

REGION 5 – ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

FRITZ SCHEIDER

The March inheritance of ice left fairly quickly with the warm, calm weather in the first two-thirds of March and the snow cover around Syracuse disappeared even earlier. A brief but severe cold spell in late March probably wiped out a number of the earlier, more tender migrants, but late March saw a period of strong southwest winds (March 29-30) with attendant excellent raptor and early landbird (American Robin, icterids) flights along Lake Ontario. April, however, produced day after day of dry, fair weather with winds either northwest, north, or northeast and movement for virtually three weeks was almost nil; a few early landbirds (e.g. Solitary Vireo) showed up with warm weather in mid-April but waves or lakeshore flights were non-existent for that time. The April raptor flights were virtually accomplished in two days (April 21-22) and the rest of the month was a bust. May was dry and fair with persistent northwest winds, abundant in obscuring foliage, mingy in warblers, and dull as a Ford speech. Warbler waves occurred later than usual (May 16-26) and the trans-regional passage of strict migrants (e.g. Cape May and Blackpoll Warblers) was remarkably quick. However, a number of local breeding species (both cuckoos, Ruby-throated Hummingbird, Willow and Alder Flycatchers, Mourning Warbler, Indigo Bunting) did not arrive until early or mid-June. The extreme dryness of both April and May is reflected in the currently reduced water levels in virtually all the local marshes and lakes and, though it bodes well for early fall shorebirding, this drought may contribute to significant breeding failure in the already jeopardized paludous species.

Spring positives include 1) a sprinkling of white herons; 2) an excellent Canada Goose flight; 3) a heavy flight of diving ducks, albeit of short duration and confined to the Lake Ontario zone; 4) a particularly good late March raptor movement at Derby Hill; 5) good tallies of early shorebirds and a brief but rich late May shorebird flight; 6) large flights of Common Crow in March and of Blue Jay in May along Lake Ontario; 7) fair survival of Tufted Titmouse and definite expansion in Mockingbird; 8) above average numbers of some vireos, although late in coming; 9) better numbers of certain warblers, especially Tennessee, Yellow, Yellow-rumped, Black-throated Blue, Magnolia, and Bay-breasted Warblers, and Common Yellowthroat; 10) continued expansion of House Finch; and 11) a heavy flight of White-crowned Sparrow.

The litany of spring negatives, the "downers," include 1) very poor tallies of Common Loon and Horned Grebe; 2) low counts on American Bittern; 3) an incredibly poor dabbling duck migration; 4) poor numbers of Hooded and Red-breasted Mergansers; 5) a poor hawk migration in April except for one glorious day (April 21); 6) very low numbers of Bonaparte's Gull and all terns; 7) a paucity of cuckoos; 8) a delayed flight of Willow and Alder Flycatchers; 9) reduced tallies on all swallows; 10) striking drops in many migrants which overwinter in the continental U.S., e.g. Eastern Phoebe, Tree Swallow, Winter Wren, Brown Thrasher, Hermit Thrush, Eastern Bluebird, and both kinglets; 11) reduced numbers of most early warblers; 12) profound reduction in many sparrows, most striking in Savannah, Grasshopper, Henslow's, and Fox Sparrows.

Rare species for the season—Glossy Ibis, European Wigeon, Barrow's Goldeneye, Surf Scoter, Black Vulture, Buff-breasted Sandpiper, Wilson's Phalarope, White-eyed Vireo, "Brewster's," "Lawrence's," and Prairie Warblers, Lark Bunting, and Clay-colored Sparrow..

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Abbreviations: CV—Camillus Valley; DH—Derby Hill near Texas; FH,LSB—Fair Haven

and Little Sodus Bay in northern Cayuga Co.; LOL—Lake Ontario littoral, lakeshore if referring to waterbirds, woodlots or thickets if referring to landbirds; SP—Sandy Pond; SSSP—Selkirk Shores State Park near Port Ontario; L—lake.

LOONS—DUCKS: Common Loon: poor spring flight—max only 45 Apr. 20 DH; present to Jun. 2. Horned Grebe: like Common Loon, very poor flight—max only 45 Apr. 10 DH-SSSP. Double-crested Cormorant: scarce—one noted Apr. 11 DH—unreported otherwise. White herons—Great Egret: singles at Churchville Mar. 31 (very early), April 28 near Utica, Six-mile Creek May 1, Scott Swamp May 12, and Pond Hundred near Fair Haven May 14, a bit above average; Cattle Egret: single adults Apr. 11 DH and May 8 Clay Swamp. American Bittern: max for spring four Scott Swamp May 12 and four again May 21 near Utica; continues to grow ever more scarce. **GLOSSY IBIS:** single in DeWitt in late Apr. and again May 21 near Utica. Canada Goose: an impressive spring flight—max. 10,000 plus Seneca River flats Mar. 1 and 13,600 over DH Apr. 30, the date of major exodus; lesser concentrations include 9,000 Brewerton Mar. 9 and 3,000 Apr. 12 near east end of Oneida L. Brant: a miserable spring flight—max nine on May 16 Mexico Point West; singles otherwise with the most unusual one at Utica Marsh May 21 (B. & D. DeSimone).

Dabbling ducks were a spring disaster and this for nearly all species—*sic*, Mallard max 185 Mar. 1 Baldwinsville; Black Duck max 85 Mar. 27 DH-Scott Swamp; Gadwall max 45 Mar. 26 FH; Pintail max 300 Mar. 20 Clay Swamp; Green-winged Teal max 20 (incredibly low) Apr. 20 Clay Swamp; Blue-winged Teal max 24 Apr. 23 DH-Scott Swamp; American Wigeon max 45 (amazingly low) Mar. 17 FH-Seneca River flats; Northern Shoveler max four Apr. 2 DH; Wood Duck max 40 May 22 Scott Swamp. The only rare dabbling for the spring was a male **EUROPEAN WIGEON** Mar. 20 west of Oswego (M. Rusk). A huge diving duck flight noted on Lake Ontario and Little Sodus Bay with impressive numbers there briefly in the last third of March—however, numbers of divers were very low on Oneida L and in the ice-choked waters of eastern L Ontario. Maxima include Redhead 2,200 Mar. 20 LSB; Ring-necked Duck 730 Mar. 20 LSB and Pond Hundred and 117 Mar. 19 Onondaga L; Canvasback 2,000 Mar. 20 LSB; Greater Scaup 6,550 Mar. 25 LSB and L Ontario; Lesser Scaup 1,020 Mar. 26 LSB-Oswego; Common Goldeneye 500 Mar. 20 LSB-L Ontario; Bufflehead 290 Mar. 20 LSB; and Common Merganser 2,000 Mar. 20 LSB-L Ontario; this huge diving duck flight was not shared by Oldsquaw (max 75 Apr. 20 DH), White-winged Scoter (max 300 May 15 DH), Hooded Merganser (max 60 Mar. 26 LSB), and Red-breasted Merganser (max 200—miserably low—Apr. 10 DH). Rare diving ducks include a male **BARROW'S GOLDENEYE** Mar. 6 at Caughdenoy, a pair of **SURF SCOTERS** Apr. 30 Salmon River at SSSP, and the now sadly rare Ruddy Duck—two Mar. 10 DH, two Mar. 19 Beaver L, and one Apr. 3 FH.

HAWKS—ALCIDS: Turkey Vulture: expanding eastward; now regular in small numbers east to Town of Marshall, Oneida Co. and West Winfield in southern Herkimer Co. The Derby Hill figures are presented here in chart form.

DERBY HILL SPRING RAPTOR SUMMARY

Species	Date Range	90% Date Range	Peak Tallies	+ Date	Totals
Turkey Vulture	Mar. 9-Jun. 2	Mar. 29-May 1	157	Mar. 30	683
Goshawk	Feb. 24-Apr. 11	Feb. 27-Mar. 29	7	Mar. 9	40
Sharp-shinned Hawk	Feb. 27-May 22	Mar. 29-May 4	982	Apr. 21	3,919
Cooper's Hawk	Mar. 5-May 17	Mar. 12-Apr. 22	50	Mar. 30	269
Red-tailed Hawk	Feb. 22-Jun. 2	Mar. 5-Apr. 22	589	Mar. 29	3,701
Red-shouldered Hawk	Mar. 5-May 12	Mar. 9-Mar. 30	266	Mar. 29	935
Broad-winged Hawk	Apr. 13-Jun. 2	Apr. 20-May 6	8,105	Apr. 21	16,107
Rough-legged Hawk	Feb. 12-May 6	Feb. 27-Apr. 22	44	Apr. 21	203
Golden Eagle	Mar. 9-Apr. 21	Mar. 12-Apr. 21	10	Apr. 21	25

<u>Species</u>	<u>Date Range</u>	<u>90% Date Range</u>	<u>Peak Tallies</u>	<u>+ Date</u>	<u>Totals</u>
Bald Eagle	Mar. 8-May 6	--	2	Mar. 8	5
Marsh Hawk	Feb. 24-May 6	Feb. 27-Apr. 30	57	Apr. 21	337
Osprey	Mar. 29-Jun. 2	Apr. 11-May 12	28	May 4	130
Peregrine Falcon	Apr. 11-May 4	--	singles only		3
Merlin	Mar. 12-May 4	--	singles only		5
American Kestrel	Feb. 26-May 22	Mar. 10-May 1	55	Mar. 28	283
Unidentified	--	--	--		196
Total					26,850

Record high counts were achieved at DH for Turkey Vulture and Golden Eagle; record low for Goshawk; nearly record high tallies were logged for Red-tailed and Red-shouldered Hawks, the first upswing in Red-shouldered Hawk in several years. Note the concentration of peak dates Mar. 29-30 and again Apr. 21 and be aware that virtually no other days had notable numbers of migrant raptors; it was a remarkably concentrated flight this year. Besides the rare Peregrine Falcon and the declining Bald Eagle, the other notable raptor was a **BLACK VULTURE** Mar. 30 (GAS,DM,H. Axtell,mob), the second in four years. American Coot: very scarce—max only 15 Apr. 24 FH. Spring shorebirds staged a surprisingly good April flight and a brief but beautiful late May movement—the late Mar.-Apr. max consisted of 42 Killdeer Mar. 27 DH, Common Snipe 12 Apr. 28 Six-mile Creek, 16 Greater Yellowlegs May 1 Six-mile Creek, 26 Lesser Yellowlegs May 1 Six-mile Creek, and the most surprising tally, 115 Pectoral Sandpiper Apr. 28 Six-mile Creek. Late May shorebird maxima include 16 Black-bellied Plover, 20 Ruddy Turnstone, 28 Red Knot, and 22 Short-billed Dowitcher all at Sandy Pond Inlet May 29. Rare shorebirds for the spring are a **BUFF-BREASTED SANDPIPER** May 28 and 30 SPI (first for the region and the state—P. DeBenedictis,FGS) and a male **WILSON'S PHALAROPE** May 17 near Lakeland (FGS). Ring-billed Gull: 3,000 to 7,000/day thru late March on the ice of LSB at FH, obviously a major staging area for the species locally. Bonaparte's Gull: spring max a wretched seven Mar. 11 FH; virtually unrecorded elsewhere. The tern picture grows steadily worse—max are 30 Common Tern May 14 Oswego, three Caspian Tern May 26 SPI, and ten Black Tern May 26 SSSP; with the loss of the N. Syracuse group, there are no extant Black Tern colonies in Onondaga Co. now.

PIGEONS—WOODPECKERS: Despite a massive food supply in the local tent caterpillar outbreak, both species of cuckoos were remarkably scarce—a total of three Yellow-billed and two Black-billed were reported for all observers for all of May; numbers did appear to pick up in mid-June, however. Whip-poor-will: first noted May 1 (rather late) Syracuse. Chimney Swift: max 170 May 13 CV-Fish Gulf, a large number for spring away from L Ontario. Common Flicker: max for DH 130 (a bit thin) Apr. 18 with not even minor flights after that. Red-headed Woodpecker: max nine DH May 16, undoubtedly birds passing along LOL to St. Lawrence River Valley breeding localities. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: singularly scarce thru spring—max only two Apr. 17 thru 28 at various locales.

FLYCATCHERS—STARLINGS: Eastern Kingbird: max 26 DH May 15; still migrating by there Jun. 2. Eastern Phoebe: first noted Mar. 11 one DH—that bird probably did not survive the later cold weather; later tallies very poor—probably hard hit by the severe winter just passed—max only six May 12 (very late) DH. Willow and Alder Flycatchers: arr May 19 three N. Syracuse and May 17 one Clark's Reservation respectively; however, counts of local breeding areas showed that neither species arrived in numbers until Jun. 8-10, very much like the pattern of cuckoo numbers and of Indigo Bunting. Least Flycatcher: 100 singing birds on Sandy Pond dunes May 19—it sounded like continuous popcorn popping—a record local tally and mayhaps for the state also. Horned Lark: max only 200 Apr. 8 near Oneida; frankly scarce now both as breeder and migrant. Swallow data—arrival dates are Tree Swallow Mar. 27 (late) two Scott Swamp; Bank Swallow Apr. 19 (very late) two DH; Rough-winged Swallow Apr. 10 one DH; Barn Swallow Apr. 10 one DH; Cliff Swallow Apr.

24 (very late) one DH; and Purple Martin Apr. 21 (very late) four DH. Swallow max for spring strikingly low with best tallies Tree Swallow 2,000, Bank Swallow 1,000, Rough-winged Swallow 20, Barn Swallow 1,000 all May 8 DH-LOL; max Cliff Swallow 12 (very low) May 15 DH and Purple Martin 40 May 19 SP-SSSP, probably mostly breeding birds. It appears the local Tree Swallows were badly hit by the severe winter of '76-'77 in the southern U.S. as local numbers may properly be said to have been decimated. Blue Jay: heavy LOL migration—951 May 12, 3,500 May 16, 1,500 May 17 all DH; still passing there Jun. 2. Common Crow: max 7,000 Feb. 27 with lesser numbers later—1,767 Mar. 8, 1,740 Mar. 9, 1,900 Mar. 12, 820 Mar. 29, 450 Apr. 2, all DH—over 16,000 noted in passage there. Tufted Titmouse: three singing birds CV May 14 indicates some winter survival. Winter Wren: migration max a wretched two Apr. 23 LOL; seems to have been hard hit by the severe '76-'77 winter. Carolina Wren: two singing birds in DeWitt—the only ones left after that terrible winter. Long-billed Marsh Wren: max only 11 May 14 Bridgeport area; another species hard hit by the winter. Mockingbird: singles noted in many areas around DeWitt, Clay, N. Syracuse, and L Ontario; appears to have come thru much better than either the Tufted Titmouse or the Carolina Wren. Gray Catbird: max 35 May 19 SP dunes—otherwise only fairly common. Brown Thrasher: max seven CV May 17, probably mostly breeders; scarce generally and, like the wrens, probably much reduced by the past severe winter. Hermit Thrush: spring max only four May 15 LOL—another victim of the rough winter. Swainson's Thrush: max 18 May 18 Syr. and 12 May 19 SP dunes—no late birds noted. Eastern Bluebird: max five Apr. 11 DH—incredibly scarce away from there. Golden-crowned Kinglet: seasonal high only 20 (very low) Apr. 7 FH and Ruby-crowned Kinglet only slightly better—50 Apr. 23 LOL woodlots; suspect both species much reduced by the winter's severity. Northern Shrike: departure date Mar. 20 one Bolivar, the last of a very good irruption.

VIREOS—WARBLERS: WHITE-EYED VIREO: One May 22 SP dunes; now almost an annual spring vagrant. Yellow-throated Vireo: max five May 21 FH. Solitary Vireo: arr very early—Apr. 19 two Syr; rather scarce thereafter. Red-eyed Vireo: max 60 May 30 Tug Hill Plateau—probably includes both breeders and later migrants. Warbling Vireo: max 32 CV-Fish Gulf May 14 and 12 Onondaga L May 30, definitely above average numbers. Warbler waves were much delayed—none noted in late April or early May. Major waves occurred May 13-14, 16, 18-19, 22, and 26 with the 18-19th outstanding; warm fair weather in late May allowed everything—and I mean everything—to zip right thru; essentially May warbling was ten days—May 16-26, zilch otherwise. Above average numbers (max only given) were achieved by Tennessee Warbler 110 May 19 Syr, Yellow Warbler 120 May 19 SP dunes, Magnolia Warbler 25 May 19 SP dunes, Black-throated Blue Warbler 28 May 19 SP dunes, Yellow-rumped (Myrtle) Warbler 240 Apr. 21 DH, Bay-breasted Warbler 48 May 19 SP dunes, Common Yellowthroat 60 May 19 SP dunes, Canada Warbler 18 May 19 SP dunes, and American Redstart 40 May 21 FH. Especially scarce (max only given) were Black-and-white Warbler five May 19 SP dunes, Nashville Warbler 16 May 13 CV-Fish Gulf, Northern Parula four May 19 SP dunes, Cape May Warbler 12 May 19 Syr, Black-throated Green Warbler 10 May 15 LOL woodlots, Blackburnian Warbler seven May 19 SP dunes, Chestnut-sided Warbler eight May 19 SP dunes, and Palm Warbler four May 12 DH. Both the low numbers of the earlier species and the striking concentration of maximal counts on May 19 stand out sharply.

Rarer warblers include seven **"BREWSTER'S WARBLERS"** and a **"LAWRENCE'S WARBLER"** (one May 21 near Brookfield—B. & D. DeSimone); **PRAIRIE WARBLER** one May 21 CV; and Yellow-breasted Chat one May 21-24 CV—however, the last did not persist.

WEAVERS—SPARROWS: Red-winged Blackbird: max 35,000 Mar. 17 and 70,000 Mar. 30, both DH; birds still moving by DH in early June; Rusty Blackbird: max 400 Apr. 21 and again Apr. 23 both DH; present to May 15 six DH. Cardinal: survived the winter very well—max 24 CV-Fish Gulf May 12 and now common enough to be a significant part of local roadkills. Indigo Bunting: counts in late May only one-five/day; numbers did not arrive locally until the second week of June. Evening Grosbeak: light return flight by DH—

max only 110 Apr. 2 with last date there May 15 ten. Pine Grosbeak: the last of a mini-flight—19 Mar. 3 near Eaton (G. Church). House Finch: expansion accelerating—pairs now at seven sites in Syr., and also in Utica, N. Syr., and Oswego. **LARK BUNTING**: a gorgeous male in full breeding plumage and song May 19-22 Wampsville (M., B., and S. Peebles, mob), the first regional record.

Most local sparrows seem much reduced in numbers with even the ubiquitous Chipping and Song Sparrows showing lower tallies. Meadow or grassland sparrows seemed particularly low—max are Savannah Sparrow 12 May 16 Clay, Grasshopper Sparrow singles only, Henslow's Sparrow two May 9 near Canastota, Vesper Sparrow three Mar. 31 Pleasant L near Phoenix. Similarly scarce were Fox Sparrow—max four Apr. 2 Clay with the last noted Apr. 20 two also Clay.

CLAY-COLORED SPARROW: a singing bird with White-crowned Sparrows May 15 Mexico Point West (M. Rusk), only the fifth local record. White-crowned Sparrow: arr May 1 three near Chittenango and also two DH; like the warblers, very few in the next ten days but a heavy migration May 13-19 with max 295 May 16 LOL woodlots. Song Sparrow: max 110 Mar. 12 DH and 90 Mar. 26 DH—Scott Swamp—much reduced, particularly if compared with last year's very high tallies. Snow Bunting: max 600 Mar. 19 Skyline Dr. near Oriskany Falls; last noted Apr. 9 110 same area (late for so many).

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REGION 6 — ST. LAWRENCE

LEE B. CHAMBERLAINE

Spring of 1977 came early in the lowlands but winter hung on in the Tug Hill and Adirondack sections with snow present into late April. The May snowstorm missed most of the lower-lying sections in the Region. Temperatures ranged from 20° F to the mid 60°s F (-6° C to 15° C).

May brought cool and dry conditions with very little rainfall—the opposite of last year. Lake levels dropped 2 feet below last year's and waterfowl nesting success was much improved from last year.

Rarities for the period were Red-throated Loon, Red-necked Grebe, Cattle Egret, Least Bittern, Red-shouldered Hawk, both eagles, Am. Golden Plover, Whimbrel, Marbled Godwit, Short-billed Marsh Wren, Bohemian Waxwing, House Finch, Grasshopper Sparrow, Henslow's Sparrow and Clay-colored Sparrow.

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Abbreviations: ED—Eldorado Shores; LWMA—Lakeview WMA; PRWMA—Perch River WMA; RMPD—Robert Moses Power Dam; RMSP—Robert Moses State Park; SLR—St. Lawrence River; ULLWMA—Upper and Lower Lakes WMA; WHWMA—Wilson Hill WMA.

Corrigenda: Vol. XXVII, No. 1, p. 49, Remove **LAUGHING GULL**: 1 ED Sept. 11 (TLC), at request of observer.

LOONS—DUCKS: Com. Loon: many reports; new location ULLWMA May 25; some new nesting locations also. **RED-THROATED LOON**: pair Nichols Isl WHWMA May 27 good description (JAV). **RED-NECKED GREBE**: 4 Pillar Pt. Apr. 17 (RCW). **Horned Grebe**: 1 only May 7 (JAV). **Pied-billed Grebe**: arrived WHWMA Apr. 15. **Double-crested**