

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SPRING SEASON

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FOR

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April's weather shifted frequently between periods of above normal temperatures and those of cold, snow and strong winds. The first week gave promise of an early raptor migration in Region 5 on southerly winds. The 8th and 9th brought heavy snow in western, central & southern tier regions. So it went with warm periods again in mid-month and at the end. Although overall the monthly temperature average was somewhat above normal, the snow, cold, rain and strong N and NE winds resulted in a migration which in most areas was sluggish and minimal.

May too was cold, cloudy and rainy during the first half, again with strong northerly winds. Migratory waves were few and many arrivals were a week late; they found foliage retarded and insect supply short. Region 2 experienced a quite spectacular warbler "wave" on the 15th — the kind you dream about — 23 species in one morning in one city park in large numbers. Region 1 reports that conditions delayed nesting so that when warm weather arrived, there was a nesting explosion with many nests lower than usual due to the retarded leafing.

Despite the adverse weather conditions the diligent observer managed to find a mouth-watering collection of the unusual and the rare. The list is long and only a few will be pointed out here. The Cinnamon Teal at MNWR may have been the male of a pair seen earlier at Iroquois NWR — an exciting find. A Black Vulture at Derby Hill was a remarkable first for Region 5. Golden Eagle reports came from Region 2, 4 & 9 — the species seems to be seen now more often than the Bald Eagle. Peregrines from Regions 2 & 5 show a few are left. The Cattle Egret continues its establishment in upstate New York with appearance of 16 in Region 2 and 1 in 5. Possibly prophetic were the Little Blue Herons in Regions 1, 5 & 9. Two Hudsonian Godwits at MNWR constitute the first spring record for Region 3. For the second consecutive year a Willet appeared at Braddock's Bay (Region 2). An interesting question is whether these come from the eastern or western populations. The increasing frequency of reports of Ruffs (Regions 1 & 3) in this state and elsewhere in the east suggests the possibility of a breeding population on this continent. The Little Gull continues its increase (Regions 2 & 5). A Raven in the Adirondack foothills at Big Moose is in accord with a quite evident increase within the central mountains in the past several years. Is the White-eyed Vireo another more southerly species which is beginning to move north (Regions 1 & 2)? Region 2,

3, 5 & 9 enjoyed sightings of uncommon warblers — Worm-eating, Orange-crowned, Yellow-throated, Prairie, Kentucky and Connecticut. The Western Meadowlark steadily probes eastward with pioneers — this year near Syracuse (Region 5). An errant Yellow-headed Blackbird showed up in Dutchess Co. (Region 9). Success in colonizing western New York by the House Finch is evident in 30 recorded at Eggertsville near Buffalo (Region 1). The incursion of Hoary Redpolls of the past winter probably came to an end with two from April 4-13 at a feeder in Perinton (Region 2). Dickcissels appeared widely in Regions 1, 3 & 9 and the Clay-colored Sparrow like the Western Meadowlark continues to send "pioneers" into the state. What will be its status here in 25 years?

Your attention is called to the perceptive and succinct observations of Fritz Scheider on negative and positive aspects of the spring season as he saw them in Region 5.

The Federation's first annual May Big Day in the May 11-19 period brought responses from 16 clubs and two individual parties to tally up 247 species and one hybrid (Brewster's Warbler). The full count will be published later but a few points merit comment. Missing were Whistling Swan, Peregrine, Whimbrel, Caspian Tern, Short-billed Marsh Wren, Loggerhead Shrike (this last has become a very scarce bird in western New York). Outstanding species were Little Blue Heron, Louisiana Heron, Surf Scoter Merlin, Turkey (37 on Allegany B.C. count), Black Rail (seen), Piping Plover, Purple Sandpiper (late), Ruff, Little Gull, Roseate Tern, Acadian Flycatcher, Brewster's Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, Western Meadowlark, Summer Tanager, Red & White-winged Crossbills and two very late Tree Sparrows.

No reports received from Regions 8 and the report from Region 10 was received too late to be included in the Highlights.

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REGION 1 — NIAGARA FRONTIER

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Early April gave promise of Spring at last with warm days and a record high of 75° on the 4th, the day after numerous tornadoes touched down in States far east of their usual path. But for the Count Day, April 7th about an inch of snow cover brought birds, especially the Dark-eyed Junco, out of fields to the bare roadsides. When the 10th found six to ten inches of snow on the ground and small lakes forming skim ice, migrants, on the move during the earlier warm weather, flocked to feeders. Although on seven days the temperature reached 70° or above, the nights were cold, giving a mean for the month of 47.5°. S. Eaton's half-acre pond near Vandalia was free of ice April 2nd, the "mean date for 20 years of records."