

1979 FEDERATION SPRING MIGRATION SURVEY

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During May, 1979, thirty-one birding groups participated in the sixth annual spring migration survey of the Federation of New York State Bird Clubs. Over 600 people were engaged in this statewide ornithological orgy which, in toto, listed 269 species. This is a substantial decrease from last year's 284, which can possibly be accounted for in part by the "uncooperative weather" described by numerous observers.

The number of species listed by the various groups ranged from 54 to 209 with an average of 125. Again, as in four of the previous five years, the Rochester area count was highest with 209 species—down five from their 214 in 1976. The next highest was the Buffalo count at 178 species.

Each year, adding new species to the cumulative total becomes more difficult, but this year two were recorded—both by the Rochester count—to bring the six-year cumulative total to 319 species. The new ones were Swainson's Hawk and Forster's Tern. Species which have been seen on three or more of the five previous counts but which were "missed" this year were 17 in number: Red-necked Grebe, Little Blue Heron, Louisiana Heron, Black Scoter, Peregrine Falcon, Whimbrel, Wilson's and Northern Phalaropes, Glaucous Gull, Short-eared Owl, Chuck-will's-widow, Loggerhead Shrike, Orange-crowned and Palm Warblers, Pine Grosbeak, Common Redpoll and both crossbills. This is the second year in a row that no Loggerhead Shrikes have been seen. During the six years, only five individuals of this species have been reported, emphasizing the perilous status in New York State of this once fairly common bird. Of course, reports from one-day birding sprees do not represent the total migration picture, and several of these "missed" species were reported during the month, but were not seen on the day the surveys were made.

Horned Grebe, Cattle Egret, Oldsquaw, Gray-checked Thrush and Water Pipit were reported by fewer groups than usual. This also seemed to be a poor year for lingering winter visitants. In the early years of the survey, reports of such winter visitants as Pine Grosbeak, Common Redpoll, both crossbills, Tree and Fox Sparrows, in middle or late May were viewed with suspicion. As the years have gone on, reports of late-lingering individuals of these species have been made each year with convincing confirmatory details. It has become appar-

ent that scattered individuals do linger in the northern tier of counties and in the Adirondack foothills to these late dates, especially at feeders. In addition to the absence of crossbills, redpolls and Pine Grosbeaks, the number of reports of Evening Grosbeaks and Pine Siskins was unusually low. Species such as Common Nighthawk and Vesper Sparrow continue to be low in numbers.

Despite the generally poor to mediocre conditions, several unusual sightings were reported: Golden Eagle in Dutchess County, Snowy Egret in Clinton County, Willet in Dutchess County, Long-billed Dowitchers on eastern Long Island and in Allegany County, Worm-eating Warbler in the Geneva area, Yellow-throated Warbler in Oneida County, Kentucky Warblers in Suffolk, Queens, Sullivan and Monroe Counties, Connecticut Warbler in Geneva, Yellow-headed Blackbird at Binghamton, and a Blue Grosbeak in Rochester. The reports, this spring, of Yellow-throated and Kentucky Warblers in several parts of the state apparently represent part of a general northward movement of this species, in an arc extending from southern New England, across New York and into the midwest. This type of movement has occurred before, with other species, but there is no present explanation for this periodic generalized phenomenon.

The House Finch has now invaded almost the entire state, except for the Champlain Valley and the Adirondacks. The movement seems to be accelerating. Those two invaders from the south—the Tufted Titmouse and the Mockingbird—are now being reported from all parts of the state on spring surveys, except the north-central counties and the Adirondacks. Their absence on spring counts from these areas has been consistent now for several years.

Although these spring forays are primarily recreational, they are building up information about changes in distribution and numbers.

A copy of the detailed summary by species and participating groups has now been sent to all group compilers.

The seventh spring migration survey dates in 1980 will be the entire month of May and the first week of June. The June dates will allow inclusion of the Federation's June 7 pelagic trip and of late surveys in the Adirondacks where migration is often later than elsewhere. Details will be sent to all clubs.

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