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REGION 2—GENESEE

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Back to back, another cold and snowy winter, this time weighted strongly to the back end. December started with cold and snow, but soon a Pacific flow brought warmer air, clouds, and rains, with the last half of the month snow-free. It was a gray, depressing time, with 26 days cloudy and the other five partly cloudy. The early cold snap left the bays and ponds near Rochester frozen for the Christmas Bird Count (CBC), but Lake Ontario and flowing water remained open. Temperatures averaged 34.4° F, 4.4° above normal, and precipitation totaled 2.31", 0.32" below normal, with snowfall 16.6", 5.2" below normal.

January continued the cold, gray pattern, with persistent light snow on 25 days after a bit of rain early. Most water other than Lake Ontario was frozen.

Fortunately, south winds just before the annual Waterfowl Count on the 18th blew near-shore ice far out and that day was a good one for counting. Still, numbers for most species were low due to the preceding days of ice cover. January temperatures averaged 19.5°, 5.2° below normal, and precipitation totaled 1.74", 0.67" below normal, with 17.7" of snowfall, 10.5" below normal.

February capped off the winter as the coldest month on record for Rochester (145 years of records). Temperatures averaged 12.2°, 14.2° below normal. Only on the 4th and only for four hours did the thermometer rise above freezing. There were 11 days with lows below 0°, a record number. Record lows were recorded on 16, 20, 21, 23, and 24 February, with the lows of -11° on the 20th and 21st the latest records for double-digit below zero temperatures. Lake Ontario remained largely open, but floating ice would pack nearly solid to the horizon after a couple of days of north winds, only to show open leads quickly when the wind shifted to the south. Persistent snowfall totaled 45.2", 21.5" above normal, though precipitation was only 2.51", 0.56" above normal. Snow cover peaked at 21" on the 15th. It was not a great month for birds or birding, and numbers dropped off for both species and individuals. Only five new species were reported and all were likely winter visitors or residents, not early migrants. In the end, it was the 13th coldest meteorological winter on record, with precipitation less than 10% below normal.

Given the weather notes, the general birding picture was pretty much as expected. The three local CBCs recorded respectable, high-average total species (with count week birds included) and the usual few record highs. With much of the water frozen, the mid-January Waterfowl Count total was low, and both species and numbers dropped in late January through February. Rarities were few and half hardies scarce and decreasing after the CBC searches. It was also not a good season for irruptive species. Yet totals for the months and year to date were very close to their respective 10-year averages.

One of the key groups we monitor in winter is waterfowl and associated waterbirds. This season all of the regularly expected winter species were recorded, though generally at low peak counts and decreasing with time. The late fall waterfowl migration that often stretches into December was poor. An exception was Snow Goose and some of the rare species that we often find loosely associated with them, Greater White-fronted, Ross's, and Cackling Geese. These were all present through December into the first few days of January. Snow Goose set record highs on the Rochester and the Conesus-Hemlock CBCs. Tundra Swan was also record high on the Conesus-Hemlock count. Several of the diving duck species that used to winter largely on Lake Ontario now peak in the Finger Lakes. On the Conesus-Hemlock CBC, record highs were set for Redhead, Ring-necked Duck, Bufflehead, Common Goldeneye, Hooded Merganser, and Common Merganser, plus Common Loon and Great Blue Heron. Waterfowl that still peak in substantial numbers on Lake Ontario are Long-tailed Duck, Common Merganser, and Red-breasted Merganser. The state Waterfowl Count on 18 January tallied the second lowest

total in the past 10 years in this Region. Most of the drop to less than half of last year's total came from no Canada Geese below the Mt. Morris Dam and missing diving ducks due mainly to the Finger Lakes and the Lake Ontario bays all being frozen.

Loons and grebes were also found only in small numbers this season other than a few good Horned Grebe counts on Lake Ontario off Wayne County. Rarer waterbirds were: an adult male King Eider found in the Genesee River mouth by Tom Nash on 15 January and seen and photographed by many there or at nearby sites off and on through 24 February; the returning male Barrow's Goldeneye found at Pt. Breeze on 6 December and there through January; other Barrow's Goldeneye reports at Sodus Pt. off and on through January; and the lone immature **Northern Gannet** of the fall photographed by Joe Wing at Sodus Pt. on 12 December and likely the same bird reported as a *solid* sp. seen passing along the Lake Ontario shore to the east off the Town of Wolcott by Wade and Melissa Rowley about an hour earlier. By February, none of the rarer geese, few puddle ducks, few Great Blue Herons, and no cormorants were reported.

Raptors provided few highlights this winter. Black Vulture finally showed up again in January and February, with reports from the Millseat Landfill (Town of Riga). Turkey Vulture was also present there in small numbers and set a record high on the Conesus-Hemlock CBC. There were only two Northern Goshawk and three Red-shouldered Hawk reports for the season. Rough-legged Hawk numbers were low and decreased through the season. Among the falcons, American Kestrels were scarce and both Merlin and Peregrine Falcon reports were a bit below recent winters. A major highlight was a gray **Gyrfalcon** photographed at the pier in Charlotte by Zaphir Shamma on 16 February and seen briefly there the next day.

Moving to nocturnal raptors, we tied a record high for Eastern Screech-Owls on the Rochester CBC; Snowy Owls were present in good numbers, though mainly at the Genesee County Airport (Batavia) later in the season; and the DEC enlisted volunteers for biweekly Short-eared Owl counts through the season. The best single locale for Short-eared Owls was near the intersection of Sand and Taft Roads in the Town of West Bloomfield, where the peak count was 19 on 18 January. **Interest in owls brought many to that area and reminded us to be aware of our impact as birders; some neighbors complained of cars parked on a snow-narrowed road, exhaust fumes, and binoculars aimed toward home windows.** Finally, Northern Saw-whet Owls were found in the usual Owl Woods area west of Braddock Bay on 7 February and as a surprise in Palmyra on 26 February. Late February checks did not turn up more at Owl Woods.

Among the shorebirds and gulls, we find only a single shorebird reported, a Purple Sandpiper seen on the piers at Irondequoit Bay Outlet from 19 December to 6 January. Ice on the piers and late waterfowl hunting limited sightings. A Black-legged Kittiwake was seen passing Hamlin Beach SP on 1 December, the only report this season, and the last Bonaparte's Gull reported was on 18

January, a typical date historically. With no open bays to provide ice-edge gathering sites, the larger winter gull reports were hit and miss along the lakeshore or near either the Millseat Landfill in Riga or the High Acres Landfill in Perinton. There were two Thayer's Gulls reported in early January, and Iceland, Lesser Black-backed, and Glaucous Gulls were seen off and on through the season in modest numbers.

Covering the passerines is always a challenge. This time I'll start with the half hardies, sneaking in a couple of non-passerines; good in December to mostly gone by February this winter. There were two Red-headed Woodpecker reports, but none from Hamlin Beach SP. Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers were present all season in better numbers than in many winters. Four Eastern Phoebe in December is likely a new high for the Region for that month. There were lots of Winter Wrens in Durand-Eastman Park for the Rochester CBC, leading to a record high 22, and 10 were still present in a small corner of the park on 3 January. Carolina Wren also set record highs on both the Rochester and Conesus-Hemlock CBCs. A lone Ruby-crowned Kinglet was found on the Letchworth-Silver Lake CBC. Multiple reports of Hermit Thrush were received in each month, and a Gray Catbird was seen in Webster Park in January. Winter warblers included an Ovenbird photographed by Monika Hermann-Kokis in Henrietta on 27 December and Pine Warblers and Yellow-rumped Warblers in December and January. Also reported were Eastern Towhee found in December and February; a few Savannah Sparrows in January and February; a rare January Fox Sparrow; and Rusty Blackbirds at a feeder in Victor in January and February. The CBCs also tallied some record high passerine counts, with Rochester nearly doubling the old high for Blue Jay, Letchworth-Silver Lake with record high Tufted Titmouse, and on all three counts, White-breasted Nuthatch at near record highs.

Most birders were disappointed with the winter finch numbers; there was no real incursion this winter. Yet many species were reported scattered through the season, with Common Redpoll and Pine Siskin the only species present in numbers and increasing later in February. Still, even those two species were hit and miss for different observers often only separated by short distances. Other reports included White-winged Crossbill in December, Hoary Redpoll—including photos—in December and February, a Common "Greater" Redpoll at the Rowley's feeder in N. Wolcott on 16 February, and four reports of Evening Grosbeak in December.

This leaves a few loose-end records of some interest. Virginia Rail was again found at the usual spot in Mendon Ponds Park from 17 January to a last report on 7 February. Rock Pigeon made the podium with a record high count on the Rochester CBC. Both Eurasian Collared-Dove and Monk Parakeet were again reported from their known locations but only in January. Northern Shrike reports were relatively few and decreased through the season. The Fish Crows usually seen either side of the Genesee River near the mouth were seen off and on all season. There were few Cedar Waxwing reports, so Bohemian Waxwing

at Hamlin Beach SP on 20 December and 1-2 birds in Webster Park (Whiting Road) 7-22 February were surprises. With lots of snow cover, but patches in fields and the road edges swept bare in open country, the winter field birds—Horned Lark, Lapland Longspur, and Snow Bunting—were found, sometimes in good numbers, when birders could get out looking. The rarest passerine of the season was the **Lark Sparrow** continuing from fall in Hamlin Beach SP near Parking Lot 4. It was seen off and on to 24 January when observers would tromp through the snow to that area after the park roads were closed. Finally, there were few reports of blackbird flocks of any large number, but a variable, mixed-species flock in the Town of Rush was accompanied to a feeder area and other sites nearby by a male Yellow-headed Blackbird seen by many from 17-31 January. Even in a tough winter there are interesting things going on in the bird and birding world!

There are a few statistics of potential interest. There were approximately 33,000 eBird records for our Region (after about 25% of the initial download each month was deleted from parts of counties lying outside in other Regions). There were also a bit over 10% more records from the geneseebirds listserv and other private submissions. Also data was utilized from the local CBC summaries and the Region 2 part of the state Waterfowl Count. The number of species seen and (10-year averages) by month were: December – 130 (129.8), January – 128 (128.9), February – 107 (112.9), and total year to date through February – 133 (133.2).

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

BB – Braddock Bay, T Greece, MONR; CHCBC – Conesus-Hemlock CBC 26 Dec; CL – Conesus L, LIVI; DEP – Durand-Eastman Pk, MONR; H – T Hamlin, MONR; HBSP – Hamlin Beach SP, MONR; IBO – Irondequoit Bay Outlet, MONR; LSLCBC – Letchworth-Silver Lake CBC 20 Dec; MP – Mendon Pond Pk, MONR; NMWMAC – Northern Montezuma WMA, T Savannah, WAYN; PB – Point Breeze, T Carlton, ORLE; RCBC – Rochester Christmas Bird Count 14 Dec; SB – Sodus Bay, WAYN; SPt – Sodus Pt., WAYN; TCEA – Twin Cedars Environmental Area at Avon DEC offices; WP – Webster Pk, MONR.

WHISTLING-DUCKS – VULTURES

Greater White-fronted Goose: 3 Jacobs Rd H 7 Dec (AGu, CGu); 3-5 HBSP 9-27 Dec (mob); last 1 and 4 HBSP 2 Jan (PM and BCl).

Snow Goose: 100 RCBC 16 Dec, CBC record high; 15074 N Sector CHCBC 26 Dec (JD, *et al.*, ph), CBC record high; **max 75000** Poplar Hill Rd Lima 28 Dec (R&SS, CSp, ph); 9000 TCEA 29 Dec (MW); 5000+ Geneseo 4 Jan (JK); last 1 CL 5 Jan (KC).

Ross's Goose: 1-2 HBSP 1-21 Dec (AGu, BriM, mob); 1 Poplar Hill Rd Lima 28 Dec (RS); West Fork Rd H 1 Jan (B&BM); last HBSP area 2 Jan (BCL).

Cackling Goose: 20 rep, 18+ ind 5 loc 1-27 Dec (mob); max 5 at 3 loc 1, 17 Dec; last 1-2 HBSP area 1-3 Jan (mob).

Canada Goose: max 17,197 LSLCBC 20 Dec.

Mute Swan: max 111 SPt 21 Jan; 25 IBO 7 Feb, peak for the month, low.

Trumpeter Swan: max 22 T Savannah WAYN 7 Dec.

Tundra Swan: 151 SB 16 Dec; max 250 CL 26 Dec (JK, AC).

Wood Duck: 1 Bear Creek at Lake Ontario 18, 23 Jan, 22 Feb, only reports after mid Jan.

Gadwall: max 36 CL 18 Jan (MW).

Am. Wigeon: last SB 1 Jan.

Am. Black Duck: max 127 CL 18 Jan (MW).

Mallard: max 2000 near Caledonia 23 Jan; total 4080 Waterfowl Count 17- 23 Jan.

N. Shoveler: last T Penfield MONR 18 Jan (C&JB).

N. Pintail: last 3 Caledonia Fish Hatchery 23 Jan.

Green-winged Teal: 1 Silver L WYOM 3 Jan; 3 Caledonia Fish Hatchery 11 Jan; 1 BB 16 Feb; only reports after Dec.

Canvasback: max 25 SPT 1 Jan, low peak.

Redhead: max 6934 CHCBC 26 Dec, CBC record high; 30 IBO 7 Feb, low peak for Feb.

Ring-necked Duck: max 1500 CHCBC 26 Dec, CBC record high; 17 CL 4 Jan, very low max for Jan; none in Feb.

Greater Scaup: max 150 SPT 3 Feb, very low.

Lesser Scaup: max 340 CHCBC 26 Dec.

King Eider: 1 ad m mouth of Genesee River and nearby sites 15 Jan – 24 Feb, -24 Dec (TN, mob), ad m rare, many ph.

White-winged Scoter: max 100 mouth of Genesee River 18 Feb, low.

Long-tailed Duck: max 872 Genesee River to Braddock Bay 18 Jan (KGr), total 1928 whole Waterfowl Count.

Bufflehead: max 497 CHCBC 26 Dec, CBC record high; only 73 on Waterfowl Count 18 Jan.

Com. Goldeneye: 936 CHCBC 26 Dec, CBC record high; max 1295 Waterfowl Count 18 Jan.

Barrow's Goldeneye: 1 m PB 6 Dec - 19 Jan (mob), present sev winters, moves from the edge of Region 1 to a mile or so east into Region 2; 1 m SPT 18 Dec (JiB, JW, ph, JM, LL).

Hooded Merganser: max 634 CHCBC 26 Dec, CBC record high.

Com. Merganser: 115 CHCBC 26 Dec, CBC record high; max 364 Waterfowl Count 18 Jan, low total.

Red-breasted Merganser: max 2169 Waterfowl Count 18 Jan.

Ruddy Duck: max 80 CHCBC 26 Dec (JK, AC), all on CL.

Red-throated Loon: max 22 HBSP 9 Dec (AGu); a few rep 1-4 to 19 Jan & 1-2 mouth of Genesee River 18 Feb.

Com. Loon: singles sev loc to 19 Jan & mouth of Genesee River & SB 18 Feb.

Pied-billed Grebe: max 22 CL 3 Dec (AC).

Horned Grebe: 72 off Bear Creek WAYN 20 Dec; 75 SPT 20 Dec; max 100 off Bear Creek WAYN 4 Jan (JW).

Red-necked Grebe: max 17 HBSP 9 Dec, low max; last 1 off T Williamson WAYN 18 Jan.

N. Gannet: 1 imm SPT 12 Dec (JW, ph), only fall rep.

sulid sp.: 1 imm offT Wolcott WAYN 12 Dec (W&MR), *intro*.

Double-crested Cormorant: last IBO 9 Jan.

Black Vulture: 1 Millseat Landfill T Riga 6-31 Jan (BriM, mob), 13 Feb (PM).

Turkey Vulture: 29 CHCBC 26 Dec, CBC record high; 18 Millseat Landfill T Riga 18 Jan (B&BM).

HAWKS – ALCIDS

Bald Eagle: 5 LSLCBC 20 Dec, count record high; 7 CHCBC 26 Dec, count record high; 20 rep, 27 ind Feb

N. Goshawk: 1 Letchworth SP 20 Dec; H 12 Feb (MT, JCh); only reports.

Red-shouldered Hawk: Chimney Bluffs WAYN 5 Dec (DD); CL Inlet 5 Jan (KC); T Hemlock 17 Jan (SM).

Rough-legged Hawk: total 20 in Dec, 14 in Jan, & 8 in Feb.

Virginia Rail: 1 MP 17 Jan-7 Feb, known winter loc.

Am. Coot: max 544 CHCBC 26 Dec.

Purple Sandpiper: IBO piers 19 Dec-6 Jan (LM, mob), only shorebird for season.

Black-legged Kittiwake: HBSP 1 imm Dec (AGu, BriM).

Bonaparte's Gull: last 1 Genesee River mouth 18 Jan.

THAYER'S GULL: 1 1st win HBSP 1 Jan (AGu, ph. mob); 1 1st win Millseat Landfill T Riga 9 Jan (BriM).

Iceland Gull: approx totals – 3 in Dec, 9 in Jan, & 5 in Feb.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: totals approx – 4 in Dec, 6 in Jan, & 3 in Feb.

Glaucous Gull: totals approx. – 0 in Dec, 13 in Jan, and 9 in Feb.

PIGEONS – PARROTS

Rock Pigeon: max 1840 RCBC 14 Dec, CBC record high.

EURASIAN COLLARED-DOVE: 1 BB 2 Jan (BCI); 1 Hamlin (Greenwell farm) 24 Jan (MV), 31 Jan (MS).

E. Screech-Owl: 69 RCBC 14 Dec, ties count RH; 45 CHCBC 26 Dec, good count.

Snowy Owl: ~41 rep, 22+ ind many loc Dec; ~87 rep, 27 ind many loc Jan; ~19 rep, 9 ind sev loc Feb; number of ind cannot be determined accurately, *intro*.

Short-eared Owl: max 19 Sand & Taft Rds, W. Bloomfield 18 Jan (MG); biweekly counts organized by DEC, *intro*.

N. Saw-whet Owl: Manitou (Owl Woods) 7 Feb (TD, ph); T Palmyra 26 Feb (PL), unusual loc.

Red-headed Woodpecker: Seneca P, Rochester 9 Dec (AGa); Fairport 29-30 Dec (WB); only reports.

Red-bellied Woodpecker: 64 LSLCBC 20 Dec, count record high; 169 RCBC 14 Dec, 1 short of count record.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: total 15 ind sev loc scattered thru, very good number for winter.

Am. Kestrel: 7 rep, 6 ind Feb, low.

Merlin: total - 6 all Dec; 7 all Jan; 6 all Feb.

GYRFALCON: gray morph Genesee River mouth area 16-17 Feb (ZS, ph, sev).

Peregrine Falcon: total - 5 all Dec; 6 all Jan; 5 all Feb.

MONK PARAKEET (R2): 1 Rochester (West Ridge Plaza area) 11, 21, 23 Jan (PM, CSt, SB), keep trying to rebuild nest on cell tower after removals.

FLYCATCHERS – WAXWINGS

E. Phoebe: 1 ph Oatka Creek P 2 Dec (JAd); Fairport 13 Dec (CL); HBSP 22 Dec (DW, JTa); DEP 23 Dec (KGa); many rep for Dec.

Blue Jay: max 508 RCBC 14 Dec, count record high.

N. Shrike: totals approx - 14 in Dec, 6 in Jan, & 4 in Feb.

Am. Crow: max 15,747 RCBC 14 Dec, about half of previous year, effects of hazing efforts?.

FISH CROW (R2): max 5 Rochester (Charlotte area) 18 Jan (BCI), *intro*

Com. Raven: 6-9 Lima 27 Jan – 1 Feb (sev).

Horned Lark: max 275 T York LIVI 23 Feb (DBea).

Tufted Titmouse: max 99 LSLCBC 20 Dec, count record high.

White-breasted Nuthatch: 111 RCBC 14 Dec; 110 LSLCBC 20 Dec, count record high; 144 CHCBC 26 Dec; very good totals.

Winter Wren: max 22 RCBC 14 Dec, count record high, most in DEP; 10 DEP 3 Jan, still present near Sherry Swamp

Carolina Wren: 19 RCBC 14 Dec, count record high; max 39 CHCBC 26 Dec, count record high.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: LSLCBC 20 Dec, only report.

Hermit Thrush: totals – 10 in De; 4 sev loc 3-25 Jan; 3 sev loc 2-22 Feb.

Am Robin: max 1625 RCBC 14 Jan; 125 Webster P (Whiting Rd) 14 Feb (JMi), Feb max.

Gray Catbird: Beatty Pt, Greece 14 Dec (GL); Hemlock L area 26 Dec (BH); last Webster P 11 Jan (NP); only reports.

Am. Pipit: last CL 6 Dec (JK, RBA Field Trip).

Bohemian Waxwing: 1 HBSP 26 Dec (JMi); 1-2 Webster P (Whiting Rd) 7-22 Feb (GF, mob).

Cedar Waxwing: max 70 Webster P (Whiting Rd) 18 Feb (JMi), scarce.

LONGSPURS – WARBLERS

Lapland Longspur: max 100 H 8 Jan (PM).

Snow Bunting: max 1000+ T Kendall ORLE 28 Jan (RS); 450 H 5 Feb (AGu).

Ovenbird: T Henrietta 27 Dec (MH-K, ph), 6th winter record.

Pine Warbler: Spenceport 2-26 Dec (FC), at feeder; HBSP 3 Jan (JMi).

Yellow-rumped Warbler: 1 Hamlin 1, 13 Dec (AGu); max 10 Beatty Pt (Greece) 14 Dec (GL); 2 LeHigh Valley Trail 20-24 Jan (PM, NK); no Feb reports.

TOWHEES – WEAVERS

E. Towhee: 1 Beechwoods SP WAYN 8, 23 Dec (JW); 1 Marengo, T Lyons WAYN 15 Feb (LG).

Chipping Sparrow: 8 eBird rep of 1-4 ind 14-16 Feb, only rep for season, NONE confirmed correct ID.

LARK SPARROW: HBSP thru 24 Jan (mob, ph), continuing from fall near west end of Parking Lot 4, *intro*.

Savannah Sparrow: total 6 sev loc 15 Jan-5 Feb.

Fox Sparrow: 1 CL Inlet 18 Jan (MW), rare in winter.

Dark-eyed Junco: max 420 LSLCBC 20 Dec.
Red-winged Blackbird: max 200 T Rush 31 Jan, low max.

YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD: 1 ad m T Rush 17 Jan (JPo, MKI), then Jeffords Rd T Rush at feeders 18-31 Jan (mob, ph), 20 eBird rep.

Rusty Blackbird: 1-2 Victor 13 Jan – 24 Feb (BBer), at feeder; 1 Whitbeck Rd T Palmyra WAYN 6 Feb (ph, *fide* DR).

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 250 T Rush 21 Jan (BCI).

White-winged Crossbill: 1 T Ontario WAYN 4-6 Dec (JW).

Com. Redpoll: max 100 T Kendall ORLE 12 Feb (MT, JCh); many reports of 20+ from scattered loc thru, increasing late in Feb.

Com. “Greater” Redpoll (*A.f.rostrata*): 1 N Wolcott WAYN 16 Feb (W&MR).

Hoary Redpoll: Brown Rd T Wolcott WAYN 20 Jan (W&MR, ph); 1 N Wolcott WAYN 12-16, 23 Feb (W&MR).

Pine Siskin: max 90 T Penfield 8 Jan (JMi).

Evening Grosbeak: H 1 Dec (AGu); Rochester 14 Dec (DB); 2 Dalton LIVI 16 Dec (JCl); 1 Letchworth SP Dec.