

BIRDS IN THE SAGINAW BAY AREA

DECEMBER 1, 1996-FEBRUARY 28, 1997

Compiled by: Ron Weeks
216 Flag Drive West
Lake Jackson, TX 77566

Compiler's Note: Once I had confirmed this summary had been discontinued, I realized just how hard it would be to recover all the information not recorded. So, I am again willing to compile with what time I can squeeze into my schedule. There will be no judgments...all interesting records will be summarized whether I believe them or not. This does not mean, however, that the state compiler will publish them. If you are not aware, a list of species that must be documented for each period has been published. This list includes seasonal rarities as well as birds requiring documentation for any season. The stated policy is that sightings of these listed species that arrive without documentation will not be printed in Michigan Birds and Natural History. I will ask for no such documentation but will forward it with this summary to the state compiler if you send it to me. In some cases, I may send you a post card if I feel you may not realize that the bird is listed. Also, be aware that in the near future the mailing list may be restricted to contributors. After its demise, this newsletter was taken out of the Chippewa Nature Center budget. I'll be back in August. -Ron

Summary: The winter of 1997 was described as uneventful by most observers. Despite all these comments, a respectable 99 species were reported by local observers. The most interesting report was of a female **Barrow's Goldeneye** seen by Gary & Tess Nelkie at the mouth of the Tawas River. Also notable was an adult **Lesser Black-backed Gull** seen by David Peters at Shiawassee NWR. Unusual birds for the winter season included February **Merlins** in two Bay County locations, a **Short-eared Owl** from Shiawassee NWR, **Eastern Bluebirds** from Saginaw and Midland Counties, **White-crowned Sparrows** from the Iosco and Bay City CBCs, **Lapland Longspurs** from Shiawassee NWR and Bay Port, and a mid-winter **Eastern Meadowlark** at Shiawassee NWR.

Waterfowl numbers were lower than usual with **Common Mergansers** being reported in much lower numbers from its normal power plant haunts. **Oldsquaw** and **White-winged Scoters** were again report in fair numbers off of the Iosco shore by Bob Bell. One duck that was reported in record numbers was **Common Goldeneye** with 3340 reported from the Karn Plant on 12/21 by Joe & Grant Soehnel.

Bald Eagles continue to do well with good numbers reported again from MCV and Shiawassee as well as in Iosco County. Moderate to below average numbers of the **buteos** and other raptors were reported for the period. A **Red-shouldered Hawk** near Brant was the only report of the species which must now be considered rare in winter and unfortunately even in summer.

Gulls numbers were unimpressive this year as no large congregations were reported from the Saginaw River. David Peters and Myles Willard were the only ones to tally any white-winged gulls finding two **Glaucous** and one **Iceland Gull** in a flooded field in northern Bay County. **Great Black-backed** were present in decent numbers and all of the gulls disappeared once again during the first weeks of February.

Snowy Owls were around again this winter with over a half dozen birds reported. **Barred Owl** and **Saw-whet Owl** went unreported. I do hope that in the case of the Barred Owl that this is due to lack of effort and the species' habit of being reluctant to call at times. Interestingly, **Red-headed Woodpeckers** were more common than usual with eleven different birds reported for the period.

Passerines logged in impressive numbers included **Horned Larks** and **Snow Buntings**. Reports of **Golden-crowned Kinglets**, **Red-breasted Nuthatches**, and **Northern Shrikes** were scarce. Some observers also reported lower than usual numbers of **American Tree Sparrows** and **American Goldfinches**. **Bohemian Waxwings** were apparently not around as none were reported. Winter finches were virtually absent with no reports of crossbills or grosbeaks and only one sighting each of **Common Redpoll** and **Pine Siskin**.

COMMON LOON:

1	1/5	Tawas River mouth, Io	DP, MW	Only report.
---	-----	-----------------------	--------	--------------

HORNED GREBE:

No reports.

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT:

2	12/3	Dow Corning Pond, Ba	RA	
1	12/21	Midland CBC, Mi		
4	12/28	Bay City CBC, Ba		

Six birds were reported through period at Karn Plant, Ba (J&GS).

GREAT BLUE HERON:

1	12/23	Midland, Mi	RA	
2	12/28	Bay City CBC, Ba		Four tp at Karn (J&GS).
16	12/12	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	DP	One straggler on 1/2.
1	2/1	Bay Port area, Hu	TB	

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON:

1	1/20	Karn Plant, Ba	J&GS	Immature.
---	------	----------------	------	-----------

TUNDRA SWAN:

500	12/13	Bay Port area, Hu	TB	
18	12/28	Bay City CBC, Ba		New count high.
2	2/9	Karn Plant, Ba	JS	

MUTE SWAN:

21	12/28	Bay City CBC, Ba		New count high.
6	2/20	Nayanquing PT WA, Ba	JG	

Ten were reported through period at Karn Plant, Ba (J&GS).

SNOW GOOSE:

1	1/2	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	DP	
3	2/20 tp	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	DP	First arrivals.

CANADA GOOSE:

12651	12/12	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	DP	Peak.
-------	-------	--------------------	----	-------

A count record 1708 were recorded on the Bay City CBC, Ba.

Common through period.

WOOD DUCK:

1	12/21	Midland CBC, Mi		Only report.
---	-------	-----------------	--	--------------

GREEN-WINGED TEAL:

1	2/26	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	DP, BG	First return.
---	------	--------------------	--------	---------------

AMERICAN BLACK DUCK:

199	12/5	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	DP	Peak.
-----	------	--------------------	----	-------

MALLARD:

Peak of 1378 at Shiawassee NWR, Sa on 12/5 (DP). Common through period.

NORTHERN PINTAIL:

1	12/21	Karn Plant, Ba	J&GS	
1	12/21	Midland CBC, Mi		
1	2/20	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	DP	

NORTHERN SHOVELER:

68	12/5	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	DP	25 left on 12/12.
1	12/21	Midland CBC, Mi		Also seen 12/20 (GZ).

GADWALL:

35	12/21	Midland CBC, Mi		
----	-------	-----------------	--	--

AMERICAN WIGEON:

2	2/24	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	DP	
---	------	--------------------	----	--

CANVASBACK:

1	12/28	Bay City CBC, Ba		
---	-------	------------------	--	--

REDHEAD:

12	12/10	Dow Corning Pond, Ba	RA	
1	12/28	Bay City CBC, Ba		
1 male	12/28 tp	Tawas River, Io	GN	
8	2/25	Hampton Twp, Ba	JS	Returning birds.

RING-NECKED DUCK:

1	12/28	Bay City CBC, Ba		
---	-------	------------------	--	--

GREATER SCAUP:

1	2/25	Hampton Twp, Ba	JS
---	------	-----------------	----

LESSER SCAUP:

3	12/10	Dow Corning Pond, Ba	RA
13	2/25	Hampton Twp, Ba	JS

SCAUP SP.:

1	12/28	Bay City CBC, Ba	
---	-------	------------------	--

OLDSQUAW:

140, 118	12/6,7	Tawas Pt SP, Io	BB	Highest counts.
----------	--------	-----------------	----	-----------------

3	12/20	Tawas Pt SP, Io	BB	
---	-------	-----------------	----	--

1	12/28	Bay City CBC, Ba		Found in Karn Plant.
---	-------	------------------	--	----------------------

WHITE-WINGED SCOTER:

5,2	12/6,7	Tawas Pt SP, Io	BB	
-----	--------	-----------------	----	--

150	12/7	Three Mile Park, Io	BB	Scoter central!
-----	------	---------------------	----	-----------------

This bird used to be unreported in winter, but is now regular before ice-up.

COMMON GOLDENEYE:

3340	12/21	Karn Plant, Ba	J&GS	Peak count.
------	-------	----------------	------	-------------

This count of a single raft of birds represents the highest SBA count ever. These birds are probably around in great numbers most years but are often too spread out to count accurately.

2300	12/28	Bay City CBC, Ba		New count high.
------	-------	------------------	--	-----------------

BARROW'S GOLDENEYE:

1 female	12/30	Tawas River, Io	G&TN	
----------	-------	-----------------	------	--

Gary writes "Appeared with a group of 200+ Common Goldeneyes and Mergansers. However, noted that the female Barrow's kept a distance from the rest of the flock. If documentation is submitted and accepted by the MBRC, this would be the first accepted record for the SBA.

BUFFLEHEAD:

12	12/12	Tawas Pt SP, Io	GZ	Peak count.
----	-------	-----------------	----	-------------

2	12/28	Bay City CBC, Ba		
---	-------	------------------	--	--

2	2/25	Hampton Twp, Ba	JS	Spring returnees.
---	------	-----------------	----	-------------------

HOODED MERGANSER:

12	12/21	Midland CBC, Mi		
----	-------	-----------------	--	--

4	12/28	Bay City CBC, Ba		
---	-------	------------------	--	--

Also reported from Tawas Pt SP, Io on 12/6 (BB) and the Middle Grounds, Ba (JS).

COMMON MERGANSER:

1041	12/5	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	DP	
------	------	--------------------	----	--

177	12/21	Midland CBC, Mi		Lower than usual.
-----	-------	-----------------	--	-------------------

1849	12/28	Bay City CBC, Ba		Also lower than usual.
------	-------	------------------	--	------------------------

RED-BREASTED MERGANSER:

2	12/7	Tawas Pt SP, Io	BB	Late for Tawas.
---	------	-----------------	----	-----------------

4	12/28	Bay City CBC, Ba		
---	-------	------------------	--	--

RUDDY DUCK:

No reports.

TURKEY VULTURE:

Two separate sightings of single birds were reported from Delaware & State St. (MW per DP) and from M-46 and St. Andrews (Steve Dushane per DP) both in Saginaw, Sa on the early date of 2/20! This is about a month ahead of the usual first push of TVs.

BALD EAGLE:

10	12/5	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	DP	Peak count.
----	------	--------------------	----	-------------

Good numbers also reported from MCV, Mi, Bay City, Ba, and Tawas Pt, Io. Doing well of late. Also reported from the beach at Bay City SRA, Ba in December (fide JG and G&EP).

NORTHERN HARRIER:

Scattered sightings through period.

SHARP-SHINNED HAWK:

1	12/6	Tawas Pt SP, Io	BB	
---	------	-----------------	----	--

1	12/21	Eagle Run, Io	BB	Where is Eagle Run?
---	-------	---------------	----	---------------------

1	12/21	Midland CBC, M		
---	-------	----------------	--	--

Ron Annelin had one through the winter at his feeder in Midland.

COOPER'S HAWK:

Scattered sightings through period.

GOSHAWK:

1	1/26	e. of Pigeon, Hu	DP	Only report
---	------	------------------	----	-------------

RED-SHOULDERED HAWK:

1	2/7-10	Brant Twp, Sa	Doug Reeves	
---	--------	---------------	-------------	--

This bird was observed by Doug's whole family (Greg, Gordon & Dianne) and Dan Morris. Dan's dad is a conservation officer who has run my plates before at Gratiot-Saginaw. Dan and his dad have found many hawk nests in that area in the past including Broad-winged and Goshawk!

RED-TAILED HAWK:

19	1/10	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	DP	Peak count.
----	------	--------------------	----	-------------

David reports that a dark morph bird stayed through the period. I assume that this is the same bird that has wintered there for several years now.

ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK:

7	2/14	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	DP	Peak count.
---	------	--------------------	----	-------------

Scattered sightings through period.

AMERICAN KESTREL:

Scattered sightings through period.

MERLIN:

1	2/15	Four Mile & Salzburg, Ba	per JS	
---	------	--------------------------	--------	--

This bird was struck by a car and died shortly thereafter. The bird was turned into Sandy Miner and photographs indicate it was an adult female.

1 adult	2/27	Dow Corning Pond, Ba	RA	
---------	------	----------------------	----	--

Are these birds already moving with the spring migration or winter residents?

RING-NECKED PHEASANT:

Scattered sightings through period.

RUFFED GROUSE:

Reported from Tawas Point, Shellenbarger Road, and Eagle Run in Io (BB); the Tuscola SGA, Tu (MW, DP) and Midland, Mi (RA).

WILD TURKEY:

55	12/21	Iosco CBC		
----	-------	-----------	--	--

Also reported from Midland by Ron Annelin, but missed on the CBC.

BOBWHITE:

No reports.

AMERICAN COOT:

6	12/28	Bay City CBC, Ba		Only report.
---	-------	------------------	--	--------------

Apparently none overwintered in MCV, Mi this year.

COMMON SNIBE:

No reports.

BONAPARTE'S GULL:

414	12/19	Saginaw River, Ba	JS	Peak count.
1	12/21	Karn Plant, Ba	J&GS	Last report.

RING-BILLED GULL:

477	12/5	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	DP	Impressive winter tally.
1	12/6	Tawas Pt SP, Io	BB	Late for Tawas.
100	12/21	Karn Plant, Ba	J&GS	

Returnees at Shiawassee NWR, Sa on 2/20.

HERRING GULL:

1423	12/5	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	DP	A devoted counter.
------	------	--------------------	----	--------------------

Absent as usual during the first three weeks of February in Bay City, Ba (fide JS).

ICELAND GULL:

1 1 st w	1/5	Whitefeather & State Rds, Ba	MW, DP	
---------------------	-----	------------------------------	--------	--

These birds were found in a flooded field-not on Saginaw Bay.

GLAUCOUS GULL:

2 ad	1/5	Whitefeather & State Rds, Ba	MW, DP	Only report.
------	-----	------------------------------	--------	--------------

None reported from Bay City this winter!

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL:

1 ad	12/5	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	DP	
------	------	--------------------	----	--

GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL:

1	12/21	Midland CBC, Mi		Rare inland.
14	12/21	Karn Plant, Ba	J&GS	Peak count.

Singles also from the Tawas Pt (12/6 & 20) and the Au Sable River mouth (12/7), Io (BB).

ROCK DOVE:

Common through period.

MOURNING DOVE:

Common through period.

EASTERN SCREECH OWL:

Reported from the Midland and Bay City CBCs.

GREAT HORNED OWL:

Reported on nest on 2/6 at Shiawassee NWR, Sa. Scattered sightings through period.

SNOWY OWL:

Shiawassee reports included one 11/21 and one present from 12/29 through 1/15 that was joined by second bird on 1/7.

Two were also reported from the Bay City CBC, Ba. Possibly these same two birds were reported from the Karn Plant, Ba (J&GS). Tom Beachy also reported 4 through the period in the Bay Port area.

BARRED OWL:

No reports.

SHORT-EARED OWL:

1	12/26	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	DP
---	-------	--------------------	----

SAW-WHET OWL:

No reports.

BELTED KINGFISHER:

1	12/13	Bay Port area, Hu	TB
1	1/20	Karn Plant, Ba	J&GS
1	2/20	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	DP

RED-HEADED WOODPECKER:

2	tp	Bay Port, Hu	TB
6	tp	Caseville, Hu	TB
2	12/21	Iosco CBC	
1	thru Jan	St. Charles, Sa	DP

Interestingly, these birds are regular in winter in Io and Hu.

RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER:

Scattered sightings through period.

DOWNY WOODPECKER:

Common through period.

HAIRY WOODPECKER:

Scattered sightings through period.

NORTHERN FLICKER:

One to two were seen through the period at Shiawassee NWR, Sa (DP).

2	12/21	Midland CBC, Mi
---	-------	-----------------

PILEATED WOODPECKER:

1	12/21	Midland CBC, Mi
---	-------	-----------------

HORNED LARK:

140	1/15	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	DP
-----	------	--------------------	----

David reports they were paired off singing on 2/14.

170	12/21	Midland CBC, Mi
-----	-------	-----------------

High than usual.

BLUE JAY:

Common through period.

AMERICAN CROW:

Common through period.

COMMON RAVEN:

Bob Bell reported multiple birds at Shellenbarger Rd (3), Iargo Springs (2) and Fountain Creek (2)-all in Io. One was also tallied on the Iosco CBC.

BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE:

Common through period.

TUFTED TITMOUSE:

Common through period.

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH:

1	12/21	Midland CBC, Mi	
1	tp	Linwood, Ba	G&EP

Apparently scarce this winter. Not reported by Bob Bell or the Iosco CBC!

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH:

Common through period.

BROWN CREEPER:

Scattered sightings through period.

CAROLINA WREN:

1	2/14	Cat Lake, Tu	MW per DP
1	2/16	Mannion & Shattuck, Sa	per DP

GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET:

Very few reports this winter.

EASTERN BLUEBIRD:

1 male	2/7-8,26	Brant Twp, Sa	Doug Reeves	Singing on latter date.
1	2/24	w. Midland, Mi	RA	

AMERICAN ROBIN:

4	2/12	East Tawas, Io	GN
7	2/15	near Edenville, Mi	Doug & Dianne Reeves

BOHEMIAN WAXWING:

No reports.

CEDAR WAXWING:

Scattered sightings through period.

NORTHERN SHRIKE:

Scattered sightings through period. Reports of individuals from Shiawassee NWR, Sa (DP) and each of the three reporting CBCs.

EUROPEAN STARLING:

Trash bird through period.

YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER:

No reports.

NORTHERN CARDINAL:

Common through period.

AMERICAN TREE SPARROW:

247	2/14	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	DP	Peak count.
-----	------	--------------------	----	-------------

SONG SPARROW:

8	1/17	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	DP	Peak count.
---	------	--------------------	----	-------------

SWAMP SPARROW:

No reports.

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW:

1	12/6	Tawas Pt SP, Io	BB	Only report.
---	------	-----------------	----	--------------

WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW:

2	12/21	Iosco CBC
4	12/28	Bay City CBC, Ba

DARK-EYED JUNCO:

Common through period.

LAPLAND LONGSPUR:

David Peters reports a peak of 14 birds on 12/19 from Shiawassee NWR, Sa with one remaining on 1/10, but none thereafter. Tom Beachy also reported six from the Bay Port area, Hu on 1/30.

SNOW BUNTING:

Common through period. Shiawassee NWR, Sa was 235 on 12/19 (DP). Tom Beachy reported more than he has ever seen before estimating "thousands every square mile". This was the best bird I saw during the period as it can be found at the airport which I still frequent despite my change of address.

EASTERN MEADOWLARK:

1	1/2	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	DP	Only report.
---	-----	--------------------	----	--------------

RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD:

30	2/26	Hampton Twp, Ba	GS	
65	2/28	Shiawassee NWR, Sa	DP	Spring birds.

COMMON GRACKLE:

1	12/6	Tawas Pt SP, Io	BB
8	1/26	Karn Plant, Ba	J&GS

BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD:

1 male	1/18	Center Rd (Bob's house), Sa	BG	At his feeder.
3	2/18	Linwood, Ba	G&EP	

30 2/26 Hampton Twp, Ba GS

PURPLE FINCH:

3 12/21 Iosco CBC

Getting hard to get.

Also reported from Huron County (TB).

HOUSE FINCH:

Common through period. CBC numbers were down this year but it is too early to say whether the decline is a part of normal population and census variation or due to the disease that is plaguing this species in some parts of the country.

AMERICAN GOLDFINCH:

Common through period. Lower numbers than usual this year.

COMMON REDPOLL:

1 12/21 Midland CBC, Mi

The lone ranger.

PINE SISKIN:

1 12/28 Bay City CBC, Ba

Another lone ranger.

EVENING GROSBEAK:

No reports.

HOUSE SPARROW:

Common through period.

TOTAL: 99 species

RECORDS FROM OUTSIDE THE SBA

1 ? US 27-Higgins Lake area Ethie Blackman

OBSERVERS:

RA	Ron Annelin (MCBC Compiler)	DP	David Peters
BB	Bob Bell	EP	Ellen Peterson
TB	Tom Beachy	GP	Glenn Peterson
JG	Jack Gillespie	GS	Grant Soehnel
BG	Bob Grefe	JS	Joe Soehnel
JH	Jeanne Henderson (BCCBC Compiler)	MW	Myles Willard
GN	Gary Nelkie	GZ	Gerald Ziarno
TN	Tess Nelkie		

ABBREVIATIONS

Ba	Bay County	NC	Nature Center
CBC	Christmas Bird Count	NWR	National Wildlife Refuge
fem	female	Sa	Saginaw County
Hu	Huron County	SBA	Saginaw Bay Area
im	immature	SL	Sewage Lagoons
Io	Iosco County	SP	State Park
MCV Pond	Midland Cogeneration Venture Pond	tp	through period
Mi	Midland County	Tu	Tuscola County