

REGION 3—FINGER LAKES

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December 2017 was colder than normal in Ithaca. The month's average low temperature was 18.5°F, 3° below normal. The average high was 32.1°, 4.7° below normal. Precipitation totaled 1.32", 0.08" less than normal. The 9.5" of snowfall was 3.1" less than normal. The maximum accumulation was 3". January was colder than normal, with an average low of 9.9°, 5.5° below normal and the average high of 29.3°, 2.0° below normal. January was wetter than

normal, with 2.38" of precipitation, 0.3" more than normal. Snowfall was 13.8", 3.8" below normal with a maximum accumulation of 8". February was warmer than normal. The average low was 21.2°, 4.7° above normal, and the average high was 39.1°, 5.1° above normal. February was only slightly wetter than normal, with 2.03" of precipitation, 0.05" more than normal. Snowfall was 1.4" less than normal with 12.8" total. The maximum accumulation was 6".

Five Ross's Geese and six White-fronted Geese at Stewart Park, Ithaca, attracted many birders on 24 December. Ian Davies picked out a total of 31 Cackling Geese among flocks of Canada Geese migrating over the Town of Danby on 27 February. Swan numbers peaked in December with high counts for Mute and Trumpeter Swans. Northern Pintail and Gadwall numbers peaked in early December. Migrating American Wigeon, Northern Pintail, and Red-breasted Merganser took advantage of the warm February weather to attain high winter counts. Diving duck numbers peaked in January, including high counts for Redhead, Greater and Lesser Scaup, White-winged Scoter, Long-tailed Duck, and Common Merganser. There was also a high count of Horned Grebes on Cayuga Lake in late January.

Unusual waterfowl species were: **Tufted Duck** present on Cayuga Lake in early January; two Surf Scoters on Cayuga Lake in mid-December, an individual on Seneca Lake in December and January, and one or more individuals on Cayuga Lake in January and February; and two Black Scoters on Cayuga and Seneca in December and one on Cayuga Lake in January.

One of the three Cattle Egrets that first appeared at Goose Haven in Seneca County in October continued through 7 December. Four Black Vultures appeared in Ithaca 20 December and became regular visitors to the Stevenson Road compost piles in the Town of Dryden through the rest of the season. Golden Eagle was observed in Tompkins County throughout January. Those reported in the Region in February were likely to have been migrants.

Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge hosted high counts of Northern Harriers and American Coots in early December. A record high 123 Sandhill Cranes was counted nearby in the Town of Tyre. One lingered in Schuyler County until 22 December, and migrants were first observed in Chemung County on 20 February.

A Killdeer at Myers Point in mid-December was the only report until the first migrant was reported in the Town of Danby on 20 February. A Pectoral Sandpiper was at Harris Park 9 December. The last fall report of American Woodcock was 1 December. Migrants began to arrive 24 February. Wilson's Snipe was observed in Montezuma NWR in early December and in the Town of Montour on 27 December.

Thirteen Lesser Black-backed Gulls at the Stevenson Road compost piles and four Glaucous Gulls at Van Cleef Lake in Geneva were seasonal high counts. Bonaparte's Gull was reported on Cayuga Lake on 9 December and at Lakefront Park, Geneva on 4 January. Dave Kennedy found the rarest gull, a **Slaty-backed**, at Van Cleef Lake. The bird lingered for four days.

There was a good incursion of Snowy Owls into the Region, with many reports near the north ends of the Finger Lakes and just a few scattered reports in the rest of the Region. A count of five at the Finger Lakes Regional Airport was the highest count. Small numbers of Short-eared Owls were reported in the Region, with the greatest concentration between Seneca and Cayuga Lakes.

Observers reported high counts of Yellow-bellied Sapsucker, Downy and Hairy Woodpeckers, and Northern Flicker. The Region's only reported Red-headed Woodpecker overwintered in Cornell University's Palmer Woods.

Among resident passerines, observers reported high counts for White-breasted Nuthatch, Winter and Carolina Wrens, and Dark-eyed Junco. Reports of lingering passerines were widespread including multiple reports of Ruby-crowned Kinglets, Hermit Thrushes, Gray Catbirds, American Pipits, Yellow-rumped Warblers, Field Sparrows, Fox Sparrows, Savannah Sparrows, Swamp Sparrows, Eastern Towhees, and Rusty Blackbirds. Also lingering were Marsh Wrens at Montezuma NWR, Brown Thrasher in Horseheads, Common Yellowthroat at Montezuma NWR, and an Eastern Meadowlark at Lott Farm in Seneca County.

The most unusual passerine species was the **Green-tailed Towhee** at feeders in the Town of Montezuma. This is the second Regional record. The previous record was of a bird in Ithaca in 1963 which was also the first New York State record.

Other than Pine Siskins, winter finches were scarce. Steve Kelling reported Evening Grosbeak in the Town of Caroline in early December and a Pine Grosbeak there in February. The three reports of Common Redpoll came from Cayuga, Tompkins, and Schuyler Counties. Chris Wood reported the only Red Crossbills, two in Bear Swamp in Cayuga County.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

BLNA – Bluegrass Lane Natural Area, TOMP; **CayL** – Cayuga L; **CC** – Cascadilla Creek, TOMP; **FLRA** – Finger Lakes Regional Airport, SENE; **MNWR** – Montezuma NWR; **MR** – Monkey Run, TOMP; **MyPt** – Myers Pt., TOMP; **SenL** – Seneca L; **SRCP** – Stevenson Road Compost Piles, TOMP; **StP** – Stewart P, TOMP; **SW** – Sapsucker Woods, TOMP; **TCar** – T Caroline, TOMP; **TDry** – T Dryden, TOMP; **TFay** – T Fayette, SENE; **TIth** – T Ithaca, TOMP; **TLed** – T Ledyard, CAYU; **TSF** – T Seneca Falls, SENE; **TTy** – T Tyre, SENE; **WTP** – Willard Town P, SENE.

WATERFOWL - VULTURES

Greater White-fronted Goose: max and last 6 StP 24 Dec (mob), late; arr MNWR 17 Feb.

Snow Goose: max 50,000 T Varick SENE 25 Feb; 50,000 MNWR 27 Feb; 50,000 TSF 28 Feb.

Ross's Goose: max 5 StP 24 Dec (mob), high; last StP 26 Dec (mob), late; arr Savannah Mucklands SENE 20 Feb (MR, WR), early.

Cackling Goose: max 31 T Danby TOMP 27 Feb (ID), high.

Mute Swan: max 26 SenL, City of Geneva 30 Dec (CJ), high.

Trumpeter Swan: max 20 MNWR 2 Dec (JL), high.

Tundra Swan: max 1350 TSF 9 Dec.

Gadwall: max 1300 MNWR 5 Dec (mob), high.

Eurasian Wigeon: arr SenL SP 19 Feb (DK), early; Savannah Mucklands SENE 21-22 Feb; StP 22-25 Feb; CayL, TSF 24 Feb.

Am. Wigeon: max 225 MNWR 2 Dec (JB, CW), high.

N. Shoveler: max 47 MNWR 2 Dec; arr 3 StP 21 Feb.

N. Pintail: max 9500 MNWR 25 Feb (JM), high.

Redhead: max 32,000 CayL, TIth 2 Jan (JM), high.

TUFTED DUCK: CayL, TIth 1-3 Jan (SKr, mob); CayL, Aurora 7 Jan (JM, ph).

Greater Scaup: max 2500 Farley's Pt CAYU 15 Jan (GVH, CW), high.

Lesser Scaup: max 2800 Farley's Pt CAYU 16 Jan (JB, GVH, CW), high.

SURF SCOTER (R3): 2 Sheldrake Pt SENE 11-18 Dec (KK, TL, DMO); WTP 21 Dec-22 Jan (TL); StP 1 Jan (SHe, KMcGo!); CayL, TLed 20 Jan (SBI, BW); StP 3 Feb (SBI); Sheldrake Pt SENE 27 Feb (MH).

White-winged Scoter: max 57 WTP 22 Jan (DK, TL), high.

BLACK SCOTER (R3): 2 StP 10 Dec (JGK); 2 WTP 21 Dec (TL); MyPt 7 Jan (JGK).

Long-tailed Duck: max 28 Hog Hole TOMP 1 Jan (PR, KR), high.

Com. Merganser: max 1200 SenL SP 15 Jan (TL), high.
Red-breasted Merganser: max 300 Sheldrake SENE 24 Feb (TL), high.
Horned Grebe: max 43 CayL, TLed 28 Jan (AMi, DN), high; 40 StP 19 Dec (TL).
CATTLE EGRET (R3): Goose Haven SENE thru 7 Dec (mob).
BLACK VULTURE (R3): 4 Tlth 20 Dec (TSch); 1-4 SRCP 21 Dec thru (mob).

HAWKS - LARIDS

N. Harrier: max 17 MNWR 6 Dec (DS), high.
N. Goshawk: Hammond Hill State Forest TOMP 19 Dec (CW); SRCP 26 Jan (DF, CW), only reports.
Red-shouldered Hawk: max 2 Durfee Hill TOMP 27 Feb (ID), high.
GOLDEN EAGLE (R3): T Lansing TOMP 7 Jan (MC); TDry 10 Jan (Cha, JI!, WM); Boyer Creek Farm Hawk Watch TOMP 27 Jan (SKe); TCar 28 Jan (JGe!); T Woodhull STEU 31 Jan (KRe!); arr Pirozzollo P CHEM 17 Feb (MFr, SG), early; Cornell University 28 Feb (LCh, JC).
Am. Coot: max 800 MNWR 9 Dec (mob), high.
Sandhill Crane: max 123 TTy 3 Dec (mob), record high; last SenL, T Dix SCHU 22 Dec; arr Tanglewood Nature Center & Museum CHEM 24 Feb (CW), early.
Killdeer: MyPt 17 Dec; arr T Danby TOMP 20 Feb.
PECTORAL SANDPIPER (R3): Harris P CAYU 9 Dec (JM!), late.
Wilson's Snipe: MNWR 2 Dec (JB, CW); T Montour SCHU 27 Dec (MSchi).
Am. Woodcock: last SW 1 Dec (CW), late; arr & max 3 Caswell Road Grasslands TOMP 24 Feb; TDry 24 Feb.
Bonaparte's Gull: max 12 CayL SENE 9 Dec (JM, LS); East Shore P TOMP 9 Dec (TA); 2 Lakefront P SENE 4 Jan (TL).
Lesser Black-backed Gull: max 13 SRCP 2 Dec (KMcGo), high.
SLATY-BACKED GULL: Van Cleef L SENE 16-19 Feb (DK, ph!, mob).
Glaucous Gull: 4 Van Cleef L SENE 3 Feb (mob), high.

PIGEONS - PARROTS

Rock Pigeon: max 289 Pine St Bridge STEU 16 Dec, low.
Snowy Owl: max 5 FLRA 24 Feb (mob), high.

Short-eared Owl: max 6 T Phelps 2 Jan; 6 FLRA 24 Feb.
RED-HEADED WOODPECKER (R3): Palmer Woods TOMP 1 Dec thru (mob).
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: max 2-3 T Enfield TOMP 31 Dec-15 Jan (PR), high.
Downy Woodpecker: max 23 CC 1 Jan (JF), high.
Hairy Woodpecker: max 13 TDry 1 Jan (DMo), high.
N. Flicker: max 13 MNWR 17 Feb (DN), high.
Merlin: max 3 Cornell University 20 Feb (KV), high.

FLYCATCHERS - WAXWINGS

N. Shrike: max 2 TFay 14 Feb.
Blue Jay: max 60 TFay 30 Dec.
White-breasted Nuthatch: max 29 CC 1 Jan (JF), high.
Brown Creeper: max 5 MR 20 Dec, low.
Winter Wren: max 3 Hile School Road Wetland TOMP 22 Dec (CW), high.
MARSH WREN (R3): MNWR 2 Dec (JB, CW); MNWR 9 Dec (JM, LS).
Carollina Wren: max 5 West Elmira Riverine Forest CHEM 3 Dec (BO); 5 MyPt 11 Jan (CW), high.
Ruby-crowned Kinglet: May's Pt SENE 1 Dec-12 Jan (DK, ph, MG!); TFay 7-9 Dec (DK, ph); TFay 13 Feb (DK, ph); T Varick SENE 2 Dec (DK, ph); TLed 28 Jan (JB, CW!).
Hermit Thrush: T Lodi SENE 1 Dec (TL); Tlth 1 Jan (SJH); West Elmira Riverine Forest CHEM 1 Jan (AP); Coombs Hill CHEM 9 Jan (WB); Danby State Forest TOMP 18 Feb (DG).
Am. Robin: max 100 TTy 24 Jan, low.
Gray Catbird: Ludovico Trail SENE 4 Dec (DK); SW 5 Dec-9 Jan (mob, ph!); BLNA 27 Jan (TSch!); Queen Catharine Marsh SCHU 19 Feb (JS, ph!).
BROWN THRASHER (R3): Horseheads Dump 1 Jan (PMe, BO!, JO).
Am. Pipit: max 8 BLNA 9 Dec.
BOHEMIAN WAXWING (R3): SW 16 Feb (WH!).
Cedar Waxwing: max 125 Newfield 23 Feb, low.

LONGSPURS - WARBLERS

Snow Bunting: max 1580 T Ledyard TOMP 7 Jan (JM), high.
COM. YELLOWTHROAT (R3): MNWR 18 Dec (JA, LiMo!).

Yellow-rumped Warbler: max 6 StP 18 Feb.

TOWHEES - WEAVERS

GREEN-TAILED TOWHEE: T Montezuma CAYU 10-16 Feb (DC, ph!; mob).

E. Towhee: TDry 1 Jan (MScha); TDry 13 Jan (KMcGo); Tlth 28 Jan (JGK); TCar 13 Feb (AMi).

Field Sparrow: T Springport CAYU 10 Dec (mob); TTy 18 Dec (DK); max 2 TTy 20 Dec (DK), high; T Brutus CAYU 16 Jan (KB); Farleys Pt CAYU 20 Jan (mob); Long Pt SP 28 Jan (JB, CW).

Savannah Sparrow: Bolton Pt TOMP 1 Jan (KMcGo); TTy 3 Jan (DK); BLNA 20 Jan (KR); FLRA 21 Jan (BH); BLNA 24 Jan (JM); Lott Farm SENE 9 Feb (DD).

FOX SPARROW (R3): SW 4 Dec (MC, JM); TDry 13 Dec (ASp); TDry 24-27 Feb (JF); MyPt 28 Feb (CW).

Song Sparrow: max 38 CC 1 Jan (JF), high.

Swamp Sparrow: max 4 BLNA 24 Feb (TSch), high.

White-crowned Sparrow: max 12 T Covert CAYU 14 Feb.

White-throated Sparrow: max 30 T Montezuma CAYU 11 Feb (JM), high.

Dark-eyed Junco: max 169 T Fayette 30 Dec (EBS), high.

Red-winged Blackbird: max 50000 MNWR 25 Feb (MSche), high.

E. Meadowlark: Lott Farm SENE 12 Jan (JA, LiMo); arr MR 24 Feb (CW), early; MNWR 28 Feb (GDa).

Rusty Blackbird: max 12 SW 10 Dec.

Com. Grackle: max 9000 MNWR 25 Feb (JM), high.

PINE GROSBEEK (R3): TCar 21 Feb (SKe).

House Finch: max 49 T Fayette 30 Dec, low.

Red Crossbill: 2 Bear Swamp CAYU 27 Jan (CW).

Com. Redpoll: Allens Pt CAYU 1 Jan (JB, CW); MR 14 Jan (JB, CW); 2 Queen Catharine Marsh SCHU 19 Jan (MFi).

Pine Siskin: max 70 TCar 14 Jan (CW), high.

EVENING GROSBEEK (R3): TCar 3 Dec (SKe).