

REGION 3—FINGER LAKES

Jay McGowan

203 Tareyton Dr., Ithaca, NY 14850

jwm57@cornell.edu

The winter of 2013-2014 was one of the coldest and longest in several years. December started out fairly mild, with high temperatures ranging from 64° to 20° F, averaging very close to normal. January was colder, with an average temperature of 17.7°, 6.6° below normal. Similarly, the average temperature in February was 18.4°, 6.9° below normal. Although only a few degrees colder than the long-term average, this season was dramatically colder than recent winters, with 20 nights below 0°. Snowfall was close to average in December and January and slightly above average in February.

Despite the cold weather, Region 3 experienced an average or above-average number of lingering half-hardies. The more regular rare-in-winter species, such as **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker**, **Hermit Thrush**, **Winter Wren**, **Ruby-crowned Kinglet**, **American Pipit**, **Yellow-rumped Warbler**, and **White-crowned Sparrow**, were all reported in the area throughout the season. Other species less commonly reported in winter were also present, with multiple reports each of **Wood Duck**, **Gray Catbird**, **Eastern Towhee**, **Field Sparrow**, **Savannah Sparrow**, **Fox Sparrow**, and **Eastern Meadowlark**. Blackbirds were scarcer, with only a handful of reports of grackles, cowbirds, and Red-winged Blackbirds. Other notable passerines included two reports of “**Oregon**” **Dark-eyed Junco**, one in Groton, Tompkins County by Ken Rosenberg and Tim Lenz on 12 December, and one near Union Springs in Cayuga County by Jay McGowan on 25 January.

This winter was an excellent one for ducks in the Region. The usual large numbers of *Aythya* on Cayuga and Seneca Lakes were present, although more noticeable later in the early spring season. One of the most notable waterfowl was a male **Tufted Duck** found by Jay McGowan and Livia Santana at the south end of Cayuga Lake on 15 February. This bird was refound later in the day but not seen subsequently. Around the same time, several *Aythya* hybrids were seen in the same area: a **Canvasback x Redhead hybrid** found by Chris Wood and Jessie Barry and a **Redhead x scaup hybrid** found by Jay McGowan were both at the south end of Cayuga Lake, and a **Ring-necked Duck x scaup hybrid** was reported by Tim Lenz, Brad Walker, and Hope Batcheller near the north end of Cayuga Lake. Geese were relatively scarce as is typical for Region 3 in the winter, but a group of three **Greater White-fronted Geese** were seen near Union Springs on 25 January. **White-winged Scoters** were present in larger numbers than usual on Cayuga and other Finger Lakes, undoubtedly due to the unusually high ice coverage on the Great Lakes. Up to 60 were around the south end of Cayuga Lake for most of the season. Two **Black Scoters**, uncommon in the Region in the winter, were on Keuka Lake in January. **Long-tailed Ducks** were also more easily found on the Finger Lakes this season than usual. Grebes were present but not in exceptional numbers until the spring season. As in past

years, two or more **Eared Grebes** were around on Cayuga Lake, both near Aurora and in the Ithaca area intermittently throughout the season. Finally, Tim Lenz found a “**Eurasian**” **Green-winged Teal** at the south end of Seneca Lake on 23 February.

It was also quite a good season for white-winged gulls in the Region. **Iceland Gulls** and **Glaucous Gulls** were seen in good numbers on the lakes, and multiple reports of **Thayer’s Gulls** were notable for the Region. **Lesser Black-backed Gulls** were around all season as has been typical of this species lately, and several **Nelson’s Gulls (Herring x Glaucous)** were photographed in the Ithaca area, as well as one near Seneca Falls.

As with essentially all the other Regions, one of the biggest stories this season was the nearly unprecedented invasion of **Snowy Owls**. This started off slowly in Region 3 compared to the Lake Ontario shore areas, with only a couple of birds reported at the end of November, several weeks after other areas had already had multiple records. The owls eventually filled out the area, however, starting with four birds at once in the Savannah Mucklands on 6 December and followed by easily dozens of different birds reported from all across the Region. Some of the most reliable and well-reported Snowy Owls in the Region were in the Genoa area, Cayuga County (2-3 birds), and south of Seneca Falls, Seneca County (4-5 birds).

Chris Wood and Jessie Barry found a **Black Vulture** on Stevenson Road in Tompkins County on 11 January, and it hung around the Cornell Compost area with overwintering Turkey Vultures at least until the next day. The **Rufous Hummingbird** coming to feeders in Seneca Falls throughout much of the fall season was last seen on 4 December.

Not surprisingly, this winter was abysmal for winter finches, with a small handful of **Pine Siskin** reports and even fewer of Common Redpoll and Red Crossbill, most of which were not confirmed. None of the scarcer winter finch species were reported at all.

In all, 135 species were reported this winter in Region 3.

CONTRIBUTORS

Janet Akin, Gustave Axelson, Ben Barkley, Evan Barrientos, Jessie Barry, Hope Batcheller, Steven & Linda Clark Benedict, Joseph Brin, Ken Burdick, Mike Burger, Doug Cameron, Donna Carter, Mark Chao, George Chiu, Alexa Class, John Confer, Doug Daniels, Susan Danskin, Richard Dreelin, Sarah Dzielski, Steve & Susan Fast, Mary Margaret Ferraro, Martha Fischer, John Fitzpatrick, Brendan Fogarty, Ben Freeman, Jeff Gerbracht, Doug Gochfeld, Jane Graves, Eric Gulson, Scott Haber, Meena Haribal, Tim Healy, Nathaniel Hernandez, Wes Hochachka, Jason Huck, Marshall Iliff, Carolyn Jacobs, Andy Johnson, Tom Johnson, France Kehas-Dewaghe, Steve Kelling, Kenneth Kemphues, Dave Kennedy, Gary Kohlenberg, Stuart Krasnoff, Cynthia Lamb, Leona Lauster, Tim Lenz, Garrett MacDonald, Jay McGowan, Kevin McGowan, Perri McGowan, Bob McGuire, Matt Medler, Ann Mitchell, Liisa Mobley, Graham Montgomery, Dave Nicosia, Dave Nutter, Bill Ostrander, Jay Powell, Mike

Powers, Ken Rosenberg, Reid Rumelt, Livia Santana, Tom Schulenberg, Luke Seitz, Eric Sibbald, Maria Smith, Dave Spier, Laura Stenzler, Scott Suttcliffe, Rose Swift, Jim Tarolli, Chris Tessaglia-Hymes, Benjamin Van Doren, Lee Ann van Leer, Brad Walker, David Weber, Drew Weber, David Wheeler, Max Witynski, Chris Wood, Eric Wood, Suan Yong, Matt Young, and Nathaniel Young.

ABBREVIATIONS

Aurora – Aurora Bay, CAYU; BlueLn – Bluegrass Lane, Ithaca, TOMP; CLSP – Cayuga L SP area, CAYU; Compost – Cornell University Compost Piles on Stevenson Rd., TOMP; EShore – East Shore P, Ithaca, TOMP; Hog Hole – Alan H. Treman State Marina P, TOMP; Knox-Mar – Knox-Marcellus Marsh area, Montezuma NWR, SENE (includes Towpath and East Roads); MNWR – Montezuma NWR, SENE (includes Visitor Center and Wildlife Drive); Mucklands – Savannah Mucklands, SENE; MyPt – Myers Pt, Lansing, TOMP; PortPt – Portland Pt, Lansing, TOMP; SaW – Sapsucker Woods, TOMP; StP – Stewart P, Ithaca, TOMP.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Greater White-fronted Goose: Mucklands 78 Dec; 3 Farleys Point CAYU 25 Jan.

Snow Goose: max 10000 Mucklands 6 Dec.

Ross's Goose: Mucklands 6 Dec (JM, PM), only report.

Trumpeter Swan: max 21 Armitage Road SENE 8 Dec.

Wood Duck: Waterloo SENE 19 Jan thru; Canandaigua ONTA 1 Feb; rare in winter.

Blue-winged Teal: StP 1 Dec (DN), late.

N. Shoveler: StP 28 Dec; 2 SaW 6 Jan; only reports, rare in winter.

GREEN-WINGED TEAL “EURASIAN”: Catherine Creek Inlet, Watkins Glen SCHU 23 Feb (TL).

CANVASBACK X REDHEAD (HYBRID): EShore 15-16 Feb (CW, JB); Geneva SENE 24 Feb (JT, DW), perhaps same bird, probably first state record.

TUFTED DUCK: EShore 15 Feb (JM, LS), second Regional record.

REDHEAD X SCAUP SP. (HYBRID): Aurora 19 Jan (JM); EShore 16 Feb (JM, LS).

RING-NECKED DUCK X SCAUP SP. (HYBRID): Canoga SENE 20 Jan (TL, BW, HB).

White-winged Scoter: max 60 EShore 8 Feb (TL).

Black Scoter: max 5 EShore 11 Dec (TL); 2 Keuka Lake STEU 1, 16, 20 Feb, rare in winter.

Ruddy Duck: max 40 StP 6 Dec.

Red-necked Grebe: EShore 8 Dec; PortPt 9 Feb

Eared Grebe: Hog Hole 19 Dec (DN); Aurora 9 -30 Jan; MyPt 30 Jan – 3 Feb.

Black Vulture: Compost 11-12 Jan.

HAWKS - ALCIDS

Golden Eagle: Hog Hole 18 Jan (CW, JB), rare in winter.

Sandhill Crane: max 39 Knox-Mar 4 Dec; last Mucklands 8 Dec.

Killdeer: arr Lansing TOMP 21 Feb.

Wilson's Snipe: Horseheads Marsh CHEM 4 Jan (MP); Etna TOMP 10 Jan (JM, BW); Ithaca Airport TOMP 19 Jan (KR); scarce in winter.

Bonaparte's Gull: max 35 CLSP 6 Dec (JT, DW).

THAYER'S GULL: Keuka Lake STEU 1 Feb (TL); Compost 9 Feb (mob).

Iceland Gull: max 5 StP 1 Jan and Geneva SENE 1 Feb.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: max 7 EShore 23 Feb (JB).

Glaucous Gull: max 3 EShore 15 Feb.

Herring x Glaucous Gull (hybrid): max 2 StP 15 Dec (TL); many other reports.

PIGEONS - PARROTS

Snowy Owl: max 4 Mucklands 6 Dec; almost unprecedented number throughout season; *intro.*

Long-eared Owl: Thomas Rd. TOMP 1-14 Jan.

Short-eared Owl: max 6 Lake Rd. Ledyard CAYU 13 Dec.

N. Saw-whet Owl: max 3 Wood Rd. Dryden TOMP 16 Jan (JM, BM).

RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD: Seneca Falls SENE 4 Dec (DK), visiting feeders, continuing from fall, last seen this date.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: multiple reports throughout season, usually fairly rare in winter.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: arr multiple locations 14 Dec; generally scarce this season.

Winter Wren: multiple reports throughout season, fairly rare in winter.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: multiple reports from Dec-Jan, fairly rare in winter.

Hermit Thrush: five reports throughout season, fairly rare in winter.

Gray Catbird: Arrowood Dr. Ithaca TOMP 18 Dec thru; Lansing 16 Feb (SH); rare in winter.

Am. Pipit: max 2 Deans Cove SENE 25 Jan.

LONGSPURS – WARBLERS

Lapland Longspur: max 45 Dog Corners Rd. Aurora CAYU (JT, DW), high count.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: max 6 Aurora 23 Feb; multiple reports throughout season.

TOWHEES - WEAVERS

E. Towhee: Hanshaw Rd. Ithaca TOMP 1 Jan – 3 Feb (CL); Caroline TOMP 1 Dec thru (SK); rare in winter.

Am. Tree Sparrow: max 160 Buck Rd. Lansing TOMP (KR) 9 Feb.

Field Sparrow: BlueLn 7 Dec -9 Feb, rare in winter.

Savannah Sparrow: max 6 Hoster Rd. Seneca Falls SENE, 5 Davis Rd. Lansing TOMP, both high for winter; several other overwintering.

Fox Sparrow: Lake Como CAYU 19 Jan; Long Point SP CAYU 17-18 Feb, fairly rare in winter.

White-crowned Sparrow: multiple reports throughout season, uncommon in winter.

DARK-EYED “OREGON” JUNCO: Booth Rd. Locke CAYU 12 Dec (KR, TL); Union Springs CAYU 25 Jan (JM).

E. Meadowlark: Scofield Rd., Lansing TOMP 1 Dec, 11 Jan, rare in winter.

Com. Grackle: Seneca Falls SENE 6 Jan (DK); Genoa CAYU 7 Feb (GM); only reports.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 14 Compost 5 Dec (JM).

Com. Redpoll: no confirmed reports.

Pine Siskin: SaW 17 Jan (MY); Etna 18 Feb; only reports.