

REGION 5 — ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

FRITZ SCHEIDER

The first two weeks of April came, wet and cold, with frequent snow squalls; migrant landbirds with the exception of the Icterids were correspondingly scarce. The last two weeks of April brought an abundance of warm, dry weather and a number of days — Apr 23, 25, 27 — of strong southwest winds; these latter conditions produced a series of marvelous hawk flights at Derby Hill (between Texas and Selkirk Shores State Park) on Lake Ontario. However, there was too much of a good thing; a hot spell Apr 26-30 induced rapid leafing-out, and by mid-May, warbler-watching had become a green hell. The initial ten days of May continued warm and dry; few waves were noted and most small landbirds were on time or early. Moreover, the very dry woodlands became a growing fire hazard. May 13-25 had frequent showers, several frosty nights, and conspicuous waves of migrants (May 13, 17, 19, 25). The last week of May noted a sudden drop of landbird migrants, especially the late warblers and flycatchers, and an uninteresting shorebird flight along Sandy Pond.

Notable features of the spring flight include: (1) the number and variety of late-staying ducks and geese, (2) the poor numbers of swallows, (3) the many "on-time" and "earlier-than-ever" arrival and peak dates, and (4) the marked scarcity of certain normally common migrants, e.g. Winter Wren, Red-breasted Nuthatch. The variety of warblers, thrushes and sparrows was excellent and counts of these birds, though less than the remarkable spring of 1956, averaged better than usual.

A severe outbreak of tent caterpillars in mid-May seems to have been aborted by the several frosty nights that occurred later in the month.

Good spring records include Glossy Ibis, Golden Eagle, Black Rail, and two Connecticut Warblers.

Loons — Ducks: Common Loon: arrival date is Apr 6 (late) with a peak of 100, May 8, Selkirk Shores St. Park. Red-necked Grebe: two Oneida Lake records, Apr 14 and 17; **none** from Lake Ontario. Pied-billed Grebe: seen unusually frequently this spring with a high of 20 on one lake at Tully, Apr 28. American Egret: first report is a single, May 5, Selkirk Shores St. Pk.; three records (Oneida Lake, Howland's Island GMA) since. Least Bittern: first noted, May 5, Clay Swamp, Onon. Co. Glossy Ibis: an adult seen May 14 near Sherrill (Mr. and Mrs. P. Paquette, R. Wayland-Smith) is the first regional report of this "southerner."

Whistling Swan: late April saw singles of this species at Widewaters and Clay Swamp near Syracuse; however, more startling is the presence of four immatures and one adult on a small farm pond near Skaneateles from May 26 to the end of the period. Canada Goose: high of 4000, Apr 17, Beaver Lake Refuge (formerly Mud Lake) west of Baldwinsville; surprising were the large numbers of these birds that stayed into the first week of May, as they usually leave en masse by Apr 26. Mallard & Black Duck: numerically the Mallard is rapidly overtaking the Black Duck both in migrating flocks and in breeding pairs; numbers of both reached 300 per day in early April. Brewer's Duck: an Audubon-perfect example of this Mallard X Gadwall hybrid was seen at Howland's Island GMA, Cayuga Co., Apr 14 and May 19; it is still indeterminate whether this particular bird is a reared or wild specimen. Pintail: three pairs, May 5, Clay Swamp are late, but surprisingly late is a female there on Jun 2. Green-winged Teal: late April numbers were high with as many as 30/small pond, Apr 25; last date, May 31

(late), a male, Sandy Pond. Wood Duck: low numbers of established breeding pairs throughout the Region, a condition noted by both Audubonites and local N.Y.S. Conservation Dept. officials. Redhead: the lowest April counts in past six years; high is a scant 25, Apr 27, Beaver Lake Refuge. Ring-necked Duck: very good flight to mid-Apr with a sudden drop in the next week; last date, May 19, a female, Three Rivers Game Management Area, Baldwinsville (very late). Oldsquaw & White-winged Scoter: more records this spring than in past six years with last dates Apr 28, six, Beaver Lake Refuge and May 19, four, Selkirk Shores State Pk. respectively (Evans). Hooded Merganser: last date is May 19, two females, on a farm pond near Euclid; ?? possible breeders. Red-breasted Merganser: the usual late April "1000s" (a high of 6000, May 8) were present on Lake Ontario.

Hawks — Owls: Hawk flights were noted on strong southwest winds on Apr 20 (900 birds), 23 (200), 25 (5000), and 26 (1000) at Derby Hill, a mile east of Texas along Lake Ontario. Goshawk: two migrant records; an adult, Apr 20; an immature, Apr 25. Sharp-shinned Hawk: high count was **1120**, Apr 20; Derby Hill. Red-tailed Hawk: interesting is the sharp drop in the numbers of these migrants in the fourth week of Apr, i.e., 120 birds, Apr 20, from a total of 900, versus ten birds, Apr 25, from a total of 5000. Broad-winged Hawk: 3820 high count, Derby Hill, Apr 25, with as many as 400 birds in sight at once. Rough-legged Hawk: small numbers, with more dark than light phase birds, were seen in all the larger hawk flights noted; last date is Apr 25, two, Derby Hill. Golden Eagle: an immature, about 150 feet up, seen Apr 23, Derby Hill (Estoff, Propst, Scheider). Osprey: remarkable is the high count of **30**, Apr 25, along Lake Ontario; last date is Jun 1, one, Sandy Pond (Listman). Merlin: two records of this uncommon migrant; three, Apr 25; one, Apr 26, all at Derby Hill.

Black Rail: a single individual, forced into the open repeatedly by field dog trials, seen May 4, Three Rivers GMA (Ernst, Weeks) is the first regional record. Ruffed Grouse: late May records indicate numerous nests and broods with all signs of a rapidly coming peak in another year.

Wilson's Snipe: a bird giving a "broken wing" act, May 26, Connors Road near Baldwinsville (Seaman) is the most positive "probable breeding" evidence in the current series of record collecting; the only previous evidence was late May — early June courtship or continued presence. Upland Sandpiper: first report is three, Apr 25 (late). Lesser Yellow-legs: two, May 19, Sandy Pond, are unusual for they are uncommon on the sand flats there even in the fall. Knot: scarce this spring; one, May 19, (Evans); two, Jun 7, both from Sandy Pond. White-rumped Sandpiper: one, May 19, Sandy Pond, is a rare spring find. Western Sandpiper: a burst of records from Sandy Pond this spring where it has probably (?) been overlooked in past springs: one, May 25; five, Jun 1 (both Listman); eight, Jun 7 (Scheider); two, Jun 16 (Rusk, Scheider).

Herring and Ring-billed Gulls: J. B. Belknap on May 17 counted 734 Ring-billed Gull and five Herring Gull nests, a considerable expansion of the former's numbers, on Long Island, Oneida Lake. Common Tern & Piping Plover: both nesting, May 26, Sandy Pond; it is to be hoped that the recent development of a second channel and the subsequent formation of a small island of dunes will provide these species the necessary isolation to breed.

Yellow-billed and Black-billed Cuckoo: numbers up considerably from the counts of 1956; arrival dates, May 13 and Apr 30, respectively. Barn Owl: one seen at a possible breeding site, Apr 24, near Baldwinsville (Farnham).

Swifts — Shrikes: Whip-poor-will: the report of five singing birds each evening in late May (Weeks) about the periphery of Cicero Swamp, a black spruce-sphagnum bog between N. Syracuse and Bridgeport, seems to establish this species as a resident in the South Shore flat country, a supposed "blank" for them. Night-hawk: migrants noted moving east along Lake Ontario, June 2; very scarce this spring and several regular Syracuse locations are unoccupied. Kingfisher: peak count is eight, Apr 24, along Lake Ontario; has been scarce all spring and surprising is their complete absence along the Sandy Pond dunes in late May. Pileated Woodpecker: a nesting hole discovered Apr 27, Three Rivers GMA; young had

left the nest by May 19. Red-headed Woodpecker: reports of at least three pairs between Texas and Sandy Pond and a new station near Elbridge (Burt); increasingly, small clumps of large dying elms appear to be the habitat of choice.

Early flycatcher arrivals are: Kingbird and Crested Flycatcher on Apr 28, Least Flycatcher on Apr 27, Wood Pewee on May 13. Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: three reports, May 19 to 27, from Syracuse and Selkirk Shores St. Pk.

All swallows appear to be somewhat reduced in numbers this spring; a huge collection of swallows, mostly Bank, Barn, and Cliff, were forced to ground-feeding at Sandy Pond, May 19, by cold, wet weather; how severely the later frosts affected these birds is not known. Cliff Swallow: seen at nine different non-nesting localities on May 19, a time when normally it is limited to its fast-decreasing colonies.

Red-breasted Nuthatch: almost unrecorded this spring; just two reports; two, May 5; one, May 31 (very late), both at Selkirk Shores St. Pk. (Evans). Brown Creeper: singing birds present in a flooded dead elm swamp, May 19, Three Rivers GMA, suggest possible breeders. House Wren: both birders and non-birders noted a distinct increase in both migrants and residents over 1956 counts. Mockingbird: one seen, Apr 27, west of Camillus (Seaman) is our second record. Thrush arrival dates are: Wood Thrush on Apr 27, Veery on Apr 26, Olive-backed Thrush on Apr 26 (W. Minor), all early. Gray-cheeked Thrush: only reports are two, May 21; one, May 25, both at Syracuse.

Golden-crowned Kinglet: spring counts low; highest count is 25, Apr 13; departure date, May 12. Ruby-crowned Kinglet: peak day is 200, Apr 27; last date, May 19, four at Selkirk Shores St. Pk. Pipit: arrival date is Apr 6 (late); very late is the departure date, May 26, Sandy Pond. Northern Shrike: last date, Apr 7, near Oswego. Loggerhead Shrike: first reported Apr 11 near Bridgeport; a mattering of records thru May with four stations located in the last week of May.

Vireos-Warblers: Warbling Vireo: first reported, Apr 26 (early). Philadelphia Vireo: three reports; May 17, 19 and 25 at Syracuse.

May warbler watching was severely hindered by the heavy foliation in late April; this was partially offset by an abundance of song, but most warbler viewing, especially of the later females and immatures, remained unsatisfactory. For many species, the date range and numbers proved interesting; with the following species, the order of data is: arrival date; peak date (peak number); last migrant and/or departure date. Black-and-white: Apr 27; May 12 (15); May 19. Tennessee: May 10; May 17 (100); May 27. Nashville: Apr 27; May 12 (35); May 26. Magnolia: May 9; May 17 (12); May 30. Cape May: May 8 (late); May 12 (25); May 25. Myrtle: Apr 14; May 12 (100); May 26. Black-throated Green: Apr 27; May 12 (21); May 27. Blackburnian: Apr 28; May 12 (20 - low); May 27. Bay-breasted: May 10; May 13 (15); May 27 (early). Black-poll: May 17; May 26 (25); June 2. Palm: Apr 18; May 19 (12); May 19. Northern Water-thrush: Apr 23; Apr 27 (15); May 17. Mourning: May 13; May 21 (3); May 31.

Prothonotary: a migrant male seen, May 18, Green Lakes St. Pk. (B. Peterson); three singing males at the Oneida Lake nesting area. Blue-winged: a male seen, May 4, near Sherrill (A. and P. Jones); none appeared at Camillus Valley this year. Brewster's: first seen, Apr 28 (very early), Camillus Valley; noteworthy is a count of four there, May 12. Orange-crowned: two reports of this rare spring migrant; one, May 15, Syracuse; one, May 19, Selkirk Shores St. Pk. Pine: first report is Apr 20, one, Shackleton Point, Oneida Lake. Connecticut: two well-verified reports, both of adult males; one, May 14, Thornden Park (Evans); one, May 17, Oakwood Cemetery (Estoff), both in Syracuse. Yellow-breasted Chat: three singing males found on the brush-covered south slope of Camillus Valley; first noted there May 11.

Blackbirds — Sparrows: Bobolink: first reported Apr 27; heavy flight (250-300/day) on May 12-13 over Syracuse. The late April hawk flights were accompanied by heavy Icterid movements, e.g. Apr 25, 7000 Red-winged Blackbirds, 8000 Grackles, 2000 Cowbirds. Baltimore Oriole: arrival date Apr 27; high count is 60, May 19.

Scarlet Tanager: excellent flight with up to 20/day, May 12-19. Cardinal:

apparently winter survival was very high; increased numbers of them in known locations and three new stations in the flat country (north of Syracuse and south of Oneida Lake). No winter finches noted; most conspicuous is the absence of a May Evening Grosbeak flight. Pine Siskin: only one report; eight May 4, Selkirk Shores St. Park (Evans). Goldfinch: flight of 600 migrated east along Lake Ontario, Apr 25. Henslow's and Grasshopper Sparrows: arrival dates of Apr 21 and Apr 27 respectively are the "earliest-ever" for both. Tree Sparrow and Slate-colored Junco: departure dates are Apr 19 (early) and May 21 (very late) respectively. White-crowned Sparrow: good flight with a high of 45, May 18, Syracuse; date range, Apr 30 to May 21. White-throated Sparrow: a protracted flight (Apr 13 to May 27) with the peak, 400, Apr 27. Lincoln's Sparrow: two reports; one banded at Sherrill, May 9 (Nodecker); two seen, May 1, Green Lakes St. Pk. (B. Peterson).

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REGION 6 — ST. LAWRENCE

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Birds started arriving about on time or a bit early, but in May the temperature was a little below normal and by that time migration was about normal or a little late.

Loons — Ducks: Loons were seen in St. Lawrence County Apr 17. Double-crested Cormorants have been seen near their usual nesting place in Jefferson County. Canada Geese stayed near Clayton at least as late as May 8. Wood Ducks have not been seen around Clayton as often as last year.

Hawks — Owls: A Turkey Vulture was seen near West Carthage Apr 13 (Gordon). J. Blake saw a Duck Hawk flying near Clayton May 8. He also reports that Ruffed Grouse are scarce in that section. An early record for Sora in St. Lawrence County is May 6 (Nichols). Ruddy Turnstones and Red-backed Sandpipers were found by Gordon at Perch River Marsh Apr 13. Mourning Doves spent the winter in this region in places where they found food. Black-billed Cuckoos have been seen more frequently than last year. Belknap saw a Bonaparte's Gull Apr 17.

Swifts — Warblers: A pair of Sapsuckers was seen near Watertown late in May and they appear to be nesting. A Brown Thrasher was seen in St. Lawrence County Apr 23 which is early. It is possible that there is a slight increase in the number of Bluebirds. A Warbling Vireo appeared in St. Lawrence County Apr 29 (Nichols). Myrtle Warblers appeared in droves starting May 6-7 (J. Blake). Among the warblers seen at the time of the spring census, May 4-19 were: Myrtle, Yellow, Black and White, Blackburnian, Chestnut-sided, Redstart, Yellow-throat, Oven-bird, Magnolia, Bay-breasted, Nashville, Black-poll, Canada, Wilson's, Parula and Yellow-breasted Chat. In general the ones reported most often are given first, but the order is by no means exact. Perhaps the Magnolia and Bay-breasted Warblers were noted more often than in other years. A Tennessee Warbler was found dead in Watertown May 18.

Blackbirds — Sparrows: A Western Tanager was identified by Mrs. Frank Roda at Joe Indian Lake the week before Memorial Day. On May 6 Rev. Nichols saw six Evening Grosbeaks feeding high up in a newly-leaved elm tree in Madrid village. They are reported to be nesting in St. Lawrence County again this year. Many White-crowned Sparrows stayed around Watertown for several days. The peak was around May 18-19. They were seen near Madrid May 15, but not after May 20th. One was still at the feeder of Louise Blake near Potsdam on Jun 4.

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