

REGION 1—NIAGARA FRONTIER

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December 2019 was relatively mild, especially over the last ten days. The mean temperature at the Buffalo weather station was 33.3° F, 3.2° above normal, with 5.37" of precipitation, 1.48" above average. Snowfall totaled 16.1", which was 11.3" below normal. The mild weather continued into the new year. The January mean temperature was 33.0°, a whopping 8.1° above average. Precipitation was 2.72", 0.46" below average, and 13.2" of snow, a foot (12.1") below normal. A strong wind event occurred with a cold front passage on the 12th which resulted in a 9' seiche on Lake Erie. February was also much milder than usual. The average temperature was 29.4°, 3.1° above normal. Rainfall was 2.50", 0.01" above normal, with 20.6" of snow, 3.3" above normal. Lake Erie remained wide open and ice free throughout the winter.

The warm winter allowed a variety of species to overwinter or at least linger late into the season. An Eastern Phoebe overwintered at Roger Tory Peterson Institute in Jamestown with sightings throughout the winter, while one at Amherst SP made it until at least early February. While there have been winter records in the Region before, I do not recall any evidence of true overwintering phoebes. Other passerines with more presence than usual included Gray Catbird, Eastern Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, and Field Sparrow. Most Bonaparte's Gulls depart the Niagara River by mid-January in a typical winter, but many more stuck around this winter than usual. A Black-headed Gull and juvenile Black-legged Kittiwake were among them with reports of presumably the same gulls into February; neither species is usually present throughout the winter. Similarly, a Purple Sandpiper in Buffalo Harbor had an unexpectedly prolonged presence from late December until 12 February. There were more Wood Duck reports than any other winter that I recall. Tundra Swans were observed multiple times at Iroquois NWR throughout the winter, which is unusual for the mid-winter period.

There was evidence of early spring migration in February for all the regular dabblers except Blue-winged Teal, which is usually a later arrival. Four Northern Pintails at Barcelona on 20 January may have already been spring migrants or at a minimum demonstrating northbound facultative movement. Multiple sightings of Greater White-fronted Geese occurred in February, including 22 at Conewango Swamp WMA. One in Clarence on 5 January was more unusual for the date. A Trumpeter Swan was identified at Bennett Beach for the only winter season report. Harlequin Duck was found again at Niagara Falls SP, plus two on the Niagara River at Buffalo, and, most notably, one at Olean on 24 February for a rare inland occurrence and third Cattaraugus County record. Other notable waterfowl included a lone report of Barrow's Goldeneye at Point Breeze and a

group of 28 Surf Scoters on Findley Lake on 1 December. An Eared Grebe was found by Gale VerHague off Lake Erie SP on 27 December.

Celeste Morien was delighted to see (and hear) a group of 32 Sandhill Cranes flying over the Iroquois NWR headquarters building on 12 December, which ties the Regional maximum.

There were good numbers of gulls around Niagara Falls in late December and early January. Josh Ketry photographed an adult **Slaty-backed Gull** at Niagara Falls SP on 18 December, which was probably the same gull observed twice earlier in the month in nearby Thorold, Ontario where found by Ryan Griffiths. There were several follow up Slaty-backed Gull reports at Niagara Falls; however, none were documented and there were several similar looking darker mantled gulls with pink legs that were observed in the area at that time. I witnessed these gulls several times and know the temptation to claim one as a Slaty-backed, but they were likely hybrids or variations of Lesser Black-backed Gull and Herring Gull.

Black Vultures and Turkey Vultures were observed in Lewiston near the Niagara River Gorge throughout the winter with maxima of eight and 31, respectively. Northern Goshawks were observed at Wilson-Tuscarora SP and in Gerry. It was a typical showing for Rough-legged Hawk, while Red-shouldered Hawk was reported in numbers well above average from mostly Southern Tier locations.

Up to three Snowy Owls were found at Buffalo Harbor throughout the winter and there were reports from two other locations. Short-eared Owl was reported from four regular winter locations. There were two Long-eared Owl and three Northern Saw-whet Owl reports.

A White-eyed Vireo was a good find at Evangola SP on 7 and 13 December by Sue Barth, this was the second winter record for the Region. Northern Shrike was well reported this winter. Up to four Fish Crows were identified among the many American Crows roosting at Forest Lawn Cemetery in Buffalo, while Scott Diedrich reported 1-2 on a near daily basis in February in another part of Buffalo.

Cedar Waxwings were scarce this winter, as were Purple Finches. A Red Crossbill was a good find on the Beaver Meadow CBC. There were not many Pine Siskins around with just a few reports and maximum of 10. Redpolls and grosbeaks went unreported. There was the usual smattering of Lapland Longspur reports, while Snow Bunting numbers peaked in late January and early February.

It was a three-warbler winter. Yellow-rumped Warblers were found in good numbers at Buckhorn Island SP again with as many as 13 there. A Pine Warbler was in Amherst in December. The Prairie Warbler seen several times since September on the Buffalo waterfront was found again on 2 December, but not after.

This report represents a milestone for me as I have now prepared the Region 1 report for 20 years. My first report was for the Spring 2000 season and appeared in *The Kingbird*, Volume 50, No. 3. At one point I was grooming Jim Pawlicki to take over, but then he moved out west. The years and reports keep rolling by, and

fortunately, the Region 1 birds and birders have always given me plenty to write about.

CONTRIBUTORS

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ABBREVIATIONS

ACNC – Audubon Community Nature Center, Jamestown CHAU; **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; **CSWMA** – Conewango Swamp WMA, CATT; **DH** – Dunkirk Harbor, CHAU; **DHSP** – Devil's Hole SP, NIAG; **EvSP** – Evangola SP, ERIE; **FLC** – Forest Lawn Cemetery, Buffalo, ERIE; **FNSP** – Fort Niagara SP, NIAG; **GHSP** – Golden Hill SP, NIAG; **INWR** – Iroquois NWR, GENE/ORLE; **LESP** – Lake Erie SP, CHAU; **NF** – Niagara Falls, NIAG; **NFSP** – Niagara Falls SP, NIAG; **NPP** – Niagara Power Project on Niagara R, NIAG; **NR** – Niagara R; **PB** – Point Breeze, ORLE; **PG** – Pt Gratiot, CHAU; **RTPI** – Roger Tory Peterson Institute, Jamestown CHAU; **SPWS** – Sinking Ponds Wildlife Sanctuary, ERIE; **Tift NP** – Tift Nature Preserve, ERIE; **WoBSP** – Woodlawn Beach SP, ERIE; **WTSP** – Wilson-Tuscarora SP, NIAG.

WATERFOWL-HUMMINGBIRDS

Snow Goose: Wilson NIAG 8 Dec; arr 68 Forestville CHAU 19 Feb (JK, SSe); 18 Shelby ORLE 24 Feb.

Greater White-fronted Goose: Clarence ERIE 5 Jan (MA); max 22, 18 CSWMA 25, 26 Feb (BR ph!, KB); 6 Lyndonville NIAG 29 Feb (WD); third consecutive spring with February arrivals.

Cackling Goose: arr 2 BuFH 21 Feb; Olean CATT 28 Feb (BG); 3 Lyndonville NIAG 29 Feb.

Mute Swan: DH 1 Dec - 23 Feb; Wellsville ALLE 2-10 Dec; BeSP 20-31 Dec; max 9 PB 12 Feb.

Trumpeter Swan: Bennett Beach ERIE 30 Jan (EC), only report.

Tundra Swan: 107 NF 14 Dec; max 136 Lakewood ChauL 16 Dec; 56, 30, 108 INWR 15 Jan, 9, 28 Feb (CM, DM, CM), usually not present mid-winter at this loc; 40 ACNC 19 Feb.

Wood Duck: three Dec rpts; max 5 Olean CATT 26 Jan (HR); three other Jan rpts; arr 2 Lyndonville NIAG 29 Feb; better than usual winter showing.

Northern Shoveler: max 59 BWWTP 10 Dec; NFSP 16 Dec; arr 6 Barcelona CHAU 23 Feb.
Gadwall: 7 BufH 6 Dec; max 25 Tiftt NP 14 Jan; 8 NFSP 15 Feb; arr Clymer CHAU 16 Feb.

American Wigeon: 2 Chautauqua ChauL 21 Dec; 3, 6 NFSP 25 Dec, 15 Feb; arr 3 DH 1 Feb.

American Black Duck: 12, 24 DH 8 Dec, 22 Feb; 16 Wendt Beach CP ERIE 23 Dec; 10 BWWTP 8 Jan; 10 Oakfield GENE 10 Jan; 15 BufH 10 Jan; max 28 CSWMA 25 Feb.

Northern Pintail: 2 WTSP 3 Dec; DH 7 Dec; 4 Cassadaga L CHAU 15 Dec; ACNC 11 Jan; BWWTP 14 Jan; arr 4 Barcelona CHAU 20 Jan; 4 CSWMA 12 Feb; max 33 Tonawanda NR 24 Feb; 26 INWR 24 Feb.

Green-winged Teal: last 2, 2 WoBSP 24 Dec, 13 Jan (SB); no other rpts beyond Dec.

Canvasback: max 6200, 2500, 1800 NFSP 22 Dec, 2 Jan, 3 Feb; 3500 BeSP 29 Jan; 2000 BufH 12 Feb.

Redhead: 600 Celeron ChauL 8 Dec (WS); 400, 400, max 800 BufH 11 Dec, 25 Jan, 15 Feb; 150 DH 14 Feb.

Ring-necked Duck: max 49 Findley L CHAU 7 Dec; 45 BWWTP 3 Jan; 30 Buffalo NR 20 Jan; arr 6 DH 3 Feb; 16 Buffalo NR 9 Feb.

Greater Scaup: 200 NF 13 Dec; max 1000, 700 BufH 25 Jan, 9 Feb; 160 DH 22 Feb.

Lesser Scaup: max 1000 Chautauqua ChauL 7 Dec (WS); 45 BufH 21 Jan; 45 DH 1 Feb; arr 16 BWWTP 25 Feb.

King Eider: no rpts.

Harlequin Duck: 2 Unity I NR ERIE 1 Dec (KB); NFSP 4 Dec – 2 Jan, 3 Feb (mob); Olean CATT 24 Feb (VM), rare inland record, 3rd for Cattaraugus Co.

Surf Scoter: max 28 Findley L CHAU 1 Dec (C&MP), great count for inland loc; 4, 3 EvSP 26 Dec, 7 Jan; BufH 10 Jan; 3 PB 3 Feb.

White-winged Scoter: max 400, 340 FNSP 25 Jan, 22 Feb.

Black Scoter: 2 NFSP 4 Dec; 3, 1 FNSP 13 Dec, 2 Jan; 2 LESP 30 Dec; BufH 10 Jan; 2 DH 23 Jan; 2 PB 11 Feb; only rpts.

Long-tailed Duck: max 220, 130 Lewiston NR NIAG 22 Dec, 9 Feb; 210 PB 5 Feb.

Bufflehead: max 1100 Buffalo NR ERIE 14 Jan (JK).

Common Goldeneye: 340 Buffalo NR ERIE 7 Dec; 325 Lakewood ChauL 13 Dec; max 2500 Buffalo NR ERIE 14 Jan (JK), remarkably high count.

Barrow's Goldeneye: PB 22 Dec (BM), regular location, perhaps same individual as over the past decade.

Hooded Merganser: max 215 Mayville ChauL 6 Dec; 140 DH 7 Dec; 43, 62 BeSP 25 Jan, 23 Feb, good winter counts for one loc.

Common Merganser: 117 Cuba L ALLE 3 Dec; max 214 Lakewood ChauL 13 Dec; 193 BeSP 25 Jan.

Red-breasted Merganser: max 575, 378 DH 4 Dec, 20 Jan.

Ruddy Duck: max 12 Lakewood ChauL 1 Dec; 9 Cuba L ALLE 6 Dec; 5 EvSP 23 Dec; BWWTP 26 Dec, 3 Jan; Chautauqua ChauL 26 Dec; Barcelona CHAU 27 Dec – 14 Jan; 3 Celeron ChauL 15 Jan; 1, 3 BufH 27 Jan, 1 Feb; 1, 1 DH 1, 9 Feb; 3 Tonawanda NR 24 Feb.

Wild Turkey: max 59 Shelby ORLE 7 Feb.

Pied-billed Grebe: 2, 1 Olean CATT 1 Jan – 3 Feb, 5-20 Feb (BG); Barcelona CHAU 20 Jan; 1, 1 DH 1, 26 Feb; FNSP 23 Feb; only reports beyond Dec.

Horned Grebe: max 22 DH 4 Dec; 15 EvSP 26 Dec; 11 Sturgeon Pt ERIE 14 Jan.

Red-necked Grebe: BufH 6 Dec; GHSP 3 Jan; only rpts.

Eared Grebe: LESP 27, 28 Dec (GV, KB), rare in winter.

RAILS-TROPICBIRDS

American Coot: max 100 N Harmony ChauL, 57 Findley L CHAU 1 Dec; 22 DH 3 Feb.

Sandhill Crane: 32 INWR 12 Dec (CM), ties Reg maximum.

Killdeer: Lewiston Res NIAG 2 Jan (NS); arr BufH 23 Feb; Hamburg ERIE 24 Feb.

Dunlin: BufH 31 Dec (PY), only rpt.

Purple Sandpiper: BufH 31 Dec, 10, 26 Jan, 4-12 Feb (PY, SSe), apparent overwintering.

Wilson's Snipe: Dunkirk Airport CHAU 27 Jan, only rpt.

Black-legged Kittiwake: 1,2, 2 juv Whirlpool SP NR NIAG 22-31 Dec, 3, 15 Jan, 5 Feb, apparent overwintering; juv FNSP 23 Dec.

Bonaparte's Gull: max 4500 Unity I NR ERIE 11 Dec; 2200 Lewiston NR NIAG 22 Dec; 2000 Whirlpool SP NIAG 4 Jan.

Black-headed Gull: Whirlpool SP NR NIAG 1-13, 22 Dec, 2, 4, 19 Jan, 5, 10, 20 Feb, apparent overwintering (AG, WD).

Little Gull: 5 FNSP 23 Dec; 4 Unity I NR ERIE 31 Dec; max 6 Lewiston NR 19 Jan.

Iceland Gull: 3, 4 DHSP 8, 15 Dec; DH 4, 27 Jan, 1, 22 Feb; 6, 6 NFSP 6, 19 Jan; max 11

NPP 19 Jan; Barcelona CHAU 20 Jan;
Sturgeon Pt ERIE 3 Feb; 3 Buffalo NR 9 Feb.
“THAYER’S” ICELAND GULL: multiple
reports from NFSP Dec, Jan.

Lesser Black-backed Gull: max 8, 12, 16
NFSP 22 Dec, 2, 5 Jan; 1, 2 DH 25 Dec, 12
Jan, 1 Feb; 5 WoBSP 28 Dec; 2 Barcelona
CHAU 20 Jan; 3 BufH 6 Feb; PB 11 Feb.

SLATY-BACKED GULL: NFSP 18 Dec (JK,
ph!), no other substantiated sightings, *see intro*.

Glaucous Gull: DHSP 7, 25 Dec, 9 Feb; NPP
7, 8 Dec; NFSP 2, 15 Jan; 2, 1, 2 BufH 14, 25
Jan, 17 Feb; Somerset NIAG 23 Feb; lower
numbers than usual.

Great Black-backed Gull: max 45 NFSP 22
Dec; 35 WoBSP 7 Jan; 44 DH 12 Jan.

LOONS-PARAKEET

Red-throated Loon: Olcott NIAG 21 Dec;
Barcelona CHAU 27 Dec, 1 Jan; FNSP 2 Jan;
max 2 Somerset NIAG 23 Feb.

Common Loon: BufH 2, 27 Jan, 1 Feb; Unity
I NR ERIE 12, 20 Jan; FNSP 25 Jan, 9 Feb; PG
25 Jan; Somerset NIAG 23 Feb; mid-winter
rpts have been rare in recent winters.

Double-crested Cormorant: max 22 BeSP 8
Dec; 20 Tonawanda NR ERIE 31 Jan

Black Vulture: 8, 6, 4 Lewiston NIAG 20
Dec, 15 Jan, 9 Feb (DW, DDo, BC, DDa,
AMa), yearround presence in area.

Turkey Vulture: max 26, 31, 21 Lewiston
NIAG 22 Dec, 15 Jan, 23 Feb.

Northern Goshawk: WTSP 21 Dec (JK, WD);
Gerry CHAU 9 Feb (RS); only reports.

Bald Eagle: max 10 Buffalo NR 29 Feb.

Red-shouldered Hawk: three Dec rpts; four
Jan rpts; nine Feb rpts; mostly in Southern
Tier.

Rough-legged Hawk: average number of
reports.

Snowy Owl: 1, 2, 3, 1-2 BufH 3, 20 Dec, 7-13
Jan, 1-28 Feb, most reliable location; NF
Airport NIAG 22 Dec, 5, 30 Jan; Sheridan
CHAU 11 Feb.

Long-eared Owl: Forestville CHAU 13 Dec;
Dunkirk Airport CHAU 5 Jan; only reports.

Short-eared Owl: 2 Jamestown Airport
CHAU 15 Dec; 2, 3, 2 Dunkirk Airport CHAU
16, 30 Dec, 9 Jan, 1-19 Feb (GV); 1, 2, 3
Shelby ORLE 25 Dec, 23 Jan, 25 Feb; 4
Newstead ERIE 6 Feb (JM); mostly regular
locs.

Northern Saw-whet Owl: Randolph CATT 15
Dec (AMe); Sherman CHAU 3 Feb (AL);
Forestville CHAU 5 Feb (GV); only reports.

Red-headed Woodpecker: 3, 2, 1 EvSP 7
Dec, 3 Jan, 26 Feb; 2 Wendt Beach CP ERIE
23 Dec; 1, 2 Bennett Beach ERIE 2 Jan, 8 Feb;
only reports.

Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: Tiftt NP 12 Jan
(LS); only report.

Peregrine Falcon: Barre ORLE 14 Jan (CM),
only report away from known breeding areas.

FLYCATCHERS-SNOW BUNTING

Eastern Phoebe: RTPI 14 Dec, 22 Jan, 28 Feb
(TL); AmSP 31 Jan, 1 Feb (JSa); rare
overwintering birds.

Northern Shrike: well reported.

White-eyed Vireo: EvSP 7, 13 Dec (SB ph!);
2nd winter record.

Fish Crow: 1-3, 3-4 FLC 27-30 Jan, 4-5 Feb;
1-2 Buffalo ERIE 28 Jan – 26 Feb (SD);
continued presence with American Crows at
roosts.

Common Raven: increasing reports.

Horned Lark: max 73, 113 Bethany GENE 6
Dec, 16 Feb.

Winter Wren: 2 Tiftt NP 3 Dec; max 2, 3
BeSP 7 Dec, 11 Jan; 2 WTSP 21 Dec; AmSP
10 Feb; BuSP 16 Feb; Lancaster ERIE 26 Feb.

Carolina Wren: 41 NF CBC 27 Dec, large
increase over recent winters.

Ruby-crowned Kinglet: NFSP 22 Dec, 15
Jan; Shelby ORLE 27 Dec; BuSP 11 Feb;
better showing than usual.

Eastern Bluebird: max 17 Dunkirk Airport
CHAU 3 Feb.

Hermit Thrush: Medina NIAG 27 Dec; BuSP
29 Jan; only reports.

American Robin: max 120 NFSP 1 Feb.

Gray Catbird: 3, 1 Tiftt NP 3 Dec, 22 Dec –
29 Feb, overwintered; EvSP 22, 24 Dec; LESP
4 Jan; Hamburg ERIE 8 Jan; Willing ALLE 12
Feb.

Cedar Waxwing: very few this winter.

House Finch: max 57 Forestville CHAU 31
Dec (GV), good count for recent years.

Purple Finch: only 7 reported from 9 CBCs.

Red Crossbill: Beaver Meadow CBC 21 Dec;
only report.

Pine Siskin: max 6, 10 Alfred ALLE 15, 17
Dec (CV); Orangeville WYOM 1, 18 Jan; max
10 N Harmony CHAU 17 Jan (MD); Cambria
NIAG 2 Feb; 4 E Aurora ERIE 16 Feb; 5
Buffalo ERIE 20 Feb.

Lapland Longspur: max 10 Shelby ORLE 18 Jan; 2 Somerset NIAG 20 Jan; 5 Sheridan CHAU 12 Feb; Bethany GENE, 6 Yates ORLE, Carlton ORLE 29 Feb.
Snow Bunting: 80 Attica WYOM 20 Dec; max 459 Shelby ORLE 20 Jan (CM); 75 Alexander GENE 20 Jan; 50 BufH 21 Jan; 200 Gaines ORLE 3 Feb; 125 Holland ERIE 16 Feb.

NEW WORLD SPARROWS- CARDINALIDS

Eastern Towhee: Alfred ALLE 4, 9 Dec; 2, 1 NF 11, 31 Dec; Rushford ALLE 17 Dec – 27 Feb (KS), overwintered; ACNC 14 Feb; Dunkirk Airport CHAU 20 Feb.
Chipping Sparrow: Chautauqua CHAU 2, 20 Dec; Dunkirk Airport CHAU 12, 21 Dec; Jamestown CHAU 16, 26 Dec, 1 Jan; 2 Orangeville WYOM 18 Jan (T&LS); more than usual.
Field Sparrow: BMAC 20 Dec; Aurora ERIE 28 Dec; Ripley CHAU 5 Feb; Silver Creek CHAU 18 Feb; max 3 Sheridan CHAU 22 Feb.

Savannah Sparrow: Carroll CHAU 15 Dec (JB); INWR 30 Dec (CM); winter reports increasing.

Swamp Sparrow: max 4 BeSP 3 Dec; Tiff NP 16 Jan; Clymer CHAU 5 Feb.

White-crowned Sparrow: max 7 Shelby ORLE 19 Jan; 4 Dunkirk CHAU 10 Feb.

Eastern Meadowlark: max 4 Carroll CHAU 15 Dec (JB, SSt); arr 2 Dayton CHAU 9 Feb; 2 Dunkirk Airport CHAU 25 Feb.

Red-winged Blackbird: 3 SPWS 29 Dec; arr 18 S Buffalo ERIE 30 Jan; 28 Clymer CHAU 3 Feb.

Brown-headed Cowbird: 130 Shelby ORLE 27 Dec; 39 Wethersfield WYOM 14 Jan; arr 23 Bethany GENE 2 Feb.

Rusty Blackbird: no reports.

Common Grackle: Amherst ERIE 7, 8 Dec; 3 SPWS 29 Dec; arr 9 BufH 6 Feb.

Pine Warbler: Amherst ERIE 19 Dec (D&DS); only report.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: 13, 11, 9 BuSP 21 Dec, 9 Jan, 1 Feb (AH), regular wintering location.

Prairie Warbler: Buffalo ERIE 2 Dec (PS); continuing from fall.