

BIRDS IN THE SAGINAW BAY AREA

December 1, 1988 through February 28, 1989

Compiler: *Terry Walsh*
 308 Mayfield Lane
 Midland, MI 48640
 517-835-7452

Summary: The mild weather allowed the Saginaw River to stay open unusually late this year. Several thousand Herring Gulls were to be seen all the way into February - usually they have mostly disappeared by early January. An adult Lesser Black-backed Gull (2nd SBA record) showed up with the huge gull influx at the end of December and luckily stayed around on the river for several weeks. At first it was mainly seen at the Middlegrounds, but later was seen most often near the sewage treatment plant. This is one bird we had all been hoping for with the intensive gull watching on the river these days, and it finally appeared! (Now how about Black-headed and California Gull?) At least 2 Iceland Gulls were also on the river at this time. Besides the gull attractions, a scruffy first-winter male King Elder (3rd SBA record) was quite obliging at the mouth of the river at the Karn Plant. It was seen in a ice-hole for two days, then disappeared and was eventually relocated a couple of weeks later. The presence of open water in January and February led to many unusual records of other ducks such as Shoveler, Wood Duck, scaups etc.

The Snowy Owl proved somewhat elusive at the Karn Plant (perhaps it was on the island a lot of the time?). A Long-eared Owl was found roosting at the Chippewa Nature Center but was only seen for a couple of days. Red-tailed Hawks appeared commoner and a few Rough-legs were around this winter. Winter finches were pretty much non-existent and the dearth of Tree Sparrows was remarkable. With the milder weather, Cedar Waxwings were more noticable, Robins stayed through February in Midland and Carolina Wrens appeared at two different feeders in Midland.

SIGHTINGS:

I have included Christmas bird count records for species for which I received no other documentation, otherwise CBC records are omitted (Chip Francke has the complete data). Most Saginaw River records refer to the Essexville/Bay City area.

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT:

up to 4 thru 12/17 Karn Plant, Ba mo

GREAT BLUE HERON:

up to 3 thru 1/13 Karn Plant, Ba JS,RW

TUNDRA SWAN:

400 12/10 Sebawaing, Hu RW

150 12/10 Bayport, Hu RW

120 12/13 Pinconning, Ba G&EP 7 still there on 12/25

MUTE SWAN:

2 1/8-2/7 Dow Ponds, Mi RW, KK

CANADA GOOSE:

5000 1/31 Fish Point, Tu MW

3000 2/5 Dow Ponds, Mi TW

Higher numbers appear to be wintering locally.

SNOW GOOSE:

5 1/16-2/14 Dow Ponds, Mi RW,TW

1 2/8 Karn Plant, Ba RW

WOOD DUCK:

1 2/9 Dow Ponds, Mi RW First February SBA record?

GREEN-WINGED TEAL:			
1	12/17	Karn Plant, Ba	BCCBC
AMERICAN BLACK DUCK:			
25 max	tp	Karn Plant, Ba	JS
20	2/5	Dow Ponds, Mi	TW
20	12/7	Fish Point, Tu	MW
MALLARD:			
600	2/5	Dow Ponds, Mi	TW
NORTHERN PINTAIL:			
1	1/27	Karn Plant, Ba	TW
1	2/9	Dow Ponds, Mi	RW
NORTHERN SHOVELER:			
1	2/9	Dow Ponds, Mi	RW
GADWALL:			
4	thru 2/8	Karn Plant, Ba	JS, RW
1	12/30	Dow Ponds, Mi	RW
REDHEAD:			
1-2	thru 12/17	Karn Plant, Ba	RW, JS
RING-NECKED DUCK:			
1	12/28	Karn Plant, Ba	RW
GREATER SCAUP:			
1	2/8-22	Karn Plant, Ba	RW, JS
LESSER SCAUP:			
1	12/28-2/9	Karn Plant, Ba	RW, JS
KING EIDER:			
1 w male	1/27-2/22	Karn Plant, Ba	TW, CF, mo
This was only the 3rd SBA record and the first to be seen by a number of observers. It was photographed on 2/18 by JS.			
OLDSQUAW:			
1	12/10	Caseville, Hu	RW
COMMON GOLDENEYE:			
95	1/2	Karn Plant, Ba	JS
80	2/5	Dow Ponds, Mi	TW
BUFFLEHEAD:			
1	1/7-2/8	Karn Plant, Ba	RW
HOODED MERGANSER:			
2	12/3-2/8	Karn Plant, Ba	RW, JS
COMMON MERGANSER:			
2000 max	tp	Karn Plant, Ba	MW, JS, RW
RED-BREASTED MERGANSER:			
1	tp	Karn Plant, Ba	JS
BALD EAGLE:			
2 imm	1/17	Bay City, Ba	RW
2 ad	1/7	Karn Plant, Ba	JS, RW
1 imm	2/20	Karn Plant, Ba	JS
1	Feb	Freeland, Sa	per TW
NORTHERN HARRIER:			
1	2/5	Midland, Mi	JL
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK:			
Singles seen occasionally throughout period.			
COOPER'S HAWK:			
Singles seen regularly throughout period.			
NORTHERN GOSHAWK:			
1	2/11	Caro, Tu	MW
RED-SHOULDERED HAWK:			
1	12/17	Bay City, Ba	BCCBC
RED-TAILED HAWK:			
Seen frequently through period; perhaps commoner than usual.			

ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK:

1 12/20, 1/28, 2/25 Karn Plant, Ba JS, PD
 1 2/8 Caro, Tu MW

AMERICAN KESTREL:

Seen often through period, common.

RING-NECKED PHEASANT:

Scattered sightings through period,; almost none in Tu (MW).

RUFFED GROUSE:

Reported from Tu, Mi.

WILD TURKEY:

up to 50 tp Midland, Mi MH, TW

AMERICAN COOT:

2-3 tp Karn Plant, Ba JS

COMMON SNIBE:

1 1/8 near Auburn, Ba TW Unusually late.

BONAPARTE'S GULL:

Last seen on 12/14 at Karn Plant, Ba (JS).

250 12/10 Karn Plant, Ba JS

RING-BILLED GULL:

5 2/1 Karn Plant, Ba RW

HERRING GULL:

~30,000 12/28 Saginaw River, Ba RW, CF

Up to ~5000 on the Saginaw River until the 1st week of Feb, rather late for these numbers.

ICELAND GULL:

1 1w 1/14 Saginaw River, Ba RW, JS

1 1w 1/27 Saginaw River, Ba TW

1 ad 2/3 Saginaw River, Ba TW, CF, RW

This species is clearly regular here in January.

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL:

1 ad 12/28-2/3 Saginaw River, Ba CF, RW, mo

This adult was the 2nd SBA record (and the 2nd in 1988). Although elusive, it was eventually seen by many SBA birders.

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL:

21 12/28 Saginaw River, Ba RW

30 12/30 Karn Plant, Ba JS

1 2/1 Saginaw River, Ba RW

Numbers continue to increase.

GLAUCOUS GULL:

14 max 12/14-2/3 Saginaw River, Ba TW, JS, mo

ROCK DOVE:

Common through period.

MOURNING DOVE:

Common through period.

~~1 3/31 Chippewa NC, Mi CF~~

SCREECH OWL:

2 dead Feb Reese, Tu MW Road kills.

GREAT HORNED OWL:

Noted through period. On nest on 2/6 in Ba (CF).

SNOWY OWL:

1 12/10-2/1 Karn Plant, Ba JS, RW Only 1 seen sporadically this year.

1 2/5-2/9 Dow Ponds, Mi TW, RW

BARRED OWL:

3 12/31 Midland, Mi MCBC

LONG-EARED OWL:

1 12/7 Chippewa NC, Mi CF, TW, mo Roosting in pines.

BELTED KINGFISHER:

1 tp Karn Plant, Ba JS

1 1/31 Chippewa NC, Mi CF

RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER:
 Present through period.
 DOWNY WOODPECKER:
 Common through period.
 HAIRY WOODPECKER:
 Common through period.
 NORTHERN FLICKER:
 Present through period at Chippewa NC, Mi.
 PILEATED WOODPECKER:
 1 thru 2/15 Sanford, Mi RW,CF
 1 Jan/Feb Chippewa NC, Mi CF
 HORNE LARK:
 Becoming common in February as usual.
 BLUE JAY:
 Common through period.
 AMERICAN CROW:
 Common through period; roost of over 100 in Midland (TW, CF).
 BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE:
 Common through period.
 TUFTED TITMOUSE:
 Noted through period.
 RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH:
 4 12/31 Midland, Mi MCBC
 WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH:
 Common through period.
 BROWN CREEPER:
 Noted through period.
 CAROLINA WREN:
 1 Jan Midland, Mi GZ
 1 Jan Midland, Mi GV At two well-separated feeders.
 GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET:
 3 12/31 Midland, Mi MCBC
 AMERICAN ROBIN:
 1-2 tp Midland, Mi TW
 2 2/25 Reese, Tu MW
 CEDAR WAXWING:
 Noted through period.
 NORTHERN SHRIKE:
 Noted in Bay, Tuscola and Midland Cos.
 STARLING:
 Common through period.
 NORTHERN CARDINAL:
 Common through period.
 AMERICAN TREE SPARROW:
 Numbers down everywhere (carrying on from last fall).
 SONG SPARROW:
 3 12/31 Harbor Beach, Hu RW
 DARK-EYED JUNCO:
 Fairly common through period.
 SNOW BUNTING:
 Common through period.
 COMMON GRACKLE:
 50 1/6 Essexville, Ba JS
 4 thru 2/15 Hampton, Ba JS
 BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD:
 Through period in Bay City and Essexville (up to 50).
 HOUSE FINCH:
 Common through period.

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH:

Common through period.

HOUSE SPARROW:

Common through period.

TOTAL: 82 SPECIES

OTHER RECORDS OUTSIDE SBA:

OLD SQUAW:

4 Port Sanilac, Sanilac Co. RW

GYRFALCON:

1 dk phase 2/11-12 Sault Ste. Marie RW

BALD EAGLE:

1 12/1 Round Lake, Clare Co. KK Heading on down road after left by hunters

LITTLE GULL:

2 ad 12/26 Port Sanilac, Sanilac Co. RW

ICELAND GULL:

1 2/18 St. Clair R., Marysville MW

SHORT-EARED OWL:

1 1/17 NW Lapeer Co. MW

BARRED OWL:

1 12/8-2/24 Round Lake, Clare Co. KK

PILEATED WOODPECKER:

1 12/8 Round Lake, Clare Co. KK

OBSERVERS

PD Phil Davis
 CF Chip Francke
 MH Mark Hubinger
 KK Kevin Kane
 JL Janea Little
 mo many observers
 G&EP Glenn & Ellen Peterson
 JS Joe Soehnei
 GV George Vogel
 TW Terry Walsh
 RW Ron Weeks
 MW Myles Willard
 CS Gary Smith

ABBREVIATIONS

Ba Bay County
 Hu Huron County
 Mi Midland County
 NC Nature Center
 Sa Saginaw County
 SBA Saginaw Bay Area
 Tu Tuscola County