

BIRDS IN THE SAGINAW BAY AREA

December 1st, 1997 - February 28th, 1998

Compiled by: Joe & Grant Soehnel
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Weather: This winter season was truly one of the milder winters that this author can recall. As El Nino wreaked havoc on the east and west coast and the southern tier of states, the Saginaw Bay Area of Michigan was left with a winter more characteristic of southern Ohio/northern Kentucky. Interior ponds remained ice-free until after January 7, 1998 in Bay County! The Saginaw River only froze over for roughly one week in late December, 1997 and again for roughly one week in the middle of January, 1998. (Of course, as of this writing, March is more than making up for it!)

The attached charts/data provide some insight as to the moderate temperatures of the Winter of 97/98. The raw data was supplied by Mark Torregrossa, WNEM News 5 Meteorologist. These temperatures were from MBS International Airport. An incredible twenty-six of twenty-eight days in February were above freezing (32F) for day-time highs! Along with moderate temperatures, snow-fall was uncommon. February had no measureable snow for the entire month!

Summary: As a result of moderate winter temperatures, several SBA late dates fell and there were numerous species that overwintered that normally migrate further south. This resulted in an impressive, record-tying, winter total of 119 species. Heading the list of rarities was a **Yellow-throated Warbler** that graced a feeder in Auburn for close to a month! A select group of individuals observed the bird and photographed it as well. (The landowner requested that no one be notified of the siting.) This was only the second winter record for Michigan and only the second record ever for the SBA!

Equally impressive was an **un-banded Trumpeter Swan** that was discovered on the First Annual Tuscola UFA (Unionville/Fairgrove/Akron) Christmas Bird Count near Vanderbilt Park. Myles Willard recognized its call and both he and David Peters pursued the bird and viewed it for some time. The following day, Tom Beachy re-discovered the bird in the vicinity of its original location. Strong winds blew in the bay ice the third day and the Trumpeter Swan was not to be re-found. David Peters sent his description in to the state compiler ahead of this seasonal survey. Wow!

Other impressive sitings included: single sitings of **Red-necked Grebe** in Huron (Dec 10th), Bay (Jan 17th/22nd) and Saginaw counties (Jan 16th/17th); single sitings of **Golden Eagle** at SNWR (Jan 12th) & Chippewa Nature Center (Feb 28th); **Black-legged Kittiwake** at the Karn Plant (Jan 2nd thru Jan 15th); **Varied Thrush** at a feeder in Whittemore, Arenac County (Feb 3rd), and separate, single sitings of presumably the same **Hoary Redpoll** at SNWR (Dec 12th & Jan 6th).

Sitings that were likely attributable to *El Nino* included: **American Bittern** at Fish Pointe (Jan 6th - *new SBA late date!*); three separate February sitings of **Killdeer** of which there are few February records; **Turkey Vulture** in Mayville (Feb 26th - *second Feb record!*); single sitings of **Merlin** at SNWR (Jan 12th) and Hampton Twp, Bay County (Feb 22nd); **Common Snipe thru period**, Tuttle Marsh, Iosco County; ten **Bonaparte Gulls** at the Karn Plant (Jan 11th - *new SBA late date!*); **Common Yellowthroat** at SNWR (Jan 19th - *First SBA January record!*), and **Swamp Sparrow** at SNWR *thru period* and one - Huron County (02/26) (*first SBA Feb records!*).

Note: Since Ron Week's permanent departure to Texas (We're gonna miss you, Ron & thanks for the survey template!), several local birders volunteered to compile the SBA seasonal survey. Along with Grant and myself, Ron Annelin and Jerry Ziarno also expressed interest in this endeavor. Team, seasonal coverage will be as follows:

- Season**
- Fall & Winter
 - Spring & Summer

Compilers
Joe & Grant Soehnel
Ron Annelin & Jerry Ziarno

REPORTS

COMMON LOON:

1	12/20	Tawas Bay, Io	GN
1	12/27	Quanicassee, Tu	DP

PIED-BILLED GREBE:

1	01/22	Karn Plant, Ba	KT
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HORNED GREBE:

1	01/24	Karn Plant, Ba	M&JH
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RED-NECKED GREBE:

1	12/10	Grindstone Harbor, Hu	DP
1	01/17	Karn Plant, Ba	M&JH
1	01/16 & 17	Saginaw River, Sa	DP
1	01/22	Karn Plant, Ba	KT

DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT:

Present through period at Karn Plant, Ba. Peak of 8 on 02/08 at Karn, Ba (J&GS)

AMERICAN BITTERN:

1	1/6	Fish Pte, Tu	AK	New SBA late date!
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GREAT BLUE HERON:

Present thru period - Ba, Io, Sa. Peak of 44 on 12/18, SNWR, Sa (DP)

BLACK-CROWNED NIGHT HERON:

2	01/30	Karn Plant, Ba	JS	imm.
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TUNDRA SWAN:

Present thru period (except mid-Jan thru mid-Feb) SNWR, Sa. Peak of 4000 on 02/28 on Sag Bay, Hu. (TB)

Also noted in Mi & Ba RA

TRUMPETER SWAN:

1	12/27 & 28	Vanderbilt Pk, Tu	MW, DP & TB	TUFACBC This was the first un-banded bird seen in the SBA area!
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MUTE SWAN:

41	01/30	Karn Plant, Ba	JS	New SBA high count!
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GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE:

None to Report.

SNOW GOOSE:

Present thru period (except late-Jan thru early-Feb) SNWR, Sa. Peak of 12 scattered thru period, Dow Corning Ba (RA)

CANADA GOOSE:

Present thru period SNWR, Sa. Peak of 18700 on 01/02 at SNWR, Sa (DP)

WOOD DUCK:

1	12/20	Ba	JB, MB	BCCBC
2	01/26	Saginaw Bay, Hu	TB	

GREEN-WINGED TEAL:

1	02/13	SNWR, Sa	DP	First return.
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AMERICAN BLACK DUCK:

Present thru period SNWR, Sa. Peak of 587 on 12/11 at SNWR, Sa (DP) Also in Ba & Mi in small numbers.

MALLARD:

Present thru period Karn, Ba - SNWR, Sa. Peak of 4727 on 01/09 at SNWR, Sa (DP)

NORTHERN PINTAIL:

1	12/20	Hampton Twp, Ba	RH	BCCBC
4	02/13	SNWR, Sa	DP	First returns.

BLUE-WINGED TEAL:

None to report.

NORTHERN SHOVELER:

33	12/18	SNWR, Sa	DP	Peak & last.
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GADWALL:

2	12/27	Tu	per DP	TUFACBC
AMERICAN WIGEON:				
2	02/13	SNWR, Sa	DP	First returns.
CANVASBACK:				
28	02/16	Karn Plant, Ba	JS	First returns.
REDHEAD:				
53	02/16	Karn Plant, Ba	JS	First returns.
RING-NECKED DUCK:				
14	12/20	Tawas Bay, Io	GN	
1 male	02/16	Karn Plant, Ba	JS	First return.
GREATER SCAUP:				
8	02/16	Karn Plant, Ba	JS	First returns.
LESSER SCAUP:				
3	12/20	Tawas Bay, Io	GN	
6	02/16	Karn Plant, Ba	JS	First returns.
OLDSQUAW:				
1	01/20	Karn Plant, Ba	MW	
WHITE-WINGED SCOTER:				
2	12/17	Saginaw Bay, Hu	TB	
2	01/20	Karn Plant, Ba	MW	1 male, 1 female
COMMON GOLDENEYE:				
Scattered sitings thru period - Ba, Sa, Hu				
BUFFLEHEAD:				
2	02/27	SNWR, Sa	DP	First returns.
HOODED MERGANSER:				
2	12/20	Tawas Bay, Io	GN	
2	01/14	Middlegrounds, Ba	JS	
1	02/26	SNWR, Sa	DP	First return.
COMMON MERGANSER:				
Present through Period, Karn, Ba (J&GS) SNWR, Sa (DP). Peak of 3359 on 12/11, SNWR, Sa (DP)				
RED-BREASTED MERGANSER:				
100+	12/13	Karn Plant, Ba	JS,GS	
8	02/08	Karn Plant, Ba	JS,GS	
RUDDY DUCK:				
1	02/27	SNWR, Sa	DP	First return.
TURKEY VULTURE:				
1	02/26	Mayville, Tu	MW	Second SBA Feb record!
BALD EAGLE:				
Present thru period - SNWR, Sa (DP). Peak of 24 on 12/11 & 12/24, SNWR, Sa (DP) New SBA high count!				
2 adults observed nest building at Nay Pte, Ba ! (G&EP, JG) Also nesting activity at Crow Island. (RH) Also noted in Huron County, Hu. (TB)				
NORTHERN HARRIER:				
Present thru period, SNWR, Sa. (DP)				
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK:				
Present thru period, Pigeon, Hu (TB)				
COOPER'S HAWK:				
Scattered sitings thru period. Ba, Sa				
RED-SHOULDERED HAWK:				
1	02/07	Deford SGA, Tu	DP, M&MW, BG	
1	02/28	Hu Co.	TB	
NORTHERN GOSHAWK:				
None to report.				
RED-TAILED HAWK:				
Present through Period, Ba, Sa. Peak of 25 on 01/2, SNWR, Sa (DP)				
ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK:				
1	12/18	SNWR, Sa	DP	
2	01/16	Sand Lake/Meadow Rd, Io	BB	

1	01/26	CNC, Mi	CG
1	02/01	Bradford Rd, Tu	DD
2	02/08	SNWR, Sa	BG

GOLDEN EAGLE:

1	01/12	SNWR, Sa	DP, MW	imm.
1	02/28	CNC, Mi	RA	

David wrote: "The golden we observed was an immature, most likely a second-year bird. The golden nape and upperwing were obvious, as was the white upper band on the tail, and the white inner primaries on the wing underside. Watching this bird fly made us comment that the bald eagles we see here on any given day are pretty slow and frumpy in comparison." Ron Annelin's description mirrored the SNWR description except that Ron observed it soaring for 5 min.

AMERICAN KESTREL:

Present through period, Ba, Sa, Mi, Hu

MERLIN:

1	01/12	SNWR, Sa	DP, BG	
1 fem.	02/22	Hampton Twp, Ba	JS, GS	In our backyard for fifteen minutes, harrassing two Blue Jays!

RING-NECKED PHEASANT:

Present through Period, SNWR, Sa. Peak of 31 on 01/19 (DP)

RUFFED GROUSE:

3	02/23	CNC, Mi	TL
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WILD TURKEY:

127	Present thru period, Io	G&TN	Also present thru period, SNWR, Sa (DP)
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AMERICAN COOT:

1	01/30	Karn Plant, Ba	JS, GS
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KILLDEER:

1	02/23	CNC, Mi	PS	First return.
1	02/28	Huron Co.	TB	
1	02/28	SBSRA, Ba	G&EP, M&JH	Few SBA Feb records!

COMMON SNIPE:

2	present thru period	Tuttle Marsh, Io	G&TN
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BONAPARTE'S GULL:

768	12/06	Karn Plant, Ba	JS	
10	01/11	Karn Plant, Ba	JS, GS, M&MW	New SBA late date!

RING-BILLED GULL:

Present through Period, Ba, Sa, Hu. Peak of 1237 on 12/11, SNWR, Sa (DP)

HERRING GULL:

Present through Period, Ba, Sa, Hu. Peak of 8513 on 12/24, SNWR, Sa (DP) What a dilligent counter!

THAYER'S GULL:

1	01/11	Karn Plant, Ba	MW	adult
1	01/19	Vet's Memorial Pk, Sa	DP, MW	adult
1	02/12	Sag Co. Landfill, Sa	MW	imm.

ICELAND GULL:

1	12/24	SNWR, Sa	DP	1st winter
	DP had numerous sitings with a peak of 4 on 02/04, SNWR, Sa (1st/2nd winter)			
1	01/11 thru 02/26	Ba, Sa	MW	"Iceland Gull(s) seen almost every week."
1	02/04	SNWR, Sa	BG	
1	02/08	Karn Plant, Ba	JS, GS	

LESSER BLACK-BACKED GULL:

1	12/17	SNWR, Sa	MW	Adult "w/ rare pink legs." See MH description below. Same bird?
1	12/20	SBSRA, Ba	JS, GS, RH	BCCBC
1	01/15&17	Saginaw River, Sa	DP	Adult - "separable from 12/17 individual."
2	02/28	SBSRA, Ba	M&JH, G&EP	

"Lester" & a 3rd yr bird that had all the marks of an adult but had flesh-colored legs and dark smudge on its bill. It had the same colored back as "Lester" but its head was not as dirty. The two birds were resting among 4 Greater Black-backed Gulls for size comparison.

GLAUCOUS GULL:

2	12/17	SNWR, Sa	MW	Both adults.
8	01/16	Wickes Pk, Sa	DP	2 adult/2-2nd winter/4-1st winter - Peak Count!
1	02/08	Karn Plant, Ba	JS,GS	imm.
GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL:				
14	02/08	Karn Plant, Ba	JS,GS	Peak count for period in one area.
David Peters reported cumulative total of 43 along entirety of Huron Co. shoreline on 12/10. (DP, MW)				
Noted thru period in Io, Ba				
BLACK-LEGGED KITTIWAKE:				
1	01/02	Saginaw River, Ba	MW,GP	1st winter bird
Sited several more times in the Karn Plant until 1/15 (MW, et al)				
ROCK DOVE:				
Common through period.				
MOURNING DOVE:				
Common through period. (peak of 344 on 1/28, SNWR, Sa - DP)				
EASTERN SCREECH OWL:				
3	12/18	SNWR, Sa	DP, BG	
Present thru period, Mi (RA)				
GREAT HORNED OWL:				
Scattered sightings through period. Ba, Io				
SNOWY OWL:				
Present thru period, Huron County. (TB)				
1	12/04	Gilford Twp, Tu	MH	
BARRED OWL:				
1	01/19	Freeland, Sa	RA	
1	02/10	CNC, Mi	JW	
LONG-EARED OWL:				
1	2/2	Bay City, Ba	fide JS	
This bird struck a window in a residential section of west-side Bay City! It was taken to Sandy Miner where it is still recuperating. Grant & I saw the bird in a flight pen and were awestruck by the characteristic silence of an owl's flight.				
BELTED KINGFISHER:				
1	12/21	SNWR, Sa	DP	
1	02/18	Saginaw Bay, Hu	TB	
RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER:				
Present through Period, Ba, Sa, Mi, Hu				
YELLOW-BELLIED SAPSUCKER:				
1	12/05	MW	Mayville, Tu	
DOWNY WOODPECKER:				
Present through Period, Ba, Sa, Mi, Hu				
HAIRY WOODPECKER:				
Scattered sightings through period. Io, Sa, Ba, Mi, Hu				
NORTHERN FLICKER:				
Present through Period, SNWR, Sa - DP				
PILEATED WOODPECKER:				
1	12/24	SNWR, Sa	DP	
1	01/20	CNC, Mi	JH	
HORNED LARK:				
Present from 01/98 - SNWR, Sa - (DP)				
100's	12/16	Huron County	TB	
BLUE JAY:				
Common through period. Ba, Sa, Mi, Hu				
AMERICAN CROW:				
Common through period. Ba, Sa, Mi, Hu				
COMMON RAVEN:				
1	01/16	Iargo Springs, Io	BB	
BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE:				

Common through period. Ba, Sa, Mi, Hu

Janea Little wrote, "One captured at CNC during banding program had originally been banded here in January, 1991!"

TUFTED TITMOUSE:
 2 12/20 Hampton Twp, Ba JS,GS, RH BCCBC
 Present thru period, Pigeon, Hu (TB)

RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH:
 Common through period. Bangor Twp, Ba - 2 (JS,GS)

WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH:
 Common through period. Ba, Sa, Mi, Hu

BROWN CREEPER:
 Scattered sightings through period. Ba, Sa. Peak of 10 on 12/07, SNWR, Sa (DP)

CAROLINA WREN:
 None to report.

GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET:
 2 01/02 SNWR, Sa DP

EASTERN BLUEBIRD:
 1 12/16 SNWR, Sa DP
 1 02/05 CNC, Mi JL

AMERICAN ROBIN:
 Present thru period, Mi (RA)
 3 02/14 Bradleyville, Tu JS Winter stragglers or first returns?

VARIED THRUSH:
 1 02/03 Whittemore, Ar GN
 Gary Nelkie wrote, "This bird resembled an odd colored robin with a horizontal chest bar. It spent several days at the feeder in the yard of Linda Stier - 5735 Old State Road - Whittemore"

BOHEMIAN WAXWING:
 10 12/20 East Tawas, Io GN

CEDAR WAXWING:
 180 12/22 East Tawas, Io GN
 161 02/20 Essexville, Ba JS

NORTHERN SHRIKE:
 1 12/04 Gilford, Tu MH
 1 12/17 Huron County TB
 1 12/11&19 SNWR, Sa DP
 1 12/18 Tawas Pte, Io GN
 1 12/24 & 01/12 Karn Plant, Ba JS,GS
 2 01/16 Towerline/Tuttle Rd, Io BB
 1 02/27 CNC, Mi JS,GS Singing/chattering atop a Maple tree!

EUROPEAN STARLING:
 Common through period.

YELLOW-THROATED WARBLER:
 1 Jan, 98 thru 2/3 Auburn, Ba JL, CA
 Well documented and also photographed! This represents only the second SBA record, the other being seen by Gene Kenega on May 3, 1963. This also represents only the second Michigan, winter record!

COMMON YELLOWTHROAT:
 1 01/19 SNWR, Sa DP,MW First SBA January record!

NORTHERN CARDINAL:
 Common through period, Sa, Ba, Mi

AMERICAN TREE SPARROW:
 Present through Period, Ba, Sa, Mi, Hu

SONG SPARROW:
 Present through Period, Sa. Peak of 11 on 01/09, SNWR, Sa (DP)

SWAMP SPARROW:
 1 02/26 Huron County TB
 Present through Period, SNWR, Sa (DP) First SBA February records!

WHITE-THROATED SPARROW:

1	12/20	Hampton Twp, Ba	JS,GS, RH	BCCBC
WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW:				
1	12/20	Salzburg Rd, Ba	LB	BCCBC
DARK-EYED JUNCO:				
Present through Period, Ba, Sa, Mi				
LAPLAND LONGSPUR:				
1	01/12	SNWR, Sa	DP	
~5	02/14	Fish Pte, Tu	RH	
SNOW BUNTING:				
Present through Period, Ba. Peak of 2600-2800 in a single flock on 02/13, SNWR, Sa! (DP)				
RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD:				
Scattered sitings thru period. SNWR, Sa (DP)				
3	02/15	Huron County	TB	First returns.
EASTERN MEADOWLARK:				
2	01/26	Midland Twp, Mi	DC	Only four previous Jan records!
RUSTY BLACKBIRD:				
9	12/07	SNWR, Sa	DP	
2	01/30	SNWR, Sa	DP	Very few SBA Jan records.
COMMON GRACKLE:				
2	02/20	Hampton Twp, Ba	JS,GS	First returns.
BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD:				
4	02/08	Essexville, Ba	JS,GS	
50	02/17	Hampton Twp, Ba	JS	First returns.
PINE GROSBEAK:				
17	12/27	Pt Austin, Hu	TB	
3	01/16	Sand Lake, Io	BB	
PURPLE FINCH:				
1	early Jan	Mi	RA	
1	01/23	SBSRA, Ba	DD	
HOUSE FINCH:				
Common through period, Ba, Sa, Mi				
RED CROSSBILL:				
No reports.				
WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL:				
7	02/09	AuGres, Ar	GN	
COMMON REDPOLL:				
500 est	12/10	Carsonville, Tu	DP, MW	Impressive flock!
80	12/20	Oscoda, Io	GN	
150	01/17	M-65	BB	
68	02/04	SNWR, Sa	BG	
Present thru period, CNC, Mi (JL) & Pigeon, Hu (TB)				
HOARY REDPOLL:				
1	12/04	SNWR, Sa	DP	
1	01/06	SNWR, Sa	MW	
David wrote, "... quite likely the same individual as seen on 12/04, as it was with similar size flock and at the same (SE Pool 2) location. This was the last bird to flush, and it's overall lightness and distinct white rump stood out in stark contrast to the others, much as a snow bunting would in a flock of Laplands. A small group of redpolls continued to be seen periodically at this same location, presumably the same birds more or less, and Myles was able to study them once, including the hoary, while they were perched. He noted this individual's general whiteness, including unstreaked remiges, and diagnostic bill/head shape."				
PINE SISKIN:				
9	01/11 thru 02/28	Tawas City, Io	G&TN	
AMERICAN GOLDFINCH:				
Present through Period, Ba, Sa				
EVENING GROSBEAK:				
10	12/22	Wilbur Twp, Io	GN	
HOUSE SPARROW:				

Common through period.

TOTAL: 119 species (Tying the record set in the Winter, 93/94! That winter had extremes in weather also, with a mild December and brutally cold January.)

EXOTICS

None to report.

OMISSIONS from previous reports

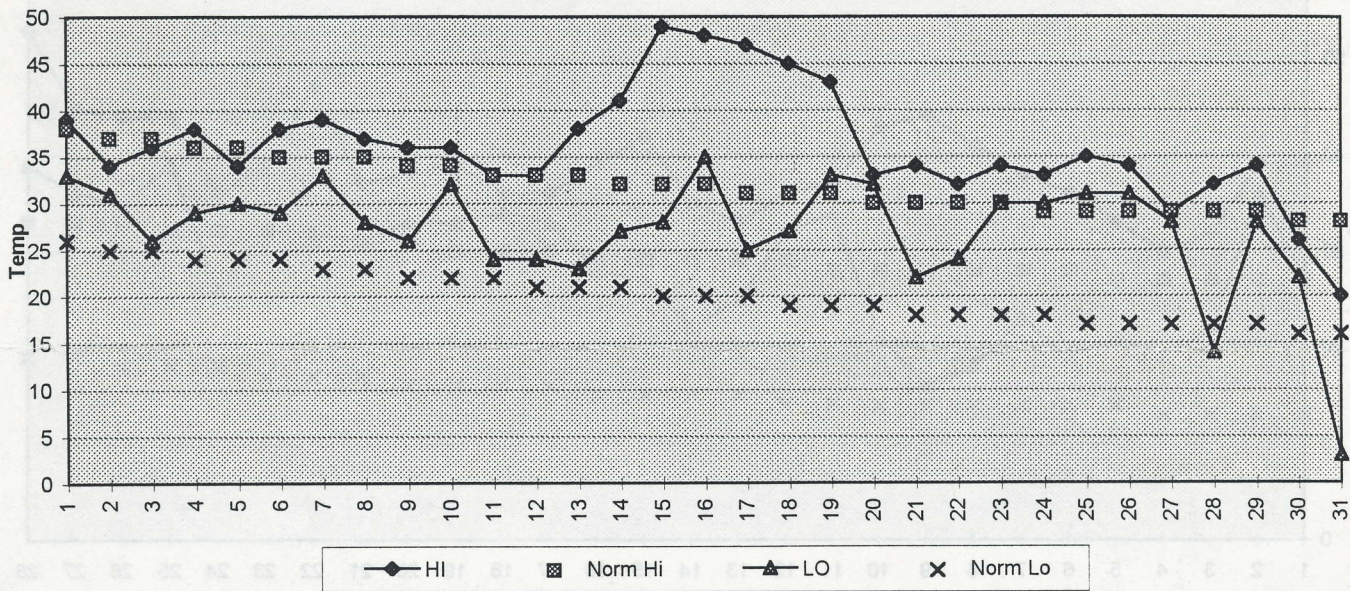
OBSERVER KEY:

CA	Cherrie Allen	TL	Tom Lenon
RA	Ron Annelin	JL	Janea Little
MB	MaryAnn Barrowman	SM	Stan Madziar
JB	Jeff Bowen	GN	Gary Nelkie
LB	Lloyd Buzzard	TN	Tess Nelkie
TB	Tom Beachy	DP	David Peters
JB	Jeff Buecking	G&EP	Glenn & Ellen Peterson
BB	Bob Bell	BR	Betty Rainwater
AB	Adam Byrne	SR	Steve Rosenberg
SC	Scott Calkins	GS	Grant Soehnel
DC	Denise Ciaravino	JS	Joe Soehnel
DD	Dan Duso	PS	Phil Stephens
JG	Jack Gillespie	KT	Kevin Thomas
CG	Carol Good-Elliott	RW	Ron Weeks
BG	Bob Grefe	M&MW	Myles & Marilyn Willard
JH	Jeanne Henderson	JW	Jen Wright
LH	Larry Hyman	GZ	Gerald Ziarno
EK	Gene Kenaga		

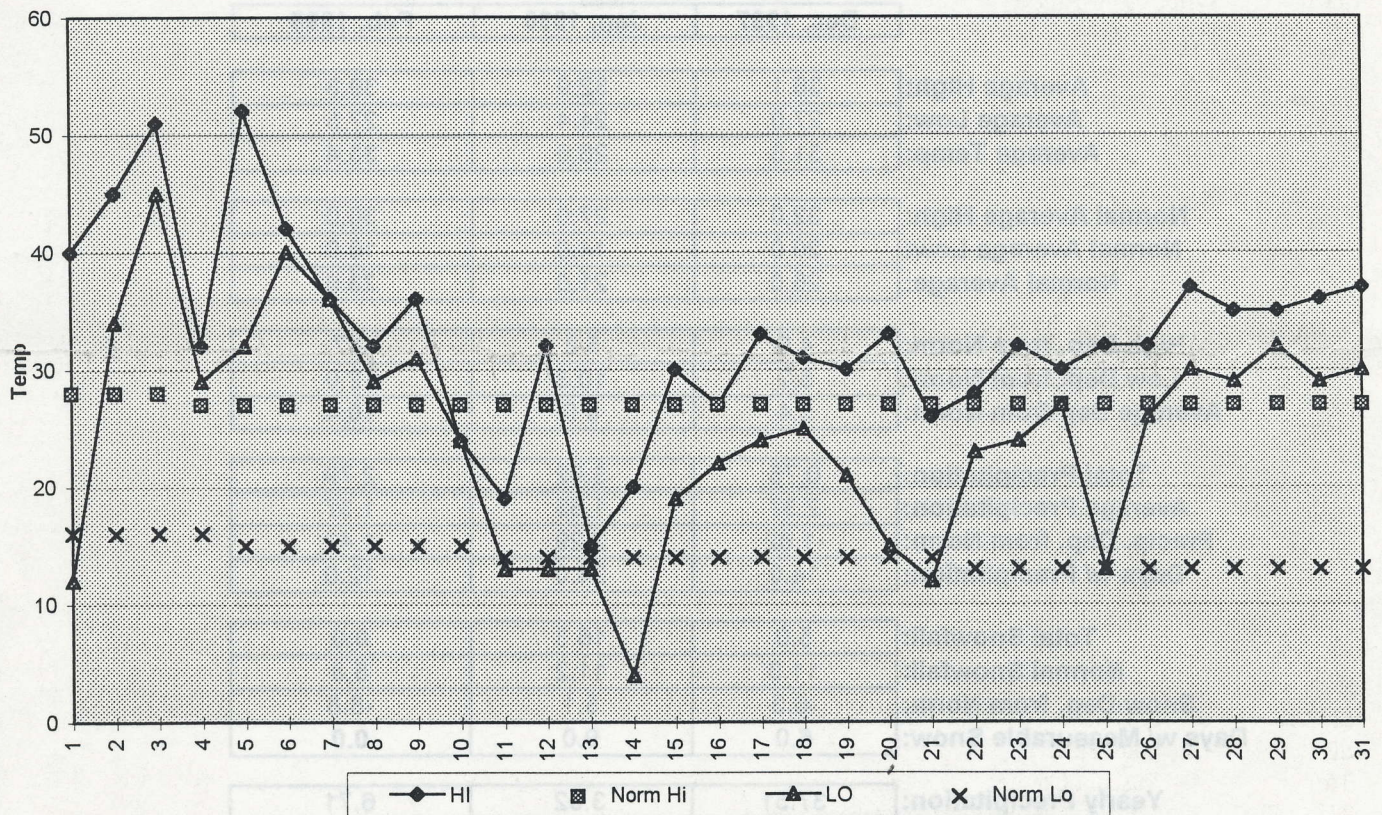
ABBREVIATIONS

Ar	Arenac County
Ba	Bay County
BCCBC	Bay City Christmas Bird Count
CNC	Chippewa Nature Center
Hu	Huron County
Io	Iosco County
MCV Pond	Midland Cogeneration Venture Pond
Mi	Midland County
NC	Nature Center
NWR	National Wildlife Refuge
Sa	Saginaw County
SBA	Saginaw Bay Area
SBSRA	Saginaw Bay State Recreation Area (Formerly Bay City State Park)
SL	Sewage Lagoons
SNWR	Shiawasee National Wildlife Refuge
SP	State Park
Tu	Tuscola County
TUFACBC	Tuscola County Christmas Bird Count

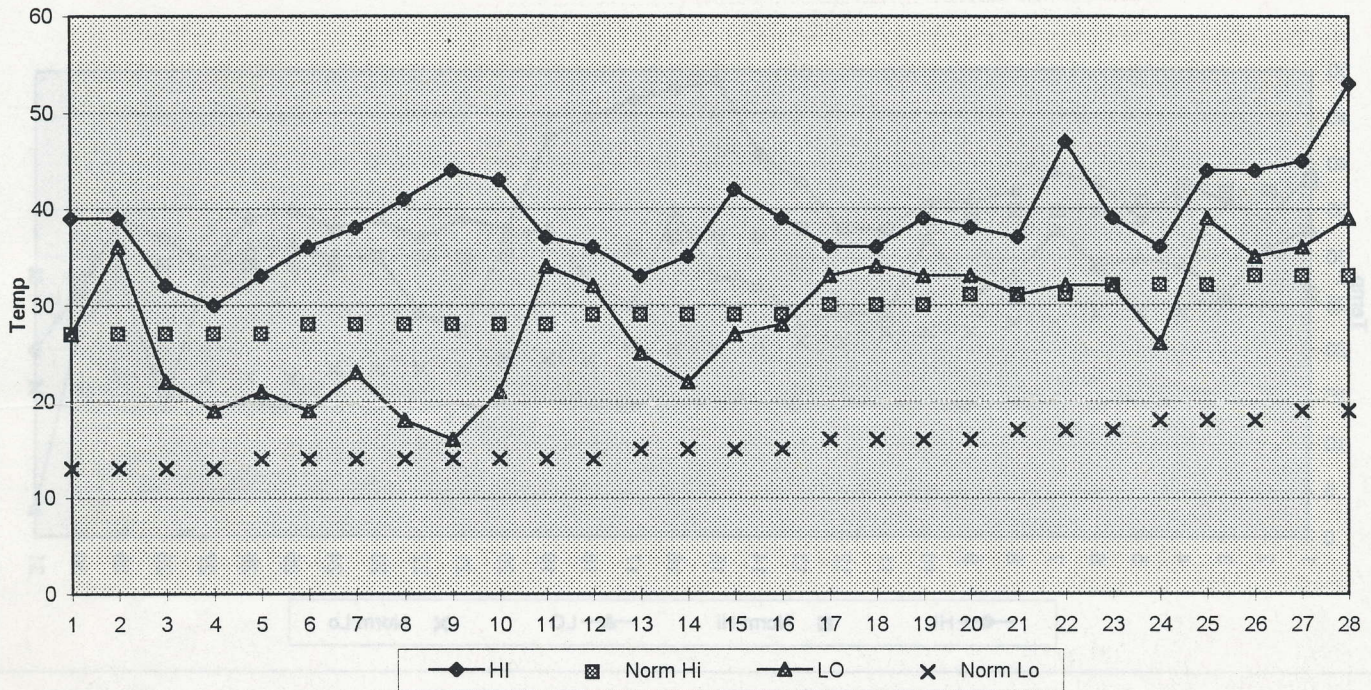
December, 1997 Temperatures @ MBS Airport, Saginaw County



January, 1998 Temperatures @ MBS Airport, Saginaw County



February, 1998 Temperatures @ MBS Airport, Saginaw County



	Dec, 1997	Jan, 1998	Feb, 1998
Average High:	36.1	32.9	39.3
Average Low:	27.0	24.4	27.5
Average Temp:	31.6	28.6	33.4
Normal Average High:	32.0	27.0	30.0
Normal Average Low:	20.0	14.0	16.0
Normal Average:	26.0	21.0	23.0
High Dep. from Norm:	4.0	5.8	9.7
Low Dep. from Norm:	6.7	10.3	12.0
Average Dep from Norm:	5.4	8.0	10.4
Total Precipitation:	0.75	3.92	2.79
Average Precipitation:	2.37	1.63	1.37
Precip. Dep. from Norm:	-1.62	2.29	1.42
Days w/ Precipitation:	14.0	24.0	12.0
Total Snowfall:	5.0	16.3	0.0
Normal Snowfall:	11.3	11.2	8.8
Snow Dep. from Norm:	-6.3	5.1	-8.8
Days w/ Measurable Snow:	6.0	9.0	0.0
Yearly Precipitation:	37.51	3.92	6.71
Yearly Snow:	54.7	16.3	16.3