

# Birds in the Saginaw Bay Area

## December 1, 2002 through February 28, 2003

**Compiled by:** Joe Soehnel, Essexville, MI

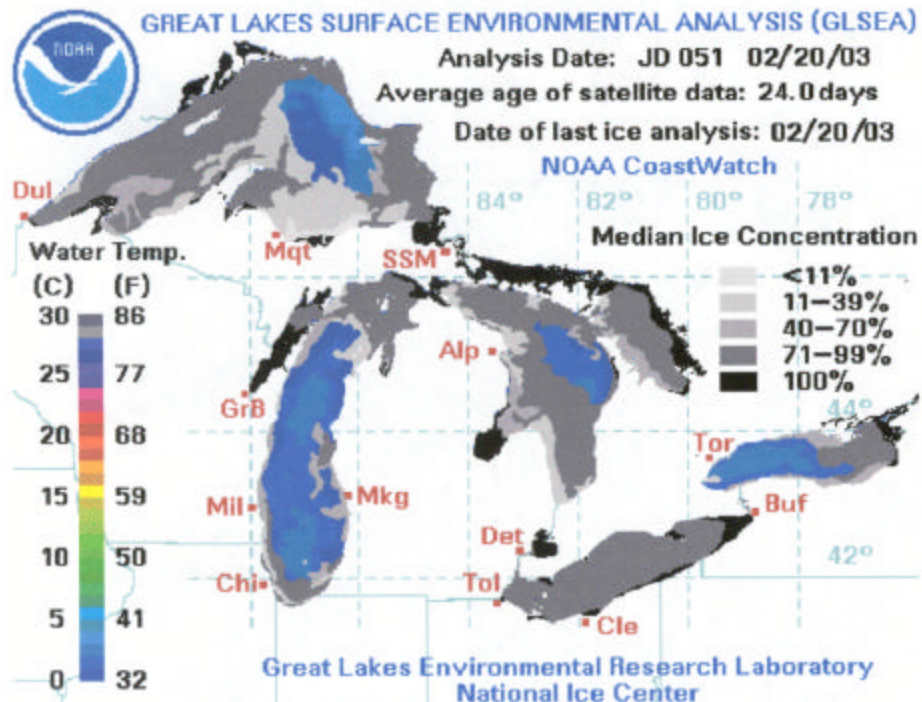
**Weather:** This winter's bone chilling temps were well below the above normal temps of Winter '01-'02. See table below for comparisons. The Saginaw River froze completely over on December 3<sup>rd</sup>, which was one month earlier than the previous year. It did open briefly in mid-December due, in part, to shipping traffic but quickly froze over and remained frozen for the remainder of the winter period.

Month	Average High '01/'02	Average High '02/'03	Normal Avg High	Departure from Norm '01/'02	Departure from Norm '02/'03
Dec	38.9	33.5	32.1	+6.8	-1.4
Jan	34.9	25.3	27.9	+7.0	-2.6
Feb	36.6	27.0	29.5	+5.1	-2.5

In addition to the average daily high comparisons, the overall temps for each of the three months fell below the normal average for each month. December was 1.9 degrees below December's monthly normal, January was 3.1 degrees below January's monthly normal, and February was 5.2 degrees below February's monthly normal.

Precipitation for the three-month period of Nov/Dec/Jan, as reported by WNEM, was the driest on record, which was evident in much of the Midwest. Precipitation for the three-month, reporting period of Dec/Jan/Feb was 3.28" below the normal amount for this time period. There were only three days for the entire three-month period where it snowed over two inches, Dec. 25<sup>th</sup> with 3.2", Jan. 28<sup>th</sup> with 2.7", and Feb. 24<sup>th</sup> with 2.9".

**Summary:** Past winter weather and current weather played a part in the species observed for this time period. With several previous milder winters, a number of species that normally migrate out of the SBA remained well into the winter period, i.e. **Tundra Swan, Carolina Wren, Hermit Thrush, American Robin, Yellow-rumped Warbler, Eastern Towhee, Vesper Sparrow, and White-throated Sparrow.** Other species that occasionally show up with Great Lakes freeze-ups made appearances at Consumer's Hot Ponds in Bay County (and other areas of the state), i.e. **Common Loon, Red-throated Loon, Red-necked Grebe, Horned Grebe, and Western Grebe.** (Blue areas on the Great Lakes represent the only open water as of 02/20/03. Both Lake Huron & Lake Superior totally froze over in early March.)



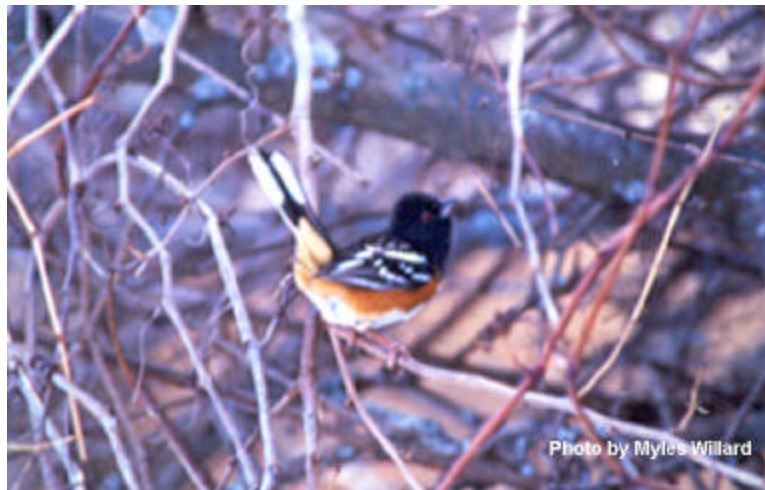
**Notable birds for the period included:** (In addition to the above mentioned species) **White-winged Scoter & Black Scoter** on the Consumer's hot ponds, Bay County; **Turkey Vulture** in Saginaw County; **Western Gull** on the Bay City Christmas Bird Count (a possible first state record); **Carolina Wren** from three different counties; **Bohemian Waxwing** in Huron County, and, last but not least, a **Spotted Towhee** in Huron County, which was a new state record. Noticeably absent for the period was winter finches.

**New SBA Peak counts included:** **56** Trumpeter Swans on 12/21 @ Iargo Springs; **98** Mute Swans on 2/27 @ Hampton Twp, and **63** Bald Eagles on 01/10 @ SNWR.

**New SBA Fall Late Date included:** **Ross' Goose** on 12/26 @ SNWR, SA & **Vesper Sparrow** on 12/06 in Iosco County.

**What's New:** Once again, you can find this and other SBA seasonal surveys along with weekly, Michigan Rare Bird reports at <http://www.saginawbaybirding.org>. Also included is a link for Saginaw Bay Area spring migration updates. Send me an e-mail with your spring birding updates to [soehnelj@hotmail.com](mailto:soehnelj@hotmail.com) or call me at 989-892-3687.

**February 24, 2003 marked Bob Grefe's 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary as an official volunteer bird watcher at the Shiawassee National Wildlife Refuge in Saginaw County. Congratulations, Bob!**



**Photo of Spotted Towhee, Grindstone City, Huron County taken by Myles Willard**

Species	#	Date	Location	Observers / Comment
COMMON LOON:	1	12/05	Saginaw River, BA	JS
	1	02/20	Karn Plant, BA	MW, GP
RED-THROATED LOON	2	02/27	Karn Plant, BA	AR, MK
PIED-BILLED GREBE:	1	12/21	MCV Ponds, MI	JZ - MCBC
HORNED GREBE:	1	02/21	Karn Plant, Ba	MH
RED-NECKED GREBE:	1	02/20	Karn Plant, BA	AA, JS, et.al.
WESTERN GREBE:	1	02/20	Karn Plant, BA	AA, JS, et.al. – Second confirmed sighting in the SBA!
DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT:	Up to 9	Noted at Karn Plant, BA - Also noted in IO		
GREAT BLUE HERON:		Noted in BA, HU, IO, TU – Peak count of 31 on 12/03 @ SNWR, SA - DP		
TURKEY VULTURE:	1	02/08	Saginaw, SA	LA
SNOW GOOSE:	1	01/10	SNWR, SA	BG, LA, CS – Blue phase
ROSS' GOOSE:	1	12/26	SNWR, SA	DP – Details forwarded to state compiler.
CANADA GOOSE:	1000+	02/16	MCV Pond, MI	JZ - Also noted in BA, HU, SA, TU
MUTE SWAN:	98	02/27	Hampton Twp, BA	JZ - Also noted in AR, IO, MI, TU New SBA peak count!
TRUMPETER SWAN:	56	12/21	Iargo Springs, IO	BB – Turning into a regular winter hang-out for this species. New SBA peak count!
TUNDRA SWAN:	58	01/20	Harbor Beach, HU	MW, JB – One of several species that normally migrate out of state. Peak count of 200 on 12/01 in Elkton, HU – MW
WOOD DUCK:		No Reports		
GADWALL:	25	12/21	MCV Pond, MI	JZ – MCBC – Also noted in BA
AMERICAN WIGEON:		No Reports		
AMERICAN BLACK DUCK:	38	12/21	Dow Ponds, MI	JZ (MCBC) - Also noted in BA, HU
MALLARD:	2950	Peak count on 12/21 MCBC - JZ - Also noted in BA, SA, HU		
NORTHERN SHOVELER:		No Reports		
BLUE-WINGED TEAL		No Reports		
NORTHERN PINTAIL:	1	12/26	SNWR, SA	DP
GREEN-WINGED TEAL:		No Reports		

CANVASBACK:			No Reports	
REDHEAD:	3 12	01/23 02/20	Karn Plant, Ba Karn Plant, Ba	JS – Overwintered– Also noted in HU JS – First returns - 100's observed there on 02/27 – JZ
RING-NECKED DUCK:	6	01/29	Dow Ponds, MI	JZ
GREATER SCAUP:	1	02/21	Karn Plant, BA	JZ – Also noted in HU
LESSER SCAUP:	2	01/31	Karn Plant, BA	JS – overwintered – Also noted in IO, MI
WHITE-WINGED SCOTER:	1 23	12/20 02/28	Tawas Pte., IO Karn Plant, BA	BB JS
BLACK SCOTER:	1 fem	01/08	Karn Plant, BA	JS
LONG-TAILED DUCK:	35	12/07	Tawas Pte., IO	BB
BUFFLEHEAD:	8	01/03	AuSable River, IO	JZ – Also noted in BA, HU, TU
COMMON GOLDENEYE:	<b>1200</b>	02/28	Karn Platn, BA	JS - Also noted in HU, IO, MI, TU
HOODED MERGANSER:	1	01/31	Karn Plant, BA	JS – overwintered – Also note in HU
COMMON MERGANSER:	427	12/04	Sag River, BA	JS - Also noted in AR, IO, MI, SA
RED-BREASTED MERGANSER:	2	02/27	Karn Plant, BA	JZ
RUDDY DUCK:			No Reports	
BALD EAGLE:			Noted in BA, HU, IO, MI, TU, – Peak count of <b>63</b> @ SNWR, SA on 01/10 – BG, LA, CS – New SBA peak count!	
NORTHERN HARRIER:	1	01/20	Hampton Twp, BA	JS – Also noted in HU, IO, SA, TU
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK:	1	12/16	Bangor Twp, BA	G&EP – Also noted in HU, SA, TU
COOPER'S HAWK:			Noted in BA, HU, IO, MI, SA, TU	
NORTHERN GOSHAWK:			No Reports	
RED-TAILED HAWK:			Noted in BA, IO, MI, SA, TU	
ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK:	2 1 1	01/03 02/12 02/17	Iosco County Bridgeport, SA Midland County	BM LA G&EP – Also noted in HU, TU
GOLDEN EAGLE:			No Reports	
AMERICAN KESTREL:			Noted in BA, HU, MI, SA, TU	
MERLIN:			No Reports	
PEREGRINE FALCON:			No Reports	
RING-NECKED PHEASANT:	14	02/24	SNWR, SA	BG, CS – Also noted in HU, TU

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RUFFED GROUSE:	1	12/05	Mayville, TU	MW
	1	01/10	Eagle Run, IO	BB
WILD TURKEY:	54	02/22	Twining Area, AR	JG – Also noted in HU, SA, TU
AMERICAN COOT:	33	12/21	MCV Pond, MI	JZ – MCBC – Also noted in BA
SANDHILL CRANE:			No Reports	
KILLDEER:			No Reports	
BONAPARTE'S GULL:	11	12/14	Saginaw River, BA	JS – BCCBC – Also noted in IO
RING-BILLED GULL:			Noted in BA, HU, SA – First returns (12) noted on 02/28 @ Karn Plant, BA – JS	
HERRING GULL:			Peak count of 225 on 12/12 @Karn Plant, Ba – JS Also noted in HU, IO, MI, SA, TU	
GLAUCOUS GULL:	9	12/29	Ojibway Island, SA	Jso – Also noted in BA, IO
	4	01/01	Caseville, HU	MW
	4	01/20	Harbor Beach, HU	MW, JB
GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL:	6	12/07	Tawas Pte., IO	BB
	12	12/14	Karn Plant, BA	JS
	1	01/03	Hamel Beach Rd, AR	JZ
WESTERN GULL:	1	12/14	Sag River, SA	M&JH – A possible 1 <sup>st</sup> state record. Documentation sent for review.
ROCK DOVE:			Noted in BA, HU, MI, TU	
MOURNING DOVE:			Noted in BA, HU, MI, TU – Peak count of 252 @ Curtis Rd, SA on 12/29 - JSo	
EASTERN SCREECH OWL:			Noted in BA, HU, TU	
GREAT HORNED OWL:			Noted in BA, SA	
SNOWY OWL:	4	02/07	West of Akron, TU	MW
BARRED OWL:			No Reports	
SHORT-EARED OWL:	2	12/28	Vassar Rd, TU	MW
NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL:			No Reports	
BELTED KINGFISHER:	1	01/20	Karn Plant, Ba	JS – Also noted in IO, SA, TU
RED-HEADED WOODPECKER			No Reports	
RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER:			Noted in BA, HU, IO, SA, TU	
DOWNY WOODPECKER:			Noted in BA, HU, MI, SA, TU	
HAIRY WOODPECKER:			Noted in BA, HU, MI, SA, TU	
NORTHERN FLICKER:	1	02/18	SNWR, SA	AA – Also noted in HU, TU

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PILEATED WOODPECKER:	1	01/03	US-23, AR	JZ
	1	01-04	Wilderness Arb, HU	MW, NS – Also 1 @ Myles home on 12/09
	1	01/10	Cooke Pond IO	BB
NORTHERN SHRIKE:	2	01/01	Huron County	MW
	1	01/09	Auburn Area, BA	DB
	1	01/17	SNWR, SA	DP
	1	01/18	Fish Pt, TU	LA
	1	02/01	Midland, MI	JS
BLUE JAY:			Noted in BA, HU, MI, SA, TU	
AMERICAN CROW:			Noted in BA, HU, MI, SA, TU	
COMMON RAVEN:	11	01/01	Silver Valley, IO	G&TN
	1	02/09	Caro Area, TU	MW – First modern day record for Tuscola!
HORNED LARK:	14	02/19	Fraser Twp, BA	JG - Also noted in BA, HU, SA, TU
BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE:			Noted in BA, HU, MI, SA, TU	
TUFTED TITMOUSE:			Noted in BA, HU, MI, SA, TU	
RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH:	1	01/10	Lumbermen's Mon IO	BB
WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH:			Noted in BA, HU, MI, SA, TU	
BROWN CREEPER:	1	02/24	Iosco County	BM – Also noted in BA, IO, MI, SA, TU
CAROLINA WREN:	1	CTP	Sag Twp, SA	M&JH
	2	01/12	Finn Rd Pk, BA	DD
	1	CTP	Tawas, IO	G&TN
GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET:	1	12/02	Bridgeport, SA	LA
	2	12/20	Corsair Trails, IO	BB
	2	01/20	Wilderness Arb, HU	MW, JB – Also noted in TU
	1	02/13	Midland, MI	JZ
EASTERN BLUEBIRD:	8	CTP	Mayville, TU	G&EP – Also noted in BA, MI, SA
HERMIT THRUSH:	1	12/06	Eagle Run, IO	BB
	1	01/17	Saginaw County	LA
	1	02/23	Bay County	DD
AMERICAN ROBIN:	<b>~250</b>	02/02	Vanderbilt Pk, TU	M&JH – Also noted in BA, HU, IO, MI, SA
EUROPEAN STARLING:			Noted in AR, HU, IO, MI, SA, TU Peak count of 250 on 01-02 in Bangor Twp, BA – G&EP	
BOHEMIAN WAXWING:	1	01/20	Grindstone City, HU	MW, JB
CEDAR WAXWING:	150+	01/08	Wilderness Arb, HU	AC – Also noted in BA, IO, MI, SA
YELLOW-RUMPED WARBLER:	3	02/18	SNWR, SA	AA
SPOTTED TOWHEE:	1	01-04	Grindstone City, HU	MW, NS, et.al. – <b>NEW STATE RECORD!</b>

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EASTERN TOWHEE:	1	02/09	Teeterville, MI	SS
AMERICAN TREE SPARROW:	<b>164</b>	01/20	Hampton Twp, BA	JS – Peak count Also noted in HU, IO, MI, SA, TU
VESPER SPARROW:	1	12/06	Tawas Point SP, IO	BB – Documentation forwarded.
SONG SPARROW:	1	01-04	Port Crescent SP, HU	MW
	1	01/16	SNWR, SA	BG, LA, CS
SWAMP SPARROW:	3	12/28	Quanicasee, TU	MW – Also noted in HU
	1	02/25	Hampton Twp, BA	DD – First SBA Feb record
WHITE-THROATED SPARROW:	1	CTP	Sag Twp, SA	M&JH – Also noted in BA
FOX SPARROW:			No Reports	
DARK-EYED JUNCO:			Noted in BA, HU, MI, SA, TU Peak count of 23 on 12-01 in Bangor Twp, BA – G&EP	
LAPLAND LONGSPUR:			No reports	
SNOW BUNTING:	2000	01/01	Huron City, HU	MW – Peak count Also noted in BA, AR, IO, TU
NORTHERN CARDINAL:			Noted in BA, HU, MI, TU Peak count of 18 males in one flock in a cornfield edge – SSGA, SA – M&JH	
RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD:	11	01/03	SNWR, SA	DP
RUSTY BLACKBIRD:			No Reports	
COMMON GRACKLE:	6	12/25	Oak Grove, Ba	JS
BROWN-HEADED COWBIRD:			No Reports	
HOUSE FINCH:			Noted in BA, MI, SA, TU - Peak count of 56 on 01/13 @ Midland, MI – K&SH	
PURPLE FINCH:	1	12/25	Bangor Twp, BA	G&EP
WHITE-WINGED CROSSBILL:			No Reports	
COMMON REDPOLL:			No Reports	
HOARY REDPOLL:			No Reports	
PINE SISKIN:			No Reports	
PINE GROSBEAK:			No Reports	
AMERICAN GOLDFINCH:			Noted in BA, HU, SA, TU – Peak count of 23 on 01/13 in Midland, MI – K&SH	
HOUSE SPARROW:			Noted in HU, MI, SA - Peak of 47 on 12/03 in Bangor Twp, BA – G&EP	

**TOTAL: 95 Species (Compared with only 109 species for the previous winter report)**

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**Observer Key:**

AA	Andy Aldrich	RM	Rick McAvinchey
LA	Larry Abraham	BM	Bill McKenzie
TB	Tom Beachy	DM	Doug McWhirter
BB	Bob Bell	G&TN	Gary & Tess Nelkie
DB	Denny Brooks	DP	David Peters
JB	Jeff Buecking	G&EP	Glen & Ellen Peterson
AC	Allen Chartier	AR	Alan Ryff
DD	Dan Duso	SS	Steve Santner
BG	Bob Grefe	NS	Napier Shelton
JH	Jeanne Henderson	JSo	Jeff Sommer
K&SH	Ken & Sandy Hoover	JS	Joe Soehnel
M&JH	Mark & Joanie Hubinger	CS	Carolyn Szaroletta
MK	Marcia Kubacki (?)	M&MW	Myles & Marilyn Willard
SM	Stan Madziar	JZ	Jerry Ziarno

**Abbreviations:**

AR	Arenac County	MCBC	Midland Christmas Bird Count
BA	Bay County	MCV	Midland Cogeneration Venture (Pond)
BCCBC	Bay City Christmas Bird Count	MI	Midland County
BCSRA	Bay City State Recreation Area	SA	Saginaw County
CNC	Chippewa Nature Center	SBA	Saginaw Bay Area
CTP	Common through Period	SNWR	Shiawasee National Wildlife Refuge
GPNC	Green Point Nature Center	SRSGA	Shiawasee River State Game Area
HU	Huron County	TU	Tuscola County
IO	Iosco County		

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