

REGION 5—ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

David Wheeler

20 Waterbury Dr., North Syracuse, NY 13212
tigger64@aol.com

Winter 2020-2021 started with a dry, warmer-than-usual December. The average daily maximum and minimum temperatures were 3.6 ° F and 5.3° above normal and 13.2" of snow was 19.5" below expected. Rainfall was average. January's average high of 32.3° was close to normal but overnight minimums were 6.5° warmer. Snowfall was 11.3", much shy of 34" historically. A whopping 28 of 31 days were cloudy and none characterized as 'sunny.' February temperatures returned to normal as did snowfall, with spring approaching and eight days partly cloudy or better.

It was a great season for rare geese with Ross's, Greater White-fronted, and **Pink-footed** the highlights, the latter bird found at Woodman Pond by Gary Chapin on 15 December and only a third Regional record. Loyal readers will recall an individual in Onondaga County during the previous reporting period. Same bird? Lingering dabblers were about typical with Erin Brisson describing two early-returning Blue-winged Teal at Onondaga Lake on 14 February. Given the lack of other early returnees one might wonder how close the birds had wintered. As many as three King Eider graced Oswego Harbor intermittently through the winter and a Barrow's Goldeneye at Phoenix was a one-day wonder for Gregg Dashnau on 23 December.

The first-year female **Rufous Hummingbird** first seen in the previous period (but brought to wider attention in early December) continued through 23 January and was seen by many birders. Barbara Gordon provided frequent updates on the bird and along with another homeowner assured a supply of fresh nectar. A supplement made for birds in captivity was tried at one feeder but rejected and subsequently found to be unsuitable for any conditions other than room temperature. Sugar water at the typical concentrations is recommended. The bird's continued presence set a new record-late date for the species in NY, as most in the past have not attempted to overwinter much past December. Hopefully this precious bird realized it was time to get out and will be eagerly awaited should it return this fall.

The south end of Onondaga Lake was a hotspot throughout the winter season, and a Great Egret lingered there through 22 December. Only a handful of prior December records exist for upstate. Matt Brown found a very late Greater Yellowlegs at Selkirk Shores State Park on 5 December and added 5 Killdeer there on 11 December, a good number for the date. Two Killdeer in Rome on 13 January were likely very late migrants. Gull numbers were typical on the area's waterways with no rarities found and no large number of white-wingers. Black Vulture was reported from Jamesville on 28 December and 28 February and also the Little Falls birds were noted in early February. A few Snowy Owls lingered in typical

places, while at the Onondaga Lake Creekwalk a Long-eared Owl was photographed by Samantha Reiter. For the first time in a while, no Red-headed Woodpeckers were reported this winter but were hopefully just missed during visits to typical locations.

The author wondered in the previous version of this report if a big invasion of Bohemian Waxwings would happen. Alas it did not, with only four reports and small numbers. Only a few **Pine Grosbeak** continued past the early push and only seen intermittently at a couple locations. Meanwhile, the big irruption year for Evening Grosbeaks continued and impressive flocks settled in the usual hotspots for the species in the Region's forested uplands. Lucky residents enjoyed their company all winter long. Ditto for Common Redpoll which was widespread at feeders and weedy fields in the best numbers in years. Diligent searching for **Hoary Redpoll** produced reports at 12 locations, most of them well-documented with photos showing the relevant field marks. Purple Finch was represented at expected locations but not widespread. Red Crossbills continued in the southern highlands while at Fair Haven Gregg Dashnau observed 11 White-winged Crossbills passing on the lakeshore. The Morgan Hill spot enjoyed only one report of the species and no substantial invasion occurred. Pine Siskins continued in typical locations but were generally more localized and at fewer places than Redpolls. Last but not least, American Goldfinch was reported in good numbers throughout the Region but its presence every winter makes it difficult to evaluate year-to-year. To what degree, if any, is it irruptive?

White-crowned Sparrow likely wintered 3-4 different places including several at Onondaga Lake Park and 5-6 in the Baldwinsville area. More Savannah Sparrow than usual were found, including a bird in Richland found by Matt Brown on 3 and 5 January. Mike Gullo saw three in Port Byron on 9 February while a bird at Sterling Nature Center on 27 February may refer to an early migrant. In Syracuse Deborah Dohne followed up on a **Baltimore Oriole** report and found a bright and beautiful male bird on 4 February. Since the species does not winter here observers may assume it is drab, but that is not the case! A few Rusty Blackbirds were noted and the weedy 'Marshy Spits' area of Onondaga Lake held a few Red-winged. At the same location a Common Yellowthroat was heard calling by Jay McGowan on 7 January. Twelve reports of Yellow-rumped Warbler were received, including five in the Baldwinsville area. Terry White reported two very-rare-in-winter **Rose-breasted Grosbeak** in Cassville on 17 December following 10" of new snow. Wendy Vautrin hosted another at her feeders near Pulaski from 25 December to 15 January. Many of the lingering birds noted in this report were last seen in mid-January.

It is noted with sadness the passing of Gene Huggins in September. Gene was one of the most friendly and warm individuals the Region has ever known, and a longtime observer of birds and nature. He was also a former Regional Editor of this publication from the 1970s when it was indeed the only widespread record of bird sightings in the state. His contributions and annual Purple Sandpiper field trip to Fair Haven will be missed.

This season a total of 146 species and five hybrids were reported, which is 11 above the recent average for the Region and 15 more than last winter. Highlights of the season included: **Ross's Goose**, Greater White-fronted Goose, **Pink-footed Goose**, Blue-winged Teal, King Eider, **Barrow's Goldeneye**, Bohemian Waxwing, Evening Grosbeak, **Pine Grosbeak**, **Hoary Redpoll**, Red Crossbill, White-winged Crossbill, Fox Sparrow, White-crowned Sparrow, Savannah Sparrow, **Baltimore Oriole**, **Common Yellowthroat**, and **Rose-breasted Grosbeak**.

Winter 2020-21 produced 71,727 eBird records for Region 5, and were processed by Swan Swan Hummingbird v5.5. Reports were contributed by 658 people. With so many submitting to eBird, the editor would like to take this opportunity to share how the 'Contributor' names below are compiled. Names appear in the list if at least one of the following four criteria are met: (1) a person's initials are used in the 'Synopsis' section; (2) a person submits a written list of sightings to the editor; (3) a person is the only one contributing from a particular part of the Region that would otherwise have no reports; or (4) a person submits above a 'participation threshold' number of eBird records which varies by season and was set at 250 for this report. Most listed below qualified under (4) but rest assured that all submissions contribute to this report.

CONTRIBUTORS

Maryanne Adams (MA), Janet Allen, Andrew & Joann Andersen, Dennis Anderson, Faith Baker, Barbara Barker, Chelsea Beck (CBe), Sue Boettger, Carla Bregman, Joseph Brin, Erin Brisson (EB), John Bronk, Matthew Brown (MB), Ken Burdick (KB), Andrea Burke, Martin Cain, Bruce Carpenter, Tim Carroll (TC), Donna Carter (DC), Jerry Case, Roger Chambers, Gary Chapin (GC), Richard Cohen, Karl Curtis, Jim D'Angelo (JD), Gregg Dashnau (GD), Liz Del Conte (LD), Deborah Dohne (DD), Sarah Dzielski, Kaye Fenlon (KF), Kayla Fisk, Elizabeth Frascatore (EF), Barbara Gordon (BGo), Bill Gruenbaum, Mike Gullo (MG), Barbara & Larry Hall (BLH), Eric Hellquist (EH), Tyler Hodges (TH), Harmon Hoff, John Killiany (JK), Renee Kittleman, Alison Kocek, Gary Lee, Fred Leff (FL), Beverly Levreault, Cheryl Lloyd (CL), Jason Luscier, Kevin McGann, Jay McGowan (JMc), Tom McKay, Gary Meyers, John Moore, Kevin Murphy, David Nash, Joanne Oliver, Kevin Pace, Scott Peterson, Matt Perry, John Pumilio, Bill Purcell (BP), Samantha Reiter (SR), Carter Riley, Santos Rodriguez, Linda Salter, Steve Schwab (SS), Mickey Scilingo (MS), Ida Sheppard, Carol Sizemore, Kent Skaggs, Barbara Stith, Faith Thompson, Judy Thurber, Sasha Torman, Wendy Vautrin (WV), Matt Voelker, Nick Voris (NV), Drew Weber (DWe), Tom Weickert, David Wheeler (DWh), Terry White (TWh), Robert Whitman, Robert G. Williams III, Tim Wing, Matt Young, Matthew Zera.

ABBREVIATIONS

ADK – Adirondacks, n. HERK; **BLNC** – Beaver L Nature Center, Baldwinsville; **Brew** – Oneida L at Brewerton; **BRH** – Bishop Road Hawk Watch, T Richland; **Bville** – Baldwinsville; **CM** – Clay Marsh, Clay; **Const** – Oneida L at Constantia; **DB** – Ditch Bank Rd & vicinity, T Sullivan/Lenox; **DC** – Deer Creek Marsh, T Richland; **DH** – Derby Hill, T Mexico; **DL** – Delta L; **Dolge** – Dolgeville, HERK; **FH** – Fair Haven, Little Sodus Bay, and West Barrier Bar; **Fult** – Fulton area including Oswego River, Indian Point, L Neatahwanta; **GB** – Great Bear Rec Area, Fulton; **GLSP** – Green Lakes SP, Fayetteville; **HF** – Highland Forest Co P; **HI** – Howland I WMA, CAYU; **HV** – Happy Valley WMA, Parish; **KK** – Kindred Kingdom Wildlife Center, Pennellville; **LH** – Labrador Hollow Unique Area; **L Ont** – L Ontario; **LoopR** – Loop Rd, Montezuma NWR, CAYU; **MCL** – Madison County Landfill; **MexPt** – Mexico Pt SP; **MSI** – Madison St Impoundment, Hamilton; **MW** – McKoons Rd Wetland, Colombia Center, s. HERK; **OakC** – Oakwood Cemetery, Syracuse; **OF** – Old Forge; **OLC** – Onondaga L Creekwalk; **OnciL** – Oneida L; **OnonL** – Onondaga L; **OLP** – Onondaga L P (east and west shore); **OSP** – Oneida Shores P, Brewerton; **OswH** – Oswego Harbor; **Phx** – Phoenix dam area; **Ppt** – Oneida L at Phillips Pt, W Monroe; **RCFS** – Rice Creek Field Station, Oswego; **RRP** – Radisson Ri P, Three Rivers confluence, Phoenix; **SBP** – Sunset Bay P, Scriba; **SFNS** – Spring Farm Nature Sanctuary, Kirkland; **SH** – Southern Highlands of ONON & MADI; **SHTF** – Sky High Turf Farm, Chittenango; **Skane** – Skaneateles; **SNC** – Sterling Nature Center, Sterling; **SP** – Sandy Pd and vicinity; **SSSP** – Selkirk Shores SP; **SVB** – Sylvan & Verona Beach; **Syr** – Syracuse; **TNP** – Tuscarora Nature P, MADI; **TR** – Three Rivers WMA, Lysander; **UM** – Utica Marsh; **VBSP** – Verona Beach SP; **WH** – Whiskey Hollow; **WP** – Woodman Pd, Hamilton.

WATERFOWL – HUMMINGBIRDS

Snow Goose: est 1000 SSSP 6 Dec; max 2000 SkanL 18 Jan, wintering;

Ross's Goose: Caz 6 Dec (JK); BLNC 11 Dec (LD); only reps.

Greater White-fronted Goose: SkanL 17 Jan (DWe); LaFayette 18 Jan (mob); OtiscoL 18 Jan (KB).

PINK-FOOTED GOOSE: WP 15-16 Dec (GC, mob, ph), 1st county rec and 3rd for Reg. **Brant:** 80 Port Ontario 8 Dec (MB), only rep.

Cackling Goose: max 4 WP 16 Dec (JMc).

Canada Goose: max est 7500 WP 16 Dec.

Snow x Canada Goose (hybrid): Phx 14 Jan (GD).

Mute Swan: 17 OnonL 4 Dec; max 74 FH 25 Jan, all large nums this loc.

Trumpeter Swan: small nums wintering var locs; max 15 FH 13 Jan.

Tundra Swan: max 445 Ppt 10 Dec.

Wood Duck: small nums 4 locs; max 4 Fult 20 Dec.

Blue-winged Teal: arr 2 OnonL 14 Feb, record early (EB).

Northern Shoveler: last OLC 27 Dec; max 5 FH 3 Dec; arr 2 OnonL 17 Feb.

Gadwall: max 24 FH 13 Jan & OnonL 27 Feb.

American Wigeon: 1-2 at 3 locs thru; arr 8 FH 26 Feb; max 12 FH 28 Feb.

Mallard: max 900 WP 16 Dec.

American Black Duck: max 180 WP 16 Dec.

Mallard x Am. Black Duck (hybrid): 1-2 at 3 locs.

Northern Pintail: 1-2 var locs thru; max 16 WP 16 Dec.

Mallard x Northern Pintail (hybrid): OswH 4 Jan thru (GD, mob).

Green-winged Teal: last WP 17 Dec; FH 12 Jan; arr Onei 18 Feb; max 4 WP 16 Dec.

Canvasback: arr WP 15 Dec; max 10 OnonL 17 Jan; small nums typ locs thru.
Redhead: max est 2000 OnonL Jan-Feb.
Ring-necked Duck: max 600 WP 5 Dec.
Greater Scaup: max est 450 OswH 27 Feb.
Lesser Scaup: max est 750 OneiL 8 Dec.
King Eider: SSSP 8 Dec; OswH 11-15 Dec; 2-3 OswH 18 Feb thru.
Surf Scoter: max 3 OswH 28 Feb.
White-winged Scoter: max 350 OswH 21 Feb.
Black Scoter: max 10 SP 3 Dec.
Long-tailed Duck: max 800 OswH 21 Feb.
Bufflehead: max 74 SkanL 3 Jan.
Common Goldeneye: max 500 OnonL 13 Jan.
BARROW'S GOLDENEYE: Phx 23 Dec (GD).
Hooded Merganser: max 109 SH 5 Dec.
Common Goldeneye x Hooded Merganser (hybrid): Bville 29 Jan.
Common Merganser: max est 2200 OnonL 16 Jan.
Red-breasted Merganser: max est 750 FH 11 Jan.
Ruddy Duck: last Bville 3 Jan; arr OnonL 28 Feb; max WP 7 Dec & BLNC 1 Dec.
Ring-necked Pheasant: small nums thru.
Ruffed Grouse: small nums thru.
Wild Turkey: small flocks thru; max 70 DB 9 Dec.
Pied-billed Grebe: small nums thru, mostly OnonL; max 4 OnonL 10 Feb.
Horned Grebe: max 7 DH 11 Dec.
Red-necked Grebe: singles OnonL, OswH thru 16 Jan; max 2 OswH 25 Dec & DH 5 Dec.
Rock Pigeon: flocks widespread.
Mourning Dove: small flocks widespread; max 100 DB 9 Dec – 2 Jan.

RAILS – TROPICBIRDS

RUFIOUS HUMMINGBIRD: Bville, cont thru 23 Jan (BGo), rec late stay.
American Coot: small nums OnonL & SkanL thru; max 22 SkanL 17 Jan.
Sandhill Crane: 7 SSSP 12 Dec (MB), only rep.
Killdeer: last & max 5 SSSP 11 Dec; 2 Rome 13 Jan, wintering?; arr Syr 23 Feb.
Greater Yellowlegs: SSSP 5 Dec, very late (MB).
Black-legged Kittiwake: DH 2 Dec (BP), only rep.
Bonaparte's Gull: last OswH 23 Dec; max OneiL 5 Dec.
Ring-billed Gull: max est 3000 OnonL 3 Dec.
Herring Gull: max est 1200 OswH 23 Jan.

Iceland Gull: max 5 IH 1 Feb; small nums typ locs thru.
Lesser Black-backed Gull: max 3 DB 4 Jan; 1-2 typ locs thru.
Glaucous Gull: max 2 SVB 1 Jan; 1-2 typ locs thru.
Great Black-backed Gull: max 132 IH 30 Jan.
Herring x Great Black-backed Gull (hybrid): DH 13 Dec (BP).

LOONS – PARAKEET

Red-throated Loon: max 5 OswH 21 Dec; a few singles thru.
Common Loon: max 35 FH 3 Dec.
Double-crested Cormorant: max 78 Bville 31 Jan.
Great Blue Heron: max 4 OnonL 19 Dec.
Great Egret: OnonL 3-22 Dec, very rare in winter.
Black Vulture: Jville 28 Dec & 28 Feb; 1-max 3 Little Falls 26 Jan – 14 Feb; only reps.
Turkey Vulture: max 59 Jville 1 Dec, birds winter at loc thru.
Golden Eagle: SH 6 Dec, only rep.
Northern Harrier: singles typ locs thru.
Sharp-shinned Hawk: singles thru but most poorly documented.
Cooper's Hawk: good num singles thru.
Northern Goshawk: Oriskany 3 Dec, well described (CB, NV); Pulaski 14, 19 Jan (MB, ph).
Bald Eagle: max 63 OnonL 18 Feb.
Red-tailed Hawk: max 7 Marcellus 27 Feb.
Rough-legged Hawk: 1-3 var locs thru.
Eastern Screech-Owl: singles small nums mostly southern part of Reg.
Great Horned Owl: small nums thru.
Snowy Owl: few other than singles SH thru.
Barred Owl: singles thru.
Long-eared Owl: TR 12 Jan (GD); OLC 20 Feb (SR, ph); only reps.
Short-eared Owl: max 3 Oneida 1 Jan; OnonL 1 Jan; 1-3 LoopR 8-24 Feb; only reps.
Northern Saw-whet Owl: Sithe 7 Jan; Cold Brook 24 Feb; Dolge 26 Feb; only reps.
Belted Kingfisher: 1-2 typ locs thru.
Red-headed Woodpecker: no reps but known nesters likely wintering.
Red-bellied Woodpecker: max 11 Salisbury 1 Dec.
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: 1-2 winter var locs.
Downy Woodpecker: typ nums/locs.
Hairy Woodpecker: max 9 Fville

Northern Flicker: max 9 Bville 23 Feb; singles/small nums var locs thru.
Pileated Woodpecker: small nums thru.
American Kestrel: few singles var locs, thru.
Merlin: few singles var locs thru, now fairly common in winter.
Peregrine Falcon: singles/pairs typ locs thru, winterers & local nesters.

FLYCATCHERS – SNOW BUNTING

Northern Shrike: singles var locs thru but fewer than usual.
Blue Jay: max 30 Georgetown 13 Feb; typ nums winter.
American Crow: max 3000 IH 1 Feb.
Fish Crow: max 8 IH 13 Dec; small groups typ locs
Common Raven: 24 SH 22 Dec, good num; small groups var locs thru.
Horned Lark: max 126 Memphis 8 Feb.
Black-capped Chickadee: typ nums.
Tufted Titmouse: typ nums.
Red-breasted Nuthatch: max 12 Pulaski 13 Feb.
White-breasted Nuthatch: typ nums.
Brown Creeper: max 5 Mexico 20 Dec.
Winter Wren: 9 reps var locs mid-Dec to mid-Feb.
Carolina Wren: typ nums locs but a pair winters DH, *intro*.
Golden-crowned Kinglet: max 5 BLNC 26 Dec; small nums var locs thru 18 Jan.
Ruby-crowned Kinglet: scattered reps 6 locs thru.
Eastern Bluebird: max 18 Pulaski 5 Jan.
Hermit Thrush: singles 12 locs var dates; max 2 GLSP & Utica 19 Dec.
American Robin: max est 8000 GLSP 19 Dec, roost flight count, unusual circumstances; typ nums otherwise.
Gray Catbird: Clinton 19 Dec & 6 Jan; Utica 21 Dec; Salisbury 23 Dec, 2 Feb; & DeWitt 19 Dec; New Hartford 15 Jan; max 2 Jville 19 Jan; only reps.
Brown Thrasher: Fruit Valley 19 Feb (EH, ph).
Northern Mockingbird: singles/pairs typ loc, mostly around Syr; max 3 Cazenovia 26 Feb, unusual loc.
European Starling: max est 4000 HI 13 Dec.
Bohemian Waxwing: Sithe 4 Jan; 5 Salisbury 22 Feb; max 13 Salisbury 5 Dec; only reps.
Cedar Waxwing: max 120 SSSP 1 Jan.
House Sparrow: typ nums thru.

Evening Grosbeak: max 85 DeRuyter 29 Dec; irruption year, good nums typ locs thru.
Pine Grosbeak: small nums thru & max 10 Salisbury 6 Jan (KT); 2 Forestport 6 Dec; 2 Erieville 4 Dec, 17 Jan; only reps & fewer than hoped for.
House Finch: max 45 OLP 11 Dec.
Purple Finch: max approx 10 Sheds, var dates; scattered reps typ locs but disappointing at feeders otherwise.
Common Redpoll: est 400 Bville 17 Feb; max est 920 Port Byron 25 Feb; irruption year, exc nums, widespread, many reps.
Hoary Redpoll: scattered reports 12 locs thru; max 6 Port Byron 15 Feb; *intro*.
Red Crossbill: 4 Clinton 16 Feb, unusual loc; flocks continue SH, esp Morgan Hill SF, thru; max 30 Morgan Hill 5 Dec.
White-winged Crossbill: GLSP 3 Dec; Morgan Hill SF 10 Jan; max 11 FH 11 Dec, unusual loc (GD), *intro*; only reps.
Pine Siskin: max 60 Cazenovia 29 Dec; flocks >20 var typ locs incl SH, Dolge; smaller groups widespread thru but generally more scarce than redpolls; *intro*.
American Goldfinch: max 60 Dolge 1 Feb; good nums widespread.
Lapland Longspur: Waterville 18 Dec; Pulaski 16 Jan; max 2 Mexico 20 Jan & Memphis 8 Feb; OswH 4 Feb; only reps.
Snow Bunting: max 300 Fenner 13 Feb & T Richland 6 Jan; good flocks rep var locs thru.

NEW WORLD SPARROWS – CARDINALIDS

Eastern Towhee: Granby 20 Dec, 12, 13 Feb (TC); only rep.
American Tree Sparrow: max 100 OLP 31 Jan, 19 Feb; good nums widespread thru.
Chipping Sparrow: max 10 Manheim Center 18 Feb; reported feeding with other sparrows at grain spill (EF), rec num for date (?); Syr 1, 5 Dec (DWe, DD); only reps.
Field Sparrow: OLP 19 Dec (FL); TR 1 Jan (GD); only reps.
Savannah Sparrow: T Richland 3, 5 Jan (MB); max 3 Port Byron 9 Feb (MG); Port Byron 15 Feb (DC); arr SNC 27 Feb (JD); only reps.
Fox Sparrow: last Dolge 9-10 Dec (BLH); Marcellus 16 Dec (KF); arr or winterer Cato 18 Feb (MA); only reps.
Song Sparrow: max 14 OLP 19 Feb; best nums OLP & TR.
Swamp Sparrow: 1-2 TR var dates; 4 other locs var dates.

White-throated Sparrow: max 45 GLSP 11 Dec.

White-crowned Sparrow: 5 Cross Lake 5 Dec thru (CL); 5 Bville 30 Jan; max 6 Bville 31 Jan; several other locs, most birds presumed to winter, more than usual.

Dark-eyed Junco: max 86 Sterling 30 Dec.

Baltimore Oriole: Syr 4 Feb (DD), very rare in winter.

Red-winged Blackbird: max 35 OLP 4 Dec & Fville 30 Dec; small num var locs thru.

Brown-headed Cowbird: max 37 Chittenango 22 Feb.

Rusty Blackbird: Chittenango 2-23 Feb (TH); max 3 Elbridge 19 Feb (SS)

Common Grackle: max 8 Syr 20 Dec; a few winter.

Common Yellowthroat: OLP 7 Jan (JMc); only rep.

Yellow-rumped Warbler: 4 RRP 28 Dec; max 5 RRP 21 Feb & HI 14 Dec; Elbridge, Bville, SP; only reps but more than usual.

Northern Cardinal: typ nums.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: Cassville 17 Dec (TWh); Pulaski 25 Dec – 15 Jan (WV, MB, ph), very rare in winter.