

## REGION 5 — ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

PAUL A. DeBENEDICTIS

The Spring 1983 migration was an exceptional mix of events. March began warm and dry but ended, along with much of April, "borrowing from December to pay for our (mild) February!" Nearly a third of the very light total snowfall fell during the last two weeks of March and the first three weeks of April. What followed was a wet, cool period, extending into early June, during which at least one day of every weekend saw rain. Earlier concerns of a drought vanished. Now the problem began to look like too much water.

The early warm period brought with it an early thaw and drying of flood plains. Many of our traditional waterfowl sites never developed their potential. The early thaw also heralded the appearance of sports fishing craft on Lake Ontario (and Oneida Lake), which greatly disturbed near shore waterfowl concentrations as has been typical of recent springs. Following a very poor season for overwintering waterfowl, the end result was the poorest waterfowl flight in many seasons; only the ubiquitous Canada Goose holding its own.

A heavy snowfall 18-20 April came at a critical period for early migratory species. Swallows appear to have been much reduced in numbers by the season's end. The Purple Martin seemed especially hard hit. Sparrows were also migrating in numbers during this period, but only Savannah Sparrow appeared to be somewhat reduced in numbers afterwards. Dorothy Crumb took advantage of the snowfall to census roadsides in n. Pompey Township on 20 April. She found 55 Savannah Sparrows, 31 Vesper Sparrows, 215 Dark-eyed Juncos, 385 Song Sparrows, and 32 assorted others in ten miles of driving, along with numerous Killdeer and American Robins. (These numbers were exceeded in a similar census in 1976, when many more miles of roadside were covered.) During the cool period which followed, especially in early May, numerous observers reported Indigo Buntings and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks at feeders, normally an unusual sight in the spring.

This generally rotten weather produced one of the finest spring passerine migrations in years, with many record highs being set. Although the winter was mild, only a few exceptionally early reports were obtained, and the migration appears to have ended rather abruptly about 30 or 31 May, with few later stragglers. Roy Slack and David Muir again coordinated a banding effort at Onondaga Audubon Society's Noyes Sanctuary along Lake Ontario, with spectacular results: 646 birds (549 warblers) banded on 15 May and 270 birds (160 warblers) on 21 May. Coincidentally F. G. Scheider and party worked adjacent woodlots on both of these dates, identifying 1,147 warblers on 15 May and 793 on 21 May; these woods were nearly as productive 14 May as well, when coverage was less complete. As is always the case when such numbers are involved, many more individuals went unidentified and/or unnoted. The combined totals from about one and one-half miles of lake shore for several warbler species are truly impressive, especially since Scheider saw NO banded birds either date!: 67 Nashville, 150 Magnolia, 96 Black-throated Blue, 718 Yellow-rumped, and 154 American Redstarts on 15 May; and 51 Tennessee, 64 Nashville, 135 Magnolia, 70 Blackburnian, and 80 American Redstarts on 21 May. The maxima in the species ac-

counts which follow represent the highest single party count. The migration in the urban Syracuse area was generally well-sustained, but not as impressive in terms of numbers as in other recent springs.

Gerald A. Smith again manned Derby Hill almost daily for the entire period. Most hawk totals were high, and a few record seasonal and peak date totals were set; the overall total for hawks was the best ever. If one can judge it so, the (typically) miserable showing of Peregrines is the only real negative. A new twist this spring was a concerted owl banding effort at the Noyes Sanctuary, directed by Roy Slack, which produced a surprising number of Northern Saw-whet Owls, along with one bird which called like a Boreal Owl but could not be confirmed by visual observation. Loggerhead Shrike made its best showing in years this spring, just after I had elevated the species to "boldface" status last spring. One hopes it will continue to improve.

Most late May migrants were very poorly represented. Shorebirds were very low in numbers and variety. Cuckoos were almost nonexistent, and Indigo Buntings were numerous only at a few localities. Southern herons were scarce, and only a scattering of our more regular southern passerines were located: White-eyed Vireo, Worm-eating, Prairie and Kentucky Warbler, and Orchard Oriole. Their numbers were comparable to recent spring seasons.

Work on the Breeding Bird Atlas began in full by mid-May, and already had produced an obliging Acadian Flycatcher, which was enjoyed by numerous observers. A full discussion of other Atlasing results will come in the next seasonal report.

A total of 237 species plus one hybrid, one color morph and one distinctive subspecies was reported this season, which is about average. The only surprising misses of the season were Bonaparte's Gull and Yellow-billed Cuckoo. Great rarities found included Northern Gannet, Greater White-fronted Goose, "Eurasian" Green-winged Teal, Stilt Sandpiper, Laughing Gull, Boreal Owl, Acadian Flycatcher and Kentucky Warbler, the last finally recorded so many times as to no longer merit this status.

Contributors: Dorothy Crumb, Paul DeBenedictis, Robert L. Evans, Marion Holmes, John Hanyak, Gene Huggins, Steven F. Kahl, Ruth Knight, Jeanne Lally, Gary Lee, Robert L. Long, George Maxwell, David Muir, Margaret S. Rusk, F. G. Scheider, Roy Slack, Gerald A. Smith, Chris Spies, Magdalena Stooks, Elba VanDresar, Gary Webb.

Abbreviations: arr—arrival; DH—Derby Hill, Oswego Co; FH—Fairhaven, Little Sodus Bay and vicinity, Cayuga Co; LOL—Lake Ontario littoral, Oswego Co; NYSARC—report submitted to New York State Avian Records Committee; Onon—Onondaga; SP—Sandy Pond, Oswego Co; StMC—Saint Mary's Cemetery, DeWitt, Onon Co; Syr—Syracuse.

LOONS—DUCKS: Com. Loon: last of winter Oswego, 3 Mar; migrants 12 Apr-21 May, max 48 DH on 30 Apr. Horned Grebe: only one FH 14 Mar and two Seneca River Flats 1 May, lowest total ever. Red-necked Grebe: six Toad Harbour, Oswego Co, 12 May, with four persisting to 15 May, record late. NORTHERN GANNET: imm found dead Oswego 2 Mar, specimen to SUNY Oswego (GM), third Regional record. Double-crested Cormorant: arr DH 9 Apr, record max 126 LOL 29 May. Am. Bittern: arr DH, Clay Marsh 3 May, late. Least Bittern: arr Clay Marsh 3 May. Great Blue Heron: max 110 Peter Scott Swamp 9 Apr, exceptional in spring. Great Egret: three near Peter Scott Swamp 12 May, singles at Six Mile Creek 5 and 15 May. Cattle Egret: adult Peter Scott Swamp 14 May. Green-backed Heron: arr Clay Marsh 1 May. Black-crowned Night-Heron: one Scott Swamp 24 Apr, another East Syr 6 May, two Snake Swamp 21 May. Tundra Swan: one Bridgeport 13 Mar only report.

Mute Swan: adult FH through season. GREATER WHITE-FRONTED GOOSE: adult Biddlecum 31 Mar (FGS) is eighth Regional record. Snow Goose: one to six per day through 17 Apr, about equal numbers of each morph. Brant: 90 Onondaga Lake 24 May, one LOL 30 May. Canada Goose: new record max 42,000 s. Oswego and n. Onon Cos. 26 Mar, last large flocks ca 24 Apr. Wood Duck: arr Syr 5 Mar, low max 28 Clay Marsh on 13 May. Green-winged Teal: max 40 Clay Marsh 3 Apr; male "EURASIAN" GREEN-WINGED TEAL Clay Marsh 3-11 Apr (FGS, mob) is sixth Regional record. Am. Black Duck: max 200 Seneca River Flats 24 Mar, few after 24 Apr. Mallard: max 500 Seneca River Flats 24 Mar, last flocks on 7 Apr. N. Pintail: low max 200 Pennellville 26 Mar, few after 17 Apr. Blue-winged Teal: arr LOL 26 Mar, max 14 LOL 24 Apr. N. Shoveler: three pairs reported between 3 and 24 Apr. Gadwall: up to nine per day through 12 Apr, low. Am. Wigeon: max 12 LOL 26 Apr very low. Canvasback: max 68 Onon Lake 9 Apr, last Oneida Lake 10 Apr. Redhead: max 4 FH 12 Apr very low, last there 17 Apr. Ring-necked Duck: max 63 Howland's Island Game Management Area 26 Mar, last FH 17 Apr. Greater Scaup: very low max 40, Oneida Lake 10 Apr, last S. Onon 11 Apr. Lesser Scaup: max 55 FH 26 Mar, last there 15 May (late). Oldsquaw: last FH 24 Mar. White-winged Scoter: 11 FH 14 Mar and 4 DH 24 Apr are only reports of any scoters. Com. Goldeneye: max 200 Oswego R 3 Mar, last FH 17 Apr. Bufflehead: max 60 FH 26 Mar, last LOL 24 Apr. Hooded Merganser: only local birds noted after 1 Apr. Com. Merganser: last LOL 17 Apr. Red-breasted Merganser: max 350 FH 31 Mar, last LOL 22 May. Ruddy Duck: four reported 20 Mar to 22 May.

HAWKS—ALCIDS: See Table for DH summary; totals for Broad-winged and Red-tailed Hawks are new record high, as are max for N. Harrier and Am. Kestrel. Turkey Vulture: 49 Howland's Island Game Management Area 22 May is exceptional count away from LOL. Bald Eagle: also an adult Williamstown 1 Apr (GW). N. Harrier: pairs noted near Georgetown and Oriskany Flats through May. Peregrine Falcon: only three reported, all DH, 27 Apr to 12 May. Virginia Rail: one Clay Marsh 16-17 Mar may have overwintered (earliest spring record in any event), next report Syr 13 Apr. Sora: arr Kirkville 17 Apr, very few noted. Com. Moorhen: arr Kirkville 3 May. Am. Coot: total of five reported 20 Mar to 23 Apr very low. SANDHILL CRANE: adult DH 5 May (GAS, NYSARC) is fifth Regional record. Black-bellied Plover: one Nine Mile Creek 21 May, two SP 29 May. Semipalmated Plover: about 15-20 reported between 15 and 26 May. Killdeer: regularly noted after 4 Mar, max 50 DH 3 Apr. Greater Yellowlegs: arr Clay Marsh and DH 17 Mar, very early, next 3 Apr, max 15 s. Oswego Co. 17 Apr, last Biddlecum 12 May. Lesser Yellowlegs: arr Clay Marsh 14 Apr, last and max 6 Biddlecum 12 May. Solitary Sandpiper: arr DH 30 Apr, max 12 LOL 8 May, last there 21 May. Spotted Sandpiper: arr Clay Marsh 25 Apr. Upland Sandpiper: arr Syr 25 Apr. Red Knot: one SP 29 May. Sanderling: four SP 27 May. Semipalmated Sandpiper: arr Clay Marsh 6 May, max 150 there 26 May, last SP 29 May. Least Sandpiper: arr Clay Marsh 1 May, max 40 FH 14 May, last SP 29 May. Pectoral Sandpiper: single Pennellville 17-23 Apr, very low. Dunlin: arr Biddlecum 14 May, max 26 Clay Marsh 26 May, last SP 27 May. STILT SANDPIPER: beautiful adult Six Mile Creek 15 May (FGS, RK) is second Regional spring report, first well-described. Short-billed Dowitcher: one Biddlecum 15 May, three there 16 May. Com. Snipe: arr 17 Mar, max 8 24 Apr. Am. Woodcock: arr New York Mills 9 Mar. LAUGHING GULL: adult FH 21 May is fourth spring (tenth overall) Regional record. Ring-billed Gull: max 6,000 s. Oswego Co. 17 Mar rather low, but widespread inland through May. Iceland Gull: last Oswego 3 Mar. Glaucous Gull: last DH 23 Apr only report of season. Great Black-backed Gull: few after 23 Apr. Caspian Tern: arr LOL 22 May, max 14 SP 27 May. Com. Tern: arr Kirkville 7 May. Black Tern: arr Kirkville 12 May, max 11 LOL 22 May.

PIGEONS—WOODPECKERS: Black-billed Cuckoo: arr DeWitt and New York Mills 26 May. Long-eared Owl: five banded Noyes Sanctuary 2 Apr-11 May. BOREAL OWL: one calling Noyes Sanctuary 1 Apr (RS) would be the third modern Regional report. N. Saw-whet Owl: 33 banded Noyes Sanctuary through 7 May (record late), max 6 on 30 Apr. Com. Nighthawk: arr DH 8 May. Whip-poor-will: arr Noyes Sanctuary 30 Apr. Chimney Swift: record early arr DH 14 Apr, next 27 Apr. Ruby-throated Hummingbird: arr Syr 6 May. Belted Kingfisher: first migrants DH 5 Mar. Red-headed Woodpecker: arr LOL 14

May. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: arr Syr 25 Apr (late), last 8 May, very scarce. N. Flicker: migrants 6 Mar to 21 May, max 110 DH 23 Apr.

**FLYCATCHERS—STARLINGS:** Olive-sided Flycatcher: five noted after 14 May. E. Wood-Pewee: arr (widespread) 14 May. Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: arr LOL 21 May. Alder Flycatcher: arr Labrador Pond 22 May. Willow Flycatcher: arr LOL 15 May, very conspicuous by end of season. Least Flycatcher: arr StMC 2 May. E. Phoebe: arr DH 2 Apr. Great Crested Flycatcher: arr DH 8 May. E. Kingbird: arr Holland Patent 2 May. Horned Lark: max 200 DH 7 Apr, last migrants DH 22 Apr. Purple Martin: arr DH 4 Apr. Tree Swallow: max 2,000 DH 7 Apr, last migrants ca. 8 May. N. Rough-winged Swallow: arr DH 7 Apr, to five per day. Bank Swallow: arr 7 Apr Clay Marsh, low max 500 DH 8 May. Cliff Swallow: arr DH 14 Apr, to eight per day. Barn Swallow: arr DH 7 Apr, scarce all season. Blue Jay: migrant 8-22 May, low max 700 DH 21 May. Am. Crow: total 35,133 past DH through 14 Apr. **COMMON RAVEN:** four past DH 14 Apr to 19 May equals the prior spring total there. Red-breasted Nuthatch: up to five per day 2 Apr to 19 May. Brown Creeper: migrants 17 Mar to ca 8 May, max 24 DH 23 Apr. Carolina Wren: singles Fayetteville mid-Mar and StMC 27 May. House Wren: arr Noyes Sanctuary 30 Apr. Winter Wren: record early arr 14 Mar, max five LOL 23 Apr, last migrant 14 May. Sedge Wren: single near Rome 3 May (GW). Marsh Wren: arr Peter Scott Swamp 12 May. Golden-crowned Kinglet: arr Fayetteville 14 Mar, max 15 LOL 24 Apr, last there 27 Apr. Ruby-crowned Kinglet: arr StMC 14 Apr, max 64 Noyes Sanctuary 29 Apr, last there 23 May. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: arr Noyes Sanctuary 29 Apr. E. Bluebird: total 90 past DH to 14 Apr, max 51 on 9 Apr. Veery: arr Noyes Sanctuary 1 May. Gray-cheeked Thrush: arr StMC 19 May. Swainson's Thrush: arr StMC 7 May, last Syr 30 May. Hermit Thrush: arr Noyes Sanctuary 10 Apr, last StMC 17 May. Wood Thrush: arr Noyes Sanctuary 30 Apr. Am. Robin: max 2,600 DH 6 Apr, last migrants ca. 8 May. Gray Catbird: arr StMC 2 May, last migrants ca 21 May. Brown Thrasher: arr New York Mills 26 Apr. Water Pipit: single DH 8 May, 75 there 12 May, only reports. Cedar Waxwing: last wintering birds departed ca. 18 Apr, summering population arr 16 May. N. Shrike: three reported through 2 Apr. **LOGGERHEAD SHRIKE:** five reported 2 Apr (New York Mills) to 23 Apr (Holland Patent).

**VIREOS—WARBLERS:** White-eyed Vireo: one Nine Mile Point 8 May. Solitary Vireo: arr Noyes Sanctuary 29 Apr, last (seven) LOL 21 May. Yellow-throated Vireo: arr StMC 2 May. Warbling Vireo: arr Noyes Sanctuary 7 May. Philadelphia Vireo: record early arr Seneca River Flats 1 May (MSR), next StMC 16 May, new record max 8 LOL 21 May, last StMC 27 May. Red-eyed Vireo: arr DH 8 May, max 28 LOL 21 May. Blue-winged Warbler: arr 2 May New York Mills. "Brewster's" Warbler: singles StMC 8-10 May, Camillus 14 May, Labrador Pond 22 May. Golden-winged Warbler: arr Syr 2 May. Tennessee Warbler: arr DH 8 May, last StMC 29 May. Orange-crowned Warbler: three banded Noyes Sanctuary 29 Apr 7 May, singles n. Pompey Township, Syr 23 May. Nashville Warbler: arr Syr 29 Apr, last StMC 23 May. N. Parula: arr StMC 7 May, max 15 LOL 15 May, last LOL 21 May. Yellow Warbler: arr widespread 1 May, last obvious migrants ca. 22 May. Chestnut-sided Warbler: arr DH 8 May, new record max 44 LOL 21 May. Magnolia Warbler: arr DH 7 May, new record max 110 banded Noyes Sanctuary 15 May, last migrants StMC 31 May. Cape May Warbler: arr DH 8 May, max 45 LOL 15 May, last StMC 22 May. Black-throated Blue Warbler: arr StMC 2 May, new record max 40 LOL 15 May, last StMC 24 May. Yellow-rumped Warbler: arr Nine Mile Point 14 Apr, max 610 LOL 15 May, last StMC 28 May. Black-throated Green Warbler: arr DH 2 May, last StMC 28 May. Blackburnian Warbler: arr DH 8 May, max 67 LOL 21 May. Pine Warbler: arr Clay Marsh 16 Apr, last StMC 17 May record late. Prairie Warbler: singles near Brookfield 7 May, Toad Harbour 13 May and Noyes Sanctuary 22 May. Palm Warbler: arr Noyes Sanctuary 1 May, last LOL 15 May. Bay-breasted Warbler: arr StMC 12 May, max 60 LOL 21 May, last Syr 30 May. Blackpoll Warbler: arr StMC 14 May, max 11 StMC 26 May. Cerulean Warbler: arr N. Manlius 12 May, last migrant 21 May. Black-and-white Warbler: arr Noyes Sanctuary 29 Apr, last StMC 23 May. Am. Redstart: arr New York Mills 30 Apr, last migrants ca 22 May. Worm-eating Warbler: one StMC 9 May. Ovenbird: arr DH 1 May, new record max 31 LOL 15 May, last

migrants ca. 22 May. N. Waterthrush: arr Noyes Sanctuary, Syr 29 Apr, last StMC 26 May. Louisiana Waterthrush: record early arr Pompey Township 17 Apr. KENTUCKY WARBLER: singles StMC 9-12 May and 20-21 May, one banded Noyes Sanctuary 7 May first Oswego Co. record; only nine previous Regional records. Mourning Warbler: arr StMC 17 May. Com. Yellowthroat: arr Chittenango 1 May, last migrants ca 29 May. Hooded Warbler: arr DH, StMC 8 May, new record max 18 LOL 21 May. Wilson's Warbler: arr 13 May DH, last StMC 30 May. Canada Warbler: arr StMC 9 May. Yellow-breasted Chat: one banded Noyes Sanctuary 29 May.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: Scarlet Tanager: arr StMC 5 May. Rose-breasted Grosbeak: arr StMC 5 May, new record max 65 LOL 21 May. Indigo Bunting: arr DH 8 May, early birds silent and many at feeders, but numbers low through May. Rufous-sided Towhee: arr StMC 17 Apr. Am. Tree Sparrow: last Clay Marsh 18 May (JH) record late. Chipping Sparrow: arr FH 17 Apr. Field Sparrow: one March report, arr DH 14 Apr. Vesper Sparrow: arr DH 7 Apr, see introduction. Savannah Sparrow: late arr DH 14 Apr, see introduction. Grasshopper Sparrow: arr Pleasant Lake 14 May. Henslow's Sparrow: arr Toad Harbour 14 May. Fox Sparrow: migrants noted in small numbers 10-27 Apr. Song Sparrow: arr 5 Mar ties record early, see introduction. Lincoln's Sparrow: arr Noyes Sanctuary 7 May, last StMC 27 May. Swamp Sparrow: bulk of migrants after 16 Apr. White-throated Sparrow: arr ca 14 Apr LOL, max 400 StMC 5 May, last there 25 May. White-crowned Sparrow: arr New York Mills, Syr 2 May, max 120 LOL 15 May, last StMC 27 May. Dark-eyed Junco: arr ca 23 Mar, max only 35 DH 23 Apr, last LOL 21 May. Lapland Longspur: one DH 23 Apr. Snow Bunting: last DH 6 Apr. Bobolink: arr New York Mills 2 May. E. Meadowlark: arr DH 6 Mar, last ca 8 May. W. Meadowlark: one singing Union Settlement after ca. 11 Apr (John Rodgers, mob). Rusty Blackbird: arr Peter Scott Swamp 6 Mar, max 300 DH 8 May, last LOL 22 May record late. Orchard Oriole: one Camillus township after 28 May. N. Oriole: arr StMC 2 May. Pine Grosbeak: last Holland Patent 3 Mar. Purple Finch: max 300 DH 8 May. House Finch: increasing everywhere, especially in urban/suburban habitats. Red Crossbill: three near Old Forge 25 May. Am. Goldfinch: migrants ca 23 Apr to 21 May, rather numerous this spring. Evening Grosbeak: max 25 DH 2 Mar, last StMC 11 May.

#### Derby Hill Hawk Migration Totals - 1983

| Species             | Arrival | Max - Date      | Last   | 90% Date Range* | Total  |
|---------------------|---------|-----------------|--------|-----------------|--------|
| Turkey Vulture      | 28 Feb  | 179 - 14 Apr    | 29 May | 2 Apr - 27 Apr  | 1,437  |
| Osprey              | 1 Apr   | 56 - 7 May      | 30 May | 14 Apr - 19 May | 270    |
| Bald Eagle          | 17 Mar  | singles only    | 23 May |                 | 15     |
| Northern Harrier    | 19 Feb  | 160 - 14 Apr    | 30 May | 17 Mar - 8 May  | 1,077  |
| Sharp-shinned Hawk  | 20 Feb  | 1,638 - 2 May   | 30 May | 13 Apr - 13 May | 6,142  |
| Cooper's Hawk       | 20 Feb  | 65 - 14 Apr     | 14 May | 13 Mar - 1 May  | 608    |
| Northern Goshawk    | 28 Feb  | 22 - 17 Mar     | 14 May | 5 Mar - 22 Apr  | 162    |
| Red-shouldered Hawk | 20 Feb  | 165 - 17 Mar    | 7 May  | 14 Mar - 23 Apr | 859    |
| Broad-winged Hawk   | 16 Apr  | 13,321 - 29 Apr | 30 May | 26 Apr - 30 May | 40,108 |
| Red-tailed Hawk     | 19 Feb  | 937 - 13 Apr    | 30 May | 5 Mar - 29 Apr  | 8,166  |
| Rough-legged Hawk   | 20 Feb  | 96 - 6 Mar      | 22 May | 3 Mar - 27 Apr  | 476    |
| Golden Eagle        | 6 Mar   | 3 - 3 May       | 7 May  |                 | 15     |
| American Kestrel    | 27 Feb  | 251 - 14 Apr    | 29 May | 27 Mar - 2 May  | 839    |
| Merlin              | 19 Apr  | 3 - 27 Apr      | 1 May  |                 | 11     |

Grand Total (including unidentified, rarities)

60,305

\* Dates between which 90% of all birds passed Derby Hill.

Educational Communications and Studies, Upstate Medical Center,  
766 Irving Ave., Syracuse, New York 13210