

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SPRING SEASON

APRIL 1 — May 31

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Our spring weather left a lot to be desired. Temperatures were below normal, the deviation being the greater in April, and precipitation, by no means all of it rain, was above the average. There were very few really warm and sunny days of the type we had expected, or at least hoped for, after one of the severest winters in recent years. These warm days came in bunches of several days duration, and they had an obvious effect on the migration pattern. Winter weather gave a dying gasp with late May snow flurries in the Adirondacks, below freezing temperatures in the Finger Lakes region, and readings not much above freezing along the Lake Ontario shore. May's weather was otherwise highlighted by a damaging tornado that hit Sullivan County (Region 9) on the 10th and by a small twister May 15 in the Buffalo region.

These weather conditions resulted in a somewhat latish migration, particularly among the early arrivals (although swallows were a notable exception). Foliage development was behind schedule at least until mid-May. The few brief periods of warm weather, with the accompanying southerly winds, accounted for several excellent landbird flights, and the intensity and number of these waves was the dominating feature of this year's spring migration. These movements were not necessarily state-wide, and indeed in a few areas (i.e. eastern Long Island) an absence of major flights was noted. There were apparently five well-spaced major waves that were experienced in at least some sections of the state, two of these in April and three in May. While the date and degree of each varied somewhat by region, in general they might be stated as follows: April 15-16, April 21-26, May 6-10, May 16-18, and May 27-30. It was the opinion of at least several observers in areas where these waves were most felt that the landbird migration this year was probably the best we have witnessed since that fabulous spring of 1956.

The flight of Canada Geese was generally good, and perhaps a bit late. While numbers at Montezuma did not reach last year's peak, numbers elsewhere in Region 3 were impressive, and a count of over 40,000 was made in the Buffalo area on April 16. There were several late May flights up the Hudson Valley. Of individual note in this family were the two White-fronted Geese which appeared at Montezuma on April 15 and the Barnacle Goose present for several days in early April in Region 1.

The migration of other waterfowl was not overly encouraging, particularly as it applied to the diving ducks. While there are earnest hopes for a successful breeding season, conditions on these birds' northern nesting grounds have been something less than ideal. American Widgeon were reported in definitely below average numbers among the dabbling ducks. John Elliott mentions a flight of about 10,000 scoters off Montauk Point

in early April. Among the other individual waterfowl records of note were the European Widgeon in Region 3, the Common Teal in Regions 2 and 10, and the Barrow's Goldeneye at Oneida Lake in early April. Details on the latter record were included in the field notes section of the last issue.

An early Common Egret appeared in Region 1 on April 1, and a Snowy Egret in Region 8 on April 19 was the only upstate record for that species. Cattle Egrets were reported from Regions 2, 3 and 9, as well as on Long Island, indicative of another year of expansion for these newcomers. A Yellow-crowned Night Heron in late April in Region 3 was an unusual find for that locality. The only Glossy Ibis reports mentioned were the four adult birds found in late April and early May in Region 5.

There were several good April hawk flights in Region 1, the first coinciding with the big landbird wave there on April 15, and Region 2 also had several notable April flights. Peak hawk counts in Region 5 were not obtained until early May, but Fritz Scheider points out that the hawk lookout near Texas was unmanned on at least one late April date when ideal weather conditions prevailed.

The northward shorebird migration was not spectacular, and high water levels in some areas were a factor. There were seasonably good late May counts in Region 5, but the migration on Long Island was described as unimpressive. A real rarity was the Purple Sandpiper in late May in Region 5, and a Wilson's Phalarope in Region 2 was also noteworthy. An Upland Plover was sighted in the central Adirondacks.

The landbird wave of April 15-16 was well marked in western areas of the state. This brought an early swallow flight into Region 1. There was a spectacular flight of Vesper Sparrows in Region 2, and large numbers were also observed in Region 3. There were good counts of Sapsuckers in all western areas during this two-day period, and a heavy influx of kinglets was evident in Region 5. Mild weather again prevailed during the third week in April, and this second major influx was perhaps a bit more extended. John Elliott notes that the principal April flights in New York City occurred on the 25th and 26th. Heavy swallow concentrations were noted in Region 3 on April 24 and in Region 5 on April 25 and 26. There was also a superb Junco flight in the latter locality. Richard Rosche notes that migrational movements were quite pronounced in the Buffalo area during the entire period April 21-26.

The first heavy May influx was perhaps the best of the season. In the Buffalo region this occurred on May 7 and for several days thereafter. On western Long Island these peak days were May 8 and 9. The peak days in Regions 8 and 9 were May 9 and 10, and in the Champlain Valley and in Region 4 May 10 was apparently the day of greatest concentration. This first May wave brought the first heavy warbler flight of the season (27 species in one day at Hempstead Lake State Park, Long Island). The third week of May produced another good flight of warblers, principally in the central part of the state. The late May influx brought large numbers of late transients to Regions 1 and 6 and the Lake Ontario shore of Region 5 (e.g. 240 Wood Pewees on May 27 at Sandy Pond.)

Our winter birds hung on late. Red crossbills continued to be widely reported, and in western areas of the state they were present throughout the period. They were seen on Long Island as late as May 25. There were April observations of White-winged Crossbills in Regions 5 and 9 and a late May report from Region 1. Pine Siskins continued to be regularly noted in many areas, and there was a breeding record from Region 2. There were May reports of Black-backed Woodpeckers from Regions 3 and 8. Snowy Owls were noted throughout April in Regions 1 and 2, and the last state record was apparently two birds on May 5 at Syracuse, where the flight had been so heavy during the winter. Late Northern Shrikes were seen in two areas. Rough-legged Hawks departed in late April and early May, the last report being on May 7 at Montezuma. A single Bohemian Waxwing was sighted in Region 2. Snow Buntings were seen as late as April 9 in Region 3 and April 16 in Region 1, and there was an extremely late Lapland Longspur observed on May 29 in Region 3. Evening Grosbeaks had generally departed by the end of April from most areas, although there were one or two sporadic reports thereafter.

The Clay-colored Sparrow must sense the ornithological atmosphere of Ithaca's environs, for the bird appeared again this season at the same locality for the third year in a row. A Lark Sparrow, a rarity at any time in the state but especially so in the spring and away from the coast, showed up in Region 5 and was duly photographed. Details of this record are given in the field notes section of this issue. Western Meadowlarks appeared in Regions 1, 2, 3, and 5.

There were several reports of Summer Tanagers and Blue Grosbeaks on Long Island. Our annual upstate quota for Summer Tanagers is about one, and this spring's report came from Region 1. Other individual records of especial interest include several hybrid flickers in Region 8, a Little Gull in Region 2, a Western Grebe in Region 9, male Oregon Juncos in Regions 2 and 3, Sharp-tailed Sparrows in Regions 1 and 7, and a European Goldfinch on eastern Long Island.

The annual late May Linnaean Society boat trip for sea birds off Long Island this year produced no Yellow-nosed Albatross and in fact relatively few birds in comparison to last year's results. Seas were not calm, and it is reported that interest in bird-watching suffered (that is the right word) accordingly.

It is with a sense of deep loss that we must note the resignation of Fritz Scheider as regional editor for the Oneida Lake Basin. Fritz's first summary appeared in the *Kingbird* of May, 1954, and since then he has consistently presented an accurate and informative description of the birdlife of the area he loves and knows so well. He has been a frequent contributor of articles pertaining to the birdlife of central New York, and we trust he will continue in this capacity. He is also well known to Federation members by virtue of his excellent presentations at the annual meetings. We wish him the best of luck in the U. S. Army and a speedy return home.