

A Franklin's Gull in Spring Plumage at Oswego — On March 15, 1959, a day of very strong southerly winds, there were relatively few ducks and gulls at Oswego Harbor, on Lake Ontario. Scanning the gulls for a possible "white-winger" I saw a small black-headed gull circling below the just west of Fort Ontario. The striking wing pattern showed a clear gray mantle, with a white band along the trailing edge which laterally crossed the primary feathers as a white bar, separating the black wing tip from the gray mantle. It was completely unfamiliar to me, and Peterson's "Eastern Field Guide" was consulted. The bird proved to be identical with the drawing of Franklin's Gull shown on Plate #33. At this point the gull was flying 10 to 15 feet over the surface of the water, dropping down to feed at frequent intervals. After about ten minutes it settled on a submerged rock and began a series of bathing maneuvers, for perhaps five minutes. Then it flew in a half circle and alighted on the ice flow just below the Fort, scarcely 100 yards from me. Here it began a prolonged preening of its feathers. During this period of at least twenty minutes it was watched through a 30X Balscope and 10 x 50 binoculars mounted on a tripod, and its plumage could be noted in detail. Close in front of it were two Ring-billed Gulls and behind it were both Herring and Black-backed Gulls. This bird was decidedly smaller than the Ring-billed, and all its markings identified it as a Franklin's Gull in spring ("alternate") plumage. The identification was confirmed by Mr. and Mrs. Charles Farnham and Dr. Walter Spofford, who also enjoyed the opportunity to see this rare visitor.

Although Franklin's Gull is known as a visitor to Lake Ontario, previous records are for the fall and winter months, when the bird is in the winter ("basic") plumage. The KINGBIRD has records of one or more each year, in either the Niagara or Rochester areas. This appears to be the first record of this species for the eastern end of Lake Ontario, and specifically for Region 5 of New York. Examination of published weather maps for the preceding several days suggests that the bird may have been carried from its wintering grounds along the western Gulf Coast up into the Mississippi Valley, then up into the Ontario Basin. The lengthy bathing and preening in the protection of Oswego Harbor further suggest a long journey. — Robert W. Seaman, 10 Onondaga Street, Skaneateles.

Some Golden Eagles in New York — The following occurrences seem worthy of record: on October 2, 1953 a Golden Eagle was shot near Sylvan Beach (Oneida Lake), N. Y., by a hunter who said he shot the bird in self-defense! A photograph of the bird taken at the Oneida barracks of the N. Y. State Police shows the eagle to have been a first year bird with extensive white at the base of the tail and inner primaries.

On April 25, 1953 Dr. and Mrs. Axtell and the writer watched a Golden Eagle fly from a perch on the west side of the Genesee River in Letchworth Park, circle over the gorge, and then perch in a live pine tree above a bluff on the other side. A Red-tailed Hawk harassed the eagle continuously, the latter sometimes rolling over to meet the nearly vertical stoops of the screaming buzzard. After the eagle had perched among the limbs of the pine, the Red-tail continued his assault for several minutes, the eagle turning his head up and crouching at each onslaught. Some time later the eagle flew to another perch and then disappeared through the trees of a small ravine. This bird was immature, showing white at the base of the tail, but little or none on the wings.

On June 1, 1955 Mr. Robert Bauer, Game Technician at the Howland's Island State Game Preserve a few miles north of Montezuma, noticing that the breeding ducks were showing hawk alarm, looked up to see two adult Golden Eagles a few hundred feet above the marsh, engaging in aerial play. The two birds were circling together and approaching each other with lowered feet, occasionally grasping talons in mid-air, in a "courtship" type display, as they slowly made their way northward out of the refuge area. Both were fully adult eagles without showing any white. Since no breeding Golden Eagles are known within one hundred miles of this location, it must be assumed that these were non-breeding birds passing north at the end of the spring migration period. Eagles and large buzzards such as the Red-tail frequently engage in flight displays, and at any time of the year, although usually these are considered to be part of territory occupancy. Other such late spring migrant eagles have been recorded previously, including one at Rochester on May 20, 1951; an immature near Degrasse on May 23, 1953 (Trimm), and one over Pinnacle Hill, Branchport on May 25, 1954.