

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SPRING SEASON APRIL 1 - MAY 31

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April did not produce any conditions favorable to the observation of waves of migrants. The numbers of Canada Geese observed were good as has been true for the last few years but, in a number of areas, the counts of dabbling ducks were low.

In late April and for the first few days of May a cold rainy spell, centered to the south of our area, slowed down migration. A warm spell starting May 6 brought about a widespread movement. Post and Tudor comment "the dam broke, the great bulk of migrants passing through May 7-12, practically every May migrant arrived on the 7th"; Treacy states that "warbler waves on May 7, 8 and 9 in Orange county coincided with those reported in Dutchess and Rockland"; Wickham says "The bulk of landbirds did not appear until May 6-10"; Rusk comments "the first warm spell of May coincided with some major movements of landbirds" and Hoyt that "the best warbler flights were on May 7 and 17 in the Ithaca area". Subsequent movements were much more local. Most of the ups and downs of numbers reported were local but reports give the impression that the Black-throated Green, Black-throated Blue and Cape May Warblers were scarce over a wide area. Deed, in Rockland county, comments on the depletion or absence of many fish-eating species and believes this is due to the cumulative effect of insecticides. I hope that sufficient information on the status of these species will be available in the summer reports to cover this subject in the next summary.

There was a fine hawk flight along the southern shore of Lake Ontario and good correlation was obtained between the counts nr Rochester and nr Mexico at the south-east corner of the lake. Peak counts of Broadwings at Rochester occurred on April 22 and May 2 and at Mexico on April 23, 25 and May 2. Record high counts of Ospreys were made at Rochester on May 2 and Mexico on May 3.

The occurrence of the first House Finch in region 8 and the second in region 4 probably represents an early stage of the further spread of this species. The early history of the House Finch in the east has been given by Arbib and Elliott in 1963 (Auk 70:31-37). At this time they estimated the total population at 280 individuals. The increase since that time can be shown by the number recorded merely on the Long Island Christmas counts. These are given in the following table

1963	1962	1961	1960	1959	1958	1957	1956	1955	1954	1953
801	665	258	299	164	208	131	76	27	27	9

The total number reported in the eastern United States on the 1963 counts was over 1800, a fifty percent increase over 1962. The species has expanded its range into the lower Hudson Valley in the last few years. This increase has been fully documented in Treacy's regional reports. Birders, especially those with feeders, should be alert to the possibility of the occurrence of this species.

Following the large-scale invasion last winter Red Crossbills were found in every region well into May. The only successful nesting was at Lancaster

in region 1 where one of several nests produced young. The species also attempted to nest in the New York City area (first time this century) and courtship feeding was noted near Ithaca.

Central New York provided two interesting records of rare ducks. An unusual duck, subsequently identified as a Sheld-duck, was seen at Montezuma. This appears to be the second record for North America and the first for the state. While the record is acceptable to me, I imagine that in the absence of a second observer, photograph or specimen that the record will be listed as hypothetical. The Fulvous Tree-duck, the validity of which I feel that I should not comment on, is the first upstate record and the first spring record for the state. However it is not all together surprising in view of occurrences in Ohio and Ontario and the spectacular increase in the range of this species in the last few years (Baird, Audubon Field Notes 17:6-8, 1963).

Other rarities included Harris' Sparrow near Rochester, Magpies in regions 1 and 10 (perhaps escapes were involved) and in region 10 Cinnamon Teal, Scissor-tailed Flycatcher, Varied Thrush and yet another Townsend's Warbler.

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REGION 1 — NIAGARA FRONTIER

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This spring was no exception to the variable weather the region usually experiences in the season. A cloudy and showery April with no severe storms was followed by a sunny, generally warm and windy May with a fairly cool period at its end. Both months had near normal precipitation and average temperatures somewhat above the normals. Vegetation was well advanced by late April and only briefly retarded by short cooler periods in May. The strong winds of the latter month (highest velocity recorded — 65 mph on the 9th) caused damage to trees and their new leaf growth. Lake Erie ice was heavy until mid-April; thereafter it rapidly broke up until only small floes were present during the last week. Snow cover dissipated rapidly with the last measurable fall on the 9th at Buffalo. Light frosts occurred in some rural areas on May 15 and 21.

Bird migration at the beginning of April was delayed by the cool weather, but after the first week and a half it was well advanced as warmer temperatures prevailed. The absence of storms and the generally warm latter half of April contributed toward the arrival in good numbers of many migrants and an early occurrence of flycatchers and warblers before the month's end. Canada Geese continued to be in high numbers in the Oak Orchard and Lake Ontario areas in early April, and the flock of about 40 Blue Geese remaining in the former place from late March was the largest this editor can recall in the region in spring. Surface-feeding ducks appeared to be below normal in abundance. Pectoral Sandpipers occurred in large flocks in two localities. Pine Siskins and Evening Grosbeaks continued coming to feeders in April and early May. Groups of Red Crossbills also remained through April and were still present at the end of May. They made several attempts to nest in Como Park, Lancaster, but only one pair appeared to have been successful in fledging young. The crossbills visited many feeders in quest of sunflower seeds, a very unusual occurrence in this region. The migration of small passerines during May was marked by two or three days when "waves" occurred, one of the most noticeable taking place during a rather strong weather disturbance on May 13 and 14.

Highlights of the season include: Cattle Egret, European Widgeon, White-eyed Vireo, Worm-eating Warbler and Kentucky Warbler.