

REGION 1—NIAGARA FRONTIER

Mike Morgante

6405 Woodberry Court, East Amherst, NY 14051
morgm@roadrunner.com

James Pawlicki

2100 Sheridan Drive Apt #149, Tonawanda, NY 14223
jmpawli10@gmail.com

December 2014 was mild, which made it anomalous from the rest of this winter, including the epic lake effect storms in November. The mean temperature was 33.5° F, 3.4° above normal. Monthly precipitation at Buffalo-Niagara International Airport was 2.15", 1.74" less than usual, with only 11.3" of snow, 16.1" less than usual. January 2015 was cold, with frequent but not heavy snow. A prolonged arctic air mass brought the mean temperature to 20.4°, 4.5° below normal. The monthly precipitation was 2.59", 0.59" below normal, with 25.0" of snow, 0.3" below normal. Precipitation occurred on all but two days in January, and Lake Erie froze on January 9th, about a week ahead of normal. February's mean temperature was 10.9°, a record-setting 15.4° below normal, making it the coldest month on record since data collection started in 1871! It was plenty snowy too, with the third snowiest February on record. The monthly precipitation was 2.40", 0.09" below normal, with 46.2" of snowfall, 28.9" above normal. There is no way to measure it, but birder effort had to be lower than usual in February.

Waterfowl diversity and numbers were down again from the recent averages of past winters, possibly the result of last winter's heavy waterfowl mortality and the continued below average temperatures starting in early January. The juvenile **Ross's Goose** that was initially found at Beaver Island SP in late November lingered through early January when it was likely taken during waterfowl hunting season. A flock of 1,500 **Snow Geese** reported in the town of Warsaw on 4 January was especially notable given the date and location. There were reports of **Harlequin Ducks** from Niagara Falls SP in December and on the upper Niagara River in Buffalo in January and February. At least three individuals, an adult male, immature male, and female, were seen in the vicinity of Squaw Island on the Niagara River in February. The drake **Barrow's Goldeneye** returned for at least its ninth consecutive winter at Point Breeze on Lake Ontario.

An **Eared Grebe** was seen with large numbers of Horned Grebes at Evangola SP on the Lake Erie shore on 22-23 December and was likely the same individual found at this location back on 27 November.

The warm water of Dunkirk Harbor continues to be a major attraction to **Bald Eagles** in late winter, with a maximum of 46 counted there on 22 February. **Black Vultures** were seen again with Turkey Vultures near the

Niagara River in Lewiston for the fourth consecutive winter, although in smaller numbers than recent winters.

Bonaparte's Gull numbers dropped off in late December with the last flocks of the season noted in early January. There were small numbers of **Little Gulls** seen within Bonaparte's flocks on the Niagara River in December and early January. Four **Black-legged Kittiwakes**, including two adults, were seen at Buffalo Harbor during strong southwest winds on 3 December and 1 January. A first-winter **Laughing Gull** appeared at Dunkirk Harbor in late December and spent most of its time scavenging handouts from people feeding the ducks and geese. Large gulls were especially scarce starting in mid-December in the area around Niagara Falls and the lower Niagara River. The only report of **Thayer's Gull** was of two seen at Devil's Hole SP on 21 January.

The Region's third **Eurasian Collared-Dove** was first sighted at the feeders of Charles and Ann Horton in the town of Wilson on 26 December and lingered until 6 January. Given the colonizing habits of the species, it is suspected this may have been the same individual seen and heard by Betsy Potter back in early August at nearby Wilson-Tuscarora SP, although the lack of sightings in the interim certainly leaves open the possibility that different individuals are involved.

Snowy Owls were widespread again this winter, likely the result of many individuals returning to the Region following last winter's large irruption. There were dozens of reports from at least 18 locations, including two in December from Allegany County where notable. The highest concentrations of owls were four from the Dunkirk Airport and Buffalo Harbor and five reported from the frozen Lewiston Reservoir in January. There were few reports of other owls, with Short-eared Owls reported mostly from previously known wintering areas.

Red-headed Woodpeckers were identified in four locations; more than most recent winters. **Yellow-bellied Sapsucker** is becoming less rare in winter. There were fewer Northern Shrike reports than usual this winter.

Most **Bohemian Waxwing** sightings in Region 1 are along the Lake Ontario shoreline, thus the two reports from southern Erie County this winter were especially noteworthy. Chris and Pat Marcello reported one eating berries from a tree in their yard in Sardinia on 10-11 January. Linda Holmes was excited to find two Bohemians in with Cedar Waxwings at Majors Park in Aurora on 22 February. Other birders made it there that same morning and pushed the total to six, which ties the maximum count for the Region outside Niagara County.

Savannah Sparrow is rare in winter and is typically not found most years after October. Three sightings this winter was surprising, with one in December and two in January in three distinct locations. **Dark-eyed "Oregon" Junco** and **Baltimore Oriole** lingered from locations described in the fall report.

It was not a big winter for irruptive finches. **Pine Siskins** were present in mostly low numbers, with some higher totals near Lake Ontario. **Common**

Redpolls were scattered in very low numbers. One **White-winged Crossbill** was reported at a feeder in Ripley, while Purple Finch numbers were very low.

CONTRIBUTORS

Russell Allen, Dennis Anderson, Teresa Ash, Sue Barth, John Barton, Doug Beattie, Seaghan Coleman, Barry Coombs, Willie D'Anna, Deborah Drake, Joe Fell, Paul Fehringer, Kurt Fox, Mike Galas, Sher Giambra, Joanne Goetz, David Gordon, Dennis Gralak, Andy Guthrie, Jim Hoover, Linda Holmes, C&A Horton, Alec Humann, Marshall Iliff, Jim & Karen Landau, Karen Lee Lewis, Tim Lenz, Barbara Lipps, Melissa Mance-Coniglio, Chris & Pat Marcello, Becky Marsh, Joe Mitchell, Mike Morgante, Celeste Morien, Brian Morse, Roy Morris, Carl Mrozek, Tom O'Donnell, Michael Palermo, James Pawlicki (JPa), Jacalyn Perry (JPe), Betsy Potter, Marsha Raszkowski, Jeff Reed, Ken Reichman, Gerry Rising, Jajean Rose-Burney, Dennis Russell, Richard Salembier, Karl Schmidt (KSc), Debbie Sharon, Keith Stock (KSt), Chris Stranger, Mike Street, Kirk Vanstrom, Gale VerHague, Don Vidler, Jacqueline Walters, William Watson, Jonathan Weber, Jim Wojewodski, Peter Yoerg, Mike Zebehazy.

ABBREVIATIONS

BeSP – Beaver I SP, ERIE; BufH – Buffalo Harbor, ERIE; BuSP – Buckhorn I SP, ERIE; BWWTWP – Batavia Wastewater Treatment Plant, GENE; ChauL – Chautauqua L, CHAU; DH – Dunkirk Harbor, CHAU; EVSP – Evangola SP, ERIE; FLC – Forest Lawn Cemetery, Buffalo, ERIE; FMCSP – Four Mile Creek SP, NIAG; FNSP – Fort Niagara SP, NIAG; INWR – Iroquois NWR, GENE/ORLE; LBSP – Lakeside Beach SP, ORLE; NF – Niagara Falls, NIAG; NFSP – Niagara Falls SP, NIAG; NPP – Niagara Power Project on NR, Lewiston, NIAG; NR – Niagara R; OOWMA – Oak Orchard WMA, GENE/ORLE; PB – Point Breeze, ORLE; Tift NP – Tift Nature Preserve, ERIE; WoBSP – Woodlawn Beach SP, ERIE.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Snow Goose: 4 Albion ORLE 1 Dec; 2 BWWTWP 1, 2 Dec; 35 Alabama GENE 14 Dec; 4 PB 21 Dec; Olcott NIAG 26, 27 Dec; Findley L CHAU 28 Dec; max 1500 Warsaw WYOM 4 Jan (JW); 13 Cuba ALLE 24 Jan; DH 16 Feb; more reports Dec-Jan than typical.
ROSS'S GOOSE (R1): juv BeSP 1 Dec - 5 Jan (WW, AH, mob), continuing from Nov, likely taken by hunter in early Jan.
Cackling Goose: 4 Albion ORLE 1 Dec; 3 DH 2 Dec; BeSP 7 Dec; 2 INWR 29 Dec; only reports.

Mute Swan: 4, max 14 DH 17-18 Jan, 20-22 Feb; 2 BeSP 19, 28 Jan; 2 NR Buffalo 8 Feb.
Trumpeter Swan: BeSP 6-14 Dec, 1 Jan (DM, DS); wing-tagged individual from Ontario.
Tundra Swan: 185, max 260 BeSP 30 Dec, 17 Jan; 30 BuSP 7 Feb; 76 Grand I NR 22 Feb.
Wood Duck: Tonawanda NR 14 Dec (MG, GR); Scio CBC 20 Dec; Hamburg-E Aurora CBC 27 Dec; only reports.
Gadwall: 14 Cuba L ALLE 4 Dec; max 94 NF 22 Jan.
Am. Wigeon: 4 DH 6 Jan; 2, 1 Tonawanda NR 15 Jan, 5 Feb; Buffalo NR 18 Feb; only reports beyond Dec.

Am. Black Duck: max 57 BWWT 9 Dec; 41 OOWMA 29 Dec; 23, 20 DH 5 Jan, 8 Feb; 15 Buffalo NR 20 Jan; 17 Fredonia CHAU 11 Feb; 8 FLC 18-28 Feb.

N. Shoveler: max 114, 64, 36 BWWT 2, 5, 14 Dec; 2 St. Bonaventure CBC 14 Dec; 3 ChauL 28 Dec; 4 DH 6 Jan.

N. Pintail: max 34 Cuba L ALLE 20 Dec; WoBSP 15 Jan; 2 NFSP 21 Jan; Buffalo ERIE 25 Jan, 18 Feb.

Green-winged Teal: 2 Cuba L ALLE 7 Dec; BWWT 2-9 Dec, 5, 19 Jan; no Feb reports.

Canvasback: max 1900, 1900 BuSP, Tonawanda NR 6 Jan, 1 Feb; 1000 BeSP 17 Jan; 278 DH 11 Feb; 9 FLC 28 Jan; 5 BWWT 28 Jan; lower numbers on NR than in recent winters.

Redhead: 110, 100 BufH 4 Dec, 6 Jan; max 255 DH 6 Jan; 1, 3 BWWT 18 Jan, 28 Feb; 229 Tonawanda NR 24 Jan; 7 FLC 28 Feb.

Ring-necked Duck: 7 BWWT 9 Dec; 4 DH 21 Jan; 10, 45 BuSP 26 Dec, 6 Jan; 4 Barcelona Harbor CHAU 18 Jan; 18 Grand I NR 22 Feb.

Greater Scaup: 8000, max 9100, 1200 Buffalo NR 19, 25 Jan, 21 Feb; 7200 BufH 20 Jan.

Lesser Scaup: 75, 30 BufH 3 Dec, 13 Jan; 14 Tonawanda NR 20 Jan; 150 Buffalo NR 22 Feb.

Harlequin Duck: f NFSP 8, 24 Dec (WD, JPa, mob); imm m Buffalo NR 25 Jan (WD, JPa, mob); 1-2 Buffalo NR 4-22 Feb (PY, JPa, WW, AH); up to 3 individuals – ad m, imm m, and f – on Buffalo NR in Feb.

Surf Scoter: 3 FNSP 4 Dec; max 14 BufH 12 Dec; 11, 1 Wilson NIAG 20 Dec, 25 Jan; 3, 1, 2 DH 21 Dec, 24 Jan, 22 Feb; 1-2 Buffalo NR 4-8 Feb.

White-winged Scoter: 61 Olcott NIAG 20 Dec; 10-36 PB 12-25 Jan; 11 Buffalo NR 5-8 Feb; 50 FNSP 20 Feb; 40 Lewiston NR 25 Feb; 30 DH 28 Feb; lower than avg numbers on L Ontario.

Black Scoter: 2, 1 DH 5-23 Dec, 22 Feb; PB 19 Jan; 2 BufH 8 Feb; only reports.

Long-tailed Duck: 159 FMCS 28 Dec; 200 Lewiston NR 13 Jan; max 256 PB 20 Jan; Independence ALLE 22 Feb; 95, 242 Buffalo NR 5, 26 Feb (WW, AH).

Bufflehead: max 2000 BufH 4 Dec.

Com. Goldeneye: 350 NFSP 4 Dec; max 1850, 1700 Buffalo NR 19 Jan, 5 Feb.

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE (R1): PB 6 Dec, 11, 19 Jan (AG, BM, CS), apparently same male that has wintered here since Dec 2006, seen in both Region 1 & 2.

Hooded Merganser: max 82, 48 DH 23 Dec, 2 Jan; 27 Tonawanda NR 31 Dec; 30 N Tonawanda NR 1 Feb.

Com. Merganser: 40 Oak Orchard CBC 29 Jan; max 1675, 1400 Tonawanda NR 15 Jan, 5 Feb; 1100, 900 Buffalo NR 17 Jan, 5 Feb; 45 FLC 28 Feb.

Red-breasted Merganser: 400 BufH 3 Dec; 500 Squaw I NR 1 Jan; 550 Buffalo NR 5 Feb; 150 PB 7 Feb; low numbers.

Ruddy Duck: max 12, 5 BWWT 1, 12 Dec; 11 Jamestown CBC 14 Dec; Cuba L ALLE 20 Dec; 25, 1-5, 1 DH 22 Dec, 1-24 Jan, 11-28 Feb; 6, 2, 3 BuSP 27 Dec, 4, 6 Jan.

Red-throated Loon: 12 FNSP 4 Dec; max 21 FMCS 28 Dec; PB 19 Jan; 2BufH, DH, FNSP 22 Feb.

Com. Loon: FNSP 1 Jan; EVSP 3 Jan; Buffalo NR 22 Feb; only reports beyond Dec.

Pied-billed Grebe: Wellsville ALLE 17, 23 Jan (KR); Hinsdale CATT 25 Jan (JR); only reports beyond Dec.

Horned Grebe: 80, 124 DH, EVSP 22 Dec (TL); 11 EVSP 3 Jan; PB 7 Feb; DH 21 Feb; FNSP 22 Feb; few reports past Dec.

Red-necked Grebe: BWWT 2 Dec; BufH 3 Dec; PB 21 Dec; 2 BuSP 26 Dec; 3 FMCS 28 Dec; no reports Jan-Feb.

EARED GREBE (R1): EVSP 22-23 Dec (TL, JPa, WW); likely continuing from late Nov, rare for date and location.

Double-crested Cormorant: 103, max 125 DH 21 Dec, 18 Jan; 6 Tonawanda NR 31 Jan; 2 Buffalo NR 28 Feb.

Great Blue Heron: max 34, 22 Strawberry I NR 4, 25 Jan.

Black-crowned Night-Heron: Strawberry I NR 25 Jan (WD, JPa, mob); only report.

Black Vulture: 4 NF 1 Dec (MS); 7 NF CBC; 3, 2, 1 Lewiston NIAG 11 Jan, 11, 28 Feb (BC, JB, WD, BP), overwintered for at least 4th consecutive year, fewer than typical.

Turkey Vulture: Eagle WYOM 23 Dec (DA); 36 NF CBC 28 Dec; Amherst ERIE 2 Jan (JPe); 3-7 Lewiston NIAG 3-19 Jan (mob); N Tonawanda NIAG 14 Feb (BL); 4 Machias CATT 15 Feb (BM).

HAWKS - LARIDS

Bald Eagle: 6 EVSP 23 Dec; 3 BeSP 6 Jan; 7, max 46 DH 21 Jan, 22 Feb (WW, GV); 4 Tonawanda NR 23 Feb; 5 Lewiston NR 25 Feb; 4 FNSP 28 Feb; also reported from other traditional wintering and breeding areas.

Red-shouldered Hawk: reported from 12 locations; more than usual.

Rough-legged Hawk: max 3 Dayton CATT 25 Jan; fewer than usual.

Am. Coot: max 500, 250, 167 DH 22 Dec, 2, 6 Jan; few reports elsewhere.

Killdeer: last Jamestown CHAU 13 Dec.

Purple Sandpiper: no reports but one above NF in Ont in early January likely found its way to US at some point.

Black-legged Kittiwake: ad, 2 imm BufH 3 Dec (JPa, JM); ad BufH 1 Jan (JPa); ad sightings rare.

Bonaparte's Gull: 1750 BufH 3 Dec; 250 Squaw I NR 1 Jan; absent after first week of Jan.

Little Gull: Yates ORLE 1 Dec; 3 BufH 3 Dec; NPP 27 Dec; DH 1 Jan; 3 Buffalo NR 1 Jan; 1-3 Squaw I NR 1-4 Jan; no Feb reports.

LAUGHING GULL (R1): imm DH 21-25 Dec (KS, WW, JPa, SB, mob), rare.

Herring Gull: max 4000 NFSP 4 Dec; very low numbers on NR starting mid-Dec.

THAYER'S GULL: 2 DHSP 21 Jan (JPa), only report.

Iceland Gull: 2 Cuba L ALLE 20, 22 Dec (TL, RM); 2 Angelica Landfill ALLE 23 Dec (MI); 3 NFSP 4 Jan; 3 DHSP 13 Jan; 2 FNSP 25 Jan; max 4 NPP 21 Feb; Buffalo NR 21-22 Feb; DH 21-28 Feb; fewer reports and smaller numbers than last two winters.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: max 6, 4 NFSP 4 Dec, 4 Jan; 2 Cuba L ALLE 21 Dec (TL); Angelica Landfill ALLE 23 Dec (MI); 2 BeSP 19 Jan; Buffalo NR 4 Feb.

Glaucous Gull: 3, 2 Cuba L ALLE 20, 22 Dec (TL, RM); Evans ERIE 23 Dec; 3 BeSP 18 Jan; 3 FNSP 25 Jan; 2 Buffalo NR 8 Feb; 2 Lewiston NR 24 Feb; 9 other reports of 1-2, widespread but much smaller numbers than last two winters.

Great Black-backed Gull: 104, 120, max 125 DH 5, 21 Jan, 3 Feb; small numbers on NR.

PIGEONS – PARROTS

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE: Wilson NIAG 26 Dec – 6 Jan (C&AH); third report for Reg.

Snowy Owl: 4 BufH 2, 22 Dec; Cuba ALLE 10 Dec (KSc); 4 Dunkirk Airport CHAU 17 Dec, 7 Jan; Rushford ALLE 19 Jan (KSc); 5 Lewiston Res NIAG 21 Jan; at least 18 other reports; likely many of the same individuals returning after last winter's major irruption.

Long-eared Owl: Arcade WYOM 18 Feb (PF), only report.

Short-eared Owl: Jamestown Airport CHAU 4 Dec (KV); 5 Shelby ORLE 20 Dec, 2-14 Jan (CM); Cambria NIAG 9 Dec, 14 Jan (JW); NF Airport NIAG 10 Dec (JW); DA 11 Jan (MM-C); Alabama GENE 7, 16 Feb (KLL, SB); Hanover CHAU 20 Feb (GV); Royalton NIAG 23 Jan (TA); Porter NIAG 23 Jan (DD); 5 Yates ORLE 25 Feb (MP); mostly regular locations.

N. Saw-whet Owl: no reports.

Red-headed Woodpecker: 1-2 Hamburg ERIE Dec-Feb (MZ, DR); Shelby ORLE 14 Dec (CM); East Aurora ERIE 15 Dec (DV); Orchard Park ERIE 3 Jan (JH); only reports.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: four reported on 4 CBCs Dec; East Aurora ERIE 15 Dec (DV); Amherst ERIE 5 Jan (RS); Forestville CHAU (GV) 10 Jan, 15 Feb; FNSP 15 Jan (DG); Wilson NIAG 22 Jan, 13 Feb (WD, BP); Alexander WYOM 13 Feb (KF); only reports.

Merlin: max 2 NF CBC 28 Dec; reported from 11 other loc..

Peregrine Falcon: reported from 11 loc.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: fewer than usual beyond December.

Com. Raven: 1-2 Tonawanda ERIE thru, established year round at this location; 2 Whirlpool SP NIAG 27 Dec (TO); 2 Buffalo ERIE 9 Feb (DG); Shelby ORLE 13 Feb (CM); continue increasing reports in northern portion of Reg; regular in southern portion of Reg.

Horned Lark: max 150 Wilson NIAG 10 Feb; max 150 Somerset NIAG 11 Feb.

Winter Wren: 2 BeSP 31 Jan (DS), only report beyond CBC season.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: NFSP 27 Dec (SC), only report.

E. Bluebird: well reported on CBCs; max 15 N Collins ERIE 1 Jan (J&KL).

Hermit Thrush: Yates ORLE 1 Dec; Tift NP 1 Dec; 2 LBSP 7 Dec; Wilson NIAG 20 Dec; FMCSP 28 Dec; Buffalo ERIE 2 Jan; Carlton ORLE 8 Jan; more than usual.

Am. Robin: max 150 Olcott 19 Jan.

Gray Catbird: Wellsville ALLE 1 Feb (RA), only report.

Am. Pipit: Jamestown CBC 14 Dec, only report.

Bohemian Waxwing: Sardinia ERIE 10-11 Jan (C&PM); Olcott NIAG 18 Jan (JW); 4 Yates ORLE 7 Feb (JPa); FNSP 8, 10 Feb; 6 Majors P Aurora ERIE 22 Feb (LH); very rare away from L Ontario Plain.

Cedar Waxwing: scarce this winter; only found on two CBCs.

LONGSPURS - WARBLERS

Lapland Longspur: only two reports Dec – Jan; 9 Wilson NIAG 10 Feb; 2 Forestville CHAU 11 Feb; 5 Somerset NIAG 11 Feb; max 45 Yates ORLE 11 Feb; 2 Alexander GENE 21 Feb.

Snow Bunting: lower numbers Dec & Jan; max 550, 675 Wilson NIAG 11, 21 Feb; 275 Alexander GENE, 330 Bethany GENE 21 Feb.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: Newfane NIAG 22 Dec; Porter NIAG 28 Dec; only reports.

TOWHEES – WEAVERS

E. Towhee: Hamburg-E Aurora CBC 27 Dec; Jamestown CHAU 23 Jan; only reports.

Chipping Sparrow: 2, 1, 1 Wilson NIAG 5, 9, 23 Dec (BP, WD); only reports.

Field Sparrow: 4 Jamestown CBC 14 Dec; last Scio CBC 20 Dec; only reports.

Savannah Sparrow: Newfane NIAG 13 Dec (WD); Clarence ERIE 10 Jan (JM); Alabama GENE 15 Jan (MZ); more reports than usual for winter.

Swamp Sparrow: nine on six CBCs; 3 BeSP 6 Jan.

White-crowned Sparrow: max 21 Wilson NIAG 20 Dec (WD); 15 Bethany GENE 31 Jan

(DB); 12 Carlton ORLE 20 Jan; 18 Sheridan CHAU 26 Feb (GV); reported from five other loc, low numbers.

Dark-eyed “Oregon” Junco: Colden ERIE 20 Dec thru (J&KL!, ph), likely same individual that has showed up at this feeder in previous winters.

Red-winged Blackbird: few winter reports; max 11 Tonawanda ERIE 26 Jan; no definite migrants in late Feb.

Rusty Blackbird: 3 Tift NP 1 Dec; INWR 14 Dec; only reports.

Com. Grackle: Portland CHAU 12 Dec; Oak Orchard CBC 29 Dec; only reports.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 110 Independence ALLE 11 Jan (KR).

BALTIMORE ORIOLE (R1): Forestville CHAU 1-20 Dec (SG), continued from fall.

Purple Finch: only 5 on three CBCs; max 12 Jamestown CHAU 25 Jan.

White-winged Crossbill: Ripley CHAU 1 Feb (MR), only report.

Com. Redpoll: 27 on five CBCs; max 13 Independence ALLE 19 Feb (KR); scattered reports in low numbers.

Pine Siskin: 65 Wilson NIAG 6 Dec; 55 Albion ORLE 12 Dec; 21 on three CBCs; max 85 Carlton ORLE 8 Jan.

Evening Grosbeak: no reports.