HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SPRING SEASON

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April, it was agreed, passed along the wet, cold weather of March. Few days of south wind and clearing weather prevailed and April flights, particularly diurnal raptor flights, along the Lake Ontario littoral (LOL), were few in number and only fair in quality. May seemed more like a meteorological endurance contest – persistent cool, wet weather, no pushes of southern warm air, and delayed foliage and insect activity. Most species could be found on, or a few days after the standard or anticipated arrival dates but the majority of individuals of many species peaked much later than usual (cf flycatchers, vireos, warblers). Many regions reported "good migrations," though somewhat late, but it should be emphasized that what constitutes a "good migration" for the birder may be a very hazardous and adverse migration for the birds, particularly nocturnal migrants. Though many sectors complained of low numbers of later migrants, e.g. (Yellow-bellied and Olive-sided Flycatchers, Gray-cheeked Thrush, Blackpoll Warbler), this may indicate only that the bulk of these species passed over in nocturnal migration with no requirement, either of their own physiology or of the local meterological conditions, to put down where the geographically sedentary birder might be. High water levels widely noted rather effectively prevented accumulations of migrant shorebirds at traditional areas and, of all groups noted this spring, the information regarding the shorebirds is the most sparse.

Cattle Egrets invaded again this spring (2,3,5,6,8,9) with a total of 68 individuals reported, the majority from 8 and 9. However, Glossy Ibis, a species often paralleling Cattle Egret flights, were very scarce and such standard species as Common Egret and Black-crowned Night Heron seem scarcer each spring. Black-crowned Night Heron has reached a point of scarcity where a state-wide census might be warranted. Canada Geese staged a spectacular eastern and central New York migration (3,5,6,9) with lesser numbers of Blue and/or Snow Geese reported. The numbers of the latter have risen to the point where estimates rather than counts are being reported. Waterfowl migration was reported as very good (2,3,5,6) with many late dates, both in dabblers and divers, with some normally absent species present to swell the totals of mid-May Big Runs; exceptions to this good flight were reduced numbers of Ring-necked Duck and Hooded Merganser in Region 2 and of both teal and Common Merganser in 5.

Hawk flights (2,5) along LOL were few (lack of south winds) and what few occurred were frequently abruptly terminated by severe rain conditions. A modest array of both eagles and a few Peregrines

was noted but the Harrier away from flight areas (3,8,9) was very, very sparse. The organization of cooperative spring diurnal raptor migration in Region 9 is to be commended and at some point a cooperative watch covering the Lake Erie-Lake Ontario flight would be very useful in solving the many riddles of this observable migration, e.g. ? numbers of Osprey at Buffalo vs Rochester vs Derby Hill?

The shorebird flight produced good variety of species (cf rarities below) but the numbers were quite low (2,3,4,5,6,8,9) and predictions of poor scolopacine conditions for the fall migration have already appeared. Tardy Glaucous and Iceland Gulls (2,5,8) and, in certain areas, increased counts of late Great Black-backed Gulls reflected the very late spring.

Both cuckoos were reported as very scarce (2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9) with singles the rule rather than the exception, this even in the caterpillar-rich counties of Region 9 where better numbers had prevailed heretofore. Both Common Nighthawk (2,3,5,6,8,9) and Ruby-throated Hummingbird were similarly markedly reduced in numbers but a few editors suggested this may represent very delayed spring migration rather than population decimation.

Virtually all swallows were mentioned as lower in numbers but the species varied from sector to sector – Bank Swallow down in 2,5, and 8, Tree Swallow and Barn Swallows reduced in 5, Cliff Swallow very scarce in 6,8, and 9. How these species, reduced as migrants, survived the adverse cold, rainy weather of June 1972 during the peak of their breeding season will be interesting to study. I particularly recommend we keep close counts on all swallow species because of their weather and habitat change (cropland pesticide use) sensitivities. The Blue Jay flight along LOL brightened late May in 2 and 5; ? do such flights occur in Region 6 along the northeastern margin of Lake Ontario and along the St. Lawrence River? Long-billed Marsh Wrens seemed down in 2 and 5. In contrast, Mockingbirds appear to be increasing in 3,4,5, 7 and 9 but may be declining in Region 8. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher may be increasing in 4 and 8 and is certainly doing so in 5 and 9. Water Pipits were uniformly scarce (2,3,5,7,8,9), both in the late March – early April and the secondary early May flights, and their migratory confreres, Horned Lark, Lapland Longspur and Snow Bunting were similarly scarce.

Most sectors (2,3,4,5,9) reported good or above average warbler migration with very heavy movements of Myrtle (2,3,4,5,6,8,9), Cape May (2,3,4,5,8,9), and Black-throated Blue Warblers (2,5,9) observed. Numbers of later warblers, particularly Blackpoll and Wilson's Warblers, in contrast seemed lower than ever. Many regional editors indicated numerous species had not passed thru entirely by the end of May and that summer reports would be studded with numerous and/or record departure dates.

Winter finches presented some impressive spring return flights with Common Redpolls dominating April (2,3,4,5,6,8,9) and Evening Grosbeak and Pine Siskin dominating May (2,3,4,5,6,7,9). Both crossbills were noted but only in small scattered groups with no defined pattern evident. Indigo Bunting counts seemed low (2,5,9) but they may be increasing in 3; this paucity, like that of the cuckoos and Common Nighthawk, may be an expression of the severely delayed migration. Both Henslow's and Grasshopper Sparrows are reported as reduced in 3 and 5 and possibly decreased in 8. However, both White-crowned (4,7,8,9) and Lincoln's Sparrows (2,3,4,5,7,8,9) were reported in excess of the usual numbers.

On a negative note, the Monk Parakeet is still present in Region 4 and one was seen in Region 5; the last thing we need is a Starlingesque outbreak of a fruit-eating pest like that. Nesting attempts by this species, after being photographically documented, should be promptly destroyed.

Rarities for the season were widespread and varied – Eared Grebe (2), Louisiana Heron (3), the second one in three years, Wood Ibis (2), Stilt Sandpiper (2,3), Ruff (2,3), Black-headed Gull (5), Little Gull (3), Black-backed Woodpecker (6), Northern Three-toed Woodpecker (7), Common Raven (6), White-eyed Vireo (2,3,8), Prothonotary Warbler (9), Yellow-throated Warbler (3), Connecticut Warbler (9), Blue Grosbeak (3), and Clay-colored Sparrow (5,6,7) plus many hibernal survivors – Harlequin Duck (2), Varied Thrush (5), Black-headed Grosbeak (5), Dickcissel (9), Hoary Redpoll (3,6,8), and Harris' Sparrow (5).

The interesting geographical extremes of the state – Regions 1 and 10 – were not available for summary. My compliments to the editors of Regions 2 thru 9 for their reports and their continuing emphasis on counts of common species and careful documentation of the rarer ones.

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REGION 2 — GENESEE

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As noted in the winter report, spring approached this region slowly and reluctantly this year, and it was almost mid-April before winter's grip seemed to really fall away. Not that there were no migrants in earlier, indeed the flight of waterfowl, delayed by ice in March, came on strong and lasted longer than usual, but many early migrants were not really common until considerably later than usual.

A particularly good flight occurred from the 16th to 23rd of April and again in the last few days of the month when a warm spell brought out lagging vegetation and produced a wave of new arrivals, some of which were unusually early.