

REGION 5 — ONEIDA LAKE BASIN

PAUL A. DeBENEDICTIS

It was a warm but dry spring. Throughout the Region birders awaited the annual race between warblers and leaves – and the leaves won! It was a strange season, rich in ornithological diversity but lacking any outstanding rarity. Nearly continual favorable weather brought with it the expected paucity of grounded migrants, but the few stretches of bad weather had little to recommend either. These sentiments have characterized several recent springs, yet there has been little evidence that avian populations generally are stressed. However, this season several new species joined the list of species that seem not to be as numerous as they had been in prior years.

The mild winter was followed by an even milder spring. Although total snowfall for the winter was nearly normal, water content of the snow was low and lake levels began to show evidence of a drought that would continue into the summer. We had June in April, April in May and a generally warmer, dryer and sunnier spring than usual. Only May came close to normal precipitation, but almost all of that fell between 18 and 21 May. This period, and a similar but shorter wet spell in late April, were favorable for grounding migrant landbirds, but while the expected variety of species was found, numbers were unimpressive. A few species, most notably Dark-eyed Junco and White-crowned Sparrow were just plain scarce all season, the latter with no reports even reaching a half-dozen individuals. On the other hand the numbers of Swainson's Thrush reported during the mid May rains were an encouraging contrast to the several previous springs, and Derby Hill had a good but not outstanding hawk migration.

Waterfowl numbers were generally miserable, and Lake Ontario opened so early that the gull concentrations that often make birding Little Sodus Bay so memorable in March didn't develop. Diving ducks were especially scarce, and only one individual Brant was reported. Of the terns, only Caspian Tern is doing well, but Double-crested Cormorant continues its explosive population increase and again nested on Oneida Lake this spring. A pair of Osprey returned to Dinglehole Swamp Road near Beaver Lake and were incubating in April. Conditions for shorebirds were good because of low lake levels, but the migration was unexceptional with neither great rarities nor outstanding numbers reported. Upland Sandpipers were very hard to locate. Of the white herons, only Great Egret was reported. The most unusual waterbirds reported included Little Blue Heron, Greater White-fronted Goose, Eurasian Wigeon, Sandhill Crane and Lesser Black-backed Gull. An early May Iceland Gull report has precedent from several previous years.

With one exception, irruptive species were little in evidence this Spring. Numbers of owls (given the lack of a report on the Noyes Sanctuary banding project), Rough-legged Hawks and Northern Shrike were about average. Goshawks, and their prey, Ruffed Grouse, were uncommon. Numbers of Picoides woodpeckers, chickadees, nuthatches, robins, jays and most winter finches were either unexceptional or low. American Tree Sparrow and Snow Bunting numbers were very low and both departed early. No Pine Grosbeaks, just a handful of crossbills, and moderate flights of Purple Finch, Common Redpoll and Evening Grosbeak

were evident. Pine Siskins, however, were everywhere and in good numbers as well, as witnessed by peaks of 2400 on 29 Mar and 1600 13 Apr at Derby Hill, and a few still remained in the southern part of the Region at the season's end. There were no confirmed lowland nestings this spring, and the behavior of persistent birds in Syracuse suggested that little or no nesting effort was made.

Numbers of migrating landbirds were unexceptional, though of species which occur annually, only Sedge Wren and Henslow's Sparrow were not reported. Maxima were generally low. There are very few positives, but also not many obvious absences of breeding birds by the season's end. Only Eastern Kingbird had a maximum much above a dozen. Swallow peaks were low, especially Barn Swallow which seemed unusually scarce in the Syracuse area, as was Chimney Swift. After several promising springs, kinglet maxima were down, but Swainson's Thrush made a modest increase this spring. Vireos and warblers were not numerous on migration, the best maxima being those for Yellow and Tennessee Warbler. Yellow-rumped Warbler, which often peaks in four-digit numbers, could only muster 260 past Derby Hill on 8 May. Both Dark-eyed Junco and White-throated Sparrow were scarce during migration, American Tree Sparrow vanished early and White-crowned Sparrow was nearly absent. It was an average spring for southern species, with White-eyed Vireo, Worm-eating, Prairie and Kentucky Warblers, Yellow-breasted Chat and Orchard Oriole all being reported, as well as a much more unusual male **Prothonotary Warbler** found south of Fairhaven 21 May by Marge Rusk and persisting, to the delight of several other observers, until 25 May. Unfortunately, the two found near Verona Beach on May 28 by Judy Thurber (*vide* D.W. Crumb) did not persist. Also notable were reports of single male **Yellow-headed Blackbirds** at Hannibal on 10 Apr and at Pennellville on 21 Apr by F.G. Scheider. There are about five previous spring reports from the Region. A total of 241 species, two hybrids and one color morph were reported this season.

For several years Gary Webb has reported **Fish Crows** from the Utica dump along the Mohawk River, but his reports were not checked. This spring several of the Region's top birders decided to find out what Webb had been seeing, and the birds were indeed Fish Crows! Only four birds were counted, nearly at the end of the winter period they spend at the dump, but as many as 14 had been reported on earlier dates. Fish Crows leave this site, perhaps to nest along the Mohawk or its tributaries; a tantalizing report during the Atlas period was not far from Utica. Where these birds summer will have to be determined another year. Another indication of the increase of Fish Crows in the Region is two seen migrating past Derby Hill this spring, one on 9 May and the other on 12 May. Details for all observations have been submitted to the NYSARC.

Contributors: Dorothy Crumb, Paul DeBenedictis, Robert L. Evans, John Hanyak, Elva Hawkins, Gene Huggins, Ruth Knight, Gary N. Lee, Robert L. Long, Robert E. Post, William Purcell, Margaret S. Rusk, F. G. Scheider, Gerald A. Smith, Magdalena Stooks.

Abbreviations: Adir arr - Adirondacks (n Herkimer Co.) arrival; BRd - Biddlecum Road, Pennellville, Oswego Co.; DH - Derby Hill, Oswego Co.; FH - Fairhaven, Little Sodus Bay and vicinity, Cayuga Co.; LOL - Lake Ontario littoral, Oswego Co.; NPT - northern Pompey township; SPd - Sandy Pond, Oswego Co.; StMC - Saint Mary's Cemetery, DeWitt, Onondaga Co.; Syr - Syracuse.

LOONS-DUCKS: Red-throated Loon: 3 singles, last 27 May. Com. Loon: arr DH 23 Mar, max 54 on 26 Apr, last 8 May; Adir arr Limekiln 20 Apr. Pied-billed Grebe: max 14 Brewerton 29 Mar. Horned Grebe: arr 10 Mar FH, max 26 Brewerton 29 Mar, last Toad Harbor 30 Apr. Red-necked Grebe: arr Brewerton 17 Mar, last and max 11 Toad Harbor 21 Apr. Double-crested Cormorant: arr DH 27 Mar, max 440 DH 9 May; up to 45 Wantry I, Oneida Lake, nesting in May but no nest count made. Least Bittern: arr DeWitt 17 May. Great Blue Heron: arr DH 17 Mar, Adir arr Moose R 20 Mar. Great Egret: four singles 8 to 27 May. **Little Blue Heron**: ad SUNY Oswego 18-21 May (J. Graves, FGS, DWC, mob). Black-crowned Night-Heron: up to 10 reported Snake Swamp to Oswego after 1 May. Tundra Swan: two DH 26 Mar, three N Sterling on 27 Mar, only reports. Gr. White-fronted Goose: one or two ad Beaver L area 10-17 Apr. Snow Goose: max 252 BRd 14 Mar, only high count; last (blue morph) Beaver Lake 24 Apr. Brant: one FH 23 May only report. Canada Goose: arr 2 Mar, max 11,000 FH, Beaver L 10 Apr; Adir arr Old Forge 12 Mar. Wood Duck: Adir arr Old Forge 6 Apr. Green-winged Teal: max 41 Clay Marsh 27 Mar, last there 8 May. Am. Black Duck: max 50 Seneca R flats 20 Mar. N. Pintail: max 200 Seneca R flats 20 Mar. Blue-winged Teal: max 74 DH 24 Mar. N. Shoveler: to 14/day 24 Mar to 5 May, more than usual. Gadwall: max 71FH 19 Mar, last Clay Marsh 6 May, then one (nesting?) SPd 28 May. **Eurasian Wigeon**: ad male Clay Marsh 28 Mar-2 May; one Scott Swamp 21 Apr doubtfully the same bird. Am. Wigeon: max 104 Clay Marsh 29 Mar, last Peter Scott Swamp 7 May. Canvasback: max 340 Brewerton 27 Mar, only high count; last Toad H 21 Apr. Redhead: max 60 FH 10 Mar, last there 20 Mar; one (?injured) Otisco L after 21 Apr. Ring-necked Duck: max 226 Brewerton 29 Mar, last Clay Marsh 3 May. Greater Scaup: last (20) Onondaga L 23 Apr. Lesser Scaup: last DH 24 Apr. Oldsquaw: max 48 FH 10 Mar and 60 Otisco L 28 Apr; last DH 9 May. White-winged Scoter: last Toad H 30 Apr, early departure. Com. Goldeneye: max 465 Brewerton 12 Mar, last Toad H 30 Apr. Bufflehead: max 60 LOL 20 Mar, last Oswego 21 May. Hooded Merganser: max 90 Brewerton 25 Mar. Com. Merganser: max 270 Cross L 6 Mar, last LOL 8 May; Adir arr Old Forge 8 Apr. Red-breasted Merganser: max 35 LOL 27 Mar. Ruddy Duck: to six/day 25 Mar to 6 Apr.

HAWKS-ALCIDS: Derby Hill Hawk Migration Totals - 1988

Species	Arrival	Max - Date	Last	90% Date Range	Total
Turkey Vulture	11 Mar	638 - 30 Mar	—	25 Mar - 10 May	2980
Osprey	26 Mar	69 - 5 May	—	6 Apr - 12 May	414
Bald Eagle	3 Mar	6 - 25 Mar	15 May	23 Mar - 10 May	36
Northern Harrier	19 Feb	129 - 25 Mar	—	10 Mar - 13 May	1134
Sharp-shinned Hawk	12 Mar	984 - 10 May	—	29 Mar - 12 May	5919
Cooper's Hawk	22 Feb	122 - 25 Mar	21 May	14 Mar - 9 May	504
Northern Goshawk	19 Feb	6 - 14 Apr	15 May	19 Feb - 10 May	45
Red-shouldered Hawk	5 Mar	289 - 26 Mar	12 May	22 Mar - 17 Apr	1029
Broad-winged Hawk	12 Apr	5301 - 27 Apr	—	26 Apr - 10 May	15371
Red-tailed Hawk	19 Feb	1170 - 26 Mar	—	6 Mar - 8 May	7313
Rough-legged Hawk	19 Feb	85 - 14 Apr	23 May	8 Mar - 8 May	41
Golden Eagle	23 Mar	4 - 2 dates	9 May	25 Mar - 8 May	27
American Kestrel	6 Mar	258 - 25 Mar	25 Mar	23 Mar - 4 Apr	824
Merlin	2 Mar	3 - 2 dates	1 May	29 Mar - 27 Apr	13

Turkey Vulture: DH total is new record. Osprey: *intro*. Bald Eagle: DH total is new record. N. Harrier: DH total is new record. Golden Eagle: DH total is new record. Peregrine Falcon: one LOL 21 May only report. Ring-necked Pheasant: very scarce, max two/day. Ruffed Grouse: max three/day, scarce. Wild Turkey: 31 Erieville in Mar; increasing near Holland Patent. Am. Coot: max six, low. **Sandhill Crane**: singles DH 24 May (GAS, NYSARC) and NY Thruway near Verona 28 May (WP). Black-bellied Plover: only two reports. Semipalmated Plover: max 17 BRd 20 May. Killdeer: max 25 LOL 2 Apr. Greater Yellowlegs: max 12 LOL 24 Apr, last 8 May. Lesser Yellowlegs: max 10 Clay Marsh 24 Apr, last 21 May. Solitary Sandpiper: last 21 May. Upland Sandpiper: arr Lakeport 18 Apr, very scarce. Ruddy Turnstone: arr SPd 28 May, max 12 on 31 May. Semipalmated Sandpiper: max 44 SPd 28 May, last 15 SPd 31 May. Least Sandpiper: max 10 LOL 15 May, last SPd 28 May. White-rumped Sandpiper: two SPd 24 May only report. Pectoral Sandpiper: max and last 45 Phoenix 24 Apr. Dunlin: arr DH 13 Apr, early; max only three. Short-billed Dowitcher: four LOL 19 May, 12 BRd 20 May only reports. Com. Snipe: max 25 Clay Marsh 3 Apr. Bonaparte's Gull: to 12/day 16 Apr to 19 May. Ring-billed Gull: influx 5-7 Mar, max 4000 FH 17 Mar, low. Herring Gull: max 800 Oneida L 12 Mar. Iceland Gull: two singles, last DH 5 May. **Lesser Black-backed Gull**: ad DeWitt 25 Apr (ph DWC, NYSARC). Glaucous Gull: three singles, last DH 7 Apr. Great Black-backed Gull: max 90 Oneida L 12 Mar. Caspian Tern: max 48 SPd 28 May. Com. Tern: max 24, low. Black Tern: max 3, very low.

PIGEONS-WOODPECKERS: Black-billed Cuckoo: max four. Yellow-billed Cuckoo: only report Camillus 24 May. Long-eared Owl: one Noyes Sancturary 24 Mar. Short-eared Owl: one Holland Patent in Mar; one DH 4 Apr. N. Saw-whet Owl: one Noyes Sancturary 24 Mar. Com. Nighthawk: scarce. Whip-poor-will: arr Gayville 8 May. Chimney Swift: max 35, scarce. Red-headed Woodpecker: scarce. Yellow-bellied Sapsucker: scarce, last StMC 5 May. N. Flicker: arr Erieville 8 Mar, max 110 DH 13 Apr.

FLYCATCHERS-STARLING: Olive-sided Flycatcher: three reports. E. Wood-Pewee: max ten, scarce. Yellow-bellied Flycatcher: arr StMC 16 May. Alder Flycatcher: max 11. Willow Flycatcher: max 10. E. Phoebe: max 13. E. Kingbird: max 35 DH 8 May. Purple Martin: max 30 DH 8 May. Tree Swallow: max 3000 LOL 23 Apr; Adir arr Moose R 12 Apr. N. Rough-winged Swallow: max 20 DH 8 May. Cliff Swallow: max 15 DH 8 May. Barn Swallow: max 120 DH 8 May, very low. Blue Jay: max 2100 DH 8 May. Am. Crow: 29128 total past DH 17 Mar-14 Apr. **Fish Crow**: *intro*. Black-capped Chickadee: to 20/day past DH 4-18 Apr. Red-breasted Nuthatch: max three. Brown Creeper: arr 24 Mar; max 12 LOL 1 May. Carolina Wren: one Syr to 11 May. Winter Wren: arr StMC 5 Apr, max 4, last Clay Marsh 14 May; Adir arr Limekiln 28 Apr. Golden-crowned Kinglet: arr 23 Mar, max 22 on 10 Apr, low; last 7 May. Ruby-crowned Kinglet: max 32 StMC 28 Apr, low, last 23 May. E. Bluebird: max five, low. Gray-cheeked Thrush: all reports 16-21 May. Swainson's Thrush: max 14 StMC 16 May. Hermit Thrush: max 5, last Onondaga Hill 8 May; Adir arr Old Forge 8 May. Wood Thrush: Adir arr Limekiln 9 May. Am. Robin: max 250 LOL 9 Apr. N. Mockingbird: one Old Forge HERK after 21 May. Brown Thrasher: scarce. Water Pipit: arr Clay 28 Mar, max 32 DH 2 Apr, last 21 May. Cedar Waxwing: sporadic until May, then typical numbers. N. Shrike: last of three report FH 19 Mar. **Loggerhead Shrike**: one near Texas 2 Apr only report.

VIREOS-WARBLED: White-eyed Vireo: singles StMC 13-16 May, Camillus 21 May. Philadelphia Vireo: to four/day 9-21 May. Red-eyed Vireo: Adir arr Moss Lake 4 days ahead of lowland reports! Blue-winged Warbler: arr StMC 5 May, max 12; outnumbered Golden-winged near Pulaski; four "Brewster's" and two "Lawrence's" hybrids reported. Golden-winged Warbler: arr Camillus Valley 8 May, max eight. Tennessee Warbler: max 90 StMC 16 May, last StMC 26 May. Orange-crowned Warbler: singles Ninemile Pt 7 May and StMC 23 May. N. Parula: one-two/day. Yellow Warbler: max 73 LOL 15 May. Chestnut-sided Warbler: last migrant 27 May. Magnolia Warbler: Adir arr Limekiln 9

May. Cape May Warbler: last 23 May. Yellow-rumped Warbler: arr Clay Marsh 21 Apr, max 250 LOL 8 May, last 23 May; Adir arr Old Forge 30 Apr. Black-throated Green Warbler: max 14 LOL 8 May; Adir arr Quiver Pd 8 May. Blackburnian Warbler: max 14 LOL 8 May, last migrant StMC 25 May. Pine Warbler: record early arr Ninemile Pt 7 Apr (FGS). Palm Warbler: max and last 12 LOL 8 May. Bay-breasted Warbler: max 35 StMc 16 May. Blackpoll Warbler: max 4, very low. Cerulean Warbler: arr LOL 8 May. Black-and-white Warbler: max nine, last migrant StMC 24 May. **Prothonotary Warbler**: *intro*. Worm-eating Warbler: one StMc 15 May. Kentucky Warbler: singles StMC 12-17 May, FH 23 May. Com. Yellowthroat: Adir arr Limekiln 9 May. Hooded Warbler: arr LOL 8 May. Wilson's Warbler: last 24 May. Yellow-breasted Chat: singles Clay Marsh 10 May and near Orwell 30 May in Tug Hill where exceptional.

TANAGERS-WEAVERS: Scarlet Tanager: max 12. Rose-breasted Grosbeak: Adir arr Moss L 2 days ahead of lowland dates! Indigo Bunting: scarce. Grasshopper Sparrow: arr LOL 8 May. Fox Sparrow: to four/day 3 Apr-3 May. Song Sparrow: arr Syr 9 Mar, Adir arr Old Forge 14 Mar. Lincoln's Sparrow: last migrant 24 May; Adir arr Quiver Pd 21 May. Swamp Sparrow: arr Clay Marsh 2 Apr. White-throated Sparrow: arr ca. 7 Apr, max 40 on 4 May, very low. White-crowned Sparrow: max two, very low. Dark-eyed Junco: max 16, very low; last migrant 11 May. Snow Bunting: max 1100 Fabius 3 Mar; last DH 27 Mar. Red-winged Blackbird: arr ca. 3 Mar; max 45000 HIGMA 19 Mar. **Yellow-headed Blackbird**: *intro*. E. Meadowlark: arr 17 Mar FH, max 350 DH 26 Mar. Rusty Blackbird: arr HIGMA 17 Mar, max 300 Clay Marsh 8 May. Com. Grackle: arr Syr area ca 3 Mar, Adir arr Old Forge 15 Mar; max 15000 HIGMA 19 Mar. Brown-headed Cowbird: arr 7 Mar, max 1000 Clay M 5 Apr. Orchard Oriole: singles Ninemile Pt 13 May, Six-Mile Creek 21 May. Purple Finch: arr Hastings and Big Moose 1 Apr, max 12 DH early May. Red Crossbill: three Euclid 1 May; near Boonville in Scots Pine 24 May. White-winged Crossbill: 11 Pennellville 24 Mar, singles there 2 and 7 Apr; one Holland Patent 14 Apr. Com. Redpoll: max 30; last Clay Marsh 6 Apr. Pine Siskin: *intro*. Evening Grosbeak: max 400 DH 8 May, still present Erieville 4 Jun.

Educational Communications, SUNY Health Science Center at Syracuse, 750 E. Adams, Syracuse NY 13210

[Thanks to F.G. Scheider for editing this Regional report – the Editor.]

REGION 6 — ST. LAWRENCE

KENNETH L. CROWELL and GERALD A. SMITH

Cold weather notwithstanding, we managed to make some interesting sightings. March was cool and dry, with temperatures running up to 3 below normal and precipitation down an inch or two. There were several small snowfalls, with over 4 in falling on Tug Hill 20-21 Mar. The monthly minimum temperature was -19° at Wanakena on 21 Mar, while the maximum was 75° in Potsdam on 30 Mar. The warm weather the end of March was never equalled in April, which, though cool and wet state-wide, was about average in the North Country. Minimum temperatures in the upper teens accompanied 2 in of snow on 16 and 20 Apr, while the month's high was 73° in Canton on 7 Apr. Contrary to one's impression, May was 2-3° warmer than normal while rainfall was an inch below normal.