

REGION 1 - NIAGARA FRONTIER

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Weatherwise, this was one of the most dismal springs in memory. Birdingwise, one had to be patient but there were occasions when it was well worth the wait. March brought more than twice the normal snowfall at 24.1 inches and temperatures averaged nearly five degrees below normal at 29.0 degrees. By the end of the month, migration was two weeks behind, and the birds never really caught up until June. Vivian Pitzrick reported small birds turning to less desirable fare, such as sumac, buckthorn, and tree buds.

Whereas March is the month when residents yearn for spring, April is the time they expect it. However, April was a cruel introduction to spring. With 5.63 inches, precipitation was twice normal and the third most in a century. It was also the fourth cloudiest April in 100 years and cold, with the average temperature 3.0 degrees below normal. April ended the third snowiest winter on record with 141.1 inches in total at Buffalo.

May continued the cloudy wet pattern for the first two weeks. The remainder of the month was mostly dry and pleasant although some cold nights during the last week caused mortality of several nestling Eastern Bluebirds in Allegany County. The temperature average of 54.5°F was two degrees below normal and marked the seventh consecutive month with colder than normal temperatures. Precipitation was less than an inch above normal, but it was enough to keep persistent flood threats on the Allegheny and Genesee rivers. Lake Erie was three weeks late in rising above 32 degrees on 3 May when the last ice disappeared, the latest date since 1982.

With all the cold wet weather the birds were as much as two weeks late across the board, from the waterfowl and short distance passerines in March to the neotropical warblers and flycatchers in May. Predictably, when birds had a chance to migrate, concentrations were often impressive, with very high and even record counts for several species. Red-necked Grebe numbers shattered the high of two springs ago. This was most likely due to good breeding conditions on the prairie potholes in recent years more than to a migration block. Waterfowl were slow to build but there were high counts of Tundra Swan and N. Pintail and record counts of Green-winged Teal and Ring-necked Duck, the ducks

also benefitting from the wet prairies. Southern herons put in what was, perhaps, an unprecedented showing which included Great and Snowy egrets, Little Blue Heron and **Tricolored Heron**. Though not verified as yet, Cattle Egret and Yellow-crowned Night-Heron were also reported. Great Egret nested again at Motor Is. on the Niagara River for the second straight year.

Hawk flights at Lakeside Cemetery in the Town of Hamburg were poor this season. More sporadic coverage near Lake Ontario was actually more productive though there were few significant counts. One exception was a record count of **Sandhill Crane**. Raptor highlights included: a Region total of over 30 Bald Eagles with a one day count of eight on the Allegheny Res.; at least seven Merlin, with one chasing a flock of 150 Lapland Longspurs; and the Region's first nesting of Peregrine Falcon. The first egg was found 24 Apr and the first of three young 26 May. The nest site was a ledge on Buffalo's City Hall outside the Bureau of Statistics, which promptly issued birth certificates. The falcons received much positive publicity in newspapers and on television. Shorebirds were not impressive with numbers only in traditional locations despite abundant habitat. One incredible anomaly was a possible state record high count for Willet.

A **Great Gray Owl** was found in the Town of Somerset NIAG on an exceptionally late date. Probably the same bird was relocated in the Town of Yates ORLE about 20 miles further east. [Ed: I think it is at least as likely that these were different birds in the light of observations in neighboring Region 2.] Around the same time a Barn Owl put in an appearance at Buffalo. Short-eared and N. Saw-whet owls were found well into May suggesting breeding. Com. Nighthawk was scarce.

Com. Raven continues to increase in the Region. Carolina Wren, however, may have taken another hit this past winter with their numbers down further. Warbler variety was excellent and, on a few days, numbers were outstanding. A record count of over 1300 warblers on 12 May on the Lake Ontario Plain in NIAG included record highs for Yellow-rumped, Pine, and Palm warblers.

The B.O.S. April Count was conducted on 14 April and compiled by Richard Collins. Species with ten-year highs were: Green-winged Teal, Am. Coot, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Tufted Titmouse (probably a count record high), Am. Pipit, Am. Tree Sparrow, Chipping Sparrow, Fox Sparrow, and Brown-headed Cowbird. Ten-year lows were counted for: Ring-necked Pheasant, Killdeer, Great Horned Owl, Blue Jay, Swamp Sparrow, White-throated Sparrow, and House Finch.

The Buffalo Ornithological Society's 60th May Bird Count was held on

19 May and compiled by Michael Galas, Gerald Rising, Gail Seamans, and Terry Yonker. The unofficial tally included 214 species (subject to reduction) and nearly 87,000 individuals, near the ten-year average. Count record highs were tallied for Herring Gull, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Common Raven, Tufted Titmouse, Yellow Warbler, and Hooded Warbler. Considering the length of time over which this count has been carried on, these records may be significant. Ten-year highs were recorded for Bald Eagle, Am. Coot, Alder Flycatcher, Red-breasted Nuthatch, Blue-gray Gnatcatcher, Swainson's Thrush, Blue-winged Warbler, Nashville Warbler, Magnolia Warbler, Black-throated Blue Warbler, Black-and-white Warbler, Indigo Bunting, and Baltimore Oriole. Ten year lows were tallied for Com. Loon, Hooded Merganser, Am. Kestrel, Ring-necked Pheasant, Com. Moorhen, Solitary Sandpiper, Com. Snipe, Chimney Swift, E. Phoebe, Bank Swallow, Barn Swallow, Golden-crowned Kinglet, Hermit Thrush, Am. Robin, N. Mockingbird, European Starling, E. Towhee, Com. Grackle, and House Finch. Note that Am. Coot, Red-bellied Woodpecker, and Tufted Titmouse were high on both counts while Ring-necked Pheasant and House Finch were low on both. None of the trends for these five species should come as a surprise - Am. Coot is a prairie pothole breeder, the House Finch has been hit hard by an eye disease, and Tufted Titmouse, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Ring-necked Pheasant are continuing recent trends. Other species in these lists which are continuing trends suggested by past counts include: Green-winged Teal, Bald Eagle, Am. Kestrel, Great Horned Owl, Com. Raven, White-throated Sparrow, and Com. Grackle.

This was a memorable season, rich in rarities and exceptional counts, too many to enumerate in this introduction. One sighting deserves mention here - a **Baird's Sparrow**, a possible first Regional record and, if accepted by NYSARC, only the second state record. The reader is encouraged to read over the records carefully. The many rarities include: Greater White-fronted Goose, **Barnacle Goose**, Eurasian Wigeon, Harlequin Duck, Golden Eagle, Lesser Black-backed Gull, Whip-poor-will, "Lawrence's" Warbler, Worm-eating Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, Yellow-breasted Chat, and **Harris' Sparrow**.

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Abbreviations: Batavia SL-Batavia Sewage Lagoons; BOSAC-*Buffalo Ornithological Society April Count*, 14 Apr; BOSMC-*Buffalo Ornithological Society May Count*, 19 May; BRBA-*Buffalo Rare Bird Alert*; GHSP-*Golden Hill SP*; GI-*Goat Island NIAG*; INWR-*Iroquois National Wildlife Refuge*; NR-*Niagara River*; OOWMA-*Oak Orchard WMA*; Tift NP-*Tift Nature Preserve, Buffalo*; TWMA-*Tonawanda WMA*; NR-*Niagara River*; WG-*Williamsville Glen ERIE*; WTSP-*Wilson-Tuscarora SP*.

LOONS-WATERFOWL: **Red-throated Loon:** arr T Somerset 23 Mar; max 11 BOSAC, with six Lewiston Reservoir and two T Dayton CATT, unusual away from L Ontario. **Pied-billed Grebe:** arr T Porter 25 Mar, late. **Horned Grebe:** arr six T Somerset 2 Mar. **Red-necked Grebe:** record max 912 L Ontario (409 off GHSP NIAG and 503 off Shadigee ORLE) 11 Apr (WD), previous high 235 in 1994; last GHSP 16 May, late; widespread multiple sightings from every county except WYOM & ALLE, unprecedented. **Least Bittern:** no reports. **Great Egret:** arr TNP 6 Apr; Greenwood ALLE 21 Apr, rare away from lake plains; good numbers NR and L Ontario; three nesting pairs Motor I NR (WW), where vandalized last year. **Snowy Egret:** Dunkirk Harbor 21 Apr (KC!,WB), third earliest ever; Motor I NR 5-7 May (WW!,RBr!); rare but nearly annual. **Little Blue Heron:** ad non-breeding plumage T Porter 21 Apr (MM!,WD!,MT!), second earliest ever. **TRICOLORED HERON:** Tift NP 13-19 May (PB!,D&DS!,mob), second here in three years and third record for Region. **Black-crowned Night-Heron:** arr six Motor I NR 30 Mar, late. **Tundra Swan:** 450 T Pembroke 26 Mar; 320 Buckhorn I SP 27 Mar; 300 INWR 27 Mar; good counts. **Mute Swan:** NF NR 9 Mar (WD!); three mouth NR 10 Mar (WD!,PO); TWMA 25 Apr - 24 May (FR!,mob); two Beaver I SP 26,27 Apr (WD!,PY!); continues the late winter influx. **Greater White-fronted Goose:** INWR 15,16 Mar (TH!,PY,MM); nearly annual. **Snow Goose:** arr and max 46 INWR 15 Mar; ad white morph acting as if mated with Canada Goose TWMA thru period. **Brant:** INWR 27 Mar (DT!); T

Somerset 21 Apr (PY!,BH); both exceptionally early - same bird? **BARNACLE GOOSE**: BSL 17 May (MM!); this species is possible escape any date but especially so late. **Green-winged Teal**: 50+ Cuba Marsh ALLE 6 Apr, high count for locale; 342 BOSAC; 340 OOWMA 27 Apr (WW), record count; excellent numbers. **N Pintail**: 3600 OOWMA 31 Mar, high count. **N Shoveler**: arr TWMA 24 Mar, late. **Eurasian Wigeon**: INWR 29 Mar (DT); T Dayton 18 Apr (BS!,GM,SE); TWMA 18-25 May (MM!,WD!,RS); good showing. **Ring-necked Duck**: arr nine INWR 2 Mar; 762 BSL 5 Apr, record max. **Harlequin Duck**: Buffalo-NR wintering bird last seen 10 Mar (WW). **Black Scoter**: two Shadigee ORLE 14 Mar (WD!), early and only report. **Surf Scoter**: Buckhorn I SP 11,16 May; BSL 17-19 May; only reports. **Ruddy Duck**: arr Buffalo 20 Mar; max 18 INWR 25 Apr.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: **Bald Eagle**: about 33 individuals reported, probably a record, many not at hawkwatches; max eight Allegheny Res. 24 Mar; three nest sites INWR, Allegheny Res., Cattaraugus Indian Reservation. **Northern Goshawk**: T Alfred 6 Apr (EB), only report. **Red-shouldered Hawk**: arr T Hanover 2 Mar. **Broad-winged Hawk**: arr three T Hamburg 15 Apr; max only 432 Lakeside Beach SP 20 Apr. **Rough-legged Hawk**: last T Yates 18 May, late. **Golden Eagle**: T Yates 16 Mar (DD,WD!,BP), only report. **Merlin**: T Ward ALLE 13 Apr (VP!,MP!), unusual location; six on lake plains 19 Mar - 10 May, a good total. **Peregrine Falcon**: first record of pair nesting, on City Hall Buffalo, with eggs 24 Apr and young 26 May (mob); T Hamburg 31 Mar (PB!); Times Beach-Buffalo 5 May (mob); INWR 12 May (WW!). **Am. Coot**: arr away from wintering areas INWR 2 Mar. **SANDHILL CRANE**: six over WTSP 18 Apr (PO,WD! ph,BP), record with previous high of two; T Porter 22 Apr (DD,WD!). **Black-bellied or Am. Golden-Plover**: T Yates 14 Apr (PB!,BR), reported unconvincingly as former but date much more likely for latter. **Willet**: 55 Goat Island-NR 2 May (WD!,BP), record Regional count by far and possible state record. **Upland Sandpiper**: arr GHSP and T Dayton 21 Apr. **Whimbrel**: T Wheatfield 21 May (Watt, Meyers), rare. **Ruddy Turnstone**: T Dayton mid-May (BRBA), only report. **White-rumped Sandpiper**: two TWMA 20 May; only report. **Purple Sandpiper**: last three Goat Island-NR 8 Apr (WW!). **Dunlin**: arr T Yates 21 Apr. **Short-billed Dowitcher**: arr six T Somerset 18 May; T Dayton mid-May (BRBA), rare away from lake plains. **Little Gull**: mouth of NR 78 on 5 Apr (GB), 67 on 7 Apr (WD,BP), both counts shatter last years record of 37; three T Somerset 28 Apr, rare away from NR. **Bonaparte's Gull**: max 16270 mouth of NR (GB), excellent

count though numbers before and after were not impressive. **Iceland Gull**: Allegheny Res. CATT 24 Mar (BS,WD,BP), first CATT record and, incredibly, may be first inland record in Region; last DH 21 Apr. **Lesser Black-backed Gull**: ad NF-NR 9 Mar (WD!); ad DH 10 Mar (PY!,BH); spring records are increasing. B: last Tiffit NP 21 Apr.

DOVES-WOODPECKERS: **Yellow-billed Cuckoo**: arr three BOSMC. **Barn Owl**: Tiffit NP 19 May (BP,DD,SS), migrant? **Great Gray Owl**: T Somerset Power Plant 5-6 May (PS! ph); 20 miles east in T Yates 17-19 May (DTe,MDD,RS!,WD!), possibly state record late; probably the same bird.[Ed: I would not add the final note.] **Long-eared Owl**: T Lockport 7 Mar, only report away from L Ontario plain. **Short-eared Owl**: T Cherry Creek CHAU 7 Apr (R&CB), unusual location; T Yates to 19 May, possibly breeding. **N Saw-whet Owl**: WTSP 12 Apr; two Four Mile Creek 14 Apr; T Amity 14 Apr, bred here last year; southern ERIE BOSMC, breeding? **Whip-poor-will**: T Sheridan 8 May (RB); two Blasdell ERIE 9,10 May (MT); T Lockport 19,24 May (CR); second straight year with more reports than usual. **Red-headed Woodpecker**: arr five 5 May.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLING: **Yellow-bellied Flycatcher**: arr four BOSMC. **Acadian Flycatcher**: arr three BOSMC 19 May, only report. **Com. Raven**: two T New Albion 6 Apr and two McCarty Hill State Forest CATT 28 Apr, new possible breeding locations; over T Hamburg 15 Apr (FR!), first Erie record since 1975. **Carolina Wren**: three locations, Lake Erie plain, down more from last two years. **Winter Wren**: arr Tiffit NP 6 Apr. **Marsh Wren**: arr three Tiffit NP 5 May, late. **Gray-cheeked Thrush**: arr GI 12 May; max five T Tonawanda 20 May. **Hermit Thrush**: arr Allegheny SP 6 Apr. **Varied Thrush**: male Point Gratiot CHAU present about one week to 18 Apr (BRBA), *unverified*. **Am. Pipit**: arr four T Amity and five Allegheny Res. 24 Mar; 571 BOSAC; 200 T Somerset 16 May; high counts. **N. Shrike**: high numbers continued through Mar; last two BOSAC.

VIREOS-WARBLERS: **White-eyed Vireo**: arr T Tonawanda 5 May (PH); T Pomfret 18,24 May (TM!,BC) where it has bred; Blasdell ERIE 19 May (MT). **Philadelphia Vireo**: arr four Erie and Ontario plains 18 May. **Blue-winged Warbler**: arr Evangola SP 5 May. **Golden-winged Warbler**: arr four Erie and Ontario plains 10 May. **Blue-Winged X Golden-Winged Warbler**: "Brewster's" T Kiantone and T Lancaster mid-May (BRBA), T Newfane 23 May, Allegheny SP late May (BRBA); "Lawrence's" Evangola

SP 10 May (MT!). **Orange-crowned Warbler:** GI 11 May (DR); Tift NP 18 May (PB); two BOSMC; T Great Valley (BS); more than usual. **N. Parula:** arr GI 20 Apr (DR!), beats last year's early record by nine days. **Yellow-rumped Warbler:** arr away from wintering areas Amity Lake ALLE 28 Mar; *record max 1000* T Porter & T Wilson 12 May (WD,BP,MT), eclipses last year's record of 400. **Pine Warbler:** arr GHSP 20 Apr; T Alfred 27 Apr (EB), where rare; record max eight T Wilson and five T Porter 12 May (WD,BP,MT). **Prairie Warbler:** arr T Yates 11 May (WD,DC); Tift NP 17 May (MT,DD); T Orchard Park mid-May (BRBA), more migrants than usual; breeding locales T Ellicottville 18 May, T Machias 18 May, T Amity 30 May. **Palm Warbler:** arr T Ashford 27 Apr; 15 WG 10 May, high count; 20 T Somerset to T Carlton 11 May, short-lived record; 46 T Wilson and 33 T Porter 12 May (WD,BP,MT), new record max. **Cerulean Warbler:** arr T Wilson 12 May. **Prothonotary Warbler:** Delaware Park-Buffalo 9 May (AH), rare migrant; INWR 18,23,25 May, breeding locale. **Worm-eating Warbler:** Delaware Park-Buffalo 9 May (AH,WD!). **Louisiana Waterthrush:** arr GHSP 20 Apr (MT,WD), a rare find away from breeding areas. **Kentucky Warbler:** Tift NP 10 May (MD!,ER); Forest Lawn-Buffalo 12 May (RBr!). **Hooded Warbler:** arr INWR 3 May; 113 BOSMC beats last year's record of 88 for this count. **Yellow-breasted Chat:** Tift NP 13 May (D&DS); GHSP 18 May (MM,MT,ST); T Kiantone mid-May (BRBA); more than usual.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: **Am. Tree Sparrow:** last T Eden and GHSP 5 May. **Field Sparrow:** arr T Somerset 11 Apr, late. **BAIRD'S SPARROW:** Point Gratiot CHAU 15 May (RB!,AB!,NYSARC), first Regional record if accepted by NYSARC. **Grasshopper Sparrow:** arr four BOSMC. **Henslow's Sparrow:** two T Lockport 2,25 May (CR), only report. **Fox Sparrow:** arr Greenwood ALLE 20 Mar; widespread and more numerous than usual. **Swamp Sparrow:** arr 30 Buckhorn I SP 9 Apr. **White-throated Sparrow:** *intro*. **White-crowned Sparrow:** successfully overwintered Belmont ALLE and T Porter NIAG. **HARRIS' SPARROW:** T Pomfret feeder 11-13 May (TM!,JM,RB). **Lapland Longspur:** T Porter 10 Mar; 150-200 T Ward ALLE 13 Apr, highest count in years. **Snow Bunting:** max 150 T Freedom 10 Mar. **E. Meadowlark:** arr two T Wilson 10 Mar. **Com. Grackle:** *intro*. **Orchard Oriole:** T Somerset 18,19 May (MM!,MT!,WW!), breeding locale, only report. **Pine Grosbeak:** one CATT 14 Apr, only report. **House Finch:** *intro*. **Red Crossbill:** five McCarty Hill State Forest CATT 25 May (BS), only report. **Com. Redpoll:** last 24 Apr. **Pine Siskin:** last 30 BOSMC. **Evening Grosbeak:** last T Wales 24 May.