

Three species deserve special awards. The first, for the most confused, goes to the Purple Gallinule that landed in a yard in Queens and was taken to Jamaica Bay where it wandered around on the dry paths under the feet of the birders. The second, for the most obliging, goes to the three White Pelicans that had the good taste to land for a while in Region 5, soon moved over to Region 3, and from there made sorties into Region 2. But the Bird of the Season (BOTS) award must go to the two Townsend's Warblers; the photographs taken at Great Gull Island and at New Haven in Oswego County serve to remove the species from the state's Hypothetical List.

This is my last season as the Highlights editor, and I would like to thank publicly all the regional editors, who have been so cooperative. Their hard work has made mine easy.

[Eds. Note: The Editors would like to express their appreciation to Bob Smart for the superb job he has done as Highlights editor. His enthusiasm, and his knowledgeable comments and interpretations have greatly enhanced the Regional Reports, and have helped us all to see where an individual record fits into the overall picture of the birdlife of New York State.]

REGION 1 – NIAGARA FRONTIER

VIVIAN MILLS PITZRICK

Backward, turned backward, was time in its flight—or so seemed the spring season as the virile winter, taking second place only to last year's as vilest of the century, persisted for a week into March, extending to 42 days the period when temperatures never rose above freezing. Although major flooding was feared as the above-normal snow cover melted, there was a beautiful dissipation of the snow. March and April were cold and dry with smaller lakes iced in until April 10, ten days past normal. Although May began cold and wet, a dry heat wave took over April 19, continuing to the end of the period. With few exceptions, "flights" were too weak to deserve the name, apparently most movements overflying the Region. The two-weeks-late season retarded migrants, delayed nesting and held back foliage, and before the last week in May when adequate cover finally developed, nests were built lower than usual or even on the ground. However, with the advent of hot, sunny weather, all nature surged to make up for lost time.

The spring's bright side includes: 1) larger egg clutches 2) a good flight of Turkey Vultures and Rough-legged Hawks, and a fair flight of other hawks—most resident raptors doing well 3) an abundance of field mice, protected by lasting snow cover—a good food source 4) fine reports of Red-bellied and Red-headed Woodpeckers 5) improved status for Horned Larks and swallows, except Cliff

Swallows 6) crows nesting in lowlands, possibly moving out of hills to escape the Goshawk (S. Eaton) 7) an irruption of Red-breasted Nuthatches 8) numbers of E. Bluebirds holding up well 9) Warbling Vireos and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks on the increase, the latter feeding on pine tortoise scale; many, many Evening Grosbeaks, one pair courtship feeding near Allegany late in the season (S. Eaton) 10) House Finches still expanding; Purple Finches everywhere and lots of lovely little Common Redpolls 11) plentiful Pine Siskins and Am. Goldfinches, the former staying late and showing courtship behavior (S. Eaton).

On the dark side are 1) honey bees hard hit by the severe winter 2) bird numbers generally down—259 banded at Farmersville Station in April being under half that for the two previous years (Clark) 3) poor duck and sandpiper flights 4) absence of Double-crested Cormorants 5) few reports of Ruffed Grouse and Turkeys, and fewer still of Ring-necked Pheasants 6) only a scattering of cuckoos despite a big tent caterpillar outbreak 7) almost no Common Nighthawks 8) fewer Hairy Woodpeckers and Yellow-bellied Sapsuckers 9) E. Phoebe nesting on time, disregarding the late season, but in 30% less locations than six years ago 10) very low numbers of Tufted Titmice, both kinglets, and House Wrens, and almost no Winter Wrens, Carolina Wrens, or Mockingbirds 11) continued scarcity of Grasshopper, Henslow's and Vesper Sparrows, with Field Sparrows and Chipmunk Sparrows joining the list this year.

Regional rarities include White-fronted Goose, Goshawk, Bald Eagle, Peregrine Falcon, Merlin, Sandhill Crane, Ruff, Saw-whet Owl, Acadian Flycatcher, Prothonotary Warbler, "Brewster's" Warbler, Prairie Warbler, Kentucky Warbler, House Finch, Hoary Redpoll and Clay-colored Sparrow.

Abbreviations: AC—April Census, Apr. 9, compiled by P. and R. Schwartz, through the Buffalo Ornithological Society (BOS hereafter); GMA or WMA—Game or Wildlife Management Area; NP or NS—Nature Preserve or Sanctuary; NWR—National Wildlife Refuge; Res—Reservoir; SP—State Park.

Contributors: Robert Andrie, Elmer Becker (EBk), Esther Becker (EsBk), Elizabeth Brooks, Doris Burton, Lou Burton, Donald Clark, Jane Clark, Ed Curtis (Weather Data, Wellsville), Frances DeGroff, Stephen Eaton, Genevieve Fish, David Freeland, Helen Graves, Matthew Hotchkiss, Norman Ives, Clarence Klingensmith, Frederick Meyer ("Bird Notes," *Olean Times Herald*), Katherine Palmer, Michael Pitzrick, Raymond Pitzrick, Vivian Pitzrick, Earl Schriver, Ann Scott (ASc), Bruce Smalley, James VanScoy, Regina VanScoy, Audrey Westley; and initialed observers: Patricia Andrie, Marcya Foster, Harriette Klabunde, Walter Klabunde, Alice McKale, Willard McKale, Harold Mitchell, John Morse, William Rebovich, Frances Rew, Robert Sundell, Alice Ulrich.

LOONS—DUCKS: The best seasonal count of Com. Loons was 11 at Cuba L May 6. Of the half dozen Red-necked Grebes noted from widespread areas, one was unusually late at Cuba L May 3. As snows melted in Mar. and Apr., four more dead Horned Grebes were found in Cattaraugus Co., probably killed in the early Jan. storm which downed so many near Quaker L, Allegany SP (SE). Maximum of the migration for Horned Grebe was a low 80 at Dunkirk Harbor Mar. 24. Regional long-legged waders were in very low numbers including: four Great Egrets, one a day—early bird at Iroquois NWR Apr. 3 (James+); a Black-crowned Night Heron at Farmersville Sta. Apr. 20 (DC), a new and unusual location, plus eight others from three sites; and only two Am. Bitterns, one at Cuba L Apr. 22 and the other at Iroquois NWR Apr. 24.

The graceful Whistling Swans put on another show this year with 432 on the AC, highest in 10 years, and the largest flock of 700 appearing in Conewango Twp. Mar. 31. One stayed

late at Dunkirk until May 31 (JM). Maximum Canada Geese were estimated at 78,000 in the Oak Orchard area Apr. 17 while about 1500 rested near Rossburg Mar. 22-30. The 15 that wintered with a Snow Goose along the Allegheny R near Allegany were still there Mar. 4 and appeared near Oramel two weeks later (*vide* SE). The resident pair of Canada Geese at Farmersville Sta. was nesting in Apr. (DC, JC). Although *very rare*, the **WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE** at Iroquois NWR Apr. 2 (FR, Chapple+) marks the third consecutive year for this species in our Region. Total reported Snow Geese, in addition to the one above, was two on the AC and at least 12 white morph and four "blues." Ducks with higher counts than last year on the AC were: Black Duck 179, Pintail 164, Wood Duck 114, Canvasback 628, Lesser Scaup 1645, Com. Goldeneye 1367, Bufflehead 1232, White-winged Scoter 82 (highest in 10 years), Black Scoter 31, Ruddy Duck 15, Hooded Merganser 169, Com. Merganser 6637 (highest in 10 years), and Red-breasted Merganser 3419. Ducks unusually low on the AC were: Green-winged Teal 62 (100 in 1977), Blue-winged Teal 184 (264 last year) and Ring-necked Duck 186 (416 last year). Dabbling ducks appeared in pitiful numbers for some species with highest reports: Mallard 35 Hume Apr. 7; Black Duck 4 Cuba L Apr. 29; Gadwall 15 Conewango Mar. 31; Pintail 250 Oak Orchard Apr. 2; Green-winged Teal 150 Conewango Mar. 31; Blue-winged Teal 50 Conewango Mar. 31; Am. Wigeon 300 Conewango Mar. 31; N. Shoveler 14 Tonawanda WMA Apr. 30; and Wood Duck 18 Hume Mar. 25. Diving ducks reached maxima as: Redhead 88 Celeron Mar. 18; Ring-necked Duck 200 Conewango Mar. 31; Canvasback 7 Cuba L Apr. 3; Lesser Scaup 50 Cuba L Apr. 3-24; Com. Goldeneye 20 Limestone Mar. 8; Bufflehead 60 Cuba L Apr. 25; Oldsquaw 15 Cuba L May 3; White-winged Scoter 18 Allegany Apr. 8; Hooded Merganser 80 Randolph Apr. 8; and Red-breasted Merganser 20 Cuba L Apr. 17, 18. The increasingly scarce Ruddy Duck was reported from only five locations with a total of but 10 birds.

HAWKS—ALCIDS: Migrating hawks just dribbled through, with highest one day reports: Turkey Vulture 122 Allegany Rd. Apr. 1; Sharp-shinned Hawk 25 Youngstown Apr. 6; Cooper's Hawk four Lyndonville Mar. 22; Red-tailed Hawk 95 Youngstown Apr. 6; Red-shouldered Hawk 32 Youngstown Mar. 31; Broad-winged Hawk 174 Allegany Rd. May 3; Rough-legged Hawk 10 Youngstown Mar. 31; and Marsh Hawk seven Lyndonville Apr. 3. 180 Turkey Vultures on the AC was highest ever. A **GOSHAWK** appeared on the AC and singles were reported from two locations. Resident Sharp-shinned and Cooper's Hawks numbered 21 and 19 respectively, with usually a single bird seen in an area. Buteos are doing well, including the Red-shouldered Hawk. With 60 Rough-legged Hawks on the AC (6 last year), 50 were noted from widespread locations throughout the season until the last three at Iroquois NWR Apr. 30. An imm **BALD EAGLE** was identified at Dunkirk Mar. 24 (FR, AU) and one, also imm, was at Oak Orchard May 8 (WR, Meddaugh), possibly Florida residents coming north for the summer. Among many Osprey reports was one early bird in Amity Mar. 31 (DB, LB). A **PEREGRINE FALCON** was found for the AC and one was in the Tonawanda WMA Apr. 28 (WR). A **MERLIN** was "watched with scope set at 40 x at 75 yards eating Starling—left after eating and circling to altitude towards north—3 mi. w. of Allegany" Apr. 23 (SE). A **SANDHILL CRANE** was found at Oak Orchard in Apr. by competent birders from Rochester (*vide* FM, Olean *Times Herald* Apr. 28), and a "crane" (species?—same bird?) was seen at nearby Iroquois NWR Apr. 2 (Klonicks+). Sharp-eyed observers located single Virginia Rails in three areas and single Soras at two sites in May. At least six Com. Gallinules were totaled from four areas in May. Noteworthy sandpiper reports include: a total three Upland Sandpipers from two locations—a species more difficult to find each year; 75 Pectoral Sandpipers at Tonawanda WMA Apr. 16, a good flight; 50 Dunlin at Cuba Marsh May 19-22, an astonishing number for the area; and a rare **RUFF** at Tonawanda WMA Apr. 16, 17 (FR, Buck+) and again at the same location May 2, 3 (WR+). Unusual larids were scarce. A single Glaucous Gull appeared at Dunkirk Harbor Mar. 4, the only report, and 200 Bonaparte's Gulls were estimated at Cuba L Apr. 3-30, an enormous number away from the Great Lakes. A max 24 Caspian Terns were seen at Yates Apr. 23 while at least 10 others were totaled from four areas during Apr. and May. A Com. Tern was counted

on the AC. Uncommon away from the Great Lakes plain were single Black Terns near Alfred May 7 and at Cuba L May 10.

PIGEONS—WOODPECKERS: Total reported cuckoos numbered only 11 Black-billed and four Yellow-billed. Snowy Owls appeared this season as singles at Buffalo Harbor Mar. 5-12 (RA, MF+) and at Times Beach Mar. 16 (DF), the same number as last spring. Seven Long-eared Owls were counted on the AC and the only reports of the Short-eared were a max 12 at Lyndonville Mar. 8-27 and 2 at Somerset Mar. 12. A **SAW-WHET OWL** was spotted at E. Amherst Apr. 8 (DF), probably the same one appearing on the AC for the first time since 1964. Single Whip-poor-wills stopped at Ft. Niagara May 12 (HK, WK) and at Tonawanda WMA May 21 (WR). Disregarding the late season, a Com. Nighthawk arrived at Buffalo Apr. 27 (DF), a week early, and but one other was noted at Forest Lawn May 13 (Wendling+).

FLYCATCHERS—STARLINGS: Flycatchers are struggling after two successive hard winters, but most seem to be gaining slowly. E. Phoebe numbered 86 on the AC (75 last year). Single Yellow-bellied Flycatchers were seen at Delaware Park May 13 and in Eggertsville May 26, 31. An **ACADIAN FLYCATCHER** was found in Yates May 24 (DF), the first Regional report since 1975 and 1976. Single Olive-sided Flycatchers appeared in four locations in May. The Horned Lark is cautiously noted as doing better with more on regular monthly reports, with Regional maximum 65 in Carroll Twp. Mar. 4. On the AC were 22 *Eremophila alpestris alpestris* (55 last year) and 323 *E. a. praticola* (289 last year). Attesting to destruction by two terrible winters are tallies from the AC: Tufted Titmouse 17, Winter Wren eight, Carolina Wren one, and Mockingbird four. Long-billed Marsh Wrens were noted as two at Tift Farm May 13 and five more at Iroquois NWR May 18, and one Short-billed was seen at Somerset May 29. Thrushes were well reported including 36 E. Bluebirds counted from 13 areas. Only six Blue-gray Gnatcatchers were located for the season. Five faithful—and surviving—Golden-crowned Kinglets were back on nesting grounds near Alfred during May (EB). For a good Northern Shrike flight, 13 birds were found. Loggerheads appeared as five on the AC, and singles at Barre Mar. 27 (Walker, Orfeo), in Hume Apr. 8 (HM, VP+) and at Amherst Apr. 10 (DF).

VIREOS—WARBLERS: Five Yellow-throated Vireos were seen May 13-15, located in 3 areas, and single Philadelphia Vireos were identified in five territories. Accents from the warbler season include: a **PROTHONOTARY WARBLER** at Iroquois NWR May 10, 20, 21 (JM, RA+) and a **"BREWSTER'S" WARBLER** at the same location May 28 (WR); a disappearing Tennessee Warbler migration in the Southern Tier but a max 50 birds at E. Amherst May 12; an Orange-crowned Warbler at E. Amherst May 12; five N. Parulas, total, from three areas; near Alfred, 100 migrating Yellow-rumped Warblers May 22 and 3 nesting pairs May 30; at least eight Blackpoll Warblers for Regional total, including one early at Delaware Park May 9 (King); an early Pine Warbler at New Albion Apr. 16 (Chapple) plus singles at Tift Farm Apr. 29 and at E. Amherst May 19; single **PRAIRIE WARBLERS** at Alfred May 16 (EB) and in Amity Twp. May 18 (VP), the latter a new area; six N. Waterthrushes counted from four locations; single Louisiana Waterthrushes at 10-Mile Rd., Allegany, Apr. 16 (SE) and at Newstead May 19 (DF); a **KENTUCKY WARBLER** at Limestone May 13 (Cattaraugus Co. Bird Club *vide* RV, JV); and single Hooded Warblers at Alfred May 23, at Limestone May 13 and in Zoar Valley May 20.

WEAVERS—SPARROWS: With the exception of a good count of E. Meadowlarks of 565, icterid tallies on the AC were low with: Red-winged Blackbirds 16,364; Rusty Blackbirds 267; Com. Grackles 16,816; and Brown-headed Cowbirds 3242. Single **HOUSE FINCHES** were seen in two new locations: Farmersville Sta. Mar. 11 (DC) and Holland Apr. 10 (EBk, EsBk). At least two **HOARY REDPOLLS** were identified at Eggertsville Mar. 3-30 (AM, WM) and 2 appeared for the AC. With 1312 on the AC (none last year), Com. Redpolls reached a high count of 400 at N. Tonawanda in Mar. (Clemesha, Laux). A few crossbills were seen: Red as three at Hamburg Mar. 25 (RA, PA), one at E. Amherst Apr. 15, 30 (DF), and six at Holland Apr. 28 (EBk, EsBk); and White-winged as three on the AC, and at

least 10 totaled from five areas. The only reported Grasshopper Sparrows were four at Tonawanda WMA May 15 and one at Somerset May 29, being absent this year in the Alfred area where formerly common. The declining Henslow's Sparrow was noted as seven at Clarence May 4 and one near Alfred May 21. Tree Sparrows stayed late again at Belmont, with two there May 15 (DB, LB). Single CLAY-COLORED SPARROWS were identified at Eggertsville May 11 (AM, WM, Reeveses) and at Grand Island May 22-25 (Nutting, Burch). Maximum of a slim migration for White-crowned Sparrows was 35 at Forest Lawn May 9 and of White-throated Sparrows was 150 in the same area the same day. From the great Fox Sparrow flight, 41 were on the AC (18 last year) and a total of 28 birds were reported from 18 areas. More than usual Lincoln's Sparrows were found: 13 in all, from eight sites! Lapland Longspurs were reported as two in Carroll Twp. Mar. 5, five at Ransomville Mar. 7, and two in Yates Mar. 12. Maximum Snow Buntings for the Southern Tier was 250 at Caneadea Mar. 6 and for the northern plains was 500 at Ransomville Mar. 7.

Amity Lake, Belmont, New York 14813

REGION TWO — GENESEE

ROBERT SPAHN

Weather again dominated the spring migration with a few brief periods of excitement interspersed among long, dull stretches either too cold, too hot, or with adverse winds. The long bottlenecks in the migration ended with brief surges when the onrush of "late" migrants swept with them numbers of species either vagrant or early for the dates. Spring was late. The first above-freezing day since January 25 occurred on March 9, low—4° F (-15° C) and high—41° F (5° C). Warming followed slowly. Ice held most of the smaller, shallower bodies of water in its grip well into April. A final snow fell on April 22 with depth ranging from one to three inches depending on location. A stretch of good weather with south winds March 14-19 culminated in a good push of waterfowl blowing in on strong westerlies on the 19th. Another surge March 30-April 1 brought an influx of passerines, waterfowl, and a few herons. Another unfavorable period followed, ending with a good flight April 11-13. Except for a continuous trickle of individuals, migration was then uniformly poor through about May 8, excepting also a few hours on April 29. During this period, cool temperatures and winds in the NW-NE quadrant prevailed. For most observers, spring migration occurred May 9-14 and 19-21. Ideal temperatures, winds, and frontal spacings swept in nearly all the bright, familiar migrants. A lack of development of foliage left them highly visible, in sharp contrast with last spring. Even many non-birders commented on sightings during this period. The activity died quickly. May ended with a final week, very calm, hot, dry and quiet.

Continuing on a theme pursued erratically the past several seasons, trends are very difficult to analyze seriously, particularly during a spring migration with their very complex dependence on weather and observer activity. As a regional comment, though probably little different from other regions, the records, particularly at this season, are predominantly those of bird finders—many very good field birders, rather than those of students of population dynamics. The records