

February 2020 Sightings Report

February was a mainly quiet, mild winter month. It capped off the official 3 months of winter 2019-2020 as tied for 18th warmest on record. There were 4 cold intrusions through the month near the ends of work weeks or on weekends. Still, temperatures averaged 28.6 °F, 2.2° above normal. Precipitation totaled 2.51", 0.56" above normal. 0.58" of that fell in a period of rain, freezing rain, and the largest snowfall of 7.7" from the 5th-7th. The only heavy lake effect snow event of February occurred at the end of the month, with only a few inches in Rochester and heavy snow west of Buffalo and east of Lake Ontario. The only arctic surge was on the 14th-15th, with single digit lows. A warm, dry period from the 22nd-24th brought a taste of spring and a few early migrants.

All of the expected waterfowl were reported, and the couple of species not reported arrived within a few days into March. Snow Goose numbers jumped after mid-month, but most of the other high counts were really holdovers from earlier in the winter. The new spring arrivals were noted in new places, but with numbers still low. Most of the bays and ponds remained largely frozen, but with patches of open water appearing with warmer days and the right winds. You will see only a few FS notations for waterfowl in the Noteworthy table, as overwintering birds were scattered about and moving, making some of the judgement calls difficult at best. There were no really rare waterfowl reports. Grebe numbers were low with only one report for Horned Grebe and one or 2 Red-necked Grebes. American Coot remained scarce. Finally, a Sandhill Crane seen by Andrew Guthrie and Pat Martin at Braddock Bay on the 16th was regional record early and one of very few records for this month.

The warm shots in February brought 2 shorebird arrivals, Killdeer and American Woodcock. Both were early but not unprecedented, and either could possibly be argued as a bird that made it through winter nearby. A third shorebird was a last report by several observers of a Purple Sandpiper found at Sodus Point at the end of January; it was one of very few February reports for the region. Gulls were present in decent numbers all month. There were no Bonaparte's Gull reports. On the 15th, there was a massive gathering of Herring and other large gulls on ice floes out off Braddock Bay and to the west. I did not have time to try to count, but the number was 1000s. Counts in Braddock Bay in subsequent days were very high. Numbers of the regular winter gulls - Iceland, Lesser Black-backed, and Glaucous - were good and are summarized in the Noteworthy Records table. Loons were well reported, mainly as singles with a few better local counts. The Double-crested Cormorants, wintering again mostly in Irondequoit Bay, were tallied in peak numbers near the mouth of the Genesee River mid-month.

The Braddock Bay hawk watch was off to a start, with local birders, Mike Tetlow and Greg Lawrence, counting on the 23rd & 24th and 16 birds tallied. David Brown is

back again as this year's official counter starting on March 1. Raptor reports generally remained low for the month, excepting a good number of Bald Eagle reports summarized as the number of lines in eBird. Also typical of winter here, the Cooper's Hawk line count out-numbered Sharp-shinned Hawk 122:28. There were no Black Vulture or Northern Goshawk reports and only 3 Red-shouldered Hawks. Only 2 Snowy Owls were reported. The usual Short-eared Owl surveys were carried out, but there were no large concentrations reported, and the Tuesday surveys were again plagued by iffy weather. Jim Adams reported that there were 3 Northern Saw-whet Owls for the month plus Barred Owl on the 8th and 25th in the Owl Woods area. It is plausible for all the reports for each species to be a single individual, but possibly also more than one. The regular falcons were all well reported through the season. There was also a good number of Northern Shrike reports, though it is hard to separate different individuals from birds moving about, such as in the Nations Road Important Bird Area.

Among the other non-passerine land birds, woodpeckers are the major component. There were no reports of Red-headed Woodpecker for the month, and only one Yellow-bellied Sapsucker late in the month at the Conesus Lake inlet area.

Given reports of low numbers and birds hard to find from earlier in the winter, it was not a big surprise that numbers of species and individuals were low this month. With the Great Backyard Bird Count, numbers of reports and observers were up a bit, but I have summarized a few species in numbers of lines in the eBird download, and you will see that a few species accounted for large numbers of reports. There still were many reports of half-hardy species lingering, many of them with single or few records submitted. Species reported included: Winter Wren, Hermit Thrush, Gray Catbird, Eastern Towhee, Chipping Sparrow, several Field Sparrows, Savannah Sparrow, and good numbers of White-crowned and White-throated Sparrows. Pine Siskin was the only winter finch reported, and there were no warbler reports. While blackbirds were scarce, a mixed flock found at the south edge of our region along Armitage Road in Wayne County late in the month also contained the rarity of the month in a male and a female Yellow-headed Blackbird.

The Great Backyard Bird Count pushed the number of observers contributing to eBird records to 391 this month, most typically not reporting otherwise, but the total number of records in the data download for the region was 24,226, up a bit from last year and a high/typical number for this month.

Please send your reports by the 5th of the month to Andrea Patterson, 144 Greystone Lane, #24, Rochester, NY 14618.

Bob Spahn and the RBA Records Committee

	2020	2019	10-year Average (2010-2019)
Species for February	118	125	118.7
New for the year	8	8	6.5
Total for the year to date	129	135	133.3

Observers: Jim Adams, Richard Ashworth, Mitchell Barry, Doug Beattie, Janice Beglinger, Linda Clark Benedict, Steve Benedict, Lynn Bergmeyer, Barry Bermudez, John Boettcher, Terry Bohling, Lynn Braband, Joe Brin, David Brown (BBRR hawk watcher), Mark Brown, Robert Buckert, Sara Burch, Bruce Cady, Brad Carlson, Donna Carter, Mark Druziak, Robert Cicotta, Kelly Close, Lydia Culbert, Kathleen Dalton, Doug Daniels, Gregg Dashnau, Ian Davies, Deborah Dohne, George Ford, Jim Fry, Kyle Gage, Candy Giles, Christopher Goetz, James Goetz, Sheryl Gracewski, Jay Greenberg, Janis George, Bill Gillette, Fiona Gilroy, John & Karla Gordinier, Kevin Griffith, Ralph & Georgia Guenther, Michael Gullo, Andrew Guthrie, Chris Guthrie, Danny Guthrie, Helen & Chris Haller, Greg Hartenstein, Kim Hartquist, Christina Hoh, Jennalee Holzschuh, Dick Horsey, Bill Howe, Mary-Ann Ingrao, Archie J., Carolyn Jacobs, Alyssa

Johnson, Nicholas Kachala, Logan Kahle, Amy Kahn, Laura Kammermeier, Jim Kimball, Kathy Kirsch, Renee Kittleman, J. Gary Kohlenberg, Augie Kramer, Hans Kunze, Tom Lathrop, Chris Lajewski, Greg Lawrence, Tim Lenz, Joan & Vern Lindberg, Peggy Mabb, Pat Martin, Lauri Mattle, Kenneth McCarthy, Jacob McCartney, Kevin McGann, Jay McGowan, Kevin McGowan, James McKay, Chita McKinney, Jim Miles, Kent Millham, Mark Miller, Randi Minetor, Ann Mitchell, Judy Mitchell, Mike Morgante, Celeste Morien, Brian & Brooke Morse, Sheila Mumpton, Tom Nash, Rivka Noll, Matt Nusstein, David Nutter, Dave Odell, Annie O'Reilly, Jay Ovsiovitich, Andrea Patterson, Jo Popma, Doug Rabjohns, Carolyn Ragan, RBA Field Trips, Rochester Young Birders Club, Neal Reilly, Rosemary Reilly, Susan Roberts, Don Ross, Wade & Melissa Rowley, Robert Ryan, Kevin Rybczynski, Jackie Salisbury, Livia Santana, Karl Schmidt, Shirley Shaw, Tom & Pat Smith, Robert & Susan Spahn, Dave Spier & Donna Mason-Spier, Chris Stanger, Rick Stevens, Joe Stevenson, June Summers, Steve Taylor, Mike Tetlow, Eunice Thein, M. J. Thomas, Sarah Toner, Nathan Ukens, Jeanne & Thomas Verhulst, Matt Voelker, Jules Wagner, Davey Walters, Mike Wasilco, Ann Watson, Bridget Watts, Drew Weber, Richard Weilacher, Emilee Weir, David Wheeler, Dave Will, Joe Wing, Jim Wood, Mark Zodorecky

Update on Heritage Wind

by Amy Kahn, RBA Conservation Chair

The long-awaited application for the Heritage Wind Project in Barre, NY has been submitted to the state and is available for review: <http://documents.dps.ny.gov/public/CaseNo16-f-0546>. It is a massive document. RBA is looking for people willing to help review so we can comment. Please contact Amy Kahn, RBA Conservation Chair (rbaconservation@gmail.com) to help. Anyone can comment as an individual. One year from March 15, 2020, the Project will be voted on by the Siting Board.

Attention Computer-savvy RBA Members!

The Communications Committee is looking for someone to help with e-mail communications. Anyone interested, please contact Liz Magnanti (lizmagnanti@gmail.com.) Training will be provided! We are looking for someone to take over the e-mail communications, so the ideal person would be familiar with MailChimp or Constant Contact. It would require very little writing, but requires the ability to copy and paste information, and add upload photos to the MailChimp platform.

Birders Exchange

Birders' Exchange collects and redistributes new and used binoculars, spotting scopes, digital camera equipment, old and new field guides, and other relevant material. Sponsored by the American Birding Association, it supports critical research and conservation programs in the Caribbean, Central and South America. Won't you help? Please bring your donations to the RBA monthly meetings or contact Lucretia at 671-1310 or lucretia@frontiernet.net for alternate arrangements. Remember to include a list of the items and your name and address with your donation.

Lucretia Grosshans