

Birds in the Saginaw Bay Area

Dec 1st, 2012 thru Feb 28th, 2013

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Summary: 119 species from the Michigan Bird List were reported in the Saginaw Bay Area this winter, equaling the second highest winter period on record, exceeded only by last winter. That these two top ranking years should occur consecutively is not surprising, considering the fact that both winters were milder than normal. Birds not only appeared to reflect this climatic situation in terms greater diversity, but in some instances, above normal overall numbers as well. This report lists all of the species reported, along with the highest reported individual count for each, and a list of the SBA counties in which each was noted. Per the state compiler's request, all Trumpeter Swan records are listed, and that is becoming quite a list, as the re-introduction efforts made for this species continue to show positive results. Chronologically, the front end of the winter was quite mild, allowing some species, particularly waterbirds, to linger, but the tail end was relatively frigid, and no real widespread early arrivals were noted with the exception of geese and ...Savannah Sparrows(!). Despite the mild weather, observer effort this winter was only average, with enough coverage in each county (just enough in several) to provide an adequate overall data image of the SBA. Several observers commented that bird movements and predictions in late autumn promised the upcoming season would be filled with flocks of irruptive winter songbirds, but this all quickly fizzled out. While most of the species expected were encountered, significant numbers of several were only locally occurring, and a few, such as Evening Grosbeak, went nearly undetected. Record-wise, five new SBA peak counts were established, as well as one new SBA fall late date and one new SBA spring early date. One MBRC Review List species was reported.

Weather: The brief cooler than average temperature trend seen in autumn 2012 did not persist into the early winter, as temperatures were unseasonably warm for the first three weeks of the December, which ended up the fourth warmest on record for Saginaw. This no doubt contributed to below normal snow fall and ice coverage during the month. January was dominated by temperatures oscillations, with a warm early portion of the month followed by a sub-zero period, then back to record highs at month's end. January snowfall was only slightly below normal, but above average rainfall left total precipitation higher than average. Temperature variability lessened in February, and snowfall stayed true to the pattern prevailing in recent years, where February is the snowiest month of winter, and an above average amount fell again this year. All told, the season was, (no surprise here), milder than normal.

(Weather is based upon the best available data from NOAA, which is for Saginaw MBS. While generally applicable to the greater SBA, conditions in the northern and lakeshore portions of the area may have varied to some extent.)

This report, as well as previous seasonal reports from 2000-2012, can be found at <http://www.saginawbaybirding.org>, along with updates on spring 2013 migration in the Saginaw Bay Area, as reported to Joe Soehnel at soehnelj@gmail.com or at 989-892-3687.

Many thanks to all observers who contributed their sightings directly to this compilation. Your extra efforts result in a significantly more accurate and thorough report. Additional thanks to Joe Soehnel for his ongoing input .



Joe Soehnel captured this image of a very handsome Greater White-fronted Goose showing off its (rarely so well seen) belly speckles at Port Austin, during the Huron County Christmas Bird Count.



The first SBA record for Lesser Black-backed Gull occurred only recently, in 1989. The first multiple bird sighting of two was reported in 1998. The species is now encountered annually, often with multiple birds, and can be found at inland locations as well as along the coast of Saginaw Bay and Lake Huron. Roger Eriksson captured this fine study of an adult napping on the Saginaw River in Bay City this winter.

Species	Number	Date	Location	Observers / Comment
GRTR WHITE-FRNTED GOOSE:	1	12/18	Port Austin, Hu	JMS
	4	2/21	SNWR, Sa	DJP - 2 here on 2/26 (DJP)
SNOW GOOSE:	4	2/13	SNWR, Sa	SFK - also noted in Ar
ROSS'S GOOSE:	2	2/21	SNWR, Sa	DJP
CAKCLING GOOSE:	3	12/2	Hammel Beach, Ar	TP - also noted in Sa
CANADA GOOSE:	13410	2/13	SNWR, Sa	SFK - also noted in Ar,Ba,Io,Tu
MUTE SWAN:	202	1/27	Hampton Twp., Ba	JMS - also noted in Ar,Hu,Io,Mi,Sa
TRUMPETER SWAN:	29	12/3	Cooke Dam, Io	WWS
	3	12/13	SNWR, Sa	SFK
	200+	12/24	Westgate, Io	PR
	2	12/27	Sanford, Mi	JEV
	182	12/28	Westgate, Io	RAE
	200+	12/31	Westgate, Io	PR,EC
	35	12/31	Iargo Springs, Io	PR,EC
	2	1/2	Port Austin, Hu	MKE
	37	1/4	Cooke Dam area, Io	WWS
	6	1/12	Tuttle Marsh, Io	RAE
	11	1/14	SNWR, Sa	SFK
	230	1/19	Westgate, Io	PR,EC - new SBA peak count
	17	1/19	Iargo Springs, Io	PR,EC
	47	1/21	Cooke Dam area, Io	WWS
	3	1/22	SNWR, Sa	SFK
	167	1/23	Cooke Dam area, Io	WWS
	85	1/26	Cooke Dam area, Io	WWS
	175	2/3	Cooke Dam area, Io	PR,EC
	18	2/3	Iargo Springs, Io	PR,EC
	25	2/3	Five Channels Dam, Io	PR,EC
1	2/5	Karn Plant area, Ba	JMS,DLJ	
2	2/6	Harbor Beach, Hu	MKE	
178	2/10	Cooke Dam area, Io	WWS	
TUNDRA SWAN:	540	12/4	Finn Road Park, Ba	JMS - also noted in Ar,Hu,Io,Mi,Sa,Tu
WOOD DUCK:	3	1/4	Saginaw River, Ba	JMS - 2 drakes and a hen
GADWALL:	57	12/13	Linwood, Ba	RAE - also noted in Mi
AMERICAN WIGEON:	44	12/16	Pinconning Park, Ba	RAE
AMERICAN BLACK DUCK:	302	12/13	SNWR, Sa	SFK - also noted in Ba,Io,Mi,Tu
MALLARD:	4642	12/13	SNWR, Sa	SFK - also noted in Ar,Ba,Io,Tu
NORTHERN SHOVELER:	8	12/5	SNWR, Sa	DJP - also noted in Ba,Mi
NORTHERN PINTAIL:	86	12/16	Pinconning Park, Ba	RAE - also noted in Io,Sa
GREEN-WINGED TEAL:	4	12/5	SNWR, Sa	DJP - also noted in Ba,Mi

CANVASBACK:	6	1/16	Saginaw River, Ba	JMS
REDHEAD:	1800	12/24	Tawas Bay, Io	RAE - also noted in Ba,Hu,Mi,Sa
RING-NECKED DUCK:	21	12/5	SNWR, Sa	DJP - also noted in Io,Mi
GREATER SCAUP:	104	2/5	Karn Plant area, Ba	JMS,DLJ - also noted in Io,Mi
LESSER SCAUP:	11	1/1	Dow Ponds, Mi	RMD - also noted in Ba,Io,Sa
SCAUP SP:	7100	12/12	BCSRA, Ba	JMS
WHITE-WINGED SCOTER:	1	12/14	Tawas Bay, Io	RAE
LONG-TAILED DUCK:	53	12/1	Tawas Bay, Io	RAE - also noted in Ba
BUFFLEHEAD:	263	12/13	Linwood, Ba	RAE - also noted in Ar,Hu,Io,Mi,Sa
COMMON GOLDENEYE:	2370	2/18	Karn Plant area, Ba	JMS - also noted in Ar,Hu,Io,Mi,Sa
*BARROW'S GOLDENEYE:	1	12/27 - 12/28	Sanford Lake, Mi	JZ,MKE,JEV - a drake - 1st Mi record - pending MBRC acceptance, details have been submitted
HOODED MERGANSER:	30	12/1	Tawas Bay, Io	RAE - also noted in Ba,Mi
COMMON MERGANSER:	5500	1/18	Karn Plant area, Ba	JMS,DLJ - also noted in Ar,Hu,Io,Mi,Sa
RED-BREASTED MERGANSER:	293	12/1	Tawas Bay, Io	RAE - also noted in Ar,Ba,Mi,Sa
COMMON GOLDENEYE X HOODED MERGANSER:	1	1/19	Tawas River mouth, Io	RAE
RUDDY DUCK:	21	12/8	Dow Ponds, Mi	RMD - also noted in Ba
RING-NECKED PHEASANT:	3	1/8	Koylton Twp., Tu	JEV - also noted in Ar,Ba,Mi,Sa
RUFFED GROUSE:	2	1/3	Cooke Dam area, Io	WWS - also noted in Mi,Tu
WILD TURKEY:	125	1/4	Bangor Twp., Ba	GSP,MW - also noted in Ar,Mi,Sa,Tu
COMMON LOON:	1	12/2	Tawas Point area, Io	JR
HORNED GREBE:	1	12/1	Tawas Bay, Io	RAE
	1	2/21	Karn Plant area, Ba	JMS
DOUBLE-CRSTD CORMORANT:	6	1/10	Saginaw River mouth, Ba	JMS - also noted in Ar,Io
GREAT BLUE HERON:	8	12/5	SNWR, Sa	DJP - also noted in Ba,Io,Mi
TURKEY VULTURE:	1	12/21	Jerome Twp., Mi	RMD
BALD EAGLE:	106	1/27	Hampton Twp., Ba	JMS - new SBA peak count - As GEP noted, SBA bald eagle populations are higher than anytime in at least the last half century. This winter was also notable in the largest winter numbers were not at SNWR - also noted in Hu,Mi,Sa,Tu
NORTHERN HARRIER:	10	1/14	SNWR, Sa	SFK - also noted in Ba,Io,Tu
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK:	1	2/12	Bangor Twp., Ba	GSP,EMP - also noted in Io,Mi,Tu

COOPER'S HAWK:	2	1/16	Saginaw River, Ba	JMS - also noted in Hu,lo,Sa,Tu
RED-SHOULDERED HAWK:	1	2/27	SNWR, Sa	DJP - also noted in Ba,lo,Mi,Tu
RED-TAILED HAWK:	13	2/7	SNWR, Sa	DJP - also noted in Ba,Hu,lo,Mi,Tu
ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK:	5	2/21	SNWR, Sa	DJP - also noted in Ar,Ba,Hu,lo,Mi,Tu
GOLDEN EAGLE:	1	2/18	Quanicassee area, Tu	MKE - immature age
AMERICAN COOT:	1	thru 2/18	Saginaw River, Ba	JMS,DLJ,RAE,GEP - also noted in lo,Tu
SANDHILL CRANE:	150 2	12/5 2/13	SNWR, Sa SNWR, Sa	DJP SFK - first spring date
KILLDEER:	1	12/5	SNWR, Sa	DJP last fall date
BONAPARTE'S GULL:	296 noted	12/12 12/28	Kawkawlin River mouth,Ba Saginaw River, Ba	JMS - also noted in Ar,lo,Mi,Sa DD - last date
RING-BILLED GULL:	1200	12/4	Karn Plant, Ba	JMS - overwintering in larger than normal numbers - also noted in Ar,lo,Mi,Sa,Tu
HERRING GULL:	10950	1/7	Saginaw River, Ba	JMS,DLJ - also noted in Ar,lo,Mi,Sa,Tu
ICELAND GULL:	7	2/1	Saginaw River, Ba	JMS,MW - new SBA peak count
LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL:	7	1/15	Saginaw River, Ba	JMS,MW,DLJ - ties SBA peak count - also noted in Sa
GLAUCOUS GULL:	6	1/31	Saginaw River, Ba	JMS,MW - also noted in lo,Mi
GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL:	35+	12/21	Linwood, Ba	DD -also noted in Ar,Hu,lo,Mi
ROCK PIGEON:	274	2/7	Saginaw River, Ba	JMS - also noted in Ar,lo,Sa,Tu
MOURNING DOVE:	334	12/18	SNWR, Sa	DJP - also noted in Ar,Ba,lo,Mi,Tu
EASTERN SCREECH OWL:	3	2/4	SNWR, Sa	SFK - also noted in Ba,Tu
GREAT HORNED OWL:	4	1/1	Spaulding Twp., Sa	JDS - also noted in Ba,Mi,Tu
SNOWY OWL:	1	12/19	Hampton Twp., Ba	SM - also noted in Hu,Tu
BARRED OWL:	1	2/26	Birch Run Twp., Sa	JDS,QJS - also noted in Ba,Mi,Tu
LONG-EARED OWL:	2	12/13	SNWR, Sa	SFK
SHORT-EARED OWL:	5	1/14	SNWR, Sa	SFK - also noted in Tu
BELTED KINGFISHER:	1	1/27	Hampton Twp., Ba	JMS - also noted in lo,Mi,Sa
RED-HEADED WOODPECKER:	2	12/13	Round Lake, lo	RAE,DLJ - also noted in Hu
RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER:	6	1/10	Garfield Twp., Ba	JMS - also noted in Ar,Hu,lo,Sa,Tu
YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER:	1	thru 2/24	Midland, Mi	AD
DOWNY WOODPECKER:	5	1/27	Bridgeport Twp., Sa	LMA - also noted in Ar,Ba,Hu,lo,Mi,Tu

HAIRY WOODPECKER:	5	12/12	SNWR, Sa	DJP - also noted in Ar,Ba,Hu,Io,Tu - GEP notes a recent disappearance in his Bangor Twp., Ba locale.
NORTHERN FLICKER:	3	1/19	SNWR, Sa	JDS - also noted in Ar,Ba,Io,Mi,Tu
PILEATED WOODPECKER:	2	2/17	Forest Lake, Ar	DLJ - also noted in Ba,Hu,Mi,Sa,Tu
AMERICAN KESTREL:	4	12/28	Jasper Twp., Mi	RMD - also noted in Ar,Ba,Hu,Io,Sa,Tu
MERLIN:	1	2/13	SNWR, Sa	SFK - also noted in Ba,Io,Mi
PEREGRINE FALCON:	1	12/10	Bayport area, Hu	MKE - The observer wrote - "I noticed a large group of 100+ starlings lift off from a barn and as they flew, they formed a flying orb!! No kidding, it was an air-ball of starlings. Flying around the air-ball, no doubt looking for someone out of formation-- a peregrine falcon. The ball o' birds-- a self-preserving maneuver??? It worked! The p-bird moved on to pursue a small, less-organized starling flock! "
	1	1/1	City Hall, Bay City, Ba	DLJ - also noted in Mi
NORTHERN SHRIKE:	3	1/5	FPSWA, Tu	JMS - also noted in Ar,Ba,Hu,Io,Mi,Sa
BLUE JAY:	9	1/25	SNWR, Sa	SFK - also noted in Ar,Ba,Io,Tu - GEP (and DJP concurs) "...less, maybe much less, than five or ten years ago."
AMERICAN CROW:	544	2/13	SNWR, Sa	SFK - also noted in Ar,Ba,Io,Mi,Tu
COMMON RAVEN:	1	2/2	Jonesfield Twp., Sa	AB - 2 nd Sa record - also noted in Ar,Mi
	25	2/3	Au Sable River area, Io	PR,EC
HORNED LARK:	120	1/25	Jasper Twp., Mi	RMD - also noted in Ba,Io,Sa,Tu
BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE:	38	1/6	Crow Island SGA, Sa	JMS - also noted in Ar,Ba,Io,Tu
TUFTED TITMOUSE:	4	tp	Koylton Twp., Tu	JEV - also noted in Ar,Ba,Io,Mi,Sa
RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH:	8	2/9	Kolyton Twp., Tu	JEV - also noted in Ar,Ba,Hu,Io,Mi,Sa
WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH:	4	2/17	Forest Lake, Ar	DLJ - also noted in Ba,Io,Sa
BROWN CREEPER:	2	2/9	Koylton Twp., Tu	JEV - also noted in Ar,Ba,Mi,Sa
CAROLINA WREN:	1	1/2 - 2/18	Oak Beach, Hu	MKE - also noted in Mi
EASTERN BLUEBIRD:	8	12/8	Koylton Twp., Tu	JEV - also noted in Ba,Mi,Sa - GEP, who keeps a eye on SBA bird population trends better than most, noted "Not a big number of these, but surely more than say ten years ago?"
HERMIT THRUSH:	1	12/10	Hume Twp., Hu	MKE,MWi - along Loosemore Rd
	1	2/28	Midland, Mi	MKE
AMERICAN ROBIN:	59	1/2	Frankenlust Twp., Ba	RAE - also noted in Io,Mi,Sa,Tu
GRAY CATBIRD:	1	12/2	Tawas Point area, Io	JR - being provisioned w/ wax worms by the observer
BROWN THRASHER:	1	12/2 - 1/1	Tawas Point area, Io	JR,others - being provisioned w/ wax worms by JR

EUROPEAN STARLING:	1000	12/3	Pinconning Twp., Ba	GSP,MW - also noted in Ar,Hu,Io,Sa,Tu
BOHEMIAN WAXWING:	530+	12/16	East Tawas, Io	RAE - new SBA peak count - also noted in Ar,Ba,Mi,Sa,Tu
CEDAR WAXWING:	91	2/28	Midland, Mi	RF - also noted in Ar,Ba,Io,Sa,Tu
LAPLAND LONGSPUR:	15	2/1	Merritt Twp., Ba	MW - also noted in Mi,Sa,Tu
SNOW BUNTING:	810	12/2	Au Gres, Ar	RAE - also noted in Ba,Io,Mi,Sa,Tu
PINE WARBLER:	1	12/1- 1/7	Bangor Twp, Ba	GSP,EMP - continuing at their feeder from the fall period
YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER:	1	12/2	Bangor Twp., Ba	GSP,EMP - last date
AMERICAN TREE SPARROW:	468	2/26	SNWR, Sa	DJP - new SBA peak count - also noted in Ar,Ba,Io,Tu
VESPER SPARROW:	1	12/20	Elmwood Twp., Tu	JEV - new SBA fall late date
SAVANNAH SPARROW:	1 1 3	2/23 2/25 2/27	Bridgeport Twp., Sa Bangor Twp., Ba Bridgeport Twp., Sa	JDS - new SBA spring early date EMP,GSP LMA - Savannah Sparrows jump the gun on spring migration in a big way! At least five birds more or less a month ahead of the previous SBA early date.
FOX SPARROW:	1	tp	Bangor Twp., Ba	EMP,GSP- 2nd SBA record for overwintering - observed on 7 occasions in December, 19 in January, and 24 in February. Not surprisingly, this correlates (roughly) to the amount of days of snow in these months.
SONG SPARROW:	3	2/10	SNWR, Sa	JDS - also noted in Io,Mi
WHITE-THROATED SPARROW:	1 1	12/2 12/20	Bangor Twp., Ba Crow Island SGA, Sa	GSP,EMP RAE
DARK-EYED JUNCO:	30	2/16	Koylton Twp., Tu	JEV - also noted in Ar,Ba,Io,Sa
NORTHERN CARDINAL:	25	1/13	Bangor Twp., Ba	EMP,GSP - also noted in Ar,Io,Sa,Tu
RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD:	5	2/18	Hampton Twp., Ba	MKE - also noted in Sa
COMMON GRACKLE:	1	tp	Bridgeport Twp., Sa	LMA - also noted in
PINE GROSBEAK:	30	12/25	Au Gres, Ar	DLJ - also noted in Io
PURPLE FINCH:	5	1/10	Hume Twp., Hu	KO - also noted in Ba
HOUSE FINCH:	19	12/24	Spaulding Twp., Sa	DJP - also noted in Ba,Tu
RED CROSSBILL:	1	12/25	Bangor Twp., Ba	JMS
WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL:	6	2/26	Deford SGA, Tu	JEV - also noted in Ba,Io
COMMON REDPOLL:	188	2/16	SNWR, Sa	DJP - also noted in Ar,Ba,Hu,Io,Mi

HOARY REDPOLL:	1	1/7	Oak Beach, Hu	MKE - an adult male - the observer noted: "Viewed with binoculars at under 10 yards in sunlight, first at feeder then perched in tree, about 3 yds up [excellent view of tail coverts]. Easily larger, appearing longer tailed, and downier than companion Common Redpolls. Very pale overall; little pale pink on breast. Minimal pale streaks on sides, absent on flanks; clean white undertail coverts free of any visible streaking. Bill stubbier, face having a rather pushed-in look compared to commons."
PINE SISKIN:	2	1/12	Koylton Twp., Tu	JEV - also noted in Ba,lo,Mi
AMERICAN GOLDFINCH:	52	1/20	Cooke Dam area, lo	WWS - also noted in Ar,Ba,Mi,Sa,Tu
EVENING GROSBEAK:	1	12/9	Oil City area, Mi	RMD
HOUSE SPARROW:	190	2/16	Saginaw Twp., Sa	SFK - also noted in Ar,Ba,lo,Tu

TOTAL: 119 Species

Peak/high counts and early/late dates are designated based upon records established in the publication *Birds and Bird Finding in the Saginaw Bay Area* by Ron Weeks, published in 1995, and subsequent updates to the data by the compilers of the Birds in the Saginaw Bay Area report. Comments on seasonal occurrences also relate to information found in this exhaustively researched book, as well as species notations on the Michigan Bird Survey Form.

* MBRC Review List species. Inclusion of this record does not signify that it has been verified, only that an encounter was reported. The observation will not be considered an official SBA record until it has been reviewed and accepted by the MBRC.

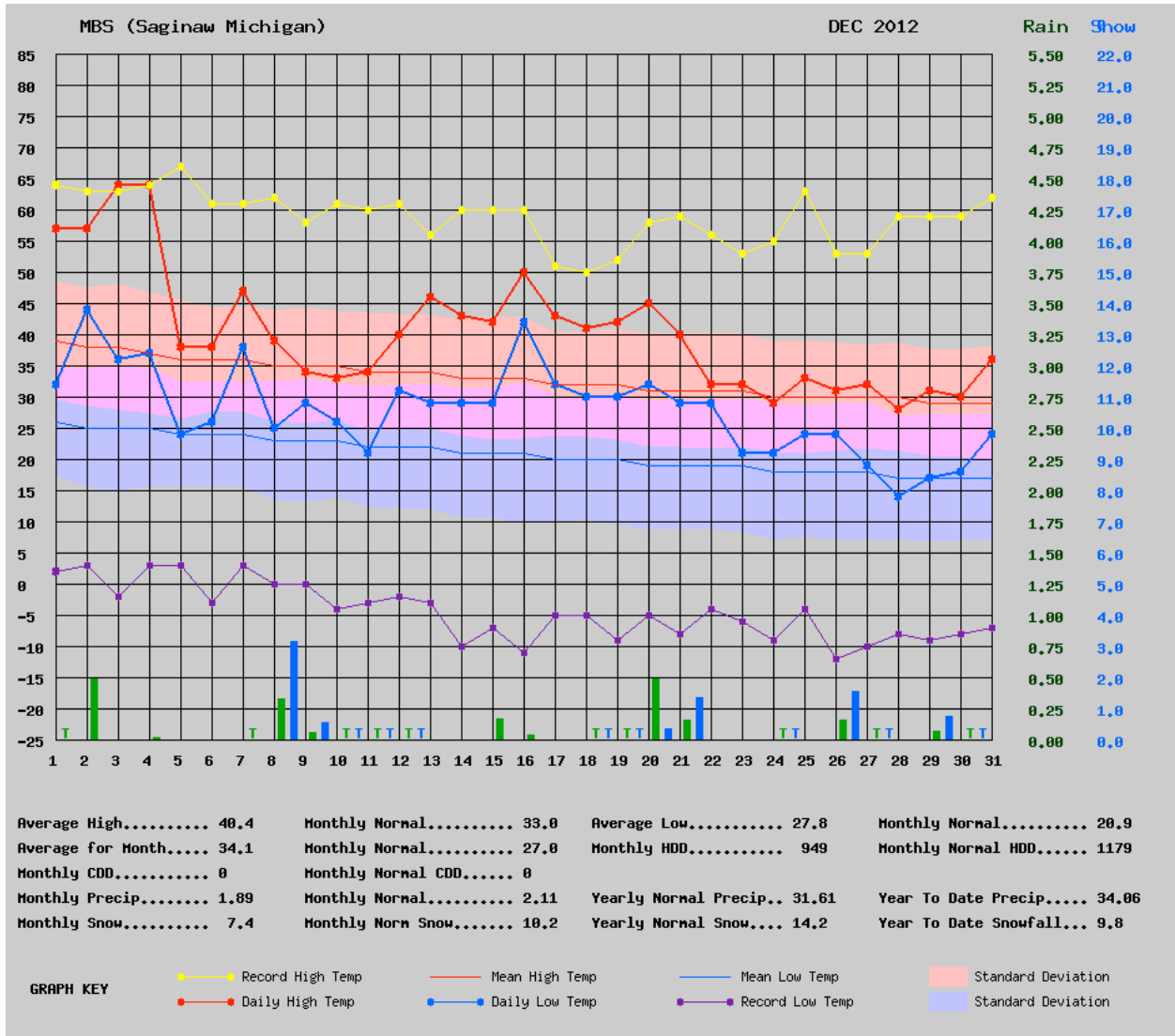
Observer Key:

LMA	Larry M. Abraham	DJP	David J. Peters
AB	Adam Byrne	GSP	Glenn S. Peterson
EC	Ed Cole	EMP	Ellen M. Peterson
AD	Audrey Diadiun	JR	Jane Rusterper
DD	Dan Duso	PR	Peggy Ridgeway
RMD	Ryan M. Dziedzic	WWS	Wayne W. Shawl
RAE	Roger A. Eriksson	JMS	Joe M. Soehnel
MKE	Monica K. Essenmacher	JDS	Jeff D. Sommer
RF	Ralph Forsberg	QJS	Quinn J. Sommer
DLJ	Doug L. Jackson	JEV	Jim E. VanAllen
SFK	Steven F. Kahl	MWi	Marilyn Willard
SM	Stan Madziar	MW	Myles Willard
KO	Karl Overman	JZ	Jerry Ziarno
TP	Tom Palgut		

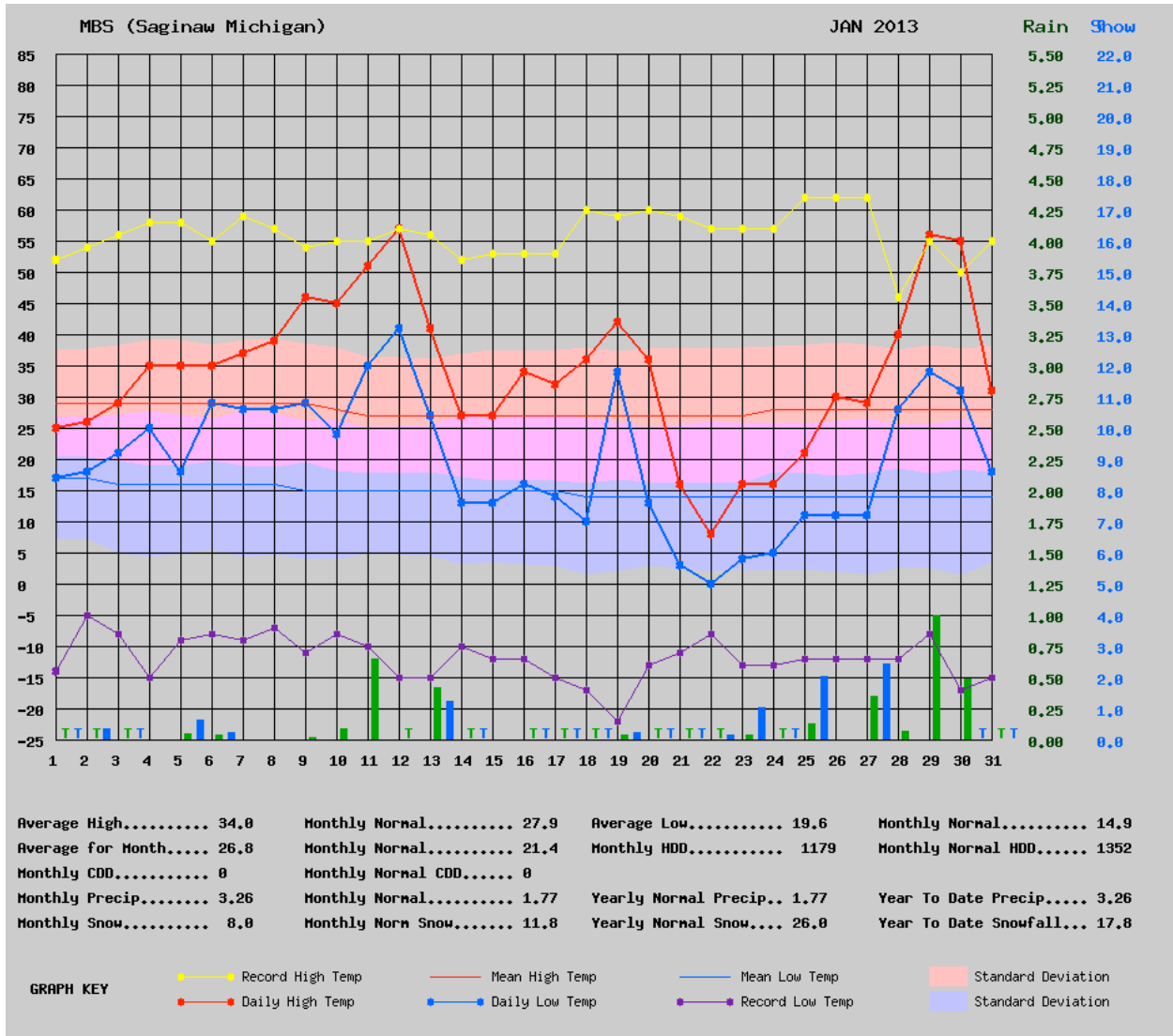
Abbreviations:

Ar	Arenac County	Sa	Saginaw County
Ba	Bay County	SBA	Saginaw Bay Area
FPSWA	Fish Point State Wildlife Area	SBB.org	SaginawBayBirding.org
Hu	Huron County	SNWR	Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge
lo	Iosco County	SGA	State Game Area
MBRC	Michigan Bird Records Committee	TPSP	Tawas Point State Park
Mi	Midland County	tp	throughout the entire, or entire remainder, of the period
NPSWA	Nayanquing Point State Wildlife Area	Tu	Tuscola County

December, 2012 Weather Graph – Saginaw (MBS)



January, 2013 Weather Graph – Saginaw (MBS)



February, 2013 Weather Graph – Saginaw (MBS)

