

# BIRDS IN THE SAGINAW BAY AREA

December 1, 1989 through February 28, 1990

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**Summary:** This period was pleasantly surprising in the number and diversity of species noted. 100 species were recorded in the SBA area, which could be a record. The best birds were a brief, but obliging, male **Varied Thrush** just outside Midland, a **Black-legged Kittiwake** on the Bay City CBC and a probable **Thayer's Gull** at the Karn Plant in December. A tour of Iosco County on February 3 by Ron Weeks and Joe Soehnel produced a **Saw-whet Owl**, **Red and White-winged Crossbills** in the same spruce tree, **Pine Grosbeaks** and **Bohemian Waxwings**! **Bohemian Waxwings** were in the SBA in force again this winter, with large flocks being regularly reported, especially from favored berry-laden localities in Midland such as the Dow Center and the Circle area. (We had a similar influx in the winter of 85-86, which was associated with large numbers of Pine Grosbeaks).

There was a good selection of over-wintering waterfowl at the Karn Plant. Raptors were well represented with a very odd December **Osprey** in Midland, a stunning **16 Bald Eagles** at Shiawassee (along with 7 at the Karn Plant) and an excellent showing of **Rough-legged Hawks** throughout the area. **30 Glaucous Gulls** on the Saginaw River was probably a record number, and there were the usual 2-3 **Iceland Gulls** on the river. **Carolina Wrens** continued to show up, 2 at the same Midland feeder as last winter and 1 at Green Point. Other unusual feeder birds were a **Rufous-sided Towhee** and a **Chipping Sparrow**, but 2 **Bobwhites** at the Chippewa NC were presumably released birds. There was a smattering of **Siskins** but no **Evening Grosbeaks** or **Purple Finches** to speak of. **Tree Sparrows** seem to have been in consistently low numbers for the past couple of years - does this show up in CBC data?



**REPORTS:**

<b>HORNED GREBE:</b>			
1	1/13	Karn Plant, Ba	JS, RW      Only the 2nd Jan SBA record.
[PIED-BILLED GREBE: no reports]			
<b>DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT:</b>			
1	tp	Karn Plant, Ba	MO
<b>GREAT BLUE HERON:</b>			
8 max	tp	Karn Plant, Ba	MO
<b>TUNDRA SWAN:</b>			
1	12/16-28	Karn Plant, Ba	BCCBC, JS      No large flocks reported.
<b>MUTE SWAN:</b>			
5	1/7-2/4	Dow Ponds, Mi	RW
1	2/17	Saginaw R. mouth, Ba	KK
<b>CANADA GOOSE:</b>			
500+	12/18	Dow Ponds, Mi	RW
12,635	12/7	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	RWe      Becoming more abundant in winter.
<b>SNOW GOOSE:</b>			
1	12/1-13	Auburn, Ba	RA
6	12/7	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	DP
1	2/13	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	DP
1	2/17	Dow Ponds, Mi	KK
<b>WOOD DUCK:</b>			
1 f	12/16	Karn Plant, Ba	BCCBC
<b>GREEN-WINGED TEAL:</b>			
9	2/13	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	DP, BG
<b>AMERICAN BLACK DUCK:</b>			
25 max	tp	Karn Plant, Ba	JS
2,062	12/7	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	RWe
<b>MALLARD:</b>			
200 max	tp	Karn Plant, Ba	JS
9,330	12/7	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	RWe
<b>NORTHERN PINTAIL:</b>			
1	12/7	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	DP
1	12/16	Karn Plant, Ba	BCCBC
1	12/18, 30	Dow Ponds, Mi	RW, MCBC
<b>NORTHERN SHOVELER:</b>			
1	12/18-2/1	Dow Ponds, Mi	RW
<b>GADWALL:</b>			
4 max	tp	Karn Plant, Ba	RW, JS
<b>AMERICAN WIGEON:</b>			
1	12/16	Karn Plant, Ba	BCCBC
<b>REDHEAD:</b>			
1	1/13-14	Karn Plant, Ba	JS, RW, KK
<b>RING-NECKED DUCK:</b>			
1	thru 1/6	Middlegrounds, Ba	RW, JS
<b>LESSER SCAUP:</b>			
1	12/18	Dow Ponds, Mi	RW
2	1/13	Karn Plant, Ba	RW, JS
<b>OLDSQUAW:</b>			
1	2/25-tp	Chippewa NC, Mi	CF      First CNC record of one on the river.
<b>COMMON GOLDENEYE:</b>			
161	12/28	Middlegrounds, Ba	JS
<b>BUFFLEHEAD:</b>			
2	12/16	Karn Plant, Ba	RW
5	2/3	Tawas, Io	JS, RW
<b>HOODED MERGANSER:</b>			
2 f	12/16	Karn Plant, Ba	BCCBC

2 m 1/13 Karn Plant, Ba JS, RW  
**COMMON MERGANSER:**  
 1,000 max 1/13 Karn Plant, Ba JS  
 7,500 12/16 BAY CITY, BA BCCBC  
 369 1/26 Shiawassee NWR, Sa DP  
**RED-BREASTED MERGANSER:**  
 15 max 1/6 Karn Plant, Ba JS  
**OSPREY:**  
 1 12/27 Midland, Mi GK An unprecedented late record.  
**BALD EAGLE:**  
 1-8 at Shiawassee NWR, Sa through period (DP, BG) but an incredible 16 on 12/13.  
 1 -7 at the Karn Plant, Ba through period (JS).  
**NORTHERN HARRIER:**  
 3 12/13 Nayanquing Pt., Ba CF  
 1 2/21 Hampton Twp, Ba JS  
 1 1/28 Shiawassee NWR, Sa BG  
**SHARP-SHINNED HAWK:**  
 Only 3 sightings (Mi, Ba and Sa).  
**COOPER'S HAWK:**  
 Noted regularly in small numbers through period, ~8 in Tu (MW).  
**NORTHERN GOSHAWK:**  
 1 12/30 Midland, Mi MCBC  
 1 2/24 Midland, Mi GV  
 1 2/3 Gladwin Co. RA  
**RED-SHOULDERED HAWK:**  
 1 1/5 Shiawassee NWR, Sa DP  
 1 1/2, 2/25 Chippewa NC, Mi CF  
**RED-TAILED HAWK:**  
 Common through period.  
 18 12/13 Shiawassee NWR, Sa DP  
**ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK:**  
 6 max 12/7 Shiawassee NWR, Sa DP  
 11 12/30 Midland, MI MCBC  
 Seen in Ar, Ba, Mi, Tu, lo; at least 4 black phase birds noted. A good year, they seemed particularly frequent in the Midland area.  
**AMERICAN KESTREL:**  
 Noted through period.  
**RING-NECKED PHEASANT:**  
 Noted through period in Mi, Sa, more common in E Tu (MW).  
**RUFFED GROUSE:**  
 Noted in Mi, Tu and lo.  
**WILD TURKEY:**  
 Seen regularly in Midland.  
**NORTHERN BOBWHITE:**  
 2 12/26 tp Chippewa NC, Mi CF Presumed released?  
**AMERICAN COOT:**  
 4 max tp Karn Plant, Ba RW  
 1 12/18 Dow Ponds, Mi RW  
**BONAPARTE'S GULL:**  
 2 12/1-3 Saginaw R. mouth, Ba RW, JS  
 7 7/12 Shiawassee NWR, Sa DP  
 1 12/20 Saginaw R., Ba MW Generally low numbers  
**RING-BILLED GULL:**  
 1 1/13 Saginaw R., Ba JS  
 11 2/13 Shiawassee NWR, Sa DP, BG  
**HERRING GULL:**  
 3,000 1/1 Saginaw R., Ba TW Most of the gulls left in late Jan.

**ICELAND GULL:**

1 (1w)	12/13	Middlegrounds, B	RW	Relatively early.
1 (3w)	12/20	Karn Plant, Ba	PC, MW	
1 (1w)	1/1	Saginaw R., Ba	TW	
1 (1w)	1/13	Saginaw R., Ba	JS, RW	

An adult pale-winged gull at the Karn Plant, Ba and Saginaw R. on 12/18-20 appeared to have the characteristics of a **Thayer's Gull** (RW, MW).

**GLAUCOUS GULL:**

30 max	12/18	Saginaw R, Ba	MW	Very high total.
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Seen on the Saginaw R. between 12/13 to 1/21

**GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL:**

1-3	12/13-1/6	Saginaw R., Ba	MO
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Numbers lower than in the past although 11 were noted on the BCCBC (12/16).

**BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE\*:**

1 ad	12/13	Karn Plant, Ba	RW, MH (BCCBC)
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The 3rd SBA record; the second was also an adult on the 1984 BCCBC.

**ROCK DOVE:**

Common through period.

**MOURNING DOVE:**

Common through period.

**EASTERN SCREECH OWL:**

2	1/16	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	BG
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**GREAT HORNED OWL:**

1	1/28	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	BG
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3 on BCCBC and 1 on MCBC.

[SNOWY OWL: no reports after a poor showing last winter]

**BARRED OWL:**

1	12/30	Midland, Mi	MCBC
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**NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL:**

1	2/3	Loud Dam, Io	RW, JS
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**BELTED KINGFISHER:**

1	tp	Karn Plant, Ba	MO
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2	12/30	Midland, Mi	MCBC
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1	1/26	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	DP
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**RED-HEADED WOODPECKER:**

1	1/1	Nayanquing Pt, Ba	G&EP	Mid-winter records are rare.
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**RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER:**

Present through period in Sa, Mi, Ba; 10 on MCBC

**DOW NY WOODPECKER:**

Common through period.

**HAIRY WOODPECKER:**

Common through period.

**NORTHERN FLICKER:**

5 max	12/7	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	DP
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1	2/8	Green Point NC, Sa	DP
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1-2	tp	Chippewa NC, Mi	CF
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**PILEATED WOODPECKER:**

1	1/6	Chippewa NC, Mi	CF
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**HORNED LARK:**

Usual arrival in late January-early February.

**BLUE JAY:**

Common through period.

**AMERICAN CROW:**

Very common through period.

**BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE:**

Common through period.

**TUFTED TITMOUSE:**

Common through period.



**RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH:**

Noted in Tu and Mi.

**WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH:**

Common through period.

**BROWN CREEPER:**

Noted through period.

**CAROLINA WREN:**

1-2 thru Feb Midland, Mi MO

1 1/31 Green Point NC, Sa DP

**GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET:**

1 2/3 Loud Dam, Tu RW, JS

10 2/24 Veteran's Park, Mi CF

High number for Feb.

Noted in Dec in Sa (DP)

**EASTERN BLUEBIRD:**

2 12/23 Saginaw Co. JS

**HERMIT THRUSH:**

1 12/16 Bay City, Ba BCCBC

**VARIED THRUSH:**

1 12/30-1/3 Midland Co. CF

A fine male at a feeder about 6 miles SW of Midland.

**AMERICAN ROBIN:**

Noted through period

25 2/17 Mayville, Tu MW

14 2/20 Shiawassee NWR, Sa DP

**BOHEMIAN WAXWING:**

An invasion year; reported in good numbers from Ar, Ba, Io, Mi, Sa and Tu with flocks of up to 130 seen regularly. Most were recorded in February (MO), first on 12/13.

**CEDAR WAXWING:**

Commoner than usual through period.

**NORTHERN SHRIKE:**

Noted in Ba, Tu, Mi and Sa. None reported from the Karn Plant, Ba.

**STARLING:**

Common through period.

**YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER:**

1-2 12/24, 2/8 Green Point NC, Sa

**NORTHERN CARDINAL:**

Common through period

**RUFIOUS-SIDED TOWHEE:**

1 12/15-30 Port Crescent, Hu ME

**AMERICAN TREE SPARROW:**

Numbers again low.

**CHIPPING SPARROW:**

1 Dec Midland, Mi per CF An unusual winter record.

**SONG SPARROW:**

1 12/31 Hampton Twp., Ba JS

5 max tp Shiawassee NWR, Sa DP

11 on BCCBC.

**WHITE-THROATED SPARROW:**

2 tp Chippewa NC, Mi CF

1 thru Jan Saginaw ME

**DARK-EYED JUNCO:**

Common through period.

**LAPLAND LONGSPUR:**

19 max 1/26-28 Shiawassee NWR, Sa DP, BG A good number for mid-winter.

**SNOW BUNTING:**

Common through period; no huge flocks noted.

**RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD:**

10 max 2/13 Shiawassee NWR, Sa DP, BG

1 12/15 Reese, Tu MW  
 1 2/17 Saginaw R., Ba JS  
**COMMON GRACKLE:**  
 Noted through 2/15, (50 max) in Ba (JS).  
 1 2/3 Tawas Pt., Tu RW, JS  
**BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD:**  
 Noted through 1/6 (50 max) in Ba (JS).  
 1 2/13 Shiawassee NWR, Sa DP  
**PINE GROSBEAK:**  
 8 2/3 Iosco Co. RW, JS  
**PURPLE FINCH:**  
 1 12/16 Bay City, Ba BCCBC  
**HOUSE FINCH:**  
 Common through period  
**RED CROSSBILL:**  
 1 2/3 East Tawas, Tu RW, JS  
**WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL:**  
 1 2/3 East Tawas, Tu RW, JS  
 These two crossbills were together in the same spruce tree!  
**COMMON REDPOLL:**  
 2-3 late Feb Midland RW, TW, GV  
**PINE SISKIN:**  
 Up to 28 seen in Mi, Ba.  
**AMERICAN GOLDFINCH:**  
 Noted through period, numbers down.  
**EVENING GROSBEAK:**  
 1 each on BCCBC and MCBC.  
**HOUSE SPARROW:**  
 Common through period.

**TOTAL: 100 SPECIES**

## **REPORTS FROM OUTSIDE SBA**

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**WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE:**  
 10 2/10 Pte. Mouillee RW  
**COMMON SNIBE:**  
 1 12/2 Sterling State Park RW, Karl Overman  
**GLAUCOUS GULL:**  
 1 2/10 Pte. Mouillee RW  
**BALD EAGLE:**  
 1 2/19 Houghton Lake TW  
**CAROLINA WREN:**  
 1 12/2 Erie Power Plant RW, Karl Overman

## **OBSERVERS**

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RA Ron Annelin  
 PC Phil Chu  
 ME Monica Essenmacher  
 CF Chip Francke  
 RG Bob Grefe  
 KK Kevin Kane  
 GK Gene Kenaga  
 MH Mark Hubinger  
 DP Dave Peters  
 G&EP Glenn & Ellen Peterson  
 JS Joe Soehnel



GV	George Vogel
TW	Terry Walsh
RW	Ron Weeks
RWe	Rick Weide
MW	Myles Willard

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

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*	Pending acceptance by Michigan Bird Records Committee
Ar	Arenac County
BCCBC	Bay City Christmas Bird Count
Ba	Bay County
Hu	Huron County
Io	Iosco County
MCBC	Midland Christmas Bird Count
Mi	Midland County
Sa	Saginaw County
<del>SBA</del>	<del>Saginaw Bay Area</del>
Tu	Tuscola County