

REGION 10 – MARINE

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It was a dismal spring migration. Many birders called it the worst in memory. How bad was it? It was so bad the *New York Times* printed several letters to the editor from people asking "Where are the birds?" There were no large waves and birds just trickled thru in small numbers. The weather wasn't particularly bad this spring. It was warm and dry overall; so dry in fact that drought warnings were in effect. March was mild for the most part with below normal temperatures on only 12 days during the month. A warm spell 27-29 March pushed temperatures to a high of 82° F on the 29th and brought the first small wave of migrants. The largest rainfall of the month was only .49 inch on the 12th. The month's mean temperature of 45.8° was 4.4° above normal and the total rainfall of a mere 1.91 inches was 2.31 inches below normal. April followed the same pattern as March with warm, dry weather throughout. While temperatures were not quite as far above normal as in March the dry spell deepened. The heaviest rain fell on the 19th, only .39 inch. This was also the warmest day of the month with a high of 88° and a mean of 77°. April's mean temperature of 55.5° was 3.1° above normal and the total rainfall of 1.41 inches was 2.34 below normal. May continued warm but with finally some rain, though not enough to make up for the earlier deficit. May's mean of 65.3° was 2.9° above normal but the total rainfall of 5.72 inches was 1.96 above normal. (All weather data from New York City.)

As mentioned above there were very few waves. However, many warbler species started arriving in late April so that the last two weeks in April saw an above normal variety of migrants present in the city parks. It was all part of the trickle thru nature of this spring's migration. Arthur Morris continued a shorebird survey at the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge. Some of his interesting results are incorporated into the main body of the report, others include highs of 881 Black-bellied Plovers on 10 May, 542 Ruddy Turnstones 16 May, 450 Red Knots 23 May and 3342 Semipalmated Sandpipers 25 May. As you can see below the list of rarities is surprisingly long for what was a very poor migration, though a number of them are holdovers from the winter season.

Rarities: Western Grebe, Gyrfalcon, Purple Gallinule, Black-necked Stilt, Bridled Tern, Black-throated Gray Warbler, Painted Bunting, Yellow-headed Blackbird.

Abbreviations: LI-Long Island; SI-Staten Island; SP-State Park; CRSP-Connetquot River State Park; HLSP-Hempstead Lake State Park; JBWR-Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge; RMSP-Robert Moses State Park; mob-many observers.

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LOONS-DUCKS: A Red-necked Grebe at JBWR 23 March (NYRBA) was unusual there, even more so since it was a poor winter for them in the region. The **WESTERN GREBE** found at Ditch Plains, Montauk in Jan. was rediscovered there 24 March (J. Coe) and then vanished again. A Least Bittern at JBWR 20 April was a bit early (AM). Great and Snowy Egrets returned on schedule in late March and early April. A Little Blue Heron at Tobay 12 April was slightly early (SL). Yellow-crowned Night-Herons were more in evidence at JBWR this spring than they have been in a number of years. A Glossy Ibis at JBWR 2 March (SL) was a bit early. Over 1000 Snow Geese were at JBWR 3 April; a lone bird was at Southard's Pd., Babylon 7-21 May (FF), perhaps an injured bird? A "Common Teal," the Eurasian race of Green-winged Teal, was found in Lawrence 13 March (SBD). Four Eurasian Wigeons, some holdovers from the winter, were reported: JBWR 3-23 March (mob), Babylon 2-19 March (JJR, FF, *et al*), Eastport 15-18 March (NYRBA) and Mill R. 30 March (NYRBA). A King Eider lingered at Montauk till 28 April. The four Harlequin Ducks that wintered at Pt. Lookout were last seen there 17 March, the same date as the last report for the species at Montauk. A lingering male Oldsquaw was at Great Gulf I 11-14 May (WPC, H. Hays).

HAWKS-ALCIDS: It was an above average season for vultures with a **BLACK VULTURE**, very rare in the region, seen at Forest Pk 11 May (IC) and Turkey Vultures at Cedar Beach 2 April (M. England, *et al*), Ridge 5 April (J. S. Ruscica), two at Mill Neck 16 April (A. Townsend), CRSP 6 May (JD, AS), between Gilgo and Cedar Beaches 8 May (L. Merryman) and Sagaponack 22 May (RA). Ospreys returned to Seatuck and CRSP in mid-March; CRSP now has two pairs nesting (G. Bergen). Four Bald Eagles were reported this spring: one flying over the Wm. Floyd Pkwy 15 March, another at Sunken Meadow 29 March and two at JBWR 23 May (all NYRBA). At least six Peregrine Falcons, a good number, were reported throughout the region this spring. The **GYRFALCON** that wintered at Jones Beach was last reported there on 27 March (SBD). A **PURPLE GALLINULE** found at Prospect Pk, Brooklyn 11 May (R. Wade) did not linger; perhaps it heard of the mugging of the last representative of its species to appear there in 1983. A breeding plumaged Lesser Golden-Plover at JBWR 20 April was a good find for the spring (AM). A flock of 22 Piping Plovers at the West End, Jones Beach 2 April was a good number for this declining species (*vide* FF). An Am. Oystercatcher at Captree 2 March was a bit early (JJR). A **BLACK-NECKED STILT** was found at JBWR 5 May (S. Walter, K. & S. Feustel) but did not stay. A scattering of Whimbrels were reported this spring: one at JBWR 20 April (AM), four at Shinnecock (NYRBA) and ten at Lawrence (SBD) on 7 May, one along Dune Rd. in the Hamptons 25 May (RA), and one at Great Kills, SI the same day (AM). White-rumped Sandpipers were at JBWR in good numbers from 19 May thru the end of the season, peaking at 28 birds on 24 May (AM, NYRBA). An estimated 200-300 Purple Sandpipers at the West End, Jones Beach 2 March was a good count (JJR); ten Purples lingered at Great Kills till 26 May (AM). Two Stilt Sandpipers at JBWR 20 May was a good spring find (AM). Three or four Wilson's Phalaropes were reported: one at JBWR 24 May (AM), the same or a different bird there 27 May (NYRBA) and two at Nazareth I, Great South Bay 30 May (D. Peterson, *et al*). Up to five Little Gulls were at Shinnecock in early to mid-March (mob), but a bird there 29 May was very late for the species in the region (mob). Single Com. Black-headed Gulls were at Shinnecock 5 & 16 March and at Jones Inlet 17 & 23 March (mob); two were at Fire I inlet with a couple of hundred Bonaparte's Gulls 2 May (JB). An imm Glaucous Gull was seen intermittently at JBWR from 9 March-24 May (JH, AM, *et al*). Terns were very well represented this spring. Two Gull-billed Terns were at JBWR 18 May (NYRBA). Caspian Terns appeared in the region in mid-April with one at Hechscher 16 April (FF), three there 18-23 April (RL, A. Clerke) and five at Mecox Bay 17 April (PG). A Royal Tern was at Shinnecock Inlet 31 May (RA). Com. and Roseate Terns returned to their traditional breeding colonies in early May. The term of the season, however, has to be the **BRIDLED TERN** found at Shinnecock Inlet 29 May (P. Bernarth). Finally, three Black Terns were at JBWR 18 May.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: A Great Horned Owl at JBWR 3 April (LS, *et al*) was the second record of the species for the refuge. Several Snowy Owls lingered into mid-March with birds reported at Pt. Lookout 5 March, Breezy Pt. 10 March, No. Hempstead Beach 14 March and West End, Jones Beach 17 March (M. Zelazinski, SBD, NYRBA). Chuck-will's-widow had returned to its traditional Oak Beach nesting location by 11 May (K. Ward, W. Lamoureux). On 15 May 300 Chimney Swifts were seen going into one chimney of the County Court Building in Riverhead (J. Clinton, Sr.). The Red-headed Woodpecker that wintered at a feeder in East Islip remained there until 6 May (JM, MM); another Red-head was on Jones Beach 27 May (NYRBA).

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: E. Phoebe arrived at Muttontown Pres. 19 March and were on territory at the Welwyn Pres. by 15 April (AL). A phoebe nest was found at the Pouch Boy Scout Camp on 12 May for the first nesting attempt for the species on SI in over 20 years (AM); unfortunately the nest was later destroyed by vandals. E. Kingbirds arrived late April with one at RMSP 30 April (FF). The first six Purple Martins arrived at the Lemon Creek, SI colony 18 April (AM). As would be expected following their near total absence this past winter, Red-breasted Nuthatches were virtually nonexistent during the spring migration. A pair of White-breasted Nuthatches fledged young from an old bird house in East Islip 23 May, perhaps an early nesting record (MM). Blue-gray Gnatcatchers arrived throughout the western portion of the region 5-6 April (mob). A flock of 60 Cedar Waxwings in Islip 22 March was a good number for that early (RL). An interesting report was of a waxwing with a scarlet-tipped tail in a flock of 30 birds at Wantagh 16-17 May (A. & E. Kretz, G. & W. Renkens); a scarlet-tipped tail is the diagnostic field mark of the Japanese Waxwing. The bird in question was probably an escaped cage bird if it was not a very aberrant Cedar.

VIREOS-WARBLED: Solitary Vireos arrived on schedule the last week in April. Golden-winged Warblers are fairly rare on LI so one at Southard's Pond, Babylon 1 May was a very good find (D. Kaufmann); another was at Yaphank Woods 5 May (NYRBA). Both "Lawrence's" and "Brewster's" Warblers were in Central Pk in early May (mob). Following their widespread occurrence in the winter report, Orange-crowned Warblers were found in above average numbers this spring; one apparently wintered in the Brooklyn Botanic Gardens, others were at Greenwood Cemetery, Brooklyn 29 March, Bronx Botanical Gardens 20 April and Central Pk 28 April. A possible female **BLACK-THROATED GRAY WARBLER** was found in Forest Pk 19 May (R. Lewis, details to NYSARC). There were fewer Yellow-throated Warblers reported than last year with one at Prospect Pk 14-17 April (mob), the same or a different bird at Greenwood Cem. 20 April (JD) and one at Muttontown Pres. 24 April (AL). It was a good spring for Pine Warblers with widespread reports mid-March to mid-April. Prothonotary Warblers had a good spring showing in the region for the second year in a row with once again about ten individuals reported starting with one at Prospect Pk 25 April (mob) and ending with one at Belmont Lk SP 27-28 May (B. Lansing & P. Herlich). An early Worm-eating Warbler was at Forest Pk 21 April (B. Spencer). Fewer Kentucky Warblers were reported than in recent years with singles at Prospect Pk and Yaphank Woods both 8 May (NYRBA), Forest Pk 10 May (J. Viglietta), one banded at Great Gull I 11 May (WPC) and the South Shore Nature Center in Islip 24 May (R. Halbeisen). There were scattered reports of Mourning Warblers in the region after 16 May.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: About seven Summer Tanagers were reported; below the numbers of recent springs. A female **PAINTED BUNTING** was seen and photographed at a feeder in the Four Corners section of SI 17-19 May (*vide* AM). A Rose-breasted Grosbeak that wintered at the same East Islip feeder as the previously mentioned Red-headed Woodpecker remained until 22 April (MM). Blue Grosbeaks were way down this spring

with the only report received one at Forest Pk 19 May (G. Tudor.) A Grasshopper Sparrow was found at Mitchell Field 11 May (SBD). A somewhat early White-crowned Sparrow was at the West End, Jones Beach 12 April (TH). A lone Lapland Longspur lingered till 1 March at Great Kills, SI (AM). Another lingerer was a Snow Bunting at RMSP 28 April (L. & L. Feldman). An adult male **YELLOW-HEADED BLACKBIRD** was found at Riis Pk 20 March (W. & W. Baumann). Following their spectacular showing this past winter, Boat-tailed Grackles were regularly reported at JBWR this spring (mob). A male Orchard Oriole returned to a known nesting site at Southard's Pd, Babylon 7 May (J. Viglietta). A young House Finch, still with down on its head, at a feeder in Elmhurst, Queens 2 May may have represented a record early nest (TH). Six Evening Grosbeaks at Ridge 5 April were undoubtedly holdovers from the only group of them reported this past winter (JJR).

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters may be of a general nature as long as they pertain to New York State ornithology, or may be of a specific nature with reference to something that has appeared in *The Kingbird*. The editor reserves the right *not* to accept a letter for publication, or to edit a letter in accordance with space requirements. All letters received will be acknowledged. Your participation is invited.