Birds in the Saginaw Bay Area
December 1, 2000 through February 28, 2001

Compiled by: Joe Soehnel
1255 Jodie Lynn Lane
Essexville, MI 48732

Weather: What more can be said about the weather that the Tri-City area experienced in December, 2000 that already hasn't been said? It was a December to remember, weatherwise! A whopping forty inches of snow fell in December which exceeded the record December snowfall by four inches. A mere four to five inches fell in December, 1999! What's more, the closest December snowfall in the past ten years was in 1996, with eighteen inches of snow.

December also recorded well below average temperatures. Only two days actually exceeded the average day-time high (Dec 16th & 17th) and the average overall temperature was a chilly 17.2 degrees (F) compared to December's monthly average of 26.2. Cold temperatures weren't confined to the midwest. Two months in a row of much below average temperatures resulted in the coldest November-December U.S. temperature on record, 33.8 degrees Fahrenheit according to the chief of the Climate Monitoring Branch at the National Climatic Data Center. This broke the old record of 34.2 set in 1898.

What caused this drastic weather change? The El Nino-La Nina weather phenomenon in the Pacific Ocean has faded into a near neutral state, eliminating that strong weather influence of the past few years. Now conditions are more like those of the 1970's with the jet stream forming a trough in the central and eastern United States, bringing cold arctic air southward, again according to the chief of the Climate Monitoring Branch at the National Climatic Data Center.

The temperatures in January & February actually moderated somewhat with above average temperatures recorded for both months. As it turned out, snowfall shut down as well; however, precipitation for January/February was 1.08 inches above normal. The bulk of that precipitation fell as rain with the moderated temperatures.

(Local information taken from MBS Airport weather data.)

Summary: It's unfortunate that the variety of birds in the SBA couldn't match the excitement of the weather for this winter period. Only 89 bird species were reported. The last winter reporting period with a number lower that 89 was in 1989 with only 82 species observed. Aside from a fly-over view of a Glaucous Gull in Pigeon by Tom Beachy, there were no other reports of white-winged gulls. Even the common gulls did not congregate in appreciable numbers on the Saginaw River and Saginaw Bay. All in all, this winter was a wash-out for birding in the SBA.

Notable birds for the period included: **Common Loon** @ Tawas Pointe on December 1st; **Snow Goose** @ SNWR; **Red-shouldered Hawk** on the MCBC; **Northern Bobwhite** on the BCCBC; reliable **Snowy Owls** in the Thumb; numerous **Short-eared Owl** reports from four different SBA counties; **Northern Saw Whet Owl** in Iosco County, and two separate reports of a female **Eastern Towhee** that frequented a bird feeder in both Bay & Midland county.

New SBA Peak counts included: *None*

New SBA Spring Early Date included: *None*

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. This is a supplement to the weekly rare bird alerts and will not replace the seasonal surveys. Send me an e-mail with your spring birding updates to soehnelj@hotmail.com or call me at 517-892-3687.

Species	Number	Date	Location	Observers / Comment
COMMON LOON:	1	12/01	Tawas Pte, IO	BB
PIED-BILLED GREBE:	None			
DOUBLE-CRESTED CORMORANT:	5	Present through period, Karn Plant, BA – MOB Also noted in IO, MI		
GREAT BLUE HERON:	31	12/6 @ SNWR, SA. DP - Peak Count. Also noted through period @ Karn, BA		
SNOW GOOSE:	4	02/27	SNWR, SA	BG, CS
CANADA GOOSE:	6054 2183	12/23 02/13	SNWR, SA SNWR, SA	RM BG - Also noted in BA, IO, SA
MUTE SWAN:	91	12/16	Karn Plant, BA	M&JH, MW, JS - Peak count. - BCCBC Also noted in SA, MI
TUNDRA SWAN:	1200 4	12/06 12/06	Wildfowl Bay, HU AuGres River, AR	TB JZ
WOOD DUCK:	2	02/20	SNWR, SA	SNWR Staff. First Returns
GADWALL:	4 20	12/30 02/17	MI Dow Ponds, MI	MCBC JZ
AMERICAN BLACK DUCK:	35	12/28	SNWR, SA	RM - Also noted in BA
MALLARD:		Noted in BA, IO, SA, TU		
NORTHERN PINTAIL:	7	02/27	SNWR, SA	RM - First returns.
GREEN-WINGED TEAL:	1	02/27	Middlegrounds, BA	JZ - First return
CANVASBACK:	1 fem	12/04	Saginaw River, BA	JS
REDHEAD:	1	12/07	Karn Plant, BA	JS
RING-NECKED DUCK:	1 1	12/07 12/19	Karn Plant, BA Dow Pond, MI	JS JZ
GREATER SCAUP:	12	12/06	Tawas Pte, IO	JZ
LESSER SCAUP:	4	12/30	MI Co	MCBC
SCAUP SP.	20	12/16	Karn Plant, BA	BCCBC
WHITE-WINGED SCOTER:	None			
LONG-TAILED DUCK:	8 2	12/02 12/06	Tawas Pte, IO Tawas Pte, IO	BB JZ
BUFFLEHEAD:	1 fem 2	12/29 02/20	Karn Plant, BA AuSable River Mouth, IO	JS JZ
COMMON GOLDENEYE:	600	12/16	Karn Plant, BA	BCCBC – Also noted in IO, MI
HOODED MERGANSER:	5 1	12/07 02/05	Karn Plant, BA	JS SNWR Staff - Also noted in IO, MI

			SNWR, SA	
COMMON MERGANSER:	62	02/13	SNWR, SA	BG - Also noted in BA, IO, MI
RED-BREASTED MERGANSER:	1	01/15	Karn Plant, BA	JS
BALD EAGLE:		Noted in BA, HU, MI, IO - Peak count of 18 @ SNWR, SA (Staff)		
NORTHERN HARRIER:	1	CTP	SNWR, SA	DP Also noted in BA, TU
SHARP-SHINNED HAWK:	3	12/16	BA	BCCBC
	1	01/26	Frankenmuth, SA	H&JS
	1	Dec/Jan	Mayville, TU	MW
COOPER'S HAWK:		Noted in BA, IO, MI, SA, TU		
RED-SHOULDERED HAWK:	1	12/30	MI Co	MCBC - No details given.
RED-TAILED HAWK:		Noted in BA, MI, TU		
ROUGH-LEGGED HAWK:	2	Through period @ SNWR, SA - DP Peak of 11 on 02/23 @ SNWR, SA - BG, CS Also noted in BA, MI		
AMERICAN KESTREL:		Noted in BA, MI, SA, TU		
NORTHERN BOBWHITE:	9	12/16	BA	BCCBC
RING-NECKED PHEASANT:	1	02/21	Hampton Twp, BA	JS - Also noted in MI, SA, TU
RUFFED GROUSE:	5	01/07	Mayville, TU	MW - Also noted in IO, MI
WILD TURKEY:	30	02/17	Tittabasasse Rd, MI	JZ - Also noted in SA
AMERICAN COOT:	1	12/07	Karn Plant, BA	JS
	23	12/30	MI Co	MCBC
SANDHILL CRANE:	1	02/20	SNWR, SA	SNWR Staff
	2	02/22	Mayville, TU	MW
KILLDEER:	1	02/25	Seven Mile Rd, MI	RK - Fairly early but came in on a morning warm front in which temps were 42F.
BONAPARTE'S GULL:	8	12/06	Saginaw River, BA	JS – Last date. Also noted in IO, HU
RING-BILLED GULL:	60	Peak Count. 12/04 Saginaw River, BA - Noted @ Karn Plant, BA on 1/15 - JS Also noted in IO, MI		
HERRING GULL:	100	Peak count. 12/07 Karn Plant, BA JS - Also noted in IO 100's 'back in force' @ Karn Plant, BA - JZ		
GLAUCOUS GULL:	1	02/10	Pigeon, HU	TB
GREAT BLACK-BACKED GULL:	1	12/01	Tawas Pte, IO	BB
	19	12/07	Karn Plant, BA	JS - Peak count.
ROCK DOVE:		Noted in BA, TU		
MOURNING DOVE:		Noted in BA, IO, MI, SA, TU		
EASTERN SCREECH OWL:	6	12/16	BA	BCCBC - Also noted on MCBC

GREAT HORNED OWL:		Noted in BA, MI, SA, TU - On nest @ SNWR, SA on 02/20 - BG, CS		
SNOWY OWL:	1	12/18	Hampton Twp, BA	SM
	2	CTP	Quanicassee Area, TU	MW
	4	01/13	Pigeon Area, HU	TB - Noted there through 02/20
BARRED OWL:	1	12/30	MI Co.	MCBC
SHORT-EARED OWL:	1	12/09	Nay Pte, BA	K&SH
	1	12/14	SNWR, SA	SNWR Staff
	1	12/17	Hampton Twp, BA	SM
	1	01/13	Bayport, HU	TB
	1	01/22	Meridian Rd, MI	PR
	4	02/23	SNWR, SA	BG, CS
NORTHERN SAW-WHET OWL:	1	12/01	Wells Rd, IO	BB
BELTED KINGFISHER:	1	12/13	CNC, MI	CNC Staff
RED-HEADED WOODPECKER	2	12/15	St Charles, SA	SNWR Staff – Remained through period!
RED-BELLIED WOODPECKER:		Noted in BA, MI, SA, TU		
DOWNY WOODPECKER:		Noted in BA, MI, SA, TU		
HAIRY WOODPECKER:		Noted in BA, MI, SA, TU		
NORTHERN FLICKER:	1	02/17	Seven Mile Rd, MI	RK - Through Period @ SNWR, SA - DP Also noted through period, Mayville, TU - MW
	5	02/27	SNWR, SA	BG, CS - Peak Count.
PILEATED WOODPECKER:	1	12/23	AuGres, AR	BB
	3	12/30	MI Co.	MCBC
NORTHERN SHRIKE:	1	12/08	CNC, MI	CNC Staff
	1	01/12	SNWR, SA	DP
	1	02/25	Hampton Twp, BA	JS - Also noted in HU, IO, TU
BLUE JAY:		Noted in BA, IO, MI, SA, TU - David Peters noted, " . . . notably abundant relative to other winters."		
AMERICAN CROW:		Noted in BA, IO, MI, TU		
COMMON RAVEN:	1	12/23	The Highbanks, IO	BB
HORNED LARK:	37	02/19	Tuscola Co.	JS - Also noted in BA, MI, SA
BLACK-CAPPED CHICKADEE:		Noted in BA, IO, MI, SA, TU		
TUFTED TITMOUSE:		Noted in BA, MI, SA, TU		
RED-BREASTED NUTHATCH:	2	12/10	Hampton Twp, BA	JS - Also noted in MI, IO, SA
WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH:		Noted in BA, MI, SA, TU		
BROWN CREEPER:	~1		SNWR, SA	DP - Also noted in IO, MI, TU
GOLDEN-CROWNED KINGLET:	1	12/01	Wells Rd, IO	BB
EASTERN BLUEBIRD:	5	01/02	GPNC, SA	M&JH
	3	02/14	Mayville, TU	MW
	1	02/22	CNC, MI	JS

AMERICAN ROBIN:	3	12/13	Frankenmuth, SA	H&JS
	15	02/18	Stroebel Rd, SA	M&JH
	2	02/26	Saginaw Twp, SA	BG - Also noted in MI
EUROPEAN STARLING:		Noted in BA, TU - Peak count of ~250 @ Frankenmuth, SA - H&JS		
CEDAR WAXWING:	300+	02/16	Frankenmuth, SA	MW - Also noted in BA, MI
EASTERN TOWHEE:	1	02/24	Seven Mile Rd, MI	RK - Very few winter records.
	1	12/23	SW Bay County	MB - Remained through period.
AMERICAN TREE SPARROW:	72	02/20	SNWR, SA	BG, CS - Peak count. Also noted in BA, MI, TU
SONG SPARROW:	6	12/30	Quanicassee, TU	MW - Tuscola CBC Also noted in BA, MI, SA
WHITE-THROATED SPARROW:	1	12/16	BA	BCCBC
WHITE-CROWNED SPARROW:	5	12/16	BA	BCCBC
DARK-EYED JUNCO:		Noted in BA, IO, MI, TU - Peak count of 12 @ Frankenmuth, SA - H&JS		
LAPLAND LONGSPUR:	13	01/12	SNWR, SA	DP
	4	01/14	Port Austin, HU	TB
SNOW BUNTING:	46	01/12	SNWR, SA	DP - Also noted in BA, IO, MI, TU
NORTHERN CARDINAL:		Noted in BA, MI, SA, TU		
RED-WINGED BLACKBIRD:	1	12/30	Quanicassee,TU	MW, DP – Tuscola CBC
	23	02/27	SNWR, SA	SNWR Staff
RUSTY BLACKBIRD:	1	02/27	SNWR, SA	BG, CS
COMMON GRACKLE:	1	12/16	Hampton Twp, BA	JS, GS – BCCBC
HOUSE FINCH:	43	12/10	Hampton Twp, BA	JS - Peak count & the day before the blizzard! Also noted in MI, TU
PINE SISKIN:	2	12/02	Iargo Springs, IO	BB
	1	12/24	The Highbanks, IO	BB
AMERICAN GOLDFINCH:	22	12/10	Hampton Twp, BA	JS - Peak count. Also noted in IO, MI, TU
HOUSE SPARROW:		Noted in BA, TU		

TOTAL: 89 Species

Omissions from Previous Report:

BRANT:	5	10/15	Fish Pte, TU	Doug Deming – per MW. Doug is the owner of Fish Point Lodge.

Observer Key:

LA	Larry Abraham	SM	Stan Madziar
RA	Ron Annelin	RM	Rick McAvinchey
TB	Tom Beachy	G&TN	Gary & Tess Nelkie
BB	Bob Bell	DP	David Peters
JDi	Janie Dinsmore	G&EP	Glen & Ellen Peterson
BG	Bob Grefe	PR	Paul Roose
JH	Jeanne Henderson	H&JS	Heinz & Jane Schwarm
K&SH	Ken & Sandy Hoover	GS	Grant Soehnel
M&JH	Mark & Joanie Hubinger	JS	Joe Soehnel
RK	Randy Kursinsky	CS	Carolyn Szaroletta
JL	Janea Little	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
GPNC	Green Point Nature Center	SNWR	Shiawasee National Wildlife Refuge
Hu	Huron County	SRSGA	Shiawasee River State Game Area
Io	Iosco County	Tu	Tuscola County