

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE SPRING SEASON

ROBERT SPAHN

The spring 1989 offered another lackluster migration enlivened a bit in every Region by a good selection of rarities. Once again overall variety was good and arrival dates generally were not far from average but, as noted specifically in Region 10's introductory comments, there was an universal impression of fewer small birds. Only in Region 7 was the picture a bit more upbeat. The Region 2 report notes birds dripping from the trees and record banding totals in the interval 18-20 May, but living and birding there on those days, I observed on 18 and 19 May that there was little sign of these migrant hordes more than a mile from the Lake Ontario, a fact similarly noted in Region 5; and that only on May 20 was there finally some sign of widespread movement of small birds in numbers, very good numbers for some species.

This spring's weather certainly contributed to the overall picture. Over most of the state the icy grip of winter extended into early March, followed by some moderation, a relatively dry period. From 18-20 Mar some excellent waterfowl concentrations upstate were accompanied by the arrival of at least three different Eurasian Wigeon across Regions 1-3. April remained cool with near normal precipitation over most of the state, but with no weather systems suitable to produce waves of migrants until the waning days of the month. May was generally cool and **wet**! This period of heavier precipitation began in April in Regions 9 and 10, and the many wet weekends substantially impacted reporting there. The lack of good winds in April and much of May also dramatically reduced hawkwatch totals. Only Region 7 appeared to counter these trends with a warmer and drier than normal spring; only 1/10 the snowfall of a normal season was recorded in some places, and record hawk tallies and banding totals were obtained there. A freak heavy snowfall on 7 May brought lots of color in the form of Rose-breasted Grosbeaks and Indigo Buntings to feeders in Regions 1, 2 and 3. The rains of May produced losses to Purple Martins, Tree Swallows and Eastern Bluebirds in Region 1 and probably elsewhere in many areas.

Let us move to the major groups of birds generally sought in the spring. Once again there were no really good counts of loons and the only grebe count of note is a very high fallout of 445 Horned Grebes noted in Region 3 during mid April. The Double-crested Cormorant explosion continues unabated inland. From Region 10, we have note of a mid May pelagic trip with totals for some species which would have

been unprecedented 15 years ago. Most heron notes were negatives, with the exceptions of Great Blue Heron and Great Egret. The annual appearance of several species rare away from the coast included Cattle Egret in Regions 2 and 6; Snowy Egret in Region 7; Little Blue Heron in Regions 6 and 7; Tricolored Heron in Regions 3 and 9; and Glossy Ibis in Regions 5 and 9. As with last year, waterfowl variety was good. There were no serious misses, but numbers for most species, particularly Brant, Am. Black Duck and Canvasback, were relatively poor. Positives included good numbers of Tundra Swan within their expected distribution; very high Snow Goose counts in Regions 3 and 7; Greater White-fronted Goose in Regions 1, 2, 3 and 5, where it has been found regularly in recent years with large concentrations of Canada Goose; Ross' Goose as Regional firsts in Regions 2 and 5; and the highest Oldsquaw count in many decades in Region 10. Once again for the dataphiles, the Region 3 report provides maxima from Montezuma National Wildlife Refuge.

Hawkwatching suffered from poor winds most of the season. Where tables or totals are presented, the overall numbers are low, though many species were still tallied in large numbers. It was a good year for the Bald Eagle both in passage and in nesting. Osprey hacking has paid off with nesting in Region 1 at last. Turkey Vulture is on the increase across the state and ever more Black Vulture reports include a peak of eight in Region 9. Swainson's Hawk, now apparently regular in spring, produced two at Braddock Bay this year. Other positives include the establishment of a new watch at Sodus Bay in Region 2 and record counts at Coot Hill in Region 7. The principal negatives were very low N. Goshawk totals and very few breeding pairs of Red-shouldered Hawk noted. Additional reports associated with the hawkwatches are several Sandhill Crane reports, with multiple birds/sightings in Regions 1, 2 and 6. The total of about 12 in Region 2 includes an incredible eight in one day, although the observations of three headed east and later five (in a group) headed west leaves the possibility only five individuals were present that day. Certainly the status of this species has changed dramatically in recent years, consistent with breeding colonies reestablished and expanding not far north and east in Ontario and lower Michigan.

Shorebirds, gulls and terns again repeated their dismal showing of a year ago. Shorebirds possibly were even worse, as there were lots of seasonal puddles in May but few birds except in Region 9. Even the Jamaica Bay Wildlife Refuge notes from Region 10 reported the six most common species down an average of 27 percent. Among the negatives,

Short-billed Dowitcher has seemed very scarce locally for several seasons and was mentioned only in Region 9 this spring. Does this reflect only a lack of reports? Positives included very high counts (which should be submitted to the NYSARC for review) of Western Sandpiper in Region 2 and of Willet in Region 5. Well above average totals for Black-bellied Plover and Red Knot came from Region 10. Gull notes of interest include several rarer species accompanying flocks of Bonaparte's Gull in Regions 2 and 10, a Thayer's Gull in Region 5, and typically late white-winged gulls in several Regions. Hopefully, tern reports were scarcer than were the actual terns. Reports of special note include only a record early Forster's Tern in Region 1 and yet another Arctic Tern in Region 10. Black Tern appears to continue in serious trouble across the state. The large rise in marsh water levels with May/June rains compounded with typical water level tinkering of the St. Lawrence seaway almost certainly has impacted Great Lakes nesting colonies drastically this year.

Moving on to the large order Passeriformes, most were felt to be late and scarce, yet late arrivals in no family were consistently statistically significantly later than normal (only a total of 10 passerines fit that criterion *vs* three early). The feeling of scarcity derives from general comments and from the fact that no noteworthy high counts were found in any Region for any of these species, even though record banding totals were obtained in Regions 2 and 7. Unfortunately these banding totals are not accompanied by more details even though the data certainly were available. Specific negatives among the passerines included few reports of Olive-sided and Yellow-bellied Flycatchers; possible problems with the colonial swallows in several Regions; few migrant Red-breasted Nuthatches; House Wrens late and scarce in Regions 2 and 9; only two Sedge Wrens reported for the state; only six Loggerhead Shrike reports, none apparently breeding; low counts for Golden-winged, Cape May and Cerulean Warblers; low counts also for Indigo Bunting in several Regions; continued lows for the grassland sparrows; few Lincoln's Sparrows in Regions 3, 5 and 9; and the lack of a spring movement of the northern finches as a group. Positives within this order included Common Raven in five Regions; increases for N. Mockingbird, highlighted by four banded in Region 7; good numbers of reports of the rarer warblers, with Yellow-throated in Regions 1, 2 and 10, Prothonotary in Regions 1, 2, 3 and 10, Worm-eating and Kentucky in five Regions, and Connecticut in Region 2; a record early female Bay-breasted Warbler on a nest in Region 7; several Clay-colored Sparrows in mid May in Regions 1 and 2; good counts for Fox Sparrow in Region 5

and Lincoln's Sparrow in Regions 1 and 2; Yellow-headed Blackbird in Regions 2, 5 and 10; Orchard Oriole in six Regions, with two banded in Region 7; and, in spite of the scarcity of finches, an early fledgling date for Pine Siskin in Region 5.

For many species and families, there is no organized approach to reporting and too few random notes among the Regional reports to say anything about status or trends. For example the mid May super wave which hit banders in Region 2 resulted in several single day totals exceeding record maxima in Bull's *Birds of New York State* even though 100's of birds were freed unbanded as banders and helpers at first couldn't keep up and then ran out of small bands. It is disappointing that this event was not summarized in more detail.

As usual, there are reports which don't belong to the major groups and other bits and pieces of interest scattered among the Regional reports. These include continued increase of Wild Turkey across the state; very low counts for most marsh birds in many Regions; few cuckoo reports except in Region 9; few owl reports, though good numbers are noted for the Lake Ontario Plain; very low counts again for both Common Nighthawk and Whip-poor-will; continued range expansion and increase of Red-bellied Woodpecker in Regions 6, 7 and 9; fair numbers of Lapland Longspur and Snow Bunting lingering well into Spring; and token single Common Redpolls in five Regions in this off year for finches. Very early arrivals, the exception this spring, included an American Robin in the Adirondacks in Region 7; Louisiana Waterthrush in Region 5; Connecticut Warbler in Region 2; and Hooded Warbler in Region 10. The Region 7 report describes an eagle-gull chase, a veritable raptor air show over Coot Hill, a retrap of a very old Yellow Warbler, observations of orange-tipped Cedar Waxwings (and are others finding that strongly orange tail-tipped birds also tend toward orange hues on all other normally yellow or yellowish areas of the bird?), and a very interesting summary of observations at a remote lake - what might be found if more of these remote areas could be covered well periodically at different seasons? Finally, in the Region 5 report we have food for thought in the comment that, while most first arrival dates were relatively normal, the bulk of arrival date records for most species from nearly all observers were late. Perhaps dwelling on Regional arrivals as data easily gathered will not give much warning of dwindling numbers as large numbers of observers continue to ferret out that one early bird and we fail to note that the next of its kind came days or weeks later, or that no one ever recorded more than 1 or 2 at a time all season.

I have recorded my reservations about the data in the arrival date

Waterbird Arrivals 1989

Species	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8	Region 9	Region 10	Average
American Bittern	16 Apr	16 Apr	8 Apr		4 May	21 Apr	7 Apr		5 Apr		15 Apr
Green-backed Heron	23 Apr	29 Apr	15 Apr		28 Apr		8 May		20 Apr	18 Apr	24 Apr
Wood Duck	14 Mar		16 Mar		11 Mar	16 Apr	2 Apr		18 Mar	12 Mar	21 Mar
Green-winged Teal	16 Mar	12 Mar	18 Mar		18 Mar	14 Apr			12 Mar		20 Mar
Northern Pintail	11 Mar		10 Mar		17 Mar	26 Mar	28 Mar		13 Mar		17 Mar
Blue-winged Teal	18 Mar	16 Mar	19 Mar		25 Mar		27 Apr		25 Mar	1 Apr	27 Mar
Osprey	2 Apr	28 Mar	3 Apr		28 Mar	19 Apr	5 Apr		2 Apr	26 Mar	2 Apr
Virginia Rail	22 Apr		29 Apr		9 Apr	10 Apr	15 May		7 May	2 Apr	22 Apr
Sora	27 Apr	15 Apr	21 Apr		20 Apr	24 Apr			13 May	2 Apr	21 Apr
Common Moorhen	15 Apr	15 Apr	30 Apr		8 Apr	24 Apr	10 May		5 May	17 Apr	23 Apr
Black-bellied Plover		26 May	28 May		2 Jun						29 May
Semipalmated Plover	19 May	20 May	2 May		20 May				13 May	19 Mar	5 May
Killdeer	4 Mar		16 Mar		12 Mar	20 Mar	27 Mar		10 Mar	5 Mar	13 Mar
Greater Yellowlegs	9 Apr	1 Apr	1 Apr		25 Mar	23 Apr	10 May		17 Apr	19 Mar	9 Apr
Lesser Yellowlegs	9 Apr	4 Apr	24 Apr		2 Apr	24 Apr	20 May		5 May	20 Apr	21 Apr
Solitary Sandpiper	29 Apr	29 Apr	21 Apr		16 Apr		23 May		5 May	29 Apr	30 Apr
Spotted Sandpiper	21 Apr	26 Apr	22 Apr		1 May	4 May	1 May		30 Apr	19 Apr	26 Apr
Sanderling		26 May	2 May								14 May
Semipalmated Sandpiper	20 May	17 May			20 May				13 May	29 Apr	13 May
Least Sandpiper	6 May	4 May	2 May		30 Apr				12 May	20 Apr	2 May
Pectoral Sandpiper		17 Mar	17 Apr		14 Apr	25 Apr			13 May	19 Mar	12 Apr
Common Snipe	17 Mar	26 Mar	3 Mar		19 Mar	5 Apr	3 Apr		25 Mar		22 Mar
American Woodcock	14 Mar	11 Mar	17 Mar		16 Mar	23 Mar	29 Mar		5 Mar		16 Mar
Caspian Tern	13 Apr	4 Apr			14 Apr	21 Apr	3 Jun			19 Apr	22 Apr
Common Tern	16 Apr	27 Apr	18 Apr		2 May	30 Apr			27 Mar	29 Apr	21 Apr
Black Tern	6 May	30 Apr	3 May		30 Apr	13 May	11 May			6 May	5 May
Marsh Wren	7 May	1 May	5 May		5 May				8 Apr	8 Apr	25 Apr

Bold Regional Record Early *Italics* Also isolated earlier report(s).

Spring Arrivals 1989

Species	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8	Region 9	Region 10	Average
Black-billed Cuckoo	19 May	17 May	20 May		19 May	22 May	19 May		8 May	6 May	16 May
Common Nighthawk	4 May	15 May	17 May		20 May		11 May		26 May	7 May	14 May
Chimney Swift	20 Apr	29 Apr	24 Apr		28 Apr	25 Apr	4 May		21 Apr	25 Apr	25 Apr
Ruby-thr Hummingbird	15 May	13 May	6 May		23 Apr	18 May	14 May		26 Apr	7 May	7 May
Yellow-bellied Sapsucker	29 Mar	6 Apr	4 Apr		8 Apr		9 Apr		26 Feb	26 Mar	29 Mar
Olive-sided Flycatcher		21 May	16 May		20 May		24 May			22 May	20 May
Eastern Wood-Pewee	16 May	13 May	1 May		15 May	16 May	27 Apr		9 May	19 May	10 May
Alder Flycatcher	16 May	25 May	19 May		19 May	29 May	8 May		21 May	27 May	20 May
Willow Flycatcher	15 May	19 May	13 May		17 May		18 Jun		12 May	19 May	20 May
Least Flycatcher	30 Apr	29 Apr	1 May		2 May	14 May	2 May		4 May	13 May	4 May
Eastern Phoebe	24 Mar	24 Mar	20 Mar		21 Mar	28 Mar	27 Mar		14 May	12 Mar	28 Mar
Gr. Crested Flycatcher	27 Apr	30 Apr	3 May		2 May	12 May	7 May		1 May	1 May	2 May
Eastern Kingbird	30 Apr	29 Apr	29 Apr		30 Apr	4 May	12 May		22 Apr	29 Apr	30 Apr
Purple Martin	23 Apr	28 Mar	18 Apr		17 Apr	17 Apr	20 Apr		17 Apr	7 Apr	14 Apr
Tree Swallow	19 Mar	26 Mar	18 Mar		15 Mar	5 Apr	4 Apr		21 Mar	18 Mar	23 Mar
N. Rough-winged Swallow	16 Apr	19 Apr	31 Mar		22 Apr		20 May		6 Apr	1 Apr	16 Apr
Bank Swallow	30 Apr	30 Apr	2 Apr		28 Apr	4 May	13 May		29 Apr	16 Apr	26 Apr
Cliff Swallow	3 May	15 Apr	27 Apr		5 May	28 Apr	30 Apr		15 Apr	22 Apr	25 Apr
Barn Swallow	8 Apr	4 Apr	15 Mar		14 Apr	24 Apr	19 Apr		21 Apr	1 Apr	9 Apr
House Wren	27 Apr	16 Apr	27 Apr		26 Apr	30 Apr	4 May		15 Apr	26 Apr	25 Apr
Ruby-crowned Kinglet	5 Apr	8 Apr	11 Mar		15 Apr	16 Apr	22 Apr		2 Mar	2 Apr	2 Apr
Blue-gray Gnatcatcher	30 Apr	18 Apr	9 Apr		29 Apr		12 May		8 Apr	8 Apr	20 Apr
Eastern Bluebird	11 Mar		1 Mar		14 Mar	28 Mar	25 Mar		10 Mar		14 Mar
Veery	28 Apr	30 Apr	4 May		30 Apr	5 May	3 May		29 Apr	29 Apr	1 May
Swainson's Thrush	6 May	5 May	9 May		12 May		5 May		5 May	13 May	7 May
Hermit Thrush	27 Mar		8 Apr		12 Apr	4 May	11 Apr		30 Mar	28 Apr	12 Apr
Wood Thrush	30 Apr	1 May	30 Apr		1 May	4 May	6 May		27 Apr	29 Apr	1 May
Gray Catbird	30 Apr	25 Apr	29 Apr		1 May	8 May	3 May		29 Apr	1 May	30 Apr
Brown Thrasher	27 Apr	13 Apr	9 Apr		16 Apr	5 May	29 Apr		16 Apr	21 Apr	20 Apr
Solitary Vireo	17 Apr	28 Apr	23 Apr		29 Apr	10 May	28 Apr		17 Apr	18 Apr	25 Apr
Yellow-throated Vireo	4 May	5 May	29 Apr		13 May				5 May	29 Apr	4 May
Warbling Vireo	1 May	4 May	29 Apr		6 May	15 May	11 May		5 May	3 May	5 May
Red-eyed Vireo	14 May	5 May	30 Apr		14 May	14 May	4 May		5 May	3 May	7 May

Species	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8	Region 9	Region 10	Average
Tennessee Warbler	7 May	9 May	13 May		13 May	9 May	19 May		7 May	4 May	10 May
Nashville Warbler	27 Apr	26 Apr	29 Apr		6 May	8 May	5 May		1 May	29 Apr	1 May
Northern Parula	6 May	5 May	7 May		6 May	16 May	19 May		22 Apr	26 Apr	5 May
Yellow Warbler	29 Apr	5 May	16 Apr		28 Apr	7 May	1 May		20 Apr	20 Apr	27 Apr
Chestnut-sided Warbler	4 May	6 May	6 May		12 May	8 May	14 May		30 Apr	29 Apr	6 May
Magnolia Warbler	6 May	5 May	6 May		15 May	11 May	14 May		29 Apr	3 May	7 May
Cape May Warbler	30 Apr	5 May	6 May		6 May	16 May	15 May		5 May	5 May	7 May
Black-thr. Blue Warbler	6 May	30 Apr	30 Apr		30 Apr	8 May	3 May		27 Apr	29 Apr	1 May
Black-thr Green Warbler	27 Apr	30 Apr	27 Apr		1 May	4 May	5 May		28 Apr	22 Apr	29 Apr
Blackburnian Warbler	30 Apr	3 May	30 Apr		30 Apr	7 May	10 May		30 Apr	29 Apr	2 May
Pine Warbler	29 Apr	29 Apr	26 Apr		16 Apr	19 Apr	4 May		19 Mar	22 Mar	16 Apr
Palm Warbler	29 Apr	29 Apr	23 Apr		28 Apr	22 May			5 Apr	1 Apr	23 Apr
Bay-breasted Warbler	6 May	13 May	6 May		16 May	18 May	20 May		12 May	7 May	12 May
Blackpoll Warbler	19 May	15 May	14 May		20 May	18 May	19 May		30 Apr	7 May	14 May
Black-and-White Warbler	29 Apr	19 Apr	29 Apr		30 Apr	5 May	1 May		21 Apr	20 Apr	26 Apr
American Redstart	6 May	5 May	29 Apr		6 May	17 May	12 May		30 Apr	13 Apr	3 May
Ovenbird	30 Apr	30 Apr	30 Apr		5 May	21 May	5 May		3 May	20 Apr	3 May
Northern Waterthrush	27 Apr	26 Apr	24 Apr		23 Apr	9 May	4 May		30 Apr	22 Apr	28 Apr
Mourning Warbler	13 May	15 May	19 May		15 May		21 May		20 May	8 May	15 May
Common Yellowthroat	3 May	1 May	30 Apr		6 May	11 May	9 May		4 May	19 Apr	2 May
Wilson's Warbler	18 May	13 May	9 May		18 May	19 May	20 May		17 May	7 May	15 May
Canada Warbler	17 May	15 May	9 May		15 May	19 May	18 May		5 May	4 May	12 May
Scarlet Tanager	2 May	5 May	7 May		6 May	17 May	7 May		5 May	29 Apr	6 May
Rose-breasted Grosbeak	29 Apr	30 Apr	29 Apr		5 May	5 May	6 May		29 Apr	16 Apr	29 Apr
Indigo Bunting	14 May	13 May	8 May		19 May		10 May		5 May	6 May	10 May
Rufous-sided Towhee	28 Mar	25 Mar	1 Apr		15 Apr	25 Apr	5 May		17 Apr	1 Apr	10 Apr
Chipping Sparrow	4 Apr	6 Apr	16 Mar		18 Apr	15 Apr	11 Apr		14 Apr	29 Mar	6 Apr
Vesper Sparrow	5 Apr	24 Mar	29 Mar		16 Apr		15 Apr		24 Apr		8 Apr
Savannah Sparrow	1 Apr	24 Mar	2 Apr		5 Apr	18 Apr	17 Apr		4 Apr	23 Apr	7 Apr
Lincoln's Sparrow	13 May	4 May	6 May		5 May		5 May		14 May	26 Apr	6 May
White-crowned Sparrow	30 Apr	16 Apr	29 Apr		1 May	27 Apr	25 Apr		12 Apr	29 Apr	24 Apr
Bobolink	30 Apr	30 Apr	30 Apr		30 Apr	8 May	12 May		1 May	6 May	3 May
Northern Oriole	30 Apr	4 May	29 Apr		4 May	7 May	6 May		30 Apr	26 Apr	2 May

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tables several times in the past and I also have detailed the mechanics of my analysis before, so this time I will simply proceed to report the results of the somewhat fuzzy statistical analysis. Water birds, land birds, and the total of all species in the tables averaged statistically significantly (at least 2 standard deviations) late this spring, though only 14 individual species were significantly late. Three species were early. These species are well scattered across families and expected arrival periods. If repeated lateness is significant, then Green-backed Heron, Bank Swallow, Vesper Sparrow and Northern Oriole are repeats from last year and all are species of some concern in at least some Regions. There were no repeats of significantly early arriving species. Using a sign test to look at groups of species with normal arrival dates in various parts of the season, only those normally arriving in the 21 Mar to 14 Apr and 25-30 Apr periods were scattered equally about their normal dates. All other 1-2 week periods had many more late than early arrivals. Looking to the summary table, seasonality shows Regions 1 and 2 averaging significantly late arrivals, Region 3 early, and the rest not significantly different from the 25 year baseline. The pattern of relative arrivals among regions under Advance generally shows the south to north movement with time that we feel is "normal."

Region	Species Reported	Seasonality (days)	Advance (days)
Region 1	89	2.0	-1.0
Region 2	87	2.7	-2.0
Region 3	91	-1.9	-3.7
Region 4	0		
Region 5	92	1.5	0.9
Region 6	72	0.7	8.0
Region 7	81	-0.7	8.3
Region 8	0		
Region 9	88	0.7	-2.2
Region 10	84	0.9	-6.4

This spring rarities really were the brightest spot of the season in most Regions. The best of the lists, generally not repeating those already mentioned above include Yellow-crowned Night-Heron, Swainson's Warbler and Brewer's Blackbird in Region 1; American White Pelican, Ross' Goose and Fish Crow in Region 2; American White Pelican, Blue

Grosbeak and Lesser Black-backed Gull in Region 3; Ross' Goose, Black-necked Stilt, Stilt Sandpiper and Fish Crow in Region 5; Sandhill Crane, Cattle Egret, and Little Blue Heron in Region 6; Barrow's Goldeneye, Red-bellied Woodpecker, Prairie Warbler and Black-headed Grosbeak in Region 7; Little Blue Heron in Region 9; and Barnacle Goose, Wilson's Plover, Fork-tailed Flycatcher, Arctic Tern, Thick-billed Murre and Harris' Sparrow in Region 10. As usual, the list from Region 10 includes only the great rarities and omits numerous species which would be great finds anywhere else in the state. From scanning this list, it is obvious that many species in it would be candidates for the BOTS Award, but this Spring they are touched out by the Ash-throated Flycatcher in Region 10, a species unprecedented in the State at this time of year.

716 High Tower Way, Webster, New York 14580

Standard abbreviations: county names are shortened to their first four letters and appear in UPPER CASE letters; months are shortened to their first three letters; ad — adult; arr — arrival or first of season; FL — fledgling; I — Island; imm — immature; *intro* — see introduction to report; j — juvenile; L — Lake; max — maximum; mob — multiple observers; NWR — National Wildlife Refuge; NYSARC — report to New York State Avian Records Committee; P — Park; Pd — Pond; ph — photographed; Pt — Point; Res — Reservoir; SP — State Park; spm — specimen; subad — subadult; T — Town of; Twn — township; WMA — Wildlife Management Area; y — young.