

REGION 1—NIAGARA FRONTIER

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December 2018 was warm with a mean temperature at the Buffalo weather station of 33.2°F, 3.1° above normal, with 3.36" of precipitation, 0.53" below normal. Only 14.1" of snowfall occurred, 13.3" below average. The mild weather continued for the first half of January before deep cold and snowy conditions arrived for the remainder of the month. The mean temperature was 22.9°, 2.0° below average. Precipitation was high with 5.71", 2.53" above average, and 63.4" of snowfall, 38.1" above normal and the fourth snowiest January on record. February brought several strong winter storms and swings in temperature. The average temperature was 27.6°, 1.3° above normal. Rainfall was 3.28", 0.79" above normal and snowfall was 16.8", 0.5" below normal. A strong cold front on the 24th included winds gusting to near 70 miles per hour causing a prolonged seiche on Lake Erie and many downed trees, believed to include some with active raptor nests as well.

The warmups in February brought geese, swans, other waterfowl, blackbirds, and a few others to the Region. For the second consecutive spring there was a strong showing of Greater White-fronted Geese. We've seen increasing numbers of sightings in both spring and fall migration this century, most often in single digits, and the numbers are swelling in recent years. This February, double digit flocks were counted in four locations, including a new maximum of 45 by Jim Wojewodzki at Point Breeze on 23 February. The increase was consistent with their movement elsewhere in the eastern Great

Lakes region in February. While winter weather patterns may have been a factor this year, it appears that the migration phenology is changing, and we can probably expect to see more Greater White-fronted Geese in spring migration moving forward.

While checking on the Greater White-fronted Geese and other waterfowl on Chautauqua Lake at Celoron on 15 February, David Cooney Jr. found a drake Eurasian Wigeon with a group of 15 American Wigeon. This marks the earliest occurrence for the Region. Other notable waterfowl sightings included a **Tufted Duck** continuing at Buffalo from late November until at least 10 December and a Barrow's Goldeneye at Point Breeze that was perhaps the same bird wintering there for many years but not found in the winter of 2017-2018. Harlequin Ducks wintered again at Niagara Falls State Park off Goat Island. Willie D'Anna counted 269 Red-necked Grebes on Lake Ontario at Wilson which is an impressive count for mid-December. Joe Mitchell identified an Eared Grebe among a few Horned Grebes on Lake Erie off Evangola State Park in early January.

Gull numbers and diversity were down this winter continuing the trend from late fall. This was unsettling for gull aficionados along the Niagara River. Bonaparte's Gull counts did not reach one thousand and only a few were present beyond early January. Little, Iceland, Lesser Black-backed, and Glaucous Gulls were present in lower numbers than any winter in recent memory.

Black Vultures wintered along the Niagara River in Lewiston for the eighth consecutive year with up to 10 this season. Turkey Vulture continued its increased winter presence with reports from two locations in December and three other locations in January beyond the regular wintering location in Lewiston. Of note was a new winter roost in Clarence Center with up to 30 Turkey Vultures gathering on tall conifers and rooftops throughout January per Gene Florentino. The lone Northern Goshawk report was a juvenile eating a crow in Elma that was photographed by David Hejna in January. Bald Eagles are regular along the Niagara River and seemingly increasing throughout the Region in winter. Red-shouldered Hawk reports from 12 locations made for a very good winter showing, while Rough-legged Hawk reports were average at best this winter.

Up to five Snowy Owls were around Buffalo Harbor throughout the winter, along with singles at four to five other locations per month. There were two Long-eared Owl reports and Short-eared Owls were found at four locations. Six Northern Saw-whet Owl sightings made for a good winter showing.

Eastern Phoebe lingered into early December as evidenced by two reports. Northern Shrike made an average showing this winter. Two Fish Crow reports from Buffalo and Tonawanda were consistent with increased reports in late winter and spring in recent years, likely associated with the crow roost in Buffalo. There were two Marsh Wren reports in December, while Gray Catbird reports from four locations were more than normal. Karl Schmidt was surprised to find a Brown Thrasher in Cuba on **1 February**.

Gale VerHague photographed a Bohemian Waxwing in a flock of Cedar Waxwings in Fredonia on 27 February. This marks the first documented occurrence for Chautauqua County. Evening Grosbeaks and Common Redpolls were sighted throughout the winter, but they were far from being widespread in occurrence. The number of reports and a maximum of 44 grosbeaks certainly made for a good showing compared to most winters this century. Pine Siskins were present in smaller numbers and usually mixed in with American Goldfinches.

Snow Buntings were reported in the hundreds at several locations while there were only a few Lapland Longspur reports. Chipping Sparrow and Field Sparrow had more winter reports than usual with six and four locations, respectively. Savannah Sparrow is being found with more regularity in winter in recent years; Joel Strong found one in Hartland in January. Of the two Fox Sparrows reported this winter, of note was one that remained throughout the season in Rushford.

An **Orange-crowned Warbler** found by Joel Strong in Newfane was only the second January report for Region 1. A Common Yellowthroat lingered at Tifft Nature Preserve until at least 20 December. Yellow-rumped Warblers were reported from four locations.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

AmSP – Amherst SP, ERIE; **BeSP** – Beaver I SP, ERIE; **BMAC** – Beaver Meadow Audubon Center, WYOM; **BufH** – Buffalo Harbor, ERIE; **BuSP** – Buckhorn I SP, ERIE; **BWWTP** – Batavia Wastewater Treatment Plant, GENE; **ChauL** – Chautauqua L, CHAU; **DH** – Dunkirk Harbor, CHAU; **EvSP** – Evangola SP, ERIE; **FLC** – Forest Lawn Cemetery, Buffalo, ERIE; **FNSP** – Fort Niagara SP, NIAG; **HBWMA** – Hanging Bog WMA, ALLE; **INWR** – Iroquois NWR, GENE/ORLE; **LBSP** – Lakeside Beach SP, ORLE; **LESP** – Lake Erie SP, CHAU; **NF** – Niagara Falls, NIAG; **NFSP** – Niagara Falls SP, NIAG; **NR** – Niagara R; **OOWMA** – Oak Orchard WMA, GENE/ORLE; **PB** – Point Breeze, ORLE; **PG** – Pt Gratiot, CHAU; **RWNP** – Reinstein Woods Nature Preserve, ERIE; **TBNP** – Times Beach NP, Buffalo, ERIE; **Tifft NP** – Tifft Nature Preserve, ERIE; **WoBSP** – Woodlawn Beach SP, ERIE; **WTSP** – Wilson-Tuscarora SP, NIAG.

WATERFOWL-GREBES

Snow Goose: DH 3 Dec; Lockport NIAG 9 Jan; arr 2 Batavia GENE 5 Feb; max 35 Celoron ChauL 7 Feb; 5 Niagara NIAG 10 Feb.

Greater White-fronted Goose: WTSP 1-8 Dec; Wilson NIAG 7 Dec; Grand I NR 27 Jan (MM, CA); max 33, 45 PB 10, 23 Feb (WD, JWo), record Reg count; 14, 17 Celoron ChauL 11, 17 Feb (WS); 4 Tonawanda ERIE 17 Feb; 4, 14 BeSP 19, 22 Feb; 21 Waterport ORLE 26 Feb; unprecedented Feb abundance.

Cackling Goose: Amherst ERIE 2 Dec; BufH 4, 8 Dec; 2, 4 WTSP 10, 11 Dec; Lyndonville ORLE 7 Jan; max 6 Yates ORLE 15 Jan.

Mute Swan: DH 1-25 Dec; Cassadaga CHAU 15 Dec; 7 WTSP 3 Jan; 5 Carlton ORLE 6 Jan; Fredonia 12-22 Jan; max 10 PB 2 Feb.

Tundra Swan: 69 Chautauqua ChauL 15 Dec; max 245 NF 20 Dec; 225, 225 BeSP 16 Jan, 19 Feb; 168 BuSP, 192 Wilson NIAG 28 Feb.

Wood Duck: Buffalo NR 13-27 Dec, 17 Jan, 26 Feb; AmSP 20 Dec; Buffalo ERIE 29 Dec – 11 Jan; WoBSP 12 Jan; only reports.

Northern Shoveler: max 38, 20, 18 BWWT 1, 26 Dec, 9 Jan; N Collins ERIE 26 Dec; Fredonia CHAU 12 Jan; only reports.

Gadwall: 22 BufH 3 Dec; max 23 Tift NP 29 Dec; 11 NF 5 Jan; 5 Ellery ChauL 8 Jan; arr 2 Celoron ChauL 10 Feb; 12 BuSP 15 Feb.

Eurasian Wigeon: Celoron CHAU 15 Feb (DC); record early.

American Wigeon: max 18 Tift NP 2 Dec; 5 NF 23 Dec; 1, arr 2, 15 Ellery ChauL 20 Jan, 12, 15 Feb; Waterport ORLE 14 Feb.

American Black Duck: 14 N Tonawanda NIAG 16 Dec; 16 Grand I NR 13 Jan; arr 10 Franklinville CATT 7 Feb; max 18 Elba GENE, 15 Fredonia CHAU 11 Feb.

Northern Pintail: WTSP 19 Dec; arr 4 DH, 2 BeSP 9 Feb; max 12 Celoron ChauL 15 Feb.

Green-winged Teal: 2 FNSP 1 Dec; 2 Cuba L ALLE 3 Dec; 4 Lyndon CATT 4 Dec; BWWT 6, 9 Jan; Buffalo ERIE 10 Jan; 2 NF 19, 20 Jan; arr Celoron ChauL 19 Feb.

Canvasback: 1000 BufH 19 Dec; max 5000 NFSP 29 Dec; 1452 BeSP 27 Jan; 2850

BuSP 4 Feb; 2 Cuba L ALLE 7 Feb; Machias CATT, BWWT 9 Feb.

Redhead: max 500, 700 BufH 23 Dec, 13 Jan; 150 Celoron ChauL 6 Jan; 73 DH 5 Feb; 270 BeSP 20 Feb.

Ring-necked Duck: 15 BuSP 11 Dec; 15 Buffalo NR 2 Jan; N Collins ERIE 5 Jan; 3 BWWT 6, 9 Jan; Cuba L ALLE 5 Feb; arr 15 Celoron ChauL 19 Feb.

TUFTED DUCK (R1): Buffalo NR 1-10 Dec (SB, KB), continuing from late Nov.

Greater Scaup: max 8000 BufH 26 Jan (JM).

Lesser Scaup: max 100 BufH 19 Dec; 4, 2 BWWT 23 Dec, 9 Jan; arr 40 Celoron ChauL 19 Feb.

King Eider: no reports.

Harlequin Duck: 2-3 NFSP thru, regular location in recent years.

Surf Scoter: 1, 1, 1, 1 BufH 2, 21 Dec, 26 Jan, 12 Feb; max 5 DH 20 Dec; PB 2, 10 Feb; only reports.

White-winged Scoter: max 90 FNSP 17 Jan.

Black Scoter: max 2, 5 DH 20 Dec, 4 Feb; Youngstown NIAG 27 Dec; EvSP 5 Jan; BufH 24 Feb.

Long-tailed Duck: max 200 FNSP 1 Dec; max 200 PB 10 Feb.

Bufflehead: max 345 Buffalo NR 16 Dec.

Common Goldeneye: 700 NFSP 1 Dec; 900 Buffalo NR 2 Jan; max 100 Grand I NR 4 Feb; 100 Olean CATT 13 Feb.

Barrow's Goldeneye: PB 13 Jan – 20 Feb (RB, mob), rare.

Hooded Merganser: max 68 N Tonawanda NR 16 Dec; 50 NF 28 Dec.

Common Merganser: 193 BWWT 9 Jan; max 200 Tonawanda NR 22 Jan; max 200 Wellsville ALLE 5 Feb (KR).

Red-breasted Merganser: max 555 FNSP 1 Dec.

Ruddy Duck: 6, 4 DH 3, 6 Dec; 2, 1 Cuba L ALLE 4, 18 Dec; BufH 5, 8 Dec; arr Celoron ChauL 19 Feb.

Pied-billed Grebe: reported from five locs Jan, Feb.

Horned Grebe: max 28 DH 5 Dec; 5 EvSP 5 Jan; Barcelona CHAU 16 Feb; Salamanca CATT 21 Feb.

Red-necked Grebe: DH 6 Dec; max 269 Wilson NIAG 15 Dec (WD), impressive

count; BufH 20 Dec; Youngstown NIAG 5, 6 Jan; Jamestown CHAU 17 Feb.

Eared Grebe: EvSP 5 Jan (JM), rare.

RAILS-LARIDS

American Coot: 2 DH 1-7 Jan; max 10

Clarence ERIE 5 Jan; BufH 24-28 Jan.

Killdeer: arr Tonawanda ERIE 10 Feb (JM), early; only report.

Dunlin: 3 NFSP 2 Dec, only report.

Bonaparte's Gull: max 974 BeSP 16 Dec; 950 Buffalo NR 3 Jan; fewer than usual.

Little Gull: 2, 1 Lewiston NR 1 Dec, 5 Jan; 1, 1 Buffalo NR 10 Dec, 28 Jan; only reports.

Iceland Gull: max 5 NFSP 18 Jan; fewer than usual.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: max 7 NFSP 1 Jan; fewer than usual.

Glaucous Gull: max 2 BufH 4 Feb; only nine other reports.

LOONS-FALCONS

Red-throated Loon: max 25 FNFP 1 Dec; Olcott NIAG 2 Jan, 4 Feb; BufH 5 Feb; PB 10, 21 Feb; only reports beyond Dec.

Common Loon: DH 2, 18 Jan; Grand I NR 9 Jan; only reports beyond Dec.

Double-crested Cormorant: 19 BufH 9 Jan, highest count beyond Dec.

Black Vulture: max 10 Lewiston NIAG 2 Dec; year-round location.

Turkey Vulture: 9 Fredonia CHAU 11 Dec; Arcade WYOM 22 Dec; 12-30 Clarence Center ERIE 1 – 31 Jan (GF), new winter roost location; 6 Lewiston NIAG 1-31 Jan; Collins ERIE 14 Jan; Hartland NIAG 22 Jan; 5, 14 Lancaster ERIE 5, 14 Feb; arr Tonawanda ERIE 9 Feb; increasing in winter.

Northern Goshawk: Elma ERIE 12 Jan (DH); only report.

Bald Eagle: max 11 Tonawanda ERIE 20 Feb.

Red-shouldered Hawk: reported from 12 locations; max 4 Forestville CHAU 5 Jan (GV); good winter showing.

Rough-legged Hawk: average numbers.

Snowy Owl: max 4, 5 BufH 22 Dec, 22 Feb; reported from 4-5 other locations per month.

Long-eared Owl: OOWMA 1 Jan; Oakfield GENE 3 Jan; only reports.

Short-eared Owl: 2-3 Shelby ORLE thru; Amherst ERIE 1 Jan (JWa); max 5

Newstead ERIE 14 Jan (JM); Porter NIAG 1 Feb.

Northern Saw-whet Owl: Newfane NIAG 15 Dec (JS); Porter NIAG 27 Dec (WD); INWR 1 Jan (NK, RB); Stiglmeier P ERIE 3-8 Feb (JK, mob); BuSP 7-15 Feb (AH); WTSP 10 Feb (BP); good showing.

Red-headed Woodpecker: max 4 FNFP 2 Dec, 5 Jan; Cheektowaga ERIE 5 Jan; EvSP 8 Jan, 5 Feb; PG 18 Feb.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: Buffalo ERIE 20 Dec; Gasport NIAG, Middleport NIAG 20 Jan; Porter NIAG 29 Jan; Holland ERIE 30 Jan; Corfu GENE 17 Feb; Portland CHAU 26 Feb; good winter showing.

Merlin: now regular.

FLYCATCHERS-SNOW BUNTING

Eastern Phoebe: Tiffit NP 4 Dec (CM); last Olean CATT 9 Dec (JR).

Northern Shrike: average showing.

Fish Crow: Buffalo ERIE 4 Feb (JF); 2 Tonawanda NR 7 Feb (TK); consistent with increased reports in late winter and spring in recent years.

Common Raven: continued increase in northern portion of Reg.

Horned Lark: max 125 Bethany GENE 22 Jan.

Winter Wren: Orchard Park ERIE 15 Dec, 17 Jan; Arkwright CHAU 16 Dec; Wilson NIAG 17 Dec; HBWMA 27 Dec; only reports.

Marsh Wren: BeSP 16 Dec (JM); INWR 27 Dec (RD); rare in winter.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: NFSP 3, 12 Dec; only report.

Hermit Thrush: Wilson NIAG 14 Dec; Olcott NIAG 15 Dec; Buffalo ERIE 16 Dec; WTSP 17 Dec; INWR 26 Feb; only reports.

Gray Catbird: RWSP 7 Dec thru; BeSP 21 Dec, 14 Jan; 2 Porter NIAG 27 Dec; NFSP 3 Feb; decent winter showing.

Brown Thrasher: Cuba ALLE 1 Feb (KS), surprise winter find.

Bohemian Waxwing: Fredonia CHAU 27 Feb (GV), first County record; only report.

Cedar Waxwing: max 152 HBWMA 6 Feb.

American Pipit: last BufH 4 Dec.

Evening Grosbeak: 14 LBSP 5 Dec; 20 Ashford CATT 8 Dec; 11, 20 Wethersfield WYOM 15, 20 Dec; 40 Arkwright CHAU 25 Dec; max 26, 44 Machias CATT 26 Dec, 17 Feb; 10 Alfred ALLE 6 Jan; 12 Ischua

CATT 28 Jan; 12 Great Valley CATT 23 Feb; strong showing.

Common Redpoll: 50 WTSP 5 Dec; 37 Wilson NIAG 15 Dec; max 70 Attica WYOM 25 Dec; 40 Shelby ORLE 27 Dec; 60, 66 Newfane NIAG 7, 26 Jan; 18 Hartland NIAG 29 Jan; max 100 Yates ORLE 14, 23 Feb (WD); 20 BMAC 16 Feb. **Pine Siskin:** 15 Hamburg ERIE 15 Dec; 30 Orangeville WYOM 23 Dec; 32 Wilson NIAG 1-18 Jan; 18 Alfred ALLE 8 Jan; 20 Orchard Park ERIE 6 Feb; max 46, 56 E Aurora ERIE 15, 24 Feb; 30 Wales ERIE 18 Feb.

Lapland Longspur: 1, 2, 1 Bethany GENE 6 Dec, 26 Jan, 28 Feb; max 30 Sheridan CHAU 6 Dec (SG, CV); 2 Yates ORLE 14 Feb; Sheldon WYOM 16 Feb; 3 Newstead ERIE 19 Feb.

Snow Bunting: 175 Dunkirk Airport CHAU 8 Dec; max 145, 550 Corfu GENE 12 Dec, 14 Feb (DB); 500, 150 Attica WYOM 28, 31 Dec; 110 Middlebury WYOM 11 Jan; 110, 170 Bethany GENE 26 Jan, 28 Feb; 125, 300 Yates ORLE 31 Jan, 14 Feb; 186 Somerset NIAG 14 Feb; 500 Sheldon WYOM 16 Feb; 200 E Aurora ERIE 16 Feb.

NEW WORLD SPARROWS- WARBLERS

Chipping Sparrow: Orchard Park ERIE 3-22 Dec (SB); FLC 16 Dec (PC); Newfane NIAG 26, 27 Jan (JS); Rushford ALLE 27-

31 Jan, 14 Feb (KS); Wilson NIAG 13, 18 Feb (WD, BP); Portland CHAU 16-18 Feb (CH); more reports than usual.

Field Sparrow: TBNP 12, 20 Dec; Orangeville WYOM 26 Dec; Wellsville ALLE 30 Dec; RWNP 22 Jan; more reports than usual.

Savannah Sparrow: Hartland NIAG 22 Jan (JS), becoming less rare in winter.

Fox Sparrow: Tift NP 14 Dec; Rushford ALLE 9 Jan thru (KS); only reports.

Swamp Sparrow: 2 Tift NP 1 Jan; EvSP 8 Jan; only reports beyond Dec.

White-crowned Sparrow: max 10 Bethany GENE 13 Jan; reported from seven other locations.

Red-winged Blackbird: arr in Feb.

Brown-headed Cowbird: 45 Grand I ERIE 19 Jan, maximum prior to mid-Feb arrivals.

Rusty Blackbird: BuSP 12 Dec thru (AH), regular winter location in recent years.

Common Grackle: Tonawanda ERIE 16 Dec; 5 Celoron CHAU 6 Jan; Pendleton NIAG 26 Jan; only reports before Feb arrival.

Orange-crowned Warbler: Newfane NIAG 5 Jan (JS), 2nd January record.

Common Yellowthroat: TBNP 12, 20 Dec (SB), late.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: NF 21 Dec; max 8, 7, 12 BuSP 26 Dec, 12 Jan, 23 Feb (AH, TK); Shelby ORLE 27 Dec; Whitesville ALLE 27 Jan.