Dec, both count record highs.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: total 6 rep Dec & Jan, good number for winter.

Merlin: total 12 all Dec; total 9 all Jan; total 4 all Feb.

Peregrine Falcon: total 1 all Dec; total 7 all Jan; total 3 all Feb.

MONK PARAKEET (R2): 4-6 Rochester (West Ridge Plaza area) Dec-12 Jan (mob), none in Feb, but seen again in Mar, origins still unknown, *intro*.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: total about 47 for season, good total.

Am. Crow: max 23,022 RCBC 18 Dec, down by 1/3 from last year, but there were last winter and later this winter continued to be efforts to haze them away from the Rochester roost, *intro*.

FISH CROW (R2): max 7 RCBC 16 Dec (T&PSm, KH); birds were back in the Charlotte of area of Rochester and in nearby T of Greece all winter, *intro*.

Horned Lark: max 260 Kendall 4 Dec (DT).

Red-breasted Nuthatch: 583 reports, but 466 were repeated reports from 11 feeders and many more were associated with 3-4 reports each from feeders only for the Great Backyard Bird Count, and only 5 reports were for >10 ind, three of these at 1 site for the GBBC.

Winter Wren: max 4 Durand-Eastman P 16 Dec; total 9 sev loc Jan; Oatka Creek P 2 Feb; Webster P 24 Feb.

Hermit Thrush: 10 rep of approx 12 birds thru season; max 3 Parma 9 Dec, low.

Am Robin: max 562 RCBC 16 DEC.

Am. Pipit: HB 3 Dec (DT); Riga Landfill 1 Jan (KF, GL, DT); 12-13 Jan (AG).

Bohemian Waxwing: Hamlin & Hilton 29 Dec (AG, RG), only reports.

Cedar Waxwing: max 134 WP 20 Dec, low.

LONGSPURS – WARBLERS

Snow Bunting: max 350 Perry WYOM 1 Jan (BGe, BM).

Com. Yellowthroat: 2 Greece (Church Trail) 14 Dec (DT); Beatty Pt. Greece (GL).

Pine Warbler: 2 Webster 16-17 Feb (PSA).

Yellow-rumped Warbler: 2 NW Quad TP T Parma 9 Dec (DT); 2 Caledonia Fish Hatchery 1 Jan (KF, GL, DT); 6 Caledonia Fish Hatchery 10 Feb (JAd, R&SS).

TOWHEES – WEAVERS

E. Towhee: 1 Kendall 2 Jan (RS).

Am. Tree Sparrow: max 181 CHCBC 28 Dec, decreasing thru season.

Chipping Sparrow: H 9-11 Dec (AG); Lima 1 Jan (KF, GL, DT); T Bloomfield ONTA 7 Jan (DSh).

Field Sparrow: LSLCBC 15 Dec (KF); CHCBC 28 Dec (R&SS).

Savannah Sparrow: 9 rep 15 thru Dec; max 9 Kendall ORLE 28 Dec (DT); 3 York LIV1 1 Jan (KF, GL, DT); H 1-9 Jan (AG); 2 T Murray ORLE 5 Jan (AG).

Fox Sparrow: last N Wolcott WAYN 5 Dec (W&MR).

WHITE-CROWNED "GAMBEL'S"

SPARROW (R2): Honeoye Falls 31 Dec (BCI).

Dark-eyed Junco: max 410 RCBC 28 Dec, count record high.

Dark-eyed “Oregon” Junco: N Wolcott WAYN 5, 22 Dec, all Feb (W&MR, ph); T Ontario WAYN 3 Feb (JWi, ph).

N. Cardinal: max 389 CHCBC 28 Dec, count record high.

DICKCISSEL (R2): 1 imm f Parma 19-21 Dec (DT, JLa).

E. Meadowlark: 1 T Richmond ONTA 28 Dec (DB), only rep

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD: ad m Honeoye Falls 28 Dec – 7 Jan (BCI, ph, mob), ad m Rush 1 Feb (TB, ph), likely same bird.

Rusty Blackbird: 1-3 Victor 5-19 Jan (BB).

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 550 Honeoye Falls 31 Dec – 1 Jan (BCI, *et al*).

Baltimore Oriole: 1 m Pittsford 23 Dec (DP, ph), rare in winter.

Pine Grosbeak: 1-17 WP thru (mob); 4-5 T Ontario WAYN 19-22 Dec (DT); 8-9 Greece (E. Manitou Rd) 16 Feb (AG, DT); 4 Ontario Beach P ROCH 16 Feb (GL).

Red Crossbill: 1-6 sev loc 1, 16, 19 Dec; 2 Webster 17 Feb.

White-winged Crossbill: 9 rep sev loc 1-16 Dec; max 25 Riverside Cemetery ROCH 4 Dec; 15 Rochester 1 Jan; 3 HB 25 Jan; 4 Durand-Eastman P 17 Feb.

Com. Redpoll: max 400 T Macedon (Hance Rd) WAYN 31 Dec (JPo); 350 Macedon WAYN 4 Jan (JPo); 320 South Conesus LIVI (KC); many other rep of smaller numbers thru.

Hoary Redpoll: Silver Lake WYOM 15 Dec (KF, DT); Webster 16 Dec (D&DTr); Honeoye Falls 24 Dec (BCI); H 8 Jan (AG); NMWMA (MAC) 11 Jan (LL); Bushnell’s Basin 15, 25 Jan (C&HH); CL WMA 25 Jan (MW); Ontario WAYN 2 Feb (JWi, ph); South Conesus LIVI 15-17 Feb (KC); N Wolcott WAYN 17-27 Feb (W&MR); good numbers accompanying all the Com. Redpolls.

Pine Siskin: max 16 WAYN 11 Feb, low.

Evening Grosbeak: last 1 LSLCBC 15 Dec (KF).