

REGION 3 – FINGER LAKES

DICK CLEMENTS

It was so dry that kingfishers were forced to feed on the lawns next to the robins! Well, a little exaggerated but precipitation was sparse in our region. A storm in early March dropped several inches of snow on most areas, but it quickly melted. After that, rainfall was meager until the end of May. In April, only .54 inches of rain fell compared to an average of close to three inches. In May, the total was 1.8 inches, again significantly below normal. Our streams looked like August instead of springtime.

Temperatures had their extremes. We experienced eighty degree weather in April. Just to keep us honest, some late frosts occurred. For most people it was an ideal spring—warm temperatures and just enough rain to keep the flowers growing. With little rainfall or storms, many warblers and shorebirds passed us by. Very few birders experienced any waves.

Your editor was very fortunate on 5 May. . For over two hours he watched a parade of warblers, vireos, thrushes, tanagers, kinglets and Rose-breasted Grosbeaks pass by. Warbler species totalled fourteen, mostly in mixed flocks but occasionally a group of four or five of the same species would be seen. Competition could be rough for male Rose-breasted Grosbeaks as eight males were seen feeding with one female.

It's hard to draw any conclusions concerning the effects of the weather on bird migration. Dorothy McIlroy's report from Ithaca is full of conflicting arrival dates. A Common Moorhen and Eastern Wood-Pewee were three weeks early while the Savannah and Vesper Sparrows arrived a month late. Pity the poor Tree Swallows that were seen in an Ithaca parking lot during a snowstorm on 4 March.

The hybridizing of Blue-winged and Golden-winged Warblers in the Elmira area has made it impossible to identify these birds by song alone. A particular song which your editor has not seen described in any journal consists of a rapid series of seven to eight chips followed by a buzz. He has heard a Blue-winged and a "Brewster's" sing this song. One day he heard this song and upon investigation noticed that it was being sung by a typically plumaged male Golden-winged but with a yellowish belly. He then heard a Blue-winged song but it turned out to be a "normal" male Golden-winged. It has always been difficult to identify these warblers by song alone, but more and more surprises are turning up.

House Sparrows in Chemung Co. continue their supposedly atypical behavior by eating sunflower seeds from hanging feeders, nesting in hanging nest boxes and nesting quite a distance from any dwellings. This has become a problem in that they have invaded bluebird trails. A pair of bluebirds have nested in a box that has a 1½ inch hole in the top. These houses have been used in other localities especially in the west. If they continue to have success in these boxes, many more will be put up to deter the increasing invasion of the House Sparrow.

Seasonal positives and interesting tidbits include: 1) First confirmed nesting of Canada Geese in Chemung Co. 2) Good numbers of Tennessee Warblers, Yellow Warblers and American Redstarts. 3) First ever report of an Acadian Flycatcher in Chemung Co. 4) A confirmed nesting of a Red Crossbill in the Ithaca area. 5) Bill Welles in Elmira reported seeing an unusual looking American Crow flying. When the crow landed, an Eastern Kingbird hopped off its back. 6) Wild Turkeys becoming tame? One was seen on a sidewalk in Phelps, another in a backyard in downtown Ithaca. 7) Vernon Dewey retired from Montezuma Wildlife Refuge after years of faithful waterfowl observations. Good luck to Vernon in his new endeavors.

Seasonal negatives include: 1) Red-headed Woodpeckers just about vanished from Chemung Co. 2) Swainson's, Gray-cheeked and Hermit Thrushes very low. Your editor did not hear one Hermit Thrush singing even at its known nesting areas. 3) Maintenance workers destroyed Cliff Swallow nests at Corning Community College buildings.

Rarities include: Golden Eagle, Merlin, Peregrine Falcon, Glaucous Gull, White-eyed Vireo, Kentucky Warbler, Clay-colored Sparrow.

Abbreviations: Cay-Cayuga; Chem-Chemung; L -Lake; M-Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge; Pk-Park; Pt-Point; Sch-Schuyler; Sen-Seneca; St-State; QC-Queen Catherine Marsh.

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LOONS-DUCKS: Red-throated Loon: one Keuka L April and May; one Stewart Pk area 9 April. Com. Loon: reported on Sen, Keuka, and Cay L as well as ponds in the Elmira area, however they were not numerous. Pied-billed Grebe: present in small numbers in Ithaca, Penn Yan and Elmira during April. Horned Grebe: lingered on Cay L thru mid-May; 21 Elmira 29 March. Red-necked Grebe: none observed. Double-crested Cormorant: two flying Elmira 19 April; a few M 20 April; 15 Sen L 7 May. Am. Bittern: Penn Yan April and May, first report since 1983; M 12 April; Sapsucker Woods 22 April; Horseheads 18 May. Great Blue Heron: returned to nesting area south of Ithaca 23 March. Great Egret: one Penn Yan April; one Punch Bowl L Watkins Glen St. Pk 14 April; one Michigan Hollow 13 April; M 22, 29 April and 6 May. Green-backed Heron: seems to be decreasing. Black-crowned Night-Heron: Penn Yan Marsh March and April; Ithaca 27 April; Elmira 5 May; M 13, 23 May. Tundra Swan: two Elmira 31 March; Penn Yan and Phelps during March and April; Cay L thru 15 April. Brant: 50 Sen L 7 May. Canada Goose: four adults and six young Horseheads 18 May.

Maximum waterfowl numbers at M as reported by the Refuge personnel:

Snow Goose	10,000	20 Mar.	Am. Wigeon	750	18 Mar.
Wood Duck	700	18 Mar.	Canvasback	75	25 Mar.
Green-winged Teal	1,000	1 Apr.	Ring-necked Duck	800	8 Apr.
Am. Black Duck	1,500	18 Mar.	Greater Scaup	200	25 Mar.
No. Pintail	1,500	25 Mar.	Bufflehead	50	1 Apr.
Blue-winged Teal	750	8 May	Hooded Merganser	20	1 Apr.
No. Shoveler	500	18 Mar.	Com. Merganser	400	18 Mar.
Gadwall	900	18 Mar.	Ruddy Duck	50	29 Apr.

Green-winged Teal: a few QC 6 March; scarce Penn Yan and Elmira; Sapsucker Woods thru mid-May. Black Scoter: none observed. Surf Scoter: one female Elmira 20 April.

White-winged Scoter: Cay L 11 March, 22 April. Com. Goldeneye: good numbers Cay L thru late April. Bufflehead: 30 Elmira 19 April. Hooded Merganser: female with downy young east of Varna 28 May; female with eight young Corning Pd. late May. Red-breasted Merganser: 11 Elmira 29 March; many Cay L lingering thru early May.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Turkey Vulture: common in Sch. Co. and Penn Yan. Osprey: pair seen again in M 5 April; reported also from QC, Elmira and Penn Yan. Bald Eagle: one imm Keuka L south of Branchport 31 March; one imm Van Atta's dam 3 March; two adults Ithaca area 3 March, 16 April; one adult Elmira 2 May. No. Harrier: often observed QC; more reports from Elmira area and Tompkins Co. Sharp-shinned Hawk: regular in the Cay L basin; scarce Elmira. Cooper's Hawk: defending territory against crows Chem. Co. during May. No. Goshawk: on nests south of Brooktondale and Michigan Hollow late May. Red-shouldered Hawk: pair South Danby 13 March; four other Cay L basin reports; one Connecticut Hill 19 May. Broad-winged Hawk: observed everywhere except Penn Yan and Phelps areas. Red-tailed Hawk: successful nesters in Phelps and Elmira. Rough-legged Hawk: Hector Forest 14 March; Penn Yan March and April; Ithaca thru 22 April. **GOLDEN EAGLE:** one adult Snyder Hill 16 March (P. Milburn). Am. Kestrel: two successful nests Chem. Co. **MERLIN:** Catherine Creek 20 April; one Six Mile Creek Valley 14 April; one M 20 April. **PEREGRINE FALCON:** flying over Cornell Campus 7 May (Cornell Ornithology Club). Gray Partridge: one Ithaca area; D.E.C. released 130 birds near Union Springs in Feb. Ring-necked Pheasant: more observations with good numbers reported from Sch. Co. and Penn Yan area but still scarce in Chem. Co. Wild Turkey: continuing their increase. Virginia Rail: one Michigan Hollow 11 May; one Horseheads responding to tape recording 18 May. Sora Rail: Michigan Hollow 11 May; Elmira 16 May. Com. Moorhen: very early one Ithaca 3 March; Alpine 24 April. Am. Coot: 70 Sen L 10 March; max 1,500 M 8 April. Shorebirds: a poor showing number-wise but a variety of species were observed. Black-bellied Plover: M 24 March. Semipalmated Plover: three Elmira 16 May; two M reports in April and May. Killdeer: several successful nestings in Chem. Co. Greater Yellowlegs: one Watkins Glen St Pk 18 April; in flooded fields Phelps area April; Elmira 8 May. Lesser Yellowlegs: one Myers Pt 28 March, matches earliest Cay L basin record. Solitary Sandpiper: a number of observations throughout our region. Upland Sandpiper: two Lansing in wet pasture 18 April; six Horseheads 18 May. W. Sandpiper: M 11 May. White-rumped Sandpiper: M 11 May. Pectoral Sandpiper: two Cay L basin reports in April; one Penn Yan 1 May. Dunlin: two M April; two Horseheads 18 May. Short-billed Dowitcher: one Lansing 18 April. Com. Snipe: scarce in Chem. Co. Am. Woodcock: nest with four eggs Elmira 20 April. Wilson's Phalarope: one near route 31 5 May. Bonaparte's Gull: observed throughout our region. Ring-billed Gull: 1000 Sen L 3 March. **GLAUCOUS GULL:** one Aurora 20 April (K. David). Caspian Tern: Keuka L April and May; Myers Pt. 18 April. Com. Tern: four Sen L St Pk 21 May; seen also Cay L and Elmira during April and May. Black Tern: Aurora 4 May; M 11 May.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Black-billed Cuckoo: fairly good numbers in Sch Co and Penn Yan; small number in Elmira. Yellow-billed Cuckoo: Camp Barton 11 May, ten days late in arriving. Com. Barn-Owl: no reports. E. Screech-Owl: pair Watkins Glen St Pk; scarce Penn Yan; only one report from Ithaca. Great Horned Owl: fledged four young near Phelps 26 April. Barred Owl: Sapsucker Woods thru. Short-eared Owl: Penn Yan area March and April. Com. Nighthawk: College Town 24 April, early; returned to nesting area on school roof in Elmira. Whip-poor-will: only two reports, one each from Ithaca and Penn Yan. Ruby-throated Hummingbird: attracted by fuscias, flying between customers at a commercial greenhouse. Red-headed Woodpecker: one Aurora 22 March; solitary male calling for mate Elmira 15 May thru. Red-bellied Woodpecker: regular QC and Cay L basin. No. Flicker: a pair resorted to nest building in a low stump when most of the large trees were removed in a Pine City block. Pileated Woodpecker: nesting QC early May.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLINGS: Olive-sided Flycatcher: Ithaca and Elmira 9 May; Dryden 15 May. E. Wood-Pewee: east of Ithaca 13 April, very early. Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: none reported. Acadian Flycatcher: one repeatedly calling Horseheads swamp 23 May. Alder Flycatcher: Sch Co 19 May; Aurora 20 May. Willow Flycatcher: Penn Yan, Elmira, Ithaca, the earliest 11 May. Great Crested Flycatcher: more numerous in Chem. Co. Horned Lark: adults with young Horseheads 18 May. Purple Martin: no encouraging reports. Tree Swallow: nest boxes have benefited these birds tremendously in Phelps, Penn Yan and Elmira areas. Cliff Swallow: returned to nests in Freeville 28 April. Fish Crow: present again Stewart Pk with a possible new location in Aurora. Black-capped Chickadee: nesting in wren house Pine City. Red-breasted Nuthatch: regular at Hector Forest. Winter Wren: two localities in Sch Co April; two singing Roricks Glen area April. Marsh Wren: M 11 May; one QC 19 May. Golden-crowned Kinglet: regular Hector Forest. Ruby-crowned Kinglet: good migration as all reports were favorable. Blue-gray Gnatcatcher: nesting Texas Hollow 25 May. E. Bluebird: nest boxes increased populations Penn Yan area; three nesting pairs near Phelps. Gray-cheeked Thrush: none observed. Swainson's Thrush: scarce Penn Yan and Ithaca; none Elmira. Hermit Thrush: Ithaca April and May only; Connecticut Hill 19 May. Am. Robin: nesting on second story window ledge, re-used same nest when first nestlings preyed upon by Blue Jays. No. Mockingbird: numbers up in Sch Co after scarce in winter. Water Pipit: Cay L area in March and April, only report. No. Shrike: one north of Ithaca airport 17 March. Loggerhead Shrike: one Hammondsport 4 April.

VIREOS-WARBLED: **WHITE-EYED VIREO:** banded Penn Yan 29 April, 10 May. Philadelphia Vireo: Penn Yan and M in May. Selected warblers with comments follow. "Brewster's" hybrid: Ithaca and several locations in Elmira. "Lawrence's" hybrid: Ithaca 12 May. Tennessee: numerous Ithaca, Sch Co; singing everywhere Elmira early May. Black-throated Blue: generally scarce. Pine: started visiting suet feeder Watkins Glen 24 March and carrying nesting material 24 April. Cerulean: at least six singing males M 17 May. Prothonotary: one Six Mile Creek 28 April; one Elmira 20 May. Worm-eating: Butter-milk St Pk 15 May; Montour Falls 19 May. No. Waterthrush: returned to nesting area of a hemlock covered ravine in Pine City, very atypical habitat. **KENTUCKY WARBLER:** one Michigan Hollow 22 May (L. Goodloe). Mourning: reports from four locations. Hooded: reported from Sch Co and Penn Yan; two singing males Dryden 18 May. Yellow-breasted Chat: one Elmira 7 May.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: Rose-breasted Grosbeak: at feeder Pine City early May. Am. Tree Sparrow: Ithaca thru late April. **CLAY-COLORED SPARROW:** one singing south of Aurora 11 May (K. David). Vesper Sparrow: no comments about increased or decreased numbers. Henslow's Sparrow: at least ten singing birds in nesting area Pine City; none observed in Ithaca area. Lincoln's Sparrow: Horseheads 16 May; Sapsucker Woods 17 May. Bobolink: increased numbers in Phelps and Elmira. Rusty Blackbird: eight M 5 April; QC 11, 17 April; Elmira 19 April. Orchard Oriole: one imm male QC 11, 19 May. Purple Finch: regular Hector Forest; no large flocks in Ithaca. Red Crossbill: three Hector Forest 7 March; ten Watkins Glen St Pk 20 March; a mixed flock of "hundreds" of Red and White-winged Crossbills and Pine Siskins on Hammond Hill Rd. 23 March; male and female Red Crossbills with three fledglings corner Irish Settlement and Hammond Hill Rds. 20 April. White-winged Crossbill: many sightings Sch Co; 25 to 30 Hector Forest 1 March; four Connecticut Hill 19 May. Evening Grosbeak: small flocks Watkins Glen, Elmira, and Phelps during April and May; flock of hundreds South Danby 7, 8 March.

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