

1977 FEDERATION SPRING MIGRATION SURVEY

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Birders participating in the Federation's statewide 1977 spring migration survey recorded a total of 271 species plus two hybrids. The survey period was May 7-22. Most of the thirty surveys (two fewer than in 1976) were conducted on the weekend of May 14-15. One of the two pelagic trips was held on June 11 but is included in this report.

Over 600 birders participated in the statewide coverage. The observers from the Genesee Ornithological Society and Rochester Birding Association tallied the most species again this year—206 compared with 214 last year. For single day observation periods, the Buffalo Ornithological Society followed with 186 species, then Moriches Bay Audubon Society with 182, and Onondaga Audubon Society with 170. North Country Bird Club reported 199 species during the entire month of May.

Although adding species to the cumulative list becomes more difficult each year, four new ones were reported in this, the fourth year of the survey. These were Iceland Gull (two birds on a pelagic trip), Gray Partridge from the Watertown area, Long-billed Dowitcher on Long Island, and Lark Bunting—a male bird at Oneida which attracted birders from a wide area. A fifth new species, Swainson's Warbler, was reported from Columbia County but must be considered hypothetical due to the rarity of the species, the out-of-range locality, and the lack of sufficient details of the sighting by the two observers.

Many groups felt that passerines were low in numbers this year. Several groups' species totals were down slightly from 1976. As in 1976, pelagic trips and the Adirondack observers helped round out the list of "specialty" birds. And as always there were numerous "misses" such as Northern Fulmar, Greater and Cory's Shearwaters, Harlequin Duck, both eiders, Bald Eagle, Spruce Grouse, King Rail, Am. Golden Plover, Red Phalarope, Glaucous Gull, Long-eared Owl, Boreal Chickadee, Yellow-throated and Connecticut Warblers, Blue Grosbeak and White-winged Crossbill.

Several lingering species were reported, such as Pine Grosbeak and Common Redpoll in the Watertown area, Tree Sparrow near Watertown and in Allegany County—both locales at somewhat high elevations, and Fox Sparrows by four groups—all at similar locales except the feeder-frequenting birds at Geneva. It has become clear with four

years' experience that these species do linger into mid-May in the sub-montane areas. Goshawks, Cooper's and Rough-legged Hawks were seen by several groups, and both Peregrine and Merlin were reported.

Among passerines some interesting observations were made. Yellow-bellied Flycatchers were well reported but only one Acadian Flycatcher was found, compared with four reports last year. A White-eyed Vireo appeared at Clifton Springs. Orange-crowned Warblers showed up only in the Rochester and Buffalo areas. While in 1976, the Kentucky Warbler was located by six groups, this year only two were tallied. "Brewster's" and "Lawrence's" Warblers were seen by several groups and Clay-colored Sparrow appeared on two reports—on Long Island and in the Watertown area.

Trends in distribution and abundance of species are beginning to be evident from the year to year study of these surveys. Turkeys this year were found on eight surveys, including Long Island, the Catskill region, Ithaca and the southeastern part of state. The House Finch was present on 22 out of 28 non-pelagic surveys, being absent primarily in central parts of state and Adirondacks. The Common Nighthawk seems to be a vanishing bird as it was recorded on only 11 of 28 land counts. Numbers were reported for four counts with a total of only 11 birds. As in the past three years only a single Loggerhead Shrike was found in the entire state—again in the Watertown area. Another species in trouble seems to be the Vesper Sparrow which was not reported at all on twelve surveys. For the eight groups which reported the species, the total was a mere 29 individuals, a frightening number for what formerly was one of our common roadside birds. The once accidental Mockingbird was reported this year on 21 of 28 land counts, missing only from the upper Mohawk Valley and the central Adirondacks.

The spring migration survey is intended to be fun for participants after a long, bitter winter but it can also be valuable in disclosing trends in distribution and abundance, especially if the numbers of designated species are reported. Thanks to all groups who participated, with special appreciation to those who indicated numbers of individuals.

The survey dates for 1978 will be May 6-21. All clubs are invited to participate. Details will appear in an early spring issue of *New York Birders*.

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