

REGION 5 — ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

FRITZ SCHEIDER

The South will rise again—and has. The incursion of southern species this spring produced three regional firsts and a host of southern goodies for the local birders. The weather patterns, as seen from the ground, did not engender a great many surges of southern air masses but the frequent rain may have grounded birds that would have gone further north or east and remained undetected. And—Lord!—did it rain! March had excess rain and snow (it almost wiped out Syracuse's 18 inch deficit of snow); April and May rainfall created the wettest April and May respectively ever recorded at Syracuse. A beautiful blast of summer warmth on 16-18 April triggered hopes for a decent spring but a protracted cold spell with accompanying northwest winds chilled those hopes, the birds, the birders, and the rest of April. May temperatures improved around 14-15 May, only to be followed May 18-20 by high winds, bone-chilling cold, and cold rain and in some areas snow (Old Forge had 13 inches of snow on May 18—ugh!). With the abundant rain, all vegetation burgeoned and the various flycatchers, vireos, and warblers were heard but seldom seen thru the wall of greenery this spring. Notable exceptions to this were the landbird flights along Lake Ontario with May 14 being particularly spectacular—8000 Blue Jays, 2000 Evening Grosbeaks, and 3000 American Goldfinches made it look like a day-long Cub Scout parade. Paralleling the delayed cold spring, some species—Eastern Wood Pewee, Willow and Alder Flycatchers, Mourning and Canada Warblers, and Indigo Bunting—had not arrived in numbers by May 31 and the number of tardy passage warblers recorded in the first half of June is much above average.

Spring positives include (1) excellent counts of Canada Goose, (2) increased numbers of Redheads, Canvasbacks, Common Goldeneyes, and Buffleheads, (3) good tallies of spring shorebirds, (4) impressive Blue Jay and Common Crow flights along Lake Ontario, (5) above average tallies of some warblers, notably Yellow and Yellow-rumped, (6) heavy migration of Evening Grosbeaks and American Goldfinches, and (7) the "southern" invasion. Negatives proliferate—(1) few white herons, (2) low numbers of both bitterns, (3) very low numbers of dabbling ducks, (4) low numbers of all merganser species, (5) a paucity of Bonaparte's Gulls and all terns, (6) a marked decline in migrant Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers, (7) loss of broods of many early nesters—Eastern Phoebe, Tree Swallow, and Eastern Bluebird, (8) low swallow tallies, (9) very low numbers of some warblers, most marked in Black-throated Green, Chestnut-sided, and Canada, and (10) continued impoverished counts of Horned Lark and of the grassland sparrows, particularly the formerly common Savannah and Vesper Sparrows.

Rarities for the spring include Cattle Egret, Fulvous Tree Duck, Surf Scoter, Swallow-tailed Kite, Peregrine Falcon, Wilson's Phalarope, Boreal Chickadee, White-eyed Vireo, Worm-eating, Prairie, and Kentucky Warblers, Yellow-breasted Chat, Western Meadowlark, Orchard Oriole, and Summer Tanager.

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Place abbreviations: CV—Camillus Valley; DH—Derby Hill near Texas; FH—Fair Haven in northern Cayuga County; HIGMA—Howland's Island Game Management Area near Port Byron; LOL—Lake Ontario littoral; SPI & SP—Sandy Pond Inlet and Sandy Pond; SSSP—Selkirk Shores State Park near Port Ontario.

Please have summer material (1 June—31 August) in by 7 September.

LOONS-DUCKS: Green Heron: very early is one April 17 near Mexico. **CATTLE EGRET:** singles only—April 28 Holland Patent (J&E VD), May 15 Pennellville (PAD), May 20-22 Wampsville (B&SP), and May 19 Utica (J&BB); a little better than the usual spring single. American Bittern: scarce—maximum only 6 Scott Swamp—Pennellville May 2.

Canada Goose: Maximum 10,000+ Beaver Lake mid-April; also 6000+ Pennellville area April 8-18. Brant: 350 May 23 LOL only report. **FULVOUS TREE DUCK:** Single near Pennellville April 29 thru late May (MSR, mob), first record for the Region but one of the many "southerners" showing up this spring. Dabbling ducks proved quite scarce thru the spring—maxima are as follows—Mallard 250 March 23, Black Duck 100 March 24, Gadwall 45 March 14, Pintail 186 March 30, Green-winged Teal 35 April 10-18, Blue-winged Teal 16 May 6, American Wigeon 50 April 11, N. Shoveler 4 (very low) April 10, Wood Duck 25 May 20; most concentrations were from Scott Swamp, HIGMA, or Brewerton. Redhead and Canvasback: increased numbers this spring—Hurrah!—350 Redhead March 6-11 FH and 875 Canvasback March 14 FH and Brewerton. Common Goldeneye: maximum 915 FH-SSSP March 14, the major push of this species for the season with numerous lower counts to mid-April. Bufflehead: maximum 400 March 14 FH (TR), best count in years. **SURF SCOTER:** one Utica Marsh April 28 (J&BB); an extremely rare bird in spring, even on Lake Ontario. Ruddy Duck: unlike the Redheads and the Canvasbacks, very scarce—maximum only 2 FH March 6. All mergansers very scarce—Hooded 12 March 22, Common 35 March 24, Red-breasted 200 (very low) May 5.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Goshawk: five nests in Region produced five flying young. Red-shouldered Hawk: one active nest in the non-Adirondack sector. Bald Eagle: an immature March 9 Oneida Lake (B&SP), an adult near Cazenovia Lake mid-May, and another adult May 31 Tassel Hill near Waterville (GH).

1976 DERBY HILL RAPTOR MIGRATION

	Arr. Date	Dep. Date	Peak Number and Date	Total
Turkey Vulture	Mar. 20	May 16	34 Apr. 17	221
Goshawk	Feb. 15	May 5	14 Mar. 20	87
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Mar. 10	May 16	410 Apr. 17	3,410
Cooper's Hawk	Feb. 25	May 5	38 Mar. 20	193
Red-tailed Hawk	Feb. 15	May 16	677 Mar. 20	2,729
Red-shouldered Hawk	Feb. 29	May 16	184 Mar. 20	465
Broad-winged Hawk	Apr. 16	May 16	3,694 Apr. 22	10,436
Rough-legged Hawk	Feb. 15	May 14	57 Mar. 20	199
Golden Eagle	Feb. 24	May 2	3 Apr. 17	11
Bald Eagle	Apr. 13	May 2	singles only	4
Marsh Hawk	Feb. 21	May 16	44 Mar. 20	378
Osprey	Apr. 16	May 16	39 May 2	148
Merlin	Mar. 20	May 2	2 Mar. 20	4
American Kestrel	Feb. 21	May 16	134 Mar. 20	451

The Golden Eagle count was ten immatures, one adult; the Bald Eagle, all immatures. Counts for Goshawk, Bald Eagle, Osprey, and Merlin are quite low; counts for Red-shouldered and Broad-winged Hawks, Golden Eagle, and American Kestrel are much improved over the miserable tallies of the 1975 season. No record tallies were achieved. Rare raptors include an adult **SWALLOW-TAILED KITE** Apr. 16 (W. & L. Holland, D. & J. Muir, GAS), the first regional record but in keeping with the many other "southerners" this spring, and an adult **PEREGRINE FALCON** May 16 (FGS).

Ring-necked Pheasant: spring maximum only eight May 17 Onondaga County—continuing to grow ever scarcer here.

Spotted and Solitary Sandpiper: maxima of 30 Spotted and 14 Solitary May 8 at drained mucklands near North Syracuse, an excellent concentration secondary to the superb feeding conditions temporarily produced by rain-delayed draining operations there. Dunlin: good spring flight with maximum 45 HIGMA May 15-18; one in winter plumage with 26 Pectoral Sandpipers April 10 near Pennellville is extremely early. Short-billed Dowitcher: like Dunlin, excellent tallies with 13 at Fox Ridge May 15, and 40 SPI May 23. **WILSON'S PHALAROPE**: breeding plumage female May 16 Utica Marsh (J&BB), sixth spring record.

Bonaparte's Gull: very, very scarce this spring—maximum only 6 April 8 near Pennellville, singles otherwise. Equally scarce are the various terns—maximum Common Tern only 20 May 15 Oswego and Black Tern 14 May 14 DH; none of the Black Tern returned to former colonies at Scott Swamp, Clay Swamp or North Syracuse.

PIGEONS—WOODPECKERS: Influx of both species of cuckoos May 15 (up to 20 individuals that day) but rather scarce thereafter despite impressive tent caterpillar outbreak locally.

Chimney Swift: maximum 110 May 14 DH; scarce thru May at Syracuse;—were they hit by cold weather of late April and again the third week of May?

Common Flicker: LOL flight maximum 254 April 17 DH with 190 there on April 18. Red-headed Woodpecker: a nice wave of this species this spring—9 DH May 14, 3 at CV May 15, 4 Bolivar Road near Chittenango May 20. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: very, very scarce this spring—maximum only 7 April 19 Syracuse but most observers saw only 1-2/day and many missed the species entirely.

FLYCATCHERS—STARLINGS: Eastern Kingbird: strong flight but late—114 DH May 14 with birds still passing there in late May. Eastern Phoebe: arrived March 28 (late); most early broods, like the Eastern Bluebirds, lost in the cold weather of the third week of May. Least Flycatcher: heavy waves of this species in latter third of May—24 on May 22, 22 on May 23, 29 on May 30, mostly LOL.

All swallows in low tallies through April and May and the cold weather in late April and again in late May may well have reduced even further the low local numbers present—maxima are Tree Swallow 1300 May 14, Bank Swallow 2000 May 14, Rough-winged Swallow 100 May 2, Barn Swallow 1200 May 14-16, Cliff Swallow 300 May 16, Purple Martin 120 May 2, all from DH. Early Tree Swallow broods may have been lost in the cold weather of late May as no flying young are yet present (third week of June) here.

Blue Jay: massive DH flight with maximum 8760 May 14 and 2700 May 16 there. Common Crow: 9925 March 5 DH in three hours, an impressive corvid count; counts of 3400-6000/day recorded in last week of February and first week of March. Black-capped Chickadee: 600 May 2, 910 May 14, both DH, this when local birds were already nesting. **BOREAL CHICKADEE**: 2 April 15 DH, the last remnant of the Boreal Chickadee irruption of the winter of '75-76. Red-breasted Nuthatch: light flight with only 1 to 8/day; last noted May 22 3 SP dunes. Carolina Wren: several new stations indicate expansion and/or shift and apparently less loss from the severe winter than anticipated. Mockingbird: expanding with individuals at Syracuse Airport, near Hamilton, near Euclid, and finally 1 appeared at Camillus Valley, the "southern" stronghold.

American Robin: 170 passing DH May 2, with 30 passing there May 16 (rather late for the "harbinger of spring"). Swainson's Thrush: light late flight with maximum 17 Syracuse-South Onondaga May 17. Eastern Bluebird: maximum 18 March 27 DH; however, still passing there May 14 10 and May 16 4; all first nestings of bluebirds at Eaton lost (GC).

Kinglets, like the later warblers, left rather late with departure dates for Golden-crowned Kinglet May 17 1 Syracuse and Ruby-crowned Kinglet May 27 1 SP dunes. Water Pipit: small counts—15 to 50/day April through mid-May; departure date May 22 8 FH.

VIREOS-WARBLES: WHITE-EYED VIREO; 4 birds May 8 through May 31 with 2 at Syracuse (JWP), 1 at Utica (J&BB), and 1 at CV (PAD); the first major incursion in modern regional records. Warbling Vireo: late flight with maximum 12 DH May 14; still migrating on the SP dunes May 22 10.

Major warbler waves were grounded locally May 6-8, May 14-17 and May 20-22; the last week of the month saw only steady drift of migrant warblers through the area. Blue-winged Warbler: like the Yellow-breasted Chat, a strong influx this spring with the maximum 6 May 13 CV where 1 to 2/day is more usual; lesser numbers near Cardiff and Pompey. Above average numbers of spring warblers include Tennessee Warbler: 95 May 17, Syracuse-South Onondaga; Yellow Warbler: 182 May 14 DH-LOL; Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler: 410 May 14 DH-LOL; Bay-breasted Warbler: 50 May 17 Syracuse; Blackpoll Warbler: 29 May 17 Syracuse-South Onondaga; Yellowthroat: 38 May 22 CV and FH; American Redstart: 110 May 14 DH-LOL. Extremely scarce (maxima only given) were Nashville Warbler, 8 May 13 CV; Black-throated Green Warbler, 7 May 23 SP dunes; Magnolia Warbler, 14 May 22 CV and FH; Blackburnian Warbler, 9 May 14 DH; Chestnut-sided Warbler, 13 May 23 SP-SSSP; Ovenbird, 5 SSSP May 20; and Canada Warbler, 4 May 23 SP-SSSP.

Rarer warblers for the spring include **WORM-EATING WARBLER**: 1 Labrador Pond May 10 (JWP); **PRAIRIE WARBLER**: 1 (two?) May 7-8 Syracuse and 1 May 17 CV, all migrants as no local breeding stations are known for this species; **KENTUCKY WARBLER**: 1 (?) May 5 and 15 at Syracuse (REL); **YELLOW-BREASTED CHAT**: 3 CV May 22 (one carrying nesting material), 2 East Syracuse May 15, and 1 May 17 South Onondaga. Three Brewster's and 1 Lawrence's Warblers reported this spring.

WEAVERS-SPARROWS: Bobolink: maximum 1160 DH May 14, a noisy segment of the impressive landbird flight that day; still passing DH at the end of May. **WESTERN MEADOWLARK**: 1 back at the Syracuse Airport May 29. Northern (Baltimore) Oriole: 860 (a record high!) May 14 at DH—a tremendous flight of these colorful icterids. **ORCHARD ORIOLE**: adult male returned to CV May 22.

Scarlet Tanager: 50, primarily adult males, May 14 DH. **SUMMER TANAGER**: adult male singing and calling at Syracuse May 26 (PAD), the first regional record.

Rose-breasted Grosbeak: adult male at feeder April 22 Oswego (CW) is remarkably early but parallels the May 3 Indigo Bunting at a feeder in Oneida (P&SP). Evening Grosbeak: very heavy mid-May flight with 2150 DH May 14, 440 May 16 DH, 16 SP dunes May 27. House Finch: 6 now regular at Utica (J&BB) since May 1975. Pine Siskin: maximum 685 May 14 DH; last noted May 31 1 Brookfield Township; however, some birds still present in more northern regional areas into early June. American Goldfinch: a golden horde of this species this spring—3575 May 14, 3150 May 16 both DH, 500 May 22 CV-FH and large groups (30 to 100/day) noted through to the end of the month.

Rufous-sided Towhee: maximum only 14 May 10 CV; notably scarce (1 to 4/day) in scrubby brushlands south and west of Syracuse. Savannah and Vesper Sparrows: both very scarce this spring—maximum Savannah Sparrow 16 and Vesper Sparrow 4 both April 18 at DH. Dark-eyed Junco: maximum a miserable 75 April 18 DH-LOL; still migrating May 27 2 SP dunes. Tree Sparrow: departure date May 10 (late) 1 Syracuse (GH). White-crowned Sparrow: thin but protracted flight, arrival May 22 with maximum 25 May 6 both DH; last noted May 27 8 SP dunes, the same day 7 White-throated and 9 Lincoln's Sparrows were also observed there.

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